

# Television Week

## Local Listings For The Week Of December 15-21, 2012

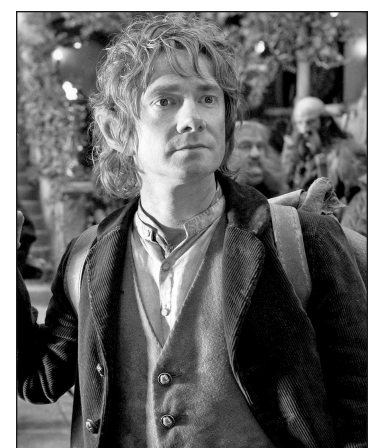


PHOTO: MCT  
Martin Freeman plays Bilbo Baggins in the fantasy adventure "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey," a production of New Line Cinema and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures (MGM), released by Warner Bros. Pictures and MGM.

# 'Hobbit': Jackson's Newest Journey

BY JOHN ANDERSON  
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In his celebrated novels of Middle-earth, J.R.R. Tolkien — author, medievalist, philologist and Oxford don — was using fantastical myths to reimagine the past. In his adaptations of Tolkien's novels, Peter Jackson — film director — is using fantastical technology to reshape the future.

The question is whether Jackson's latest — "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey," which opens Friday, not quite hotly on the heels of Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy of 2001, '02 and '03 — will leave audiences exhilarated. Or simply nostalgic — not, like Tolkien, for a past that never was. But for a cinema that used to be.

Like its Oscar-winning predecessor, "The Hobbit" will be a trilogy: "The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug" is scheduled for next December, "The Hobbit: There and Back Again," for the summer of 2014 (which will also commemorate the centenary of the war in which Tolkien's worldview was forged).

Unlike "The Lord of the Rings," "The Hobbit" is based on a single book, the shortest of the oeuvre, and the one Tolkien had specifically intended for children (his own). One might think that Team Tolkien is going to the Rivendell well once too often. But in expanding "The Hobbit" — approximately 300 pages to cover three distinct movies, Jackson and his co-screenwriters — producing and life partner Fran Walsh (they have two children), creaturist-genius Guillermo del Toro (who was originally going to direct "The Hobbit") and Philippa Boyens (the team's acknowledged "Tolkien geek") — have gone to supplemental materials.

By doing this, they're giving fans of "The Hobbit," published in 1937 and never out of print, much they probably won't expect — epic battles between noble Dwarves and hideous Orcs, several of which take place in flashbacks that were never part of the original novel. They might also expect, knowing Jackson's previous trips to Middle-earth, a seamless transition from their world to that of Bilbo Baggins, the Hobbit of the title and the viewer's entree to matters incredible.

That may indeed be what they find. But it will certainly be a matter of personal taste. Much of what Jackson is up to in "The Hobbit" may as well be Elvish to most viewers, but one of the more critical technical choices he made was to shoot the film in 48 frames per second — twice the 24 frames per second that has been the industry standard for about 90 years. It's the frame rate at which we comfortably reach what is commonly referred to as "persistence of vision" — the illusion that what we're seeing is actually happening, rather than a series of still pictures.

Unlike "The Lord of the Rings," "The Hobbit" is in 3-D, an effect that goes hand in hand with the film's heightened frame rate. Many of the problems audiences have with 3-D — such as headaches — can be relieved by filming faster.

"3-D perception of something is just a slightly different angle between two views of the same thing," visual-effects wizard Douglas Trumbull said during an interview last year. The man behind the effects in "2001: A Space Odyssey" and "Blade Runner" said that if something in a movie is moving across the screen, the frame-to-frame motion can be more than the left eye/right eye displacement.

"So the 3-D effect goes away and your brain is trying to figure out how to put this image together, which is all blurred and strobed," he said. "So there's a lot of eye strain, especially in the action sequences directors want to have. Like in 'Transformers': It's fun to go home, look at your favorite Blu-ray action film and freeze-frame it on the highest action. You'll see that it's all blurred."

When you move into high frame rates, he said, you get rid of that problem. "So Peter Jackson is shoot-

Table with columns for Broadcast Stations, Time Slots (3:00-1:30), and Program Listings for Saturday Primetime/Late Night on December 15, 2012.

Table with columns for Broadcast Stations, Time Slots (3:00-1:30), and Program Listings for Sunday Primetime/Late Night on December 16, 2012.