

Richard Armitage: Thorin, the leader of dwarves

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Q: Finally Thorin and his men arrived at the Lonely Mountain, the lost homeland in this movie "The Hobbit: Desolation of Smaug". Would you tell us about Thorin in this film?

RA: In this film Thorin became the leader of the group after Gandalf (Ian McKellen) left them. He met a barrage of obstacles. I think getting captured by Thranduil (Lee Pace), the king of woodland elves, was the hardest to endure for Thorin and the dwarves in their quest. It was a dark chapter. For this reason the episode was a key moment in movie two for the depiction of this character. And also I had been thinking from the beginning that Thorin was a difficult role to play because of his complex feelings. He desired to reclaim the kingdom and the throne, but there was this terrible dragon Smaug under the mountain. It was his desire to get rid of Smaug and reclaim his kingdom but also a fear to escape from his obsession. In this film this became the main issue.

Q: In the first film you said having the trust of the director, Peter Jackson, was helpful to play Thorin. Was it also true for this film?

RA: Actually Thorin was not my favorite at the beginning. I had to justify his words and actions when I could not agree with his motives. But gradually I began to love Thorin for his loyalty for his people and fighting for them without thought of his own life. I think my increased attachment paid off.

There is a scene in this film that shows when his feelings change. Thorin stares at the faces of his men when they have arrived at the Lonely Mountain. It is a moment which says "We did it together." You can see he felt humble instead of showing his ego. It is very moving.

Q: This film has many new characters. How was it working with the cast members who played them?

RA: Unfortunately I did not have scenes working with Evangeline Lilly (Tauriel) but I worked with Lee in the scene I said earlier. It was very rewarding. It was an exceptional scene in which I was able to confront him as the dwarf leader.

Q: Has your life changed since you played Thorin in the Hobbit series? Such as being addressed in the street?

RA: Not so bad. But when I visited Australia for the DVD promo, the responses from the audience were great, and I felt their enthusiasm for Thorin. Someone asked "Who was Thorin's love of his life?" That was a question I had been wondering as well. The audience were thinking not only the story of the film but also the past and future of the character. This type of response from the audience inspired me to get myself deeper into the role. And so I kept thinking of all these questions while I was working in the pick-up shoot, thinking how I could represent what the audience was asking for.

Q: Can you tell us what the pick-up shoot was about?

RA: It was work to expand on each character with as much detail as possible. The work was to make the second film perfect. In other words, it was like working to sharpen the blade. The last two weeks were like a three-legged race between Peter and me. Under extreme conditions, I think our mutual trust pulled us through.