

**Do you feel like you're the Aragorn of *The Hobbit*?**

Richard Armitage: I understand why the public might be tempted to draw this parallel, but Thorin and Aragorn are very different characters.

**Your desire to become an actor goes back to your childhood, around your first reading of *The Lord of the Rings*. Is that true, or is it a legend?**

Richard Armitage: It's true. I must have been eleven years old when I read *The Hobbit*. The book inspired me so much that I devoured it two or three times in a row before reading *The Lord of the Rings*. I craved to be one of the characters.

**Which one did you dream of being?**

Bilbo was the narrator of the *Hobbit*, I would have had to identify with him. I recall very precisely the passage in the cave between Bilbo and Gollum. It completely fascinated me.

**Was Peter Jackson aware of this story?**

Richard Armitage: Not to my knowledge. My agent was contacted by Peter's staff. I auditioned for the roles of Thorin and Beorn, but I thought I was too young and too tall to play Thorin. I never imagined for a second that I would be chosen.

**Did you know that Peter Jackson has the habit of casting his actors in relationship to affinities that they have with their characters? For example, he chose Viggo Mortensen to play Aragorn because he thought him to be poetic and chivalrous.**

Richard Armitage: I didn't have the least idea. What I know is that they did an enormous amount of research into the work of the actor. That's all the more flattering because once you're cast, you know that you're the person they really want. Just like Thorin having a quest to accomplish is something that speaks to me. And like him, I sometimes doubt myself.

**You began to prepare your role in a training camp, for eight weeks. You were with the other actors who play your dwarf companions. Did you have to, at the beginning of the role, to assert yourself as the leader of the group?**

Richard Armitage: Yes, and that in particular was something that was more difficult for me because I am someone who's very reserved. I needed to suppress that facet of my personality. That took me a certain amount of time to succeed in expressing that. It was a long time ago that I worked with James Nesbitt [on the English series, *Cold Feet*], but I didn't know the others. We were quick to make bonds of friendship.

**What surprised you most about Peter Jackson's style of working?**

That from the beginning to the close of the production, when you are with him, you have the feeling of being in a very intimate shoot, a little as if there was nothing there but him, you and some other actors. One has the sensation of making an incredibly personal film for him and not a huge franchise.