

RAINBOW

...a rare Swedish reel of the past



The RAINBOW reel is special, and its history tells the story of a daring Swedish attempt by highly educated and creative engineers to design the perfect multiplier reel in a time when this type of reel was still plagued with many problems. We have to go back to 1947 and the Swedish SAAB aircraft company to find the start of this story.

After the end of WW2 many Swedish companies were looking for new products to produce. Europe was in ruins, Sweden had not been affected much by the war and Swedish manufacturers saw the potential for selling consumer goods across Europe. The RAINBOW project started in 1947 when two engineers at SAAB in Linköping (the aircraft factory), Ingvar Öhlund and Sven Bergman started the design of what they called the perfect casting reel. This reel became the first RAINBOW prototype.

Right from the start the RAINBOW reel was a little different, felt sturdy and solid, and featured a unique line guide system which did not interfere with the line during casting. Instead of a guide where the line runs through a loop and may be caught up by this, and a mechanical mechanism to drive the guide back and forth, the RAINBOW system moved the entire reel relative to the foot's position and thus achieved an even distribution of line across the spool. This system was completely disengaged for casting and no friction would reduce the casting distance. It is an innovative approach to a problem which had already seen a number of different solutions. Better? Well, it works well on a new reel, but it isn't as durable as the more commonly used systems, and on most RAINBOW reels still in existence some sort of malfunction is present.

Apart from the sophisticated line guide system the RAINBOW reels are pretty main stream in design. And simple. There is a cast control system, different to the centrifuge system used by ABU, but no brake and no clicker mechanism. The handle is a short one grip thing without counterweight and the spool is made from aluminum. Quality is good, and the chrome seems to last very well.

The first prototype was tested intensively for 8 months, and the reel seems to have delivered acceptable performance. At the end of the 8 months a batch of 12 new prototypes were made and testing continued, and then finally, after some improvements and upgrades had been implemented, yet another batch of 12 prototypes were made.

While testing and developing the reel negotiations went on to secure the production. SAAB was initially a discussing partner in these negotiations, but eventually pulled out. Fishing reels were too far from their focus, and the RAINBOW project took place in a time when SAAB was busy designing the J29 Tunnan fighter aircraft and the first SAAB automobile. SAAB needed their resources for aircrafts and cars and could not afford to spend money on fishing reels.

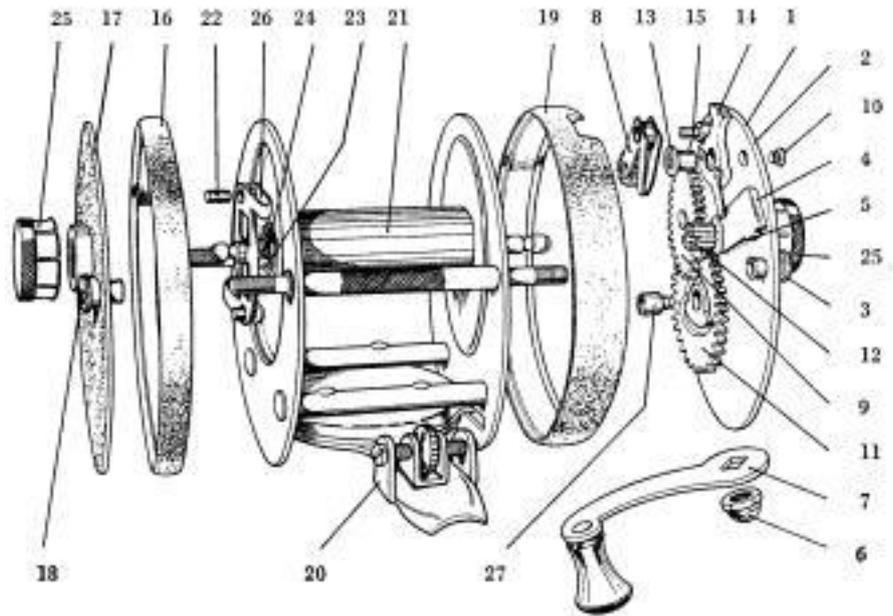
This left the RAINBOW founders with one possible business partner, ITU (ing. Torsten Ullman AB). They were able to strike a deal which left it to ITU to develop and produce components. ITU had a large network of business partners which was utilized to find suited companies for production. On December 1st 1948 two further deals were signed between RAINBOW AB and Standard Radio in Stockholm, who were assigned to painting and chroming of parts, and Hackefors Instrument AB in Linköping, where final assembly and packaging of reels would take place.

