

From TV screen to movie screen

Actor Richard Armitage makes a great impression, not just in British series

First he played heroes only on TV, but now, in "The Hobbit," Richard Armitage has the chance to shine in the movies, too. In "Inspector Lynley" (on ZDF today) the Brit proves his expertise in playing shady characters as well.

London. When Richard Armitage auditioned for the first time for the role that was to make him suddenly famous throughout the whole world, he was recovering from an injury he'd incurred while shooting the spy series, "Spooks." "I had taken so many painkillers that all I could do was limp into the room and sit on my hands while the meeting passed me by. I think all I showed there was my ability to act in pain," the tall thespian recalls.

"Lord of the Rings" director and Oscar winner Peter Jackson must have liked Armitage's performance anyway; in the end, he gave Armitage the role of Thorin Oakenshield in his three-part of film adaptation of "The Hobbit." Even if the first piece of the trilogy, which appeared in cinemas in 2012, does not quite reach the level of "Lord of the Rings," the part of the heroic prince Thorin Oakenshield catapulted Armitage into the Hollywood spotlight.

But even before his international breakthrough into the dream factory, the Brit, born in 1971 in Leicestershire as Richard Crispin Armitage, was hardly an unknown. In 2011 he could be seen in the blockbuster, "Captain America." But Armitage, who made his TV debut in the series "Boon" in 1992, made his name mostly in British series such as "Cold Feet," "Between the Sheets," or "Inspector Lynley." Before that the actor, educated at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, had also stood on stage with the Royal Shakespeare Company.

His charismatic entrance as John Thornton in the literary adaptation "North and South" made Richard a ladies' favorite not only in England, but also earned him a loyal fan community, which calls itself "Armitage's Army." Beginning in 2006, he played the opaque Guisborne [!] in the BBC series, "Robin Hood." Leading roles in "Spooks" and the action series "Strike Back" followed, which in turn made him known to Hollywood producers as well.

At the moment, Richard Armitage is standing in front of the camera in New Zealand for the finale of the "Hobbit" trilogy. The second part, "The Desolation of Smaug," will appear in German cinemas on December 12. In addition, Richard has just finished shooting the thriller, "Black Sky."

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Today, 23.30, on ZDF.