



Five Favorite Films with *Hellboy II*'s Doug Jones

The erstwhile Abe Sapien also talks up Guillermo del Toro and a potential Frankenstein film in our full interview.

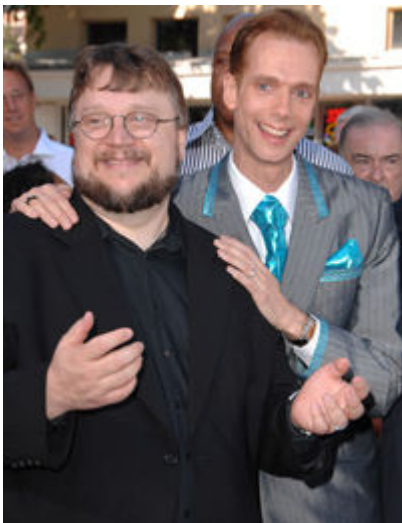
by [Jen Yamato](#) | July 08, 2008



You may not know it, but you've seen Doug Jones' work. One of the best physical actors in Hollywood, he has performed under heavy make-up and special effects as the Silver Surfer in [Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer](#), the "Gentlemen" on [Buffy the Vampire Slayer](#), and gave life to both The Faun and the Pale Man in [Guillermo del Toro](#)'s Oscar-winning horror-fairytale, [Pan's Labyrinth](#). This week, Jones reprises his role of amphibian psychic Abe Sapien in [Hellboy II: The Golden Army](#), the sequel to del Toro's 2004 [comic book adaptation](#), in which he enjoys extended screen time as Hellboy's crime-fighting sidekick and romances a princess -- and more importantly, takes over (or takes back) Abe's voicing duties for the first time.

We spoke with Doug Jones about his work under prosthetics, his close relationship with Guillermo del Toro, and his battle to win Abe Sapien's voice back from [David Hyde Pierce](#) (who, as the story goes, graciously deferred vocal credit in the first *Hellboy* after seeing Jones' own performance). And after playing every fantastical creature from robots to aliens to yetis, Jones told us what his dream role would be --- and how he and del Toro may already be planning to bring it to the screen.

But first, Jones took time to share his favorite films of all time with Rotten Tomatoes. Read on for more!



Your Five Favorite Films are interesting because they seem to speak to you as an actor's actor, not just a creature actor. You've not only done great creature work in films like *Pan's Labyrinth* and *Hellboy*, you also play regular characters. Has it been strange to become known for your work under prosthetics as opposed to the latter?

[Doug Jones](#): Thank you. It's very kind of you to notice that. If you asked me this a few years ago, I might have

said that the day would come where I'm not wearing prosthetics anymore and I'm just doing straight acting roles. But you know what I think I've learned in the last couple years especially, is that with a little bit more recognition, a certain respect and dignity has returned to these kinds of roles --- monsters with a heart. It's a throwback to the Golden Era, when you had [Bela Lugosi](#) and [Boris Karloff](#) and [Lon Chaney](#) doing these roles that were leading men in their own little creature-y, freaky little way. Directors like [Guillermo del Toro](#) (pictured at left with Jones at the *Hellboy II* premiere), who like to tell that kind of story, take you to a fantastical world but deal with real human issues when they get there. That's brought a certain, like I said, respect and dignity to this kind of story and this kind of acting, so that I'm now happy to continue it until the day I die. In fact, I'll tell you the perfect way for me to die. You want to hear it? I think if I'm on a Guillermo del Toro film --- and I want to finish it for him, I don't want to leave him hanging --- and my last day, when they yell, "It's a wrap on Doug Jones," that's how I want to die. That's the perfect way for me to go.

That's really sweet. It speaks to the bond that you and Guillermo have obviously formed by working together.

DJ: We definitely do have a sort of shorthand with each other, and a respect for each other, and an actor-director relationship that really works and doesn't need a whole lot of dialogue. We understand each other with very few words.

Speaking of words, let's talk about how you came to voice your character, Abe Sapien, in *Hellboy II*. We know that [David Hyde Pierce](#), who voiced Abe in the first *Hellboy* while you did the physical acting, had such tremendous respect for your performance in that film that he had his credit removed.



DJ: He's a gentleman beyond words. And in an ego-driven business like ours it's unheard of for an actor to do what David Hyde Pierce did. The more questionable thing is, how did it come about that someone was voiced over like that in the first place? When presented with an acting role, any actor assumes they're taking on the character, and that would include all of it -- it would include the visuals and the audio part and everything. I don't walk down the street doing half of Doug Jones! I walk into a 7-11 and I get to order for myself. So originally it was kind of like, you've got this major make-up, and you've got A-list celebrities that probably don't want to don that much make-up and be obliterated in the face, so the studio was thinking, we'll get someone to physically pull it off, and we'll get an A-list name that we can market with the film that'll provide the voice, and there you go. We can attach a name to the part without gruesome amounts of make-up on that person. When I heard that that's what the plan was -- that was already decided by the time I was cast --- I said, hey, how about we *don't* do that? How about I get to do the part, as I'd play any part? So I was given the opportunity to be one of the voices being considered, but at the time Doug Jones didn't carry a lot of weight as a name, as a marketing tool.

