

## RICHARD THE FIRST

Arrival to The Hobbit set overwhelmed him, he took on the creepy part in the Hannibal in spite of the fact he can't stand horror movies, and even though he really likes the US, he can't wait to leave and come back home, to England: an interview with a great British actor Richard Armitage, starring in the spy series "Berlin Station".

### THE HOBBIT

"I remember my first day on The Hobbit set, when I arrived and saw this massive production with hundreds of people being there at any given moment of time. I was overwhelmed."

"For me, there is life before and after The Hobbit. Not only because of the worldwide release of the trilogy, but because working on these films helped me with my work. While working on a movie you know that so many eyes are directed at you that you simply must immerse yourself completely in the part, and it develops and strengthens you as an actor. I knew that if I did not do it then, I would probably never have another chance. I remember telling Peter that this was a lifetime opportunity and I was not going to waste it," laughs Armitage.

#### **Taking part in a big fantasy franchise comes along with certain commitments towards fans? Conventions and such?**

"It's quite optional. I haven't done Cons of this kind yet. I feel like the character exists within the movie and I am not interested in pulling him out. Taking money for autographs... I just don't like it".

#### **Was The Hobbit trilogy the biggest production you ever took part in?**

"Absolutely. It just can't be bigger than that. What's interesting, though, is that Peter and his partners, Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, manage the whole thing with utmost modesty. Most of the time you could talk to them directly, and they were the ones to guide you through all this. So this massive production with thousands of workers had a domestic, family feel."

#### **Your character in The Hobbit, Thorin Oakenshield, seems to be the most psychologically complicated, rich part.**

"That's what they wanted: a character that would evolve in the course of a trilogy along with Bilbo Baggins, even though the original book is relatively thin, with not too much information regarding those who surround Bilbo. I was very grateful for that. Fantasy or not, I wanted a character I would be able to perform sincerely and convincingly. That's what I like so much about Tolkien - it feels more like history than fantasy."

### BERLIN STATION

"I've always loved spy thrillers. I've been in Spooks for years, have read lots of Le Carré books. Preparing for the show I've made a comprehensive study of the subject, and it got me even more attracted to the modern, political spy genre, connected to the current situation in Europe. The amazing thing is that during the filming we felt like we were pushing the story to the edge of reasonable for the sake of drama, but eventually, reality caught up with us and even became more dramatic."

"Daniel is super-patriotic. But at some point he starts to question the motives of the organisation that sent him, the country that sent him. And if you can't trust your own country, especially having this kind of job, who or what can you trust?"

"When you get to work each morning, surrounded by actors of such calibre, it gives you a sense of confidence. They have fantastic taste, they set the bar very high. To work with Richard Jenkins - it makes you a better actor. There was not a single day when I came to

set to work with him and didn't feel his weight – not only as an actor, but as a person. He is surrounded by an aura of authority. For me, it was a great honour and pleasure to work with him."

**The series was shot in Berlin, obviously, and I am sure the city worked its own magic.**

"Berlin is a city with so many faces, masks and identities, that it became a character in its own right in the series. It is full of rich history with all its scars, full of young, addictive energy."

**Probably that's why Israelis keep visiting Berlin with such pleasure.**

"I can totally understand that. Berlin is such a cool place, it's cool because it supports individualism, supports art. You feel you can be yourself, can express yourself (and eat good food in between). It's an amazing place and I really love it".

**HANNIBAL**

"I've always said that the only genre I will not work in is horror. But what the Hannibal show runner Bryan Fuller did with the show is something special. No one ever made such a TV-show, no one makes such cinema. "Hannibal" is a very dark show, but I think it's also high art. The reason I got attracted to it despite my resentment of this genre, is that all the characters are so psychologically complicated. Francis Dolarhyde is a monster, but the psychology of his actions is deep and very complicated. He is uncomfortable in his own skin".

**I assume playing such a role comes with a price?**

"Yes, it was terrifying. In the mornings, I was listening to disturbing music in order to get ready. It wasn't a long shooting period, but at some point it starts to get under your skin, into your dreams, into your sleeping patterns. And the way people look at you is just a bit... Hey. It's me, not the character. In short, it's a character that is very interesting to play, but it's also very nice to stop working on him".

**So, no more horror shows or movies?**

"I don't know... It's nice to make a psychological thriller, but a project with people dissecting other people is one of the projects I won't have problem to say no to, no matter how much money is on offer. There are so many stories to tell, so why this?"

**ON LIVING IN US**

"My home is, obviously, in England and I really hope to be able to get back next year. After all that happened here in terms of politics, I feel a strong urge to get out... I feel that I have achieved what I came here for, and the idea of coming back fills me with warmth. I love America, I love working here, but I am far from my friends and family and it's not easy".

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