

POWERDWARF

Size does matter. In Peter Jackson's The Hobbit-trilogy RICHARD ARMITAGE accomplishes the squaring of the circle: His bearded dwarf-king rivals easily with LOTR hero Aragorn in regard to sex appeal. SKIP met the British actor in Paris and talked to him about proportions, youthful indiscretions and Sundays in Vienna.

SKIP:

When you meet an actor for the first time in real life, one usually thinks: "I imagined him taller!" With you it's just the opposite: In the movie you're playing a dwarf, in reality you're almost 2 meters tall. How did you do that on set?

RA:

Oh, I crouched a bit and slouched my shoulders...no, nonsense. There are a lot of tricks. To begin with I had a lot of stuff in my face: my forehead, my nose and my chin were...er.. 'enhanced' – my head needed to get bigger in comparison to my body, otherwise the dwarfish proportions wouldn't fit. And lots happened digitally. There is a fascinating technology, which enables partial scaling of a frame whilst filming, and a lot of scenes were filmed in front of a green screen. And there's always the good old box to stand upon. Actually I was very unfamiliar with looking up constantly during talking – I normally don't do that. Now I can look down on people again (laughs).

SKIP:

You had your first role on stage at the age of 14, at school in a dramatized version of – just- 'The Hobbit'! Which role did you play?

RA:

I was the legendary third elf from the left (laughs). I wore a thick woolen, knitted gown which was sprayed with silver colour to make it look from a distance like a chainmail armour. Somehow looking similar to what Peter Jackson has come up with (laughs). At that time I didn't have the faintest what the problem between the elves and dwarves was about. Now this changed just to the opposite, I internalized the conflict completely. I can't even walk into a room anymore, if an elf is in there (laughs).

SKIP:

In this trilogy you're representing someone like who Aragorn has been in LOTR –the tough, heroic, slightly uncombed eye candy. Do you compare yourself with Viggo Mortensen?

RA:

Of course I'm not comparing with an iconic role like that. Actually I don't think the two have much in common but the fact that both are starting their quests as kings without thrones.

SKIP:

By all means - you're the first ever sexy dwarf in movie history!

RA:

You think so? Thank you very much! But there's been Al Pacino..(laughs). But I understand what you're getting at: it doesn't have so much to do with the height – you can't see it that much on screen anyway - it's the facial hair that stood in the path of sex. But we did our best, especially the makeup artists.

SKIP:

How much impact do you think this role will have on your career?

RA:

Oh, it's not easy to answer what it will do to my career...but it had a great impact on me personally. To play such an iconic character for such a long time, at such an otherworldly beautiful locations, with such a director, for such a huge, expectant audience – that's a once-in-a-lifetime, that'll never come again.

SKIP:

Are you upset by fans or press?

RA:

Luckily I'm looking a little bit different from Thorin in reality. Until now I've been spared from the onslaught and usually very few recognize me on the street – I hope it stays that way. I love traveling, and would like to do it in the future. By the way I've been to Vienna several times, last time not long ago!

SKIP:

And what did you visit?

RA:

I've been to Belvedere and at the Naschmarkt which is awesome. And I attended a concert in a small club by the river...what's it's name...Flex, of course. Vienna is gorgeous. It's one of the most worthy to live in cities of the world. I especially enjoy that your Sundays over there are real Sundays, all shops are closed and the whole world is taking a break.