

PURE MAGIC

[Excerpt of the interview]

Text: Sebastián Tabany (Viva, La Revista de Clarín- Buenos Aires, Argentina- November 26, 2013)

The Hobbit returns. In the second part of the trilogy, director Peter Jackson took liberties with the text to achieve a film more epic than the previous one. How did he do it?

'Sometimes Smaug was a stick with a green bulb at one end and I had to look at it and pretend it was a dragon. Sometimes it'd be better not to have anything at all because a pole with a green bulb is of no help,' remembers Richard Armitage when it comes to the filming of the climatic battle in "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug" to première in the country (Argentina) on December 12th. The final battle, which took between four and five weeks to be shot in Wellington, NZ, will be the climax of the second part of the trilogy, although the story ends there in the original book by J.R.R. Tolkien.

New Zealand's director Peter Jackson summoned his Lord of the Ring's technical crew a decade later to work together again for eighteen months. His aim was to take up Guillermo del Toro's ill-fated project and return to Middle Earth to tell Bilbo Baggins' story about the way he got the ring and his battle against the dragon Smaug, who had stolen an incalculable treasure from the last dwarven heirs. Just as it's customary in Jackson's films, what started as an adaptation of a 300-page children story turned into another over-the-top trilogy, whose last film isn't based on a book but on appendices and even paragraphs. Armitage, who plays Thorin- the leader of the dwarves looking for the treasure- clarifies: 'I remember that in the book, the Battle of the Five Armies isn't explored that much. Maybe because Tolkien was telling a bedtime story to his children and didn't want to talk about violence that way. However, I'm sure that Peter will incorporate all the elements when he shows the battle.'

Jackson didn't just use the latest technology to recreate the world of Middle Earth, sixty years after the events of The Lord of the Rings, he created new effects and even introduced the audience to a different way of watching films- in HD 3D and in 48 fps instead of the traditional one in 24 fps.

What was it like seeing yourself on the screen in 3D ?

I was impressed by the details in 3D. The sequence which made the greatest impact on me was the one of the eagles at the end because what we had seen was a bunch of green bananas. I thought it was a scene with green bananas. It's extraordinary when you see the final result on the screen.

You're one of the tallest of the cast, but you play a dwarf. How did they do it?

They used digital magic. While I'm on one set, there's another actor with scale props on a different one. The cameras are synchronised and we're shot simultaneously but in different places. There's a simpler version with two cameras on the same set, but one of them is placed farther away. And there's also the old trick of using a wooden box so that the other actor looks taller. It's funny because being a tall person playing a dwarf means people don't recognise me in the street. They expect to see someone who's 1.50 m.

Your character's a lot like Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen in The Lord of the Rings). He's a hero and a leader...

I think that the only thing that may link us both is the notion of kingship. I can't talk about Aragorn because I don't know the character enough. But in some way, Thorin's a king without a kingdom. Thorin has higher expectations than Aragorn because he hopes to claim back the title under the mountain. He spent his whole childhood expecting to be a king until his throne was snatched away. However, there might be parallelisms in the sense that both characters were meant to be crowned.

During the shooting it was a pole, but did you get to see anything of the dragon?

I saw one of his eyes.

What colour is it?

I don't know. In my version it's red because that's what it looked like in one of the illustrations of Tolkien's I used as an inspiration.