Actual production started early in 1950, and from the initial orders for parts and raw materials we can deduct that RAINBOW AB planned for 12 000 to 15 000 reels. If such a number of reels were actually produced is highly questionable. Some say only around 3000 reels were made, and others claim 10 000. What is certain is that RAINBOW also planned for export, several patents were applied for in the USA, Argentina, Chile, France, England and Switzerland, and RAINBOW VD, Gösta Bergmann took personal responsibility to introduce the new brand on the American market. It is however doubtful if he had much success in doing so, and the numbers of reels exported is most likely low.

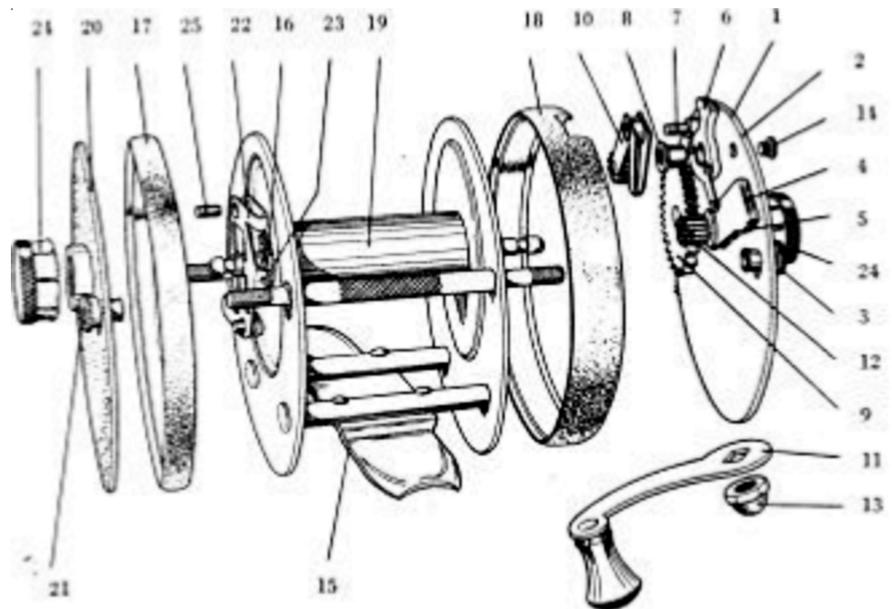


Standard Radios factory where RAINBOW parts were painted and chromed

RAINBOW 888



RAINBOW 555

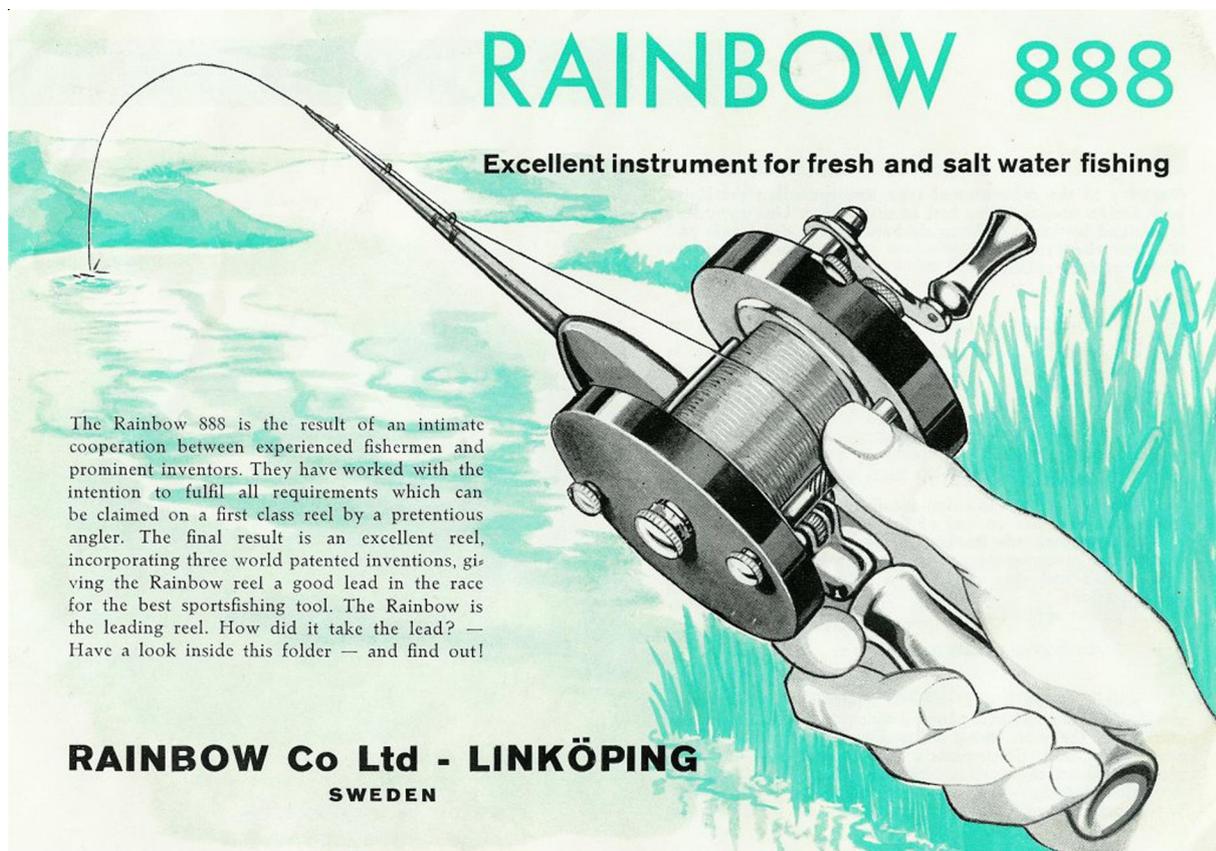


THREE ORIGINAL MODELS - 555, 777, 888

The RAINBOW model line consisted of three models, the 555, the 777 and the 888, where the first is least expensive. The 555 model was based on the same design as the others, it did however lack the line guide system. The 777 model was equipped with the line guide system, but did not have the adjustment system for the action of the line guide. The 888 model had this adjustment system and was the most expensive of the three. Based on the numbers still in existence it seems likely that very few 555 and 777 models were made and that the vast majority of those made were 888 models. My research of accounts further indicates that all reels manufactured were made in 1950 and 1951 and that no new reels were made after 1951.

Sales effort & marketing...

A search through Swedish newspapers and magazines show that the RAINBOW was marketed sparsely during 1950, 51 and 52. It seems the strategy was to some extent to create interest among dealers by having customers coming into the shops and ask for the reel. This off course is not as efficient as having a salesman force visiting the individual shops and selling the reel across the counter. Prices in the 1950 ads are SKR 90,- (888-model), SKR 82,- (777-model) and SKR 60 (555-model). This can be compared to the launching price of the Record Ambassadeur in 1952 of SKR 150,-. It was a considerable difference, but when the reels are compared there is also a considerable difference in functionality and performance. Customer taste favored the Ambassadeur and the RAINBOW didn't sell well enough to survive, to quote Lennart Borgström. In a 1957 interview Göte Borgström mentions that sales of the RAINBOW dropped dramatically when the Ambassadeur 5000 appeared on the market and that RAINBOW AB was very near bankruptcy when ABU acquired the company in September/October 1953. He also claims that the patents were the main reason behind this acquisition. The folder front page proves that RAINBOW planned export of their reels. No information exists on how successful they were, but it seems the main effort of introducing the reel in foreign countries was planned for 1953, by which time the money had ran out, and the planned international launch came to nothing.



