

coverstory
BY JAY BOBBIN



Lloyd Owen is among the stars of "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power," which begins streaming Friday on Prime Video.

Prime Video prequel revisits 'The Lord of the Rings'

The size of streaming series has gotten ever bigger, but that's about to take a major leap forward with one of fiction's best-known brands.

Author J.R.R. Tolkien's saga is revisited as the new series "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" begins streaming eight weekly episodes Friday, Sept. 2, on Prime Video. Filmed in New Zealand, the epic production uses appendices from the Tolkien work to unfold thousand of years before the events in "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings," as the Second Age of Middle-earth sees widespread evil prompt a final alliance between elves and men to defend the world.

Boasting huge physical sets rather than relying principally on computer imagery, the fantasy-drama boasts a large cast, as the "Rings" feature films have. Lloyd Owen's character, Elendil, is a sailor and warrior who becomes the leader of exiles – split into two Realms, Arnor and Gondor – from the island kingdom of Numenor.

"Especially with something as broad as this, which is trying to match Tolkien's vast imagination, I think part of the absolute joy of this series is the level of skill and work and dedication and attention to detail that went into it," Owen reflects. "That was so present once we got to the set for Numenor, which is where much of the action is based."

Owen's own familiarity with "The Lord of the Rings" dates back to his youth. "I was given a paperback edition, and it's got one of Tolkien's own drawings on the front cover. I remember seeing a friend at school reading a monster-sized book, which actually was the 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy in paperback, and he was about 10 pages from the end.

"I said, 'Well done! Congratulations on getting so far into such an enormous book.' And he said, 'Yeah! I can't wait to finish it, because then, I'm going to read it all over again from the beginning.' And I remember thinking he was insane, but that gave me an inkling of the effect that Tolkien's writing was having."

Also an accomplished stage actor, Owen – whose previous TV work includes "Monarch of the Glen" and "The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles" – allows that he hasn't been involved before with anything on the scale of "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power" (which moves to England for production of Season 2).

"I just feel so privileged and excited to be a part of it," he concludes. "And with my own interest in Tolkien as well, it was just an opportunity impossible to turn down ... despite the fact that I had to go to the other side of the world to do it."

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