

# December Release

## The Hobbit: The Desolation Of Smaug

Director: Peter Jackson  
Starring: Martin Freeman, Ian McKellen  
Running time: TBC  
Released nationwide on December 13th



*‘You’re not the same Hobbit who set out from the Shire... what did you find down there, in the goblin tunnels?’*

Gandalf’s question to Bilbo aptly summarises the progression of the second instalment of *The Hobbit*. The entrance of the One Ring into both the wider storyline and the various layers of Martin Freeman’s Bilbo Baggins could well mark an increase in interest for *The Desolation Of Smaug* and the expectation for director Peter Jackson to amaze once more.

The story sees nemesis Azog and his orcs return to stalk Bilbo’s travelling company across Mirkwood, whilst new battles arise for Gandalf and royal elf Galadriel at Dol Guldur. Yet despite Jackson’s role as primary protector of the integrity of the Middle Earth franchise, some controversial decisions have undoubtedly been made, potentially to the detriment of authenticity and the happiness of die-hard fans.

Not only has the three hundred page novel been deemed dense enough material for a trilogy (drawing out the full experience of the story by two years), Jackson has seen fit to create a spanking new character that was never specifically discussed by Tolkien, Evangeline Lily inserted into an otherwise male-dominated cast to play head of the Elven guard, Tauriel. An amalgamation of Jackson

and screenwriter Fran Walsh’s imagination and Tolkien’s descriptions of the Silvan Elves, the necessity of such an addition is questionable. Has a departure from reasonable viewing times and an authentic transition from novel to film indicated Jackson’s creativity, or a need for Hollywood designed hooks?

Yet all could be forgiven by the entrance of Smaug into Jackson’s story. Benedict Cumberbatch will not only provide the menacing vocals for the Lonely Mountain’s parasitic dragon, but use of motion-capture - or ‘that all-important jump suit with balls on it’ as the Batch himself refers to it

- enables him to physicalise Smaug himself. Use of such technology suggests that the evil in Smaug’s character can be as easily translated from novel to film as from actor to dragon, whilst the film’s climax featuring Smaug and Bilbo’s confrontation will certainly put Freeman’s advance throughout the franchise to the ultimate test.

That’s enough to suggest that whilst *The Desolation Of Smaug* arguably leaves a lot to be desired in terms of fidelity to the novel, Jackson’s second *Hobbit* adventure could leave even more to be expected.

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Charlotte Ross