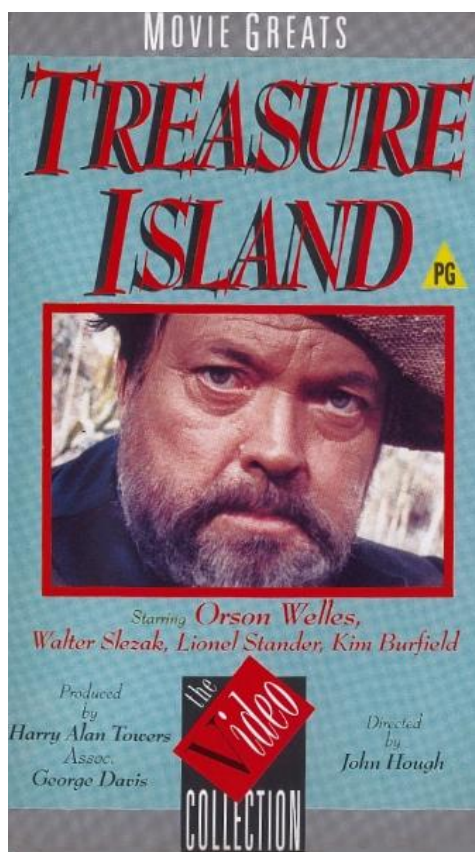


Treasure Island

UK / France / E Germany / Spain : 1971 : dir. John Hough : : 95 min
 : Massfilms / FDL / CCC / Eguiluz
 prod: Harry Alan Towers : scr: Wolf Mankowitz & "O.W. Jeeves" : dir.ph.: Cicilio Paniagua
[Kim Burfield](#)
 Orson Welles; Walter Slezak; Lionel Stander; Migel del Pozo; Rik Battaglia; Maria Rohm;
 Paul Miller; Jean Lefebvre; Michael Garland; Aldo Sambrell; Alibe; Chinchilla; Victor Israel

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Kbytes	Ω □ ♀ Z ☼	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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"I like that boy. I never seen a better boy than that" declares Silver, as the prospect of being marooned on his island looms larger in the mind.
 Source: The Moving Picture Boy

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 1996 review:

"This weak retelling of the classic tale finds a very hammy Welles (who also co-scripted) in the role of Long John Silver. **"

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Weak new version of the classic tale in which Welles hams tremendously as Long John Silver."



The colour balance on the videotape wasn't much better either. Ye may lay to that!

Source: VHS VC3035

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Spiritless and characterless international remake with poor acting, production and dubbing. Scr: Wolf Mankowitz & "O.W. Jeeves" (Welles)."

Movies on TV (1987) review:

"Welles as Long John Silver eschews the emphasis on roguish charm which Robert Newton and Wallace Beery brought to the role, instead conveying the dangerous, ominous side of the pirate - more what Stevenson intended and dramatically more impressive. An entertaining version of the absorbing tale. ***"

Videocassette – **The Video Collection VHS VC3035** – sleeve notes:

"Of all the stories of sea and ships and daring desperate men, none can compare with the adventure of Robert Louis Stevenson's classic **"TREASURE ISLAND"**.

It begins on that fateful night when young Jim Hawkins touches the hand of evil, becomes obsessed with riches and learns of the man

whose terrifying presence makes men tremble – Long John Silver. See **"TREASURE ISLAND"** as it was meant to be, with the unforgettable performance of Orson Welles as Long John Silver and Kim Burfield [as] Jim Hawkins.

"TREASURE ISLAND" is a feast of exciting adventures - don't miss them. Music composed and conducted by Natalie Massara."

Halliwell's Filmgoer's Companion note:

"...In 1972 Orson Welles starred in a European remake, using such a thick accent that he had to be dubbed.. "

The Moving Picture Boy entry on Burfield:

"After an inauspicious start as the hero-worshipper of a clapped-out soccer star (Richard Harris, who also directed with maudlin abandon) young Kim's career was resurrected when Orson Welles chose him as Jim Hawkins to his oft-postponed Long John Silver. The introduction was presumably made by Wolf Mankowitz, who scripted both films, but Kim was too young and cute to be a

convincing Jim, though he performed with spirit.

His final lead – as a boy called David Hawkins, oddly enough – was in a rather plodding time-travel fantasy from the Children’s Film Foundation.”

[no listing in ""The Critics’ Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times notes:

“Orson Welles stars as Long John Silver in this version of Robert Louis Stevenson’s piratical tale.”

“Orson Welles in R L Stevenson’s classic adventure of piracy and plots.”

Sunday Times note:

“A remake of Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic starring Orson Welles, Kim Burfield, Walter Slezak”

TV Quick note:

“Orson Welles fills his wooden leg with ham as he Jim-lads and me-hearties like a good ’un. But this telling of Robert Louis Stevenson’s classic is short on excitement.”

What’s On TV note:

“Orson Welles heads the cast in Stevenson’s story of pirates and buried treasure.”

