

Movie-Interview

A 1.85 meter Dwarf

Richard Armitage was the head dwarf in “The Hobbit,” now he’s chasing a tornado in “Storm Hunters.” He speaks here in a *Berliner Zeitung* interview.

From dwarf to tornado hunter – Richard Armitage (42) is just at the high point of his career and in “Storm Hunters,” he can finally show his cultivated face – which he had to hide in “The Hobbit” behind a full beard and prosthetics. Although the role of strong-as-a-bear “Hobbit” dwarf Thorin Oakenshield made him world famous, in reality, the Brit is an impressive man of 1.85 meters – exactly fitting for bigger roles like that of the worried father who, for the wellbeing of his sons, shows himself as a force of nature in the disaster spectacle, “Storm Hunters.” Markus Tschiedert spoke with him.

“Storm Hunters” plays on the fear of huge storms, which are actually multiplying ...

Exactly that excited me about the film. I’ve seen classic disaster films like “The Fiery Inferno,” which knocked my socks off at the time. Today of course they seem somewhat dated, so we have to come up with something new. When I see them today, they do seem somewhat dated. [sic] I find “Storm Hunters” totally exciting, precisely because it gives one the feeling that exactly that could actually happen somewhere.

But haven’t we experienced enough orgies of destruction in film lately?

The difference is that that is never an end in itself. It’s not destruction that stands in the foreground, but rather the people who have to deal with the storm. The spectator sympathizes with and worries about them.

Have you ever experienced a natural disaster?

Yes, in New Zealand I experienced an aftershock from the big Christchurch earthquake of February 2011. It is indeed worrying, when one realizes with what force one can simply be swept away. It makes us seem like very fragile creatures. We are simply not masters of the universe and so we should show more humility in the face of nature.

While you were part of an ensemble in “The Hobbit,” in “Storm Hunters,” you play your first large film role. Is this possibly the beginning of a big screen career?

I am experiencing the most unbelievable time in my career, because I have opportunities to follow paths that I didn’t even know existed before. I find interesting how different the offers are that I get at the moment and I can’t wait to see where the next role might take me.

How happy are you to finally be able to show your real face to a large audience in “Storm Hunters”?

Well, without my makeup as Thorin I look a lot more like a human, but I didn’t have any problem with being transformed into a dwarf for “The Hobbit.” I actually found it very fascinating, how my head got bigger and bigger through facial prosthetics and glued-on hair. The makeup designers weren’t just gluing

things on, but were very aware of using my facial features in such a way that the believable face of a dwarf came out of them.

Even so: Aren't you afraid of being stuck in the dwarf role of "The Hobbit" forever?

I have no way to know that, but I think that the global reach of "The Hobbit" is a good thing. The quality of the films speaks for itself, but it may take a while before I can convince people that I am not a dwarf with long hair and a beard.

Are you still recognized a lot on the street as the man who played Thorin Oakenshield?

It actually doesn't happen that often, which is interesting. I remember speaking to people after the premiere in Los Angeles who weren't aware that they had just seen me on the screen. So conversations take a different path until someone suddenly realizes, "Oh, you're the one in the film?" That *is* really funny (laughs).