

Treasure Island – General note



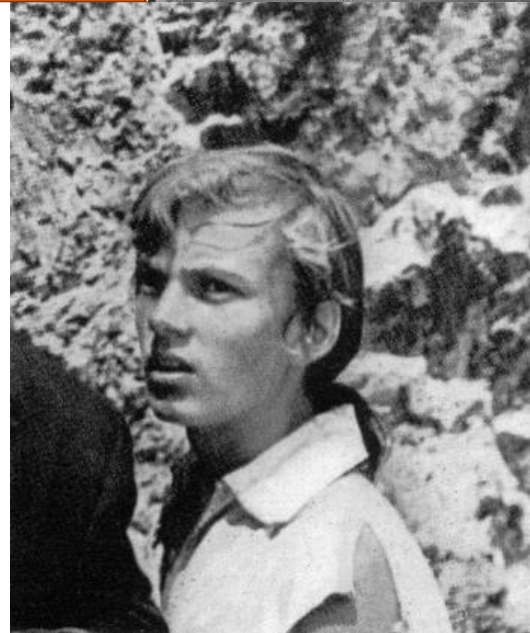
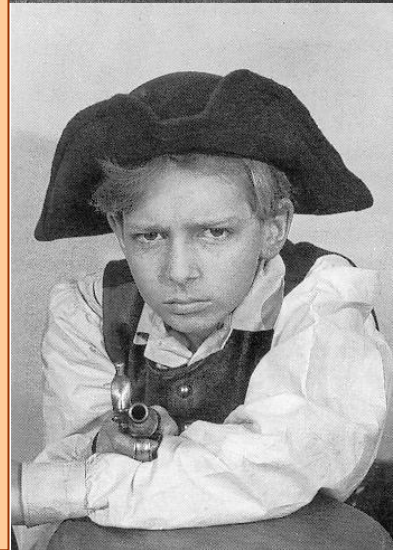
A chronological list of 25 known adaptations and their principal casts, with supplementary notes on animated and theatrical versions featuring known boy actors.



Six Jim Hawkins's

Note how the differing hairstyles reflect the period they were made more than the period in which they're set.

1934: Jackie Cooper
1920: Shirley Mason
1950: Bobby Driscoll
1954: Kit Taylor
1972: Kim Burfield
1971: Aare Laanemets



No other classic children's novel – indeed, no other book at all, the bible included – has been adapted for film and television more frequently than Robert Louis Stevenson's piracy tale. Titles such as "**ALICE IN WONDERLAND**", "**OLIVER TWIST**", "**GREAT EXPECTATIONS**", "**HUCKLEBERRY FINN**", "**HEIDI**", "**THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER**" and "**LES MISERABLES**" have all been regularly adapted in various languages, but none more often than the story of Jim Hawkins, the Hispaniola and Long John Silver. Of all the adventure stories ever written, it is neither the most exciting nor the richest in character, it contains no profound truth about human nature, yet the appeal of this simple, linear tale of treasure hunting would seem to be universal and timeless.

Written for the diversion of his ailing stepson, Stevenson's book itself reads like a rough draft for a film script – thin on character, atmosphere or description, it carries the plot along in a brisk, no-nonsense fashion, relying entirely on dialogue and first-person narrative to provide colour. What it also does not do is reveal any insight at all into the actual lives and customs of pirates, their superstitions or codes of honour. To Stevenson, clearly, the pirates were mere seagoing brigands or mountain bandits. His enduring creation, Long John Silver, creates no firm visual image on the page, much less his colourless hero, Jim Hawkins, which leaves casting directors a very broad choice when filling these roles.

Fans of the films often imprint on the first characterisation they saw as children, just as Bela Lugosi remains for many the definitive Dracula, or Christopher Lee for a later generation who saw the Hammer films first. So for some, burly affable Wallace Beery will always be Silver, while for others it will be Robert Newton, whose leering music hall caricature was probably closer to J.M. Barrie's conception of Captain Hook, and has since acquired a mocking life of its own. Everybody's notion of your basic pirate now has Newton's drawl and utters phrases like "Aarr Jim lad" and "Avast there, ye lubbers" even though neither phrase was penned by R.L. Stevenson.

Having seen half of the two dozen adaptations listed below (and it's certainly an incomplete list) I would have to give the laurels to Charlton Heston's interpretation of the central character in a generally excellent and lively 1990 retelling, marred only by a butchered-up Jim Hawkins in the shape of surly Christian Bale. Where Orson Welles tried to darken the character, but lost himself in an obscure and barely intelligible accent, Heston brings just the right degree of ruthless menace to Silver, his wide toothy grin a far better mask for Silver's villainy than Beery's cap-tugging deferential charm. For the definitive worst performance, and adaptation, we need look no further than Kirk Douglas' staggeringly awful "**SCALAWAG**" (1973), shot in Yugoslavia as a musical comedy Western, but the songs were ditched before final release. It is dire beyond belief, and not simply because of its considerable production difficulties. Like a bad reworking of the "**SHANE**" story (another oft-told tale in many guises), it manages to mislay almost every element that makes **TREASURE ISLAND** such an enduring favourite. Quite what those qualities are, of course, is rather harder to pinpoint.

