



Sound & Vision ? November 1983

Article Author:

[Pat Triggs](#) [1]

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News of books on films and television.

Listen to this

Latest recruit to the growing number of companies producing stories on sound cassettes is Rainbow Communications Ltd. Picking up on the fear that children may have become too dependant on the visual image at the expense of listening and imaginative response they are marketing **Rainbow Theatre for Children** as 'a healthy change from television'. Tapes are of two kinds - Listen and Read, and dramatic adaptations of longer books: both sorts have music, sound effects and a variety of actors' voices.

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The Listen and Read Pack consists of a tape and a copy of the book. So far there are four titles from the **Superted** series by Mike Young and four from Jane Pilgrim's **Blackberry Farm** books.

We tried **Superted and the Stolen Rocket Ship** (BOW 113). No amount of sound effects and valiant acting performances could do much for the wooden prose and inadequate storylines of these little books. But perhaps the fans of Superted on TV won't notice. For listening and reading the production is good: clear instructions and well-integrated page turning cues.

Of the 'full scale dramatic productions... just like a radio play' we listened to **James and the Giant Peach** (adapted from Roald Dahl by Edward Phillips, BOW 110) and **The Sea of Adventure** (adapted from Enid Blyton by Edward Kelsey, BOW 100). The Dahl is well done with sufficient stretches of straight narrative from the book to give a true flavour of the original. It's an entertaining 40 minutes listen which could well send a child racing off to find the book. Forty minutes of Blyton proves just how thin and boring even the best of her stuff is when reduced to the bare essentials. This adaptation misses out most of what grabs the Blyton reader - in the whole adventure the only thing that gets eaten is one bar of chocolate! The voices of the children are straight out of Children's Hour 1950's vintage - so is the language, 'Golly, that's torn it'. Other noises, like disco music from a trannie, indicate attempts at updating.

Rainbow so far have dramatised *eight* Blyton titles, including **Sea of Adventure**, and two by Dahl (**James and Fantastic Mr Fox**). The commercial motives behind choosing these authors are not hard to see. But if they do manage to find a market it would be nice to see Rainbow using its considerable expertise to widen children's reading and listening experience.

All Rainbow packs cost £1.99.

Looking Ahead

Carrie's War

A third screening for this popular version of Nina Bawden's story begins at the end of November. (BBC1)

Swallows and Amazons Forever

A new TV serial based on **Coot Club** and **The Big Six**. Puffin have an abridged single volume tie-in. (Jan. BBC1)

Stanley Bagshaw and the 14 Foot Wheel

Seven 10 minute animated films from Bob Wilson's picture book. (Jan. Yorkshire TV)

The Book Tower

A new series starts on January 5th at 4.45. The new presenter is actor Alun Armstrong. If not already on the mailing list send to Yorkshire TV for your poster and Watcher's Guide. The new series will feature a competition with book token prizes.

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