

THE HOBBIT AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

USA/New Zealand | 2012 | 169' | Adventure, Fantasy | Rated PG-13

Directed by

Peter Jackson

Written with

Fran Walsh
Philippa Boyens
Guillermo del Toro

(from the novel by J.R.R. Tolkien)

With

Ian McKellen
Martin Freeman
Richard Armitage
Elijah Wood
Hugo Weaving
Cate Blanchette
Andy Serkis

Original Music by

Howard Shore



Première:

28/11/2012 (Wellington)

World release:

12/12/2012

From the smallest beginnings come the greatest legends.

Budget: \$ 180.000.000

Gross: \$1.021.000.000 ca

REVIEW

66 years before Frodo's adventure, Middle Earth. The hobbit Bilbo Baggins is the most usual of them all, living a quiet life eating, sleeping and smoking his pipe. When Gandalf, the Grey wizard, comes to his door offering him to live an adventure, Bilbo hasn't got a clue that that same evening, even though he declined, a company of twelve dwarfs would rush into his house. These dwarfs were errant since the day the dragon Smaug got into their home, the Lonely Mountain, which they now want to conquer again; in spite of everyone's reluctancy, most of all that of the leader of the company, Thorin Oakenshield, Bilbo ends up leaving with them. They will be facing many perils, first of all the ogre Azog, one of the oldest and most ferocious enemies of the dwarf race. And also, a great danger is falling upon the Middle Earth, an old enemy that only a unimaginable alliance between dwarfs and elves could prevent...

So here we are, almost 10 years after the ending of one of the most incredible (and successful) trilogies of cinema, trying to talk about its new 'beginning', set before the original story, with uncle Bilbo taking Frodo's place.

I will try not to make a Peter Jackson praise out of this review, though his merit is undeniable.

The beginning of the movie captivates the wistful of the Lord of The Rings, since this story couldn't do without a very long explanation of the old rivalry between dwarfs and elves and most of all without the tale of how the Lonely Mountain was lost by the dwarfs. The story here is fluid and pleasant, thanks to the great succession of dialogue and monologue: even so, the use (or ab-use) of panning shots becomes almost overwhelming, being just a celebration of a tremendously effective 3D (which last for the whole - extremely long- movie) and, at some point, resembles a commercial on New Zealand and its landscapes.

Slow as it is until the first hour, the rhythm increases steeply after the company 'visit' at Rivendell: from this point on, the tension gets higher and higher, capturing the most disapproving viewer out of his boredom and dragging him along the dwarfs miraculous escapes. The helpful hand of Guillermo del Toro is clear along the story: both the original screenwriters

Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens, together with Peter Jackson, already did great things, but with the Mexican director add some disquieting scenes which, in such a movie, are a real treat.

Something to say here. The movie was shot not only in 3D technology, as everybody knows, but also in 48fps (frame-per-second, while the standard is 24); this incredible feature risks its success here, since the fast camera movements of war scenes and similar stuff, already difficult to follow with the 3D glasses on, turn out even more confused to the human eye, especially in the first half of the movie.

Moving on, the photography is as impressive as always, where lights and shadows help the viewer's mood swinging between joy and fear, together with an improved Middle Earth landscape (different, as Lord of the Rings fan would say) and an and an incredibly effective cast.

Just about that: if Ian McKellen didn't get the Oscar this time, I'm really confused about what more can he do; he was nominated as 'supporting actor' for the first installment of the original trilogy ("The Fellowship of the Ring") and got another 'best leading actor' nomination for "Gods and Monsters", which is not enough for an actor as good as he is.

As for the rest. Martin Freeman, aka Bilbo, gives us a much lighter and friendly hobbit than Frodo was; exaggeration of expressions and a slight feeling of loss throughout the movie gives his character great credibility and the audience affection. Richard Armitage/Thorin has the unfriendly part; and he does it quite as well. The thick beard and the dwarf-high appearance help a lot, though this 41-year-old boy plays someone torn apart from his desire of vengeance but with an unexpected wisdom: I'd say 'intense' is the right term to describe him. Brief comments on Cristopher Lee/Saruman (if ever a character could show his unpleasantness in five minutes, well, here it is), Cate Blanchett and Elijah Wood (just a tear of sentimentality for Galadriel e Frodo) and Hugo Weaving (Elrond is one of the greatest character of the whole saga).

No, of course I didn't forget him. The 'monster' in the cinema industry, literally. And if Peter Jackson himself decides to leave him the second unit direction, at least this should be something. Andy Serkis cannot fail in his most iconic character, the marvelously unsettling Gollum/Smeagol, with his

computerized body but his truly immense eyes, just as incredible as they are undervalued. Pure acting skills and talent.

Maybe I overwrote a bit. A note of merit to Howard Shore's score, which is, as usual, something more than a soundtrack: Arda's musical atmospheres is one of the most iconic and helpful things into the audience building of their collective imagination. And the dwarfs' song got me a real shiver down the spine, both thanks to words and sounds.

Rightfully criticized as slow for the long first part, this is a movie that has to be enjoyed, tasted, savored. Good to be seen in 3D the first time, then just as perfect on a good flat screen. And I cannot say it isn't one of my favorite movies of 2012.

ASSASSMENT	
POSTER	89%
TAGLINE	77%
TRAILER	89%
SATISFACTION	95%
DIRECTING	89%
SCREENPLAY	84%
PRODUCTION DESIGN	92%
PHOTOGRAPHY	93%
CAST	90%
MUSIC	92%
TOTAL	89% - B+