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Hangin' with Viggo

Kiwis have a soft spot for Viggo Mortensen - aka Aragorn - and since his role in *The Lord of the Rings*, our man has been getting the best parts in the best films. He talks to Tom Cardy about his new film, *Good*.



Viggo Mortensen
Photo: Dominion Post

BEFORE he played the heroic Aragorn in Peter Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings*, Viggo Mortensen was a respected and gifted actor, but not a name that would sell a movie or with a face - despite the imposing jaw line and piercing blue eyes - that was instantly recognised on the street. Today couldn't be more different. The mere mention that Mortensen, 50, is briefly in Wellington is enough to cause excitement among work colleagues, including several longing sighs - mainly from women. It's not just *The Lord of the Rings*, but the fact Mortensen, a 21st century American renaissance man who lived in Argentina until he was 11, was based in Wellington for two years. We queued to hear him read his poetry or to buy

signed copies of his photography books. We learned that he sometimes walked around the central city barefoot and ate at the unpretentious Green Parrot restaurant. He loved fly fishing. He painted. He had a small publishing house called Perceval Press. Mid-morning at his Wellington hotel, Mortensen is dressed in a conservative blue-striped shirt and dark pants, but his hair, while now a little grey, is about the same length it was when he was Aragorn. He's relaxed and genial, but there's occasionally a sense of tension or weight behind his eyes as he speaks quietly, a facet we've seen in some of his on-screen roles. On his table is a silver-coloured decorative metal cup and a metal straw, which looks like it could be out of Middle-earth, from which he takes a sip. But

it's a special herbal tea mug, one he's had at other interviews, including for *The Return of the King*. "Do you want some chocolate or is it too early?" Mortensen asks as he rips open a block of Old Gold. I accept while a thought quickly runs through my mind: "Should I eat this or seal it in a bag and put it in a display case?" Since Jackson's trilogy, this most un-Hollywood of Hollywood actors has joined its A list. Orlando Bloom has had the biggest box-office punch with *The Pirates of the Caribbean* trilogy and Sir Ian McKellen has the gravitas. But Mortensen's had the best parts in the best films. In *Eastern Promises*, which earned him a Best Actor Oscar nomination, he played a Russian mafia bodyguard torn between good and evil. It was a similar dilemma for his seemingly mild-mannered

character in the equally gripping *A History of Violence*. Now, in *Good*, it's a character in a similar position - a mild-mannered university lecturer in Nazi Germany who means well and doesn't want to offend. But along the way, he abandons his friend, a Jewish psychiatrist, and ends up a member of the SS. It's based on an acclaimed play by Scottish playwright CP Taylor. Mortensen's enthusiasm for *Good* goes back to when he first started acting, 26 years ago on a trip to London for his second audition. He didn't get the part, but did see the first stage production of *Good*.

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To the crusher with the all



MATE
Mark Wilson

AS a country we have a great history of making endless rules banning this, that and the next thing, telling us how to live our lives and raise our children. Some of these rules are required - hell, we can't just go round knocking off our neighbours for not returning the lawn mower. However, many are purely social engineering from those who deem themselves more knowledgeable than Joe Public and thus should lead their poor helpless, mindless and obviously intent-on-self-destruction populace away from the road to Armageddon. We are also legends at baking up this plethora of rules with varying degrees of interpretative enforcement by police who don't carry weapons despite those they police being able to buy them at will, and follow this up with hopelessly inadequate penalties that probably do more to encourage us to break the rules than scaring us into abiding by them. Finally, however, someone at the Beehive had an epiphany: let's make a rule to protect the majority of Kiwis from a small destructive, and often obstructive, segment of the population. Then to my amazement, they propose backing this up with a punishment that may actually act as a deterrent. I am talking about crushing boy racers' cars. I am almost as excited as most of Southland was when they realised Michael Cullen wouldn't be looking after their money any more - it's about time we cleared the streets of these pull troughs. Anyone who buys, borrows from their mum or steals a Japanese import, gets up on the roof, takes the chimney off their house and straps it to their exhaust, cuts the suspension springs and somehow manages to sink the front seat or slouch enough in it to make it appear sunken, loads it up with cheap spirits or beer (as they have spent their money on a stereo worth more than the car) and fuel to lap around and then hits the streets on Friday and Saturday night, even during major events like a Stags game, to do nothing more than clog up our roads, comparing their chimney with other like-minded dropkicks, needs not only their car crushed but their brain examined. I just hope that instead of taking the easy option of pulling my 1989 silver bullet over for a warrant check, the boys in blue start stripping these menaces from our streets and retaking them for ordinary sized exhausts. I can't believe the boy racers somehow try to legitimise their existence as some form of hobby or passion for cars. No real car enthusiast would drive a 94 Mazda 323 with a blow-off valve. Greg Murphy is a car enthusiast - do you see him drag racing in South Auckland or putting eight people in his Holden and doing burnouts around the war memorial roundabout? Crush them all.

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