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MOVIE REVIEW

A Zebra of a Different Color, or Another Pattern

By MIRIAMBALE

“Khumba,” the second feature from the South African animation studio [Triggerfish](#), is a wondrous and slightly deranged story about oddballs embracing their differences. The titular young hero is a South African zebra who is born half-white in a gated community of chicly striped peers. The superstitious zebras conclude that Khumba is the cause of the drought that follows his birth. For them, no stripes mean no rain.

After a wise mantis gives him a map to a magic watering hole, Khumba (the voice of Jake T. Austin) heads out to find it. He is joined by a pair of wandering outcasts: the lonely and loving wildebeest Mama V (Loretta Devine) and the flamboyant ostrich Bradley (Richard E. Grant, [“Withnail and I”](#)). A key musical number has Mr. Grant singing a campfire version of “I Will Survive” with new lyrics: “I am ostracized.”

Along the way, these misfits encounter various other isolated cults, from a family of meerkats living in a human-made animal sanctuary to a group of rock-dwelling rodents, known as dassies, on a mountain convinced that doomsday is nigh. A cruel and half-blind leopard (Liam Neeson) also crosses their path. The voice acting from talented American, British and South African performers (including Steve Buscemi and Sindiwe Magona) is zany and emotionally charged.

Also delightful in this film, from the director Anthony Silverston, is the way the fantastic animation exaggerates the landscapes, colors, sounds and wildlife of the [Great Karoo](#) of South Africa. Real-life nature is presented as more exotic, detailed and deeply felt than any fantasy world.