Comparing the various incarnations of Jim Hawkins is a fruitless task, since the character is little more than a roving reporter, recording the doings of his elders. Hawkins is no mere boy sidekick, however. He plays a very proactive role in the story from first to last, but he is as colourless a figure as any of Dickens' much put-upon boy heroes. Jackie Cooper was for me too much of a pouting pudding, Bobby Driscoll bright as a button, but wildly improbable for the period. Kim Burfield scuttled through the action like a terror-stricken mouse crossing a butcher's yard, and Mark Lester (in "**SCALAWAG**") was just the vapid, pretty creature he always was, an ideal cabin boy perhaps for whiling away a long tedious sea voyage, but little use in a tight corner. Michael Ande and Christian Bale were simply too old for the part. So again my choice for the best Jim Hawkins would be an unlikely candidate. I don't even know the actor's name, but he played the lead in an Italian children's TV serial for which the story was translated (fairly faithfully) into SF terms – "**Treasure Island in Outer Space**". Silver was a quite creditable Anthony Quinn, but this particular Jim was a feisty, full-blooded boy hero with the looks of a smouldering Caravaggio urchin packed into a lurex jumpsuit. Even through the mangle of abominable English dubbing, his character comes alive better than any other Hawkins I've seen.

1 : 1912

Jim Hawkins	Addison Rothermel [..]
Long John Silver	.....
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

2 : 1917

[an all-child version by the Franklin Brothers' "Kiddie Pictures"]

Jim Hawkins	Francis Carpenter ? [6]
Long John Silver	Violet Radcliffe [..]
Dr Livesey	 [..]
Squire Trelawney	 [..]
Billy Bones	 [..]
Blind Pew	 [..]
Israel Hands	 [..]
Ben Gunn	Lewis Sargent [14]



3 : 1920

Jim Hawkins	Shirley Mason [20]
Long John Silver	Charles Ogle
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	Lon Chaney
Israel Hands	Lon Chaney ?
Ben Gunn	.....



4 : 1934

Jim Hawkins	Jackie Cooper [12]
Long John Silver	Wallace Beery

Dr Livesey	Otto Kruger
Squire Trelawney	Nigel Bruce
Billy Bones	Lionel Barrymore
Blind Pew	William V Mong
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	Chic Sale



5 : 1950

Jim Hawkins	Bobby Driscoll [13]
Long John Silver	Robert Newton
Dr Livesey	Denis O'Dea
Squire Trelawney	Walter Fitzgerald
Billy Bones	Finlay Currie
Blind Pew	John Laurie
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	Geoffrey Wilkinson

6 : 1954 "LONG JOHN SILVER"

[Australian feature to launch TV series below, a blatant rehash of the traditional story, but with Silver now cast in a more heroic light, and Hawkins in the role of boy sidekick.]

Jim Hawkins	Kit Taylor [12]
Long John Silver	Robert Newton
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	N/A
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	Rod Taylor
Ben Gunn	.....

7 : 1955 "The Adventures of Long John Silver"

[Australian TV series – 26 episodes]

Jim Hawkins	Kit Taylor [13]
Long John Silver	Robert Newton
Dr Livesey	.....

Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	N/A
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

8 : 1955 "UNDER THE BLACK FLAG"

[Commercial release shamelessly cobbled together from episodes of the Australian TV series above]

Jim Hawkins	Kit Taylor [13]
Long John Silver	Robert Newton
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	N/A
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

9 : 1957 "SOUTH SEA PIRATES"

[Commercial release shamelessly cobbled together from episodes of the Australian TV series above]

Jim Hawkins	Kit Taylor [13]
Long John Silver	Robert Newton
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	N/A
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

10 : c1957

[BBC TV serial]

Jim Hawkins	Richard Palmer [12]
Long John Silver	.....
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

11 : 1960 "DuPont Show of the Month"

[Live UK TV broadcast featuring a medley of scenes from Stevenson's writings.]

Jim Hawkins	Richard O'Sullivan [16]
Long John Silver	.....
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

12 : 1966 "Die Schatzinsel"

[W German / French TV serial]

Jim Hawkins	Michael Ande [22!]
Long John Silver	.....
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

13 : 1968

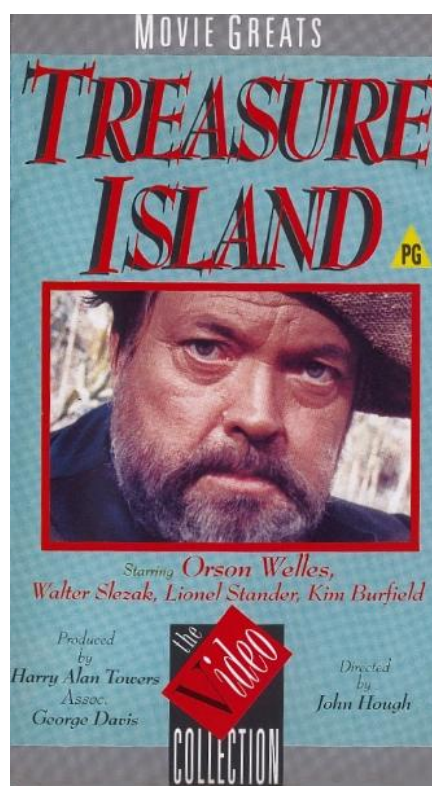
[UK TV serial]

Jim Hawkins	Michael Newport [16]
Long John Silver	.....
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....

