

## Interview with Richard Armitage (Thorin Oakenshield)

He is the King of the Dwarves in the new "Hobbit" trilogy and his name is Richard Armitage. He plays Thorin Oakenshield and answered all our questions in this interview.

[picture: Richard Armitage in costume]

He played a supporting role in *Captain America: The First Avenger*, participated in countless TV-productions and will play the King of the Dwarves, Thorin Oakenshield, in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*. Actor *Richard Armitage* may not stand in the film industry spotlight just yet, but that might change this December at the latest, when he's allowed to take charge as Thorin Oakenshield for the first time.

We spoke with Richard Armitage about the expectations for the new trilogy, the *Lord of the Rings* feeling, and about exactly for whom which of the two great trilogies by *Peter Jackson* is better.

**Outnow.CH:** Hello, Richard, how excited are you to be in the *Hobbit* trilogy?

**Richard Armitage:** Undescribably excited. The closer the premiere gets, the more intensive the feeling. It is overwhelming and fantastic to participate in a project like this. Peter Jackson's vision is inspired and gigantic. I am enormously excited.

**ON:** We all know the story of *The Hobbit* as a book for children. Can – or must – we expect a film for children?

**RA:** No. That basic idea was laid aside quite early in the production and replaced with more grownup elements. More humor; the action and of course the brutality are focused more strongly. The dwarves are funny, the adventures are dark, and in that way, they will fit into the existing Jackson universe. Evil is present; danger lurks behind every corner. It's no film for children, no worries.

**ON:** Your character, Thorin Oakenshield, is the leader of the dwarves. What does a leader like that, a king, need to be like?

**RA:** Well, he and his people *were* driven away by a dragon. So he doesn't feel much like a king, but rather like a person who wants to get back what once belonged to him. Once upon a time he was rich and powerful, and now he wants to be king again. That's why he goes on this quest and he has a clear goal before his eyes.

**ON:** The first trilogy is world famous and earned oodles of money. Do you feel any pressure for the *Hobbit*-trilogy to be so successful?

**RA:** Yes, of course. When the first trilogy premiered, no one knew what to expect. The story was certainly well known, but the execution was so full of genius that the sequels will be measured by that standard. As a consequence there's a lot more pressure on our production, because everyone expects at least as gigantic a film as those that Peter has already made. But we are sure that the viewers will be excited.

**ON:** I've read that you play the flute. Do we get to see this skill in the film?

**RA:** Unfortunately not. Dwarves do play many instruments; I, for example, play the harp. Unfortunately I am not allowed to play the flute. But I do have to sing. (*laughs out loud...*)

**ON:** What did you do in particular to prepare for your role as Thorin Oakenshield?

**RA:** I had to do a lot of physical work. On top of that, a lot of speaking, learning the story, getting a grip on the legend. But the most difficult thing was certainly the physical preparation. We had to feel like warriors and so we trained that way – swinging hammers around, fighting with axes and of course learning how to fall. That was quite important.

**ON:** We've read a lot about the great mood on the set of the "Rings" films. Good food, lots of fun, neat atmosphere. Can you say the same about *The Hobbit*?

**RA:** Definitely. One of the most important things in a Peter Jackson production is that the actors feel comfortable. "We were fed well" [*the interviewer notes here that that's the original quote, because translating literally requires the use of a verb that is only used for feeding animals and might strike a German reader as odd—Servetus*], had a super crew, great mood. Jackson makes sure that the whole team becomes a family for a time. It was a joy to work there, the dwarves became fans of the production, and our connection to each other was fantastic.

**ON:** You met some of the "old hands" of Middle-earth. How were *Ian McKellen* or *Andy Serkis* on set?

**RA:** The guys were great. I still remember that I was uncomfortable on the first day of shooting. The heavy costume, all the hair, I just didn't like it. Then the door to the hall opened and *Ian McKellen* came in, dressed as Gandalf. And suddenly you feel like you're right in Middle-earth. Practically magically (*laughs*). Right then I knew, I belong here, I want to do this. I want to be part of this. And then *Cate Blanchett* came into the room as Galadriel. You just can't top that. Things like that help a lot and naturally make the beginning of a production like this a great deal easier.

**ON:** Why is *The Hobbit* better than *The Lord of the Rings*?

**RA:** (*laughs*) Well, we don't know that yet ... But if it were up to Thorin Oakenshield, it would be clear. **His** story is much better and more interesting than that of a little guy with hairs on his feet, of course. In the end, though, it's important that the balance of the story is right, that the viewer is entertained and has fun. A lot of emphasis is placed on the dwarves: where they come from, what they do, and how they plan to make good their loss. They are the center of the story. For Thorin that's a logical choice, naturally ... (*laughs*)