In the end, everyone was happy with my performance, and I was kind of directed even to

sound like... Guillermo wanted me to sound a little bit like Niles Crane from *Frasier*, with a little bit of HAL the computer from [2001: A Space Odyssey](#). So I kind of affected a sound for Abe that wasn't far from David Hyde Pierce anyway. He, being the gentleman that he is, heard my performance in his ear piece when he came in to voice-over, and he saw my performance on film, and he kind of backed away saying, "Why am I here?" It was one of those things where he, as legend goes, was very much a gentleman that backed away from taking a credit in the film and doing any press, and doing any limelight-type things, and he left that all to me. Which was very, very, very sweet and kind of him.



So that continued through to the animated features, when he was offered the voice of Abe Sapien, and he politely declined. And that's when they just deferred to me immediately. Part of the discussion that Guillermo had with me, when he told me about the first film and what happened with the voice, was he said, "If we get the blessing and the opportunity to do a *Hellboy II*, I would like to have your voice back in it." So this animated feature was a nice transitional period to do that in, and by the time *Hellboy II* came around, I was assured and promised that the voice would stay intact as mine. I love David Hyde Pierce, I think he's a wonderful actor, but it really is nice to have that whole baby, in its entirety, back in my hands again. Before I was kind of holding a baby without legs [Laughs].

In *Hellboy II*, Abe has a considerably large storyline; was that borne of fan love of Abe from the first movie, and will that prominence carry over to the third movie?

DJ: Yes, and yes. And I believe it's also borne of Guillermo del Toro's love for Abe Sapien. I'll share a little moment with you from the set. We were doing the scene in the library, when Abe and the lovely Princess Nuala are getting to know each other over a book of poetry. There was this backlight that shined and hit my gills, and Guillermo said to me, before we rolled on the next take, "There's something about the way the light shines on Abe's gills that just makes my heart flutter." That was one way of him expressing his absolute adoration for Abe Sapien. So, yes; I think there was a resounding cry from the fans for more Abe in the second film, and there was a desire in Guillermo all along to build on Abe as well.

Your work as the Faun and the Pale Man in [Pan's Labyrinth](#) was well-received. Again in *Hellboy II*, you play three different characters.

DJ: I was Abe, and the Angel of Death, and the Chamberlain; those are my three. The Chamberlain is the doorkeeper for the king of the elven underworld --- he's a sad looking fellow, isn't he?

These new characters even seem to have some resemblance to those you played in *Pan's Labyrinth*.

DJ: It was the same creature designers as the first *Hellboy*, Spectral Motion. They're also

the ones who made me up as the Silver Surfer [in [Fantastic Four 2](#)]. The *Pan's Labyrinth* people were DDT Effectos Especiales in Barcelona. In *Hellboy II* they did design and apply the make-up for young Hellboy. *Hellboy II* had so many creatures in it, they pulled in a lot of shops, but the main characters were by Spectral Motion --- Hellboy, and Abe, and the Angel of Death and such.

One last question: If you could play any creature from mythology or lore that we haven't seen yet onscreen, what would it be?

DJ: Actually, there's been some talk recently that really intrigued me, about doing Frankenstein. That's something I had never thought of because he's rather large and lumbering in the imagery that you've seen of him before. However, there are new art concepts that Guillermo has seen, and the idea of doing Frankenstein with a thinner, more soulful kind of monster in Frankenstein could be something really delicious to chew on.

Guillermo was asked about this recently, on the red carpet of the *Hellboy II* premiere.



[[ShockTilYouDrop's Ryan Rotten got the scoop.](#)] A journalist got to him first and asked, "Hey Guillermo, if you did Frankenstein, who would the monster be?" And Guillermo said, a resounding "Doug Jones" -- which seems like an alternative choice to what you've seen before, but there's a certain type of artwork that he's seen of Frankenstein and that's what interested him. The journalist got to me next and said, "Hey, guess what I just heard Guillermo say?" I was like, "Oh, you're kidding!" I went onto [DelToro films](#), which is his website, and there's a message board that the fans talk on, and somebody on a thread for fan art submitted a piece of art of a Frankenstein built on Doug Jones. The artist's screen name is Riddick, so that's how

you can find it. ([Click here](#) for a full view of the art. Conception and design courtesy of the artist, [Alex Tuis](#).) There's a drawing in there that is based on me that is a Frankenstein that *I would kill* to play. Looking at that imagery, and having Guillermo as a director, and knowing Frankenstein's sympathetic side and his scary side --- I love characters like that that are sympathetic and yet scary at the same time --- that could become a dream role for me. Absolutely.

It seems like if Guillermo's in for a project, you're in.

DJ: As he said, [in his best Guillermo del Toro voice] "Listen, if I direct a hemorrhoid commercial, Doug Jones will be in it." And I feel the same way. If he's directing a hemorrhoid commercial, I'll play the frickin' hemorrhoid. He'll find a way to make it artful; I know he will.

[Hellboy II: The Golden Army](#) is in theaters this Friday, July 11 and currently sits at 89 percent on the Tomatometer.