

## ARMITAGE LIVING HIS CHILDHOOD DREAM - *Spits*, April 16, 2013 NL

Although actor Richard Armitage has been in the film business for a good 15 years, his role as tough dwarf Thorin in *The Hobbit* trilogy signifies his international breakthrough. The 41 year old Briton found his bread buttered on both sides, after he was previously turned away when he auditioned for *Lord Of The Rings*.

"No way", laughs the charming actor when we ask him during a conversation referring to the DVD release of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* if he, after months of giving interviews, is not tired talking about Tolkien's world. "If I was fed up by now, how will I feel at the end of 2015? Because *The Hobbit* hype is far from over: in the coming years there are two more parts scheduled in which dwarves, elves and hobbits have to compete against the dark sorcerer Sauron.

Besides, the author Tolkien has been one of his favourite subjects all his life. "My love for the books was unconditional, from an early age", he nods. "I devoured them as a child, even though I did not yet understand the enormous layering of the story." When he heard at the end of the nineties that *Lord Of The Rings* would be filmed, he begged his casting director for a small part. "However back then I was a real nobody and there was a long and wide choice of actors." He was given a second chance for *The Hobbit* ten years later, which he grabbed with both hands. "For four years, I am living my own childhood dream."

Yet, with both *Lord Of The Rings* and *The Hobbit*, an actor's reputation was not by far the most important motive for director Peter Jackson. "He could ask so many other actors", nods Armitage who before this was seen in many British TV series.

"In any case, Peter likes actors with a distinctive appearance. And he is also very sensitive to actors with a fine, clear voice. That also helps the audience in *The Hobbit* to quickly distinguish the large number of characters."

Although Armitage previously had small parts in *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* and *Captain America*, he was still relatively unfamiliar with the fantasy-genre. "I have never acted with such a thick layer of make-up on my face before and such an enormous wig on my head," he grins. "That is more difficult than you would think. Because all the muscles you need to use to express any sort of emotion, are glued together." An additional advantage is that people in the street do not really recognize him yet. "But I don't necessarily want that. It is more important to me that people embrace my characters rather than they embrace me. The work only gets tougher if you have such a recognisable face that people don't see past that in movies or plays."

Also the filming with special 3D cameras and many revolutionary image techniques was a whole new experience for Armitage. "At first I did not want to get to deep into that, because too much knowledge about it affects your own viewing experience with those kind of movies," he explains. But he changed tack after being on set with director Peter Jackson for a week. "Making a movie like *The Hobbit*, there's so much technology to look at. And Peter talked about it on set all the time. Not only is it rude if you don't know what he is talking about. But it also ruins for yourself a huge part of the unique experience, which was making these films."

*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* DVD is on sale from tomorrow.