

Exclusive: Richard Armitage

Interviewer: Jesús Usero

Perhaps in our country he may be more known for his television roles in series like *Robin Hood* or *Strike Back*, but we have also seen him in *Captain America*. All of this remains tiny in comparison with his most recent job, Thorin, the dwarf leader in Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit*. An experience that the actor himself says that, if it were the last one of his life, it would make him happy. And he tells us all this in an exclusive interview he gave to *Acción*.

The first thing we'd like to do is thank you for your time and ask what you can tell us about *The Hobbit*, one of the most anticipated films of the year.

Well, I think that the reason that it might be one of the most anticipated films of the year is that it's going to be a cinematographic event like no one has seen before, which has to do mainly with the return to Middle Earth and the way that Peter has created this work, in 3D, filming at 48 frames per second ... I think it will be a very special event.

And how did you get a role in such a special project?

I got to do an audition for two roles: one for Bard and the other for Thorin, and then I met Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, and I didn't prepare anything from the film, but rather a mixture of everything in which Thorin believes and all of his characteristics, I read this and we talked about the character, about Middle Earth, about how the film would be. ... And we talked about Thorin's quest, his dignity, his mission to recover his homeland ... and it seemed that we had similar ideas and they offered me the role. When I met them, I had just injured my shoulder in a television role, and it hurt quite a bit, I had taken some relaxants, but they didn't have much effect (laughs) ... but I believe that they noticed a certain pain in my voice and my eyes that somehow helped me to personify Thorin.

Was there any point at which you thought you would pass up the role, say no to this film?

No, on the contrary, I don't know how I would have been able not to do it. I remember when they were making the first films, and I would have liked to have been part of them. And when this appeared on the path ... Obviously I knew they

were going to film *The Hobbit*, but all the while it was delayed, and delayed, and I couldn't believe that in the end we would be making the film, delayed, and I told Peter, I would have given my arm to work on it, and although I don't think it will happen, if this were my last job, I would still be very, very happy.

And with all these delays that you mention, was there any moment in which you were afraid for the film, at which you thought to yourself that *The Hobbit* was a project that would never be filmed?

Yes, and I remember that a moment came when they were saying to me that they had to make a decision, because I had already turned down one project in order to be in *The Hobbit*, but the film was not getting a green light to be filmed. But I knew that it was going to be made, I knew that Peter was going to get to finish making it. And when you have the chance to do this role ... you don't think about other options. I remember saying to myself, if I make this act of faith, if I decide to stick with it, then the film will be made. And here we are, talking about a film that will be screened this Christmastime.

Definitely. And what do you like best about Thorin? What attracts you most about this character?

I think that what I like best about him is the idea that Thorin develops in a very unexpected way, the way in which he changes over the length of his life. It is a very interesting path that he travels. There's a piece of guilt in him, but also a big piece of ferocity, a big internal struggle with himself, with which he begins the adventure, and all the catastrophic events that happen over the length of the story create an interesting drama, inside the character and at the same time, in the story. But at the same time, around the end of the film, there's a feeling that the character achieves what he deserves, and that his relationship with Bilbo, which goes from the beginning to the end of the film, is a relationship that helps him to understand who he is. That this relationship in constant development makes Thorin who he is.

And how was your arrival in this very special universe? How was it to arrive in New Zealand and see the sets and the whole operation?

I think that this is part of what made of this a different experience for everyone. You go to the other side of the world, and coming from the UK I can't think of many places much further away to go, unless it would be the South Pole. Basically, this experience makes you think that you're taking a long trip to do it, that you're going to Middle Earth, because I think that a lot of people see New Zealand as Middle Earth, and you're going to see these places, the ones that appear in the first films, and you're going to travel to this magical land. And from the moment in which we got on the plane, we were going on creating this sort of mystique in which our characters were going to exist. One of the most memorable moments for me was, the first day of filming, the ceremony on the set that the Kiwis [as they lovingly call the inhabitants of New Zealand] did, and it was right before we started to film for the

first time, even though it was at night, we were in the entry to the studio and the sun was starting to set, while they were singing a song, the song of blessing. It was such an emotional moment, I thought, that we would all be blessed filming this film in this so special place.

And I assume that it will have been an extended filming period, more than a year. How did you live there?

It was about 18 months, because we got there at the beginning of 2011 and we left in August of 2012, so that probably it was about 18 months. And part of what made the experience so special was spending all this time with the people you are working with there, to feel yourself part of a long journey that isn't even over yet. But it is something that unites people. You can talk with anyone who worked on *The Lord of the Rings*, and the feeling is the same. It's a time that you spend together, you work in such unity ... that it is something that I will never forget.

As well as Peter Jackson, who is one of the most important directors of our age. How was it to work with him?

From the first moment I was with him in a room, and he told me about the character, and the way in which he shaped it, I knew that Peter was a person very similar to me. He doesn't like to lose time, he likes the camera to be filming constantly, and he does this thing he calls 'filmed rehearsal',* where there's no cut between takes, and then he ends up using it, I call this masterwork. I give the best of myself when I am working and working in the character without many cuts. But also at moments of doubt, when you feel like you're not inhabiting your character, and you turn to him and you know, because you've seen it in the *Lord of the Rings* films, that he has all the characters in mind, that they will all appear, each with his own individual delight, because there's not one single weak character in *The Lord of the Rings*. So that even when you plunge in, when you know that you are in deep waters, he is going to get you to the other side perfectly.

*translation from *ensayo rodado* [jargon]

Bio:

RICHARD ARMITAGE
(Richard Crispin Armitage)

22nd of August 1971, Leicester, Leicestershire, England, United Kingdom
Height: 1.88 meters

Marital status: there have been rumors of all kinds for quite some time, none of them confirmed or denied in any way. The only thing that we really know is that for some years he maintained a romance with the actress Annabel Capper, with whom he lived together, and with whom he has remained friends.

Professional debut: From a young age he was interested in art and got his parents to send him to school to study music, where he learned to play the cello, the guitar and the flute from the age of 14 years. At 17 he joined a circus in order to get a membership card for an actor's union. When his career didn't take off, he studied acting at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. He debuted in film in 1999 in *This Year's Love*, and the same year on television with *Cleopatra*.

Characters: He is a big star on British TV, where we've been able to see him in series like *Robin Hood*, as Guy of Gisborne, *Strike Back*, as Sgt John Porter, *Spooks*, where he played Lucas North, or the miniseries *North & South*, in the role of John Thornton.

Prizes: he has not been nominated for any important prize.

Basic filmography: *The Hobbit* (2012), *This Year's Love* (1999), *Cleopatra* (1999), *North & South* (2004), *Robin Hood* (2006-9), *Spooks* (2008-10), *Strike Back* (2010-11), *Captain America: The First Avenger* (2011), *Frozen* (2005).

Quotes: "you can give a part of yourself when you play a character. At the end of the day you have to remind yourself who you are and what you are."

"Acting live is like an adventure sport. I don't go snowboarding, but sometimes I think that getting into a scene can produce the same jolt of adrenaline."

Did you know that: At 28 years of age, he joined the Royal Shakespeare Company for a year and a half.

As a child, he wanted to be an architect, until he discovered music and acting. His voice is also very well known in the UK because of several audiobooks in which he has worked.