14 : 1971 "OSTROV SOKROVISHCH"

[U.S.S.R. - Estonia]

Jim Hawkins	Aare Laanemets [c15]
Long John Silver	Boris Andreyev ?
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	.....



15 : 1972

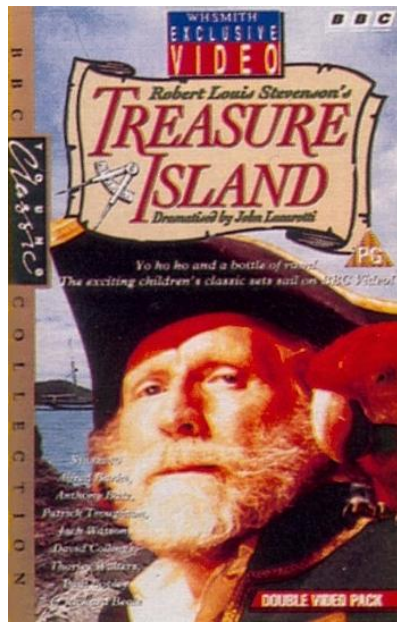
Jim Hawkins	Kim Burfield [c11]
Long John Silver	Orson Welles
Dr Livesey	Migel del Pozo
Squire Trelawney	Walter Slezak
Billy Bones	Lionel Stander
Blind Pew	Paul Miller
Israel Hands	.....
Ben Gunn	Jean Lefebvre

16 : 1973 "SCALAWAG"

[a musical Western version shot in Yugoslavia]

Jim Hawkins	Mark Lester [15]
Long John Silver	Kirk Douglas
Dr Livesey	.....
Squire Trelawney	.....
Billy Bones	.....
Blind Pew	.....

Israel Hands
Ben Gunn



17 : 1970s ?

[BBC TV serial]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver Alfred Burke
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew Patrick Troughton ?
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

18 : ? ? ?

[UK TV serial]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver Stratford Johns
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

19 : 1983 "TREASURE ISLAND – THE MUSICAL"

Jim Hawkins Piers Eady [..]
Long John Silver
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

20 : 1986 (or 89) "L'ISLE AU TRESOR"

[France / US]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew

Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

21 : ? ? ?

[TV serial]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

22 : 1987 "Treasure Island in Outer Space"

[Italian ch TV serial – released on video as "SPACE ISLAND"]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver Anthony Quinn
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones Ernest Borgnine
Blind Pew
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn



23 : 1990

[US TV – released on video in UK as "DEVIL'S TREASURE"]

Jim Hawkins Christian Bale [16]
Long John Silver Charlton Heston
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones Oliver Reed
Blind Pew Christopher Lee
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

24 : 1996 "MUPPET TREASURE ISLAND"

[UK TV serial]

Jim Hawkins [..]
Long John Silver Tim Curry
Dr Livesey
Squire Trelawney
Billy Bones
Blind Pew
Israel Hands
Ben Gunn

25 : ? ? ? "KEN RUSSELL'S TREASURE ISLAND"

[UK TV - a pantomime version sodden with the director's characteristic heterosexual obsessions]

Jim Hawkins	.....	[..]
Long John Silver	.....	
Dr Livesey	.....	
Squire Trelawney	.....	
Billy Bones	.....	
Blind Pew	.....	
Israel Hands	.....	
Ben Gunn	.....	

c1950 John Charlesworth, of "**TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS**" played Jim Hawkins to Donald Wolfitt's Silver in a London stage production.

c1961 Australian Sean Scully, of Disney films such as "**ALMOST ANGELS**" and "**THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER**" (62), played Jim Hawkins in London to Bernard Miles' Silver. The New Statesman described him as "A bright-eyed squirrel of a boy who spits delightfully".

1963 Fergus McClelland, of "**SAMMY GOING SOUTH**" (63), played Jim Hawkins in a Christmas production for the Mermaid Theatre. He was 13.

c1966 Len Jones, of "**SPRING AND PORT WINE**", (70) played Jim Hawkins at the Mermaid Theatre

1971 "**DOBUTSU TAKARAJIMA**".
A Japanese 78-minute animated version.

1973 Jonathan Scott-Taylor, of "**DAMIEN – OMEN II**" (78), made his professional debut as Hawkins at the Mermaid Theatre. He was 11.

1974 A full-length animated version.

? ? ? "**Return to Treasure Island**" was a UK TV serial in which a young adult Hawkins returns to the Caribbean and meets up again with Silver [Brian Blessed].