

What happened to Guillermo Del Toro's The Hobbit?

After the financial success of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, New Line Cinema was interested in adapting The Hobbit to the big screen. Peter Jackson was offered the director role, but he turned the studio down. However, he did return as a writer and executive producer. In the spring of 2008 Jackson would hire his friend Guillermo Del Toro to direct The Hobbit. In addition to directing, Del Toro took on co-writing duties alongside Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens. He would go on to move to New Zealand where the films were made.

Guillermo Del Toro's plan was to break the book into two movies. The first movie was to focus on the source material from the book while being light in tone and aesthetically different from The Lord of the Rings movies. He planned to be more faithful to Tolkien's works. Originally, the ring simply made the wearer invisible. Once Tolkien began writing the sequels, the ring retroactively became a weapon of great evil. Del Toro wanted to portray this fairy tale setting of innocence for the first film. The second film would focus on Bilbo's slow corruption into darkness by the one ring. Slowly, the first film's light tone would give way to a gritty darkness that would bridge the gap between these movies and The Lord of the Rings films. It was Del Toro's vision to portray a world closer to the original drawings of Middle Earth found in the book. Not wanting to rely solely on CGI he planned to utilize a mix of animatronics and CGI for the monsters and creatures.

The production of The Hobbit was plagued with problems from the start. First, New Line Cinema's parent company MGM was going through documented financial troubles, causing them to drag their feet with the production. Script revisions had become so commonplace that filming was delayed multiple times. Filming was then slated to begin in 2010 but was delayed again because a cast hadn't been lined up yet. Unfortunately, Del Toro's obligations to other

productions forced him to eventually walk away from The Hobbit. Del Toro would go on to say that he harbored no hard feelings towards New Line or MGM and supported whoever was hired. He still received a screenwriting credit on the first movie. In an interview, years later Del Toro was asked if it was hard to leave. Del Toro responded, “It doesn’t get harder.”