"Them as dies'll be the lucky ones!" snarls Welles with a glint in his eye for the camera. Sympathy for the audience? Who can tell? His fingerprints are unmistakable on the weapon – while his own character is given additional dialogue not in the book, the parts of Dr Livesey and Squire Trelawney are pared down considerably. But though Welles can hardly be supposed to have taken a back seat to director Hough, and Holmstrom implies he had been nurturing the project for some while, this is from first to last a typical Europudding, with all the ills attendant on that multilingual style of film-making. From a book which has been filmed more times than any work of Dickens or Shakespeare ("**HUCKLEBERRY FINN**" could run it a close race, but few others) this is not *quite* the worst adaptation – that accolade must go to Kirk Douglas' truly awful musical Western interpretation "**SCALAWAG**" (73), shot entirely in Yugoslavia, with Mark Lester in the Hawkins role. But it's bad enough – threadbare in conception and prosaic in execution.

Other "**TREASURE ISLAND**"s were shot in 1912, 1917, 1920, 1934, 1950, 1954 and 1990, not to mention a Ken Russell camped-up pantomime, or one with Muppets crawling all over it and Tim Curry playing Silver. Versions exist in Japanese, French and Russian also, and the story has been serialised for television many times.

Any adaptation will stand or fall, naturally, on the strength of its characterisation of "Barbecue" Silver. The essence of that character, and his appeal, lies in the abrupt shifts of temperament between the affable ship's cook - with which he beguiles Jim - and the murderous bandit who is said to have struck fear into the heart of the dread Captain Flint himself.





Wallace Beery was long on affable, short on rogue. Robert Newton was a thigh-slapping pantomime pirate. Welles is sinister even when being affable, and the establishment of his rapport with Jim is skimmed over, undermining the sense of betrayal so important in their relationship. When, before the mutiny, the pirates land to scout out the island and Jim hares off on his own, Welles' Silver growls a chilling aside to one of his cronies: "Keep a weather eye on that boy! He's a sight too nimble for my liking". This suggests that Silver mistrusted Hawkins under all his pretended admiration, and there's no basis for that in the book, any more than for his interesting information - plucked from god knows where - that the phrase "Long John" is a natives' term for human flesh, of the cooked variety.

It seems the idea was to wrest Stevenson's story back from the pretty and unthreatening waters where Disney had left it beached. No harm in that, certainly. The original text is followed fairly closely on the whole, but the production is scuppered almost irretrievably by very poor post-synced dialogue, a muddle of accents, none especially convincing, a clumsy score, and bad sound mixing in general. The greatest single piece of miscasting, however, is the island itself.. Location shooting was in the UK, Italy and Spain, and Welles's Caribbean island, instead of a lush tropic wilderness, is a bleak Adriatic rockpile strewn with parched grass and mosses. In the book, the Hispaniola first draws up in an inlet so locked with rank vegetation Dr Livesey recognises the threat of swamp fever at once, and the pirates do indeed fall prey to fever. It would be hard to imagine mosquitoes, swamps and leeches on the rocky wastes of this island, more redolent of Alcatraz than Antigua.

No "**TREASURE ISLAND**" yet has come close to capturing the taste of salt one gets watching "**MOBY DICK**" for instance, "**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS**", or the better seafaring films. Nor do they offer any interesting insights on the pirate philosophy of life. Instead they rely upon the familiar action set-pieces: the pirate assault on the stockade, or Jim's fight to the death with Israel Hands alone on the Hispaniola. Both key episodes are handled half-heartedly here, the mutiny itself is underplayed, and only the final discovery of the treasure is a genuinely satisfying scene. Throughout, one is left wondering what kind of a film this would have been if Welles himself had been allowed to take the director's seat.

Kim Burfield, for his part, makes a nicely epicene Jim Hawkins (a champion cabin boy, no doubt), prone to emit little squeaks at moments of peril, but then Jackie Cooper was too surly in 1935 and Bobby Driscoll too sweet and freshly-scrubbed in 1950. The later Charlton Heston version, which is superior to this one by a long sea mile, has Christian Bale, disappointingly wooden after "**EMPIRE OF THE SUN**" and - for my money - much too old for the part anyway, so getting the boy right does seem to be a trick in itself. One of the feistier ones, perhaps surprisingly, was an Italian boy who appeared with Anthony Quinn as Silver in the children's TV serial "**Treasure Island in Outer Space**" [\[qv\]](#).

Poor Kim's career fizzled out after just three films, all of them dire. He made "**BLOOMFIELD**" (aka "THE HERO") in Israel, and in 1974 "**THE FLYING SORCEROR**". If not exactly brimming with talent on the strength of this performance, he had more than Mark Lester at any rate, but was simply unlucky with the scripts that fell in his lap. He was 11.

See **TREASURE ISLAND - GENERAL NOTE** for details of all other known versions, and subject index under **HISTORY**, **KIDS OUTWIT THE CROOKS**, **SEAFARING / PIRACY** and **TREASURE HUNTS**.