RAINBOW 888

Excellent instrument for fresh and salt water fishing

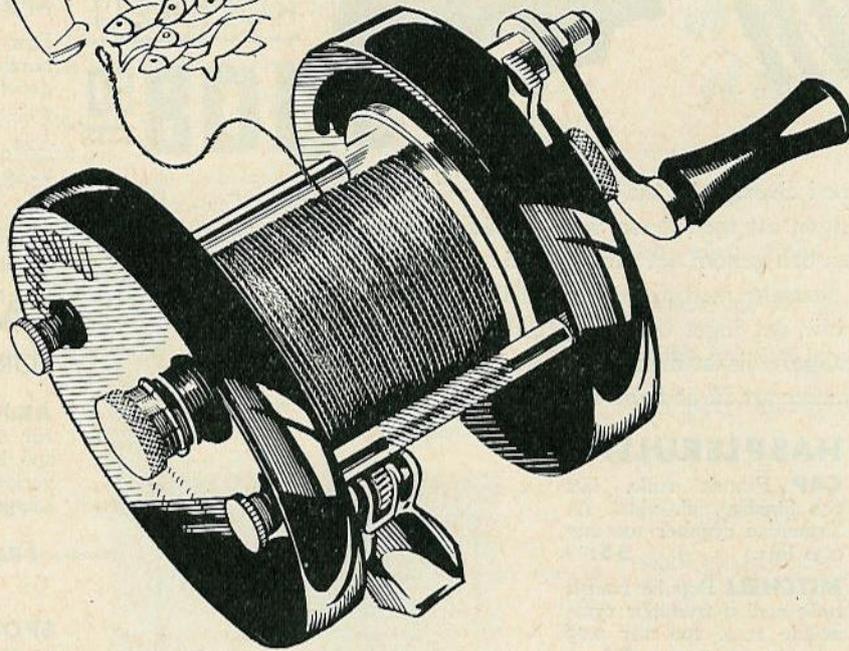
The Rainbow 888 is the result of an intimate cooperation between experienced fishermen and prominent inventors. They have worked with the intention to fulfil all requirements which can be claimed on a first class reel by a pretentious angler. The final result is an excellent reel, incorporating three world patented inventions, giving the Rainbow reel a good lead in the race for the best sportsfishing tool. The Rainbow is the leading reel. How did it take the lead? — Have a look inside this folder — and find out!

RAINBOW Co Ltd - LINKÖPING
SWEDEN

Evidence of the plans to sell outside Sweden, Front page of early english text information folder.



Oss spinnfiskare emellan



RAINBOW

exakt som en spinnrulle

skall vara

Så är den också byggd för kräsna sportfiskare av framstående tekniker och rutinerade sportfiskare. Däri ligger förklaringen till att Rainbow blivit något alldeles extra. Den är t. ex. den enda rulle som har både *frikoppling* och *automatisk revspridning*. Den har ett nytt revolutionerande *bromssystem*, som trots sin fullständiga effektivitet låter hela kastet löpa ut. Bland övriga fördelar har den *automatisk spärr*, *utbytbara lager*, *slitsfäste* för linan på spoltrumman. Den kan öppnas utan *skruvnyckel* medelst förskruvningar, som sitter kvar i gavlarna. Ni vet väl hur besvärligt det annars kan vara att leta rätt på tappade skruvar.

Dessutom är Rainbow trots sina många finesser billig i pris: Rainbow 888 kostar 90:— kr., Rainbow 777 82:— kr. och Rainbow 555 60:— kr.

Begär att få se dem hos Er redskapshandlare.

A.B. RAINBOW
LINKÖPING



The 888 is the most common model of the original RAINBOW reels. The 777 is very rare and the 555 model is almost impossible to find. Good 888's command a high value, not at least thanks to its link with ABU who took possession of the company in 1953. As a collector item the RAINBOW reel is a great find, no matter what condition it is in, these reels tell an interesting story from a time when most Swedish reel manufacturers struggled to survive due to the launch of the Record Ambassadeur 5000. The RAINBOW project started at a time when the Record 5000 wasn't yet invented, but when faced with the competition from Svängsta the RAINBOW sales plummeted and the company ran into trouble. ABU seized their chance and bought what remained. The patent for the casting brake system is probably what ABU valued most about the take-over. Not that they needed to copy RAINBOWs system as they had a better patent themselves, but with both patents under ABU ownership, the door on any attempt to design a similar system was effectively closed.





Line guide system is the most significant feature of the RAINBOW 888 - worked well when new, but tends to become problematic with age.

RAINBOW 888



Lure saver «SPIDER» a patented product by RAINBOW which also made a spinner and a fish net - the so called «Bergmannhåven»



RAINBOW 777 (555 is similar but no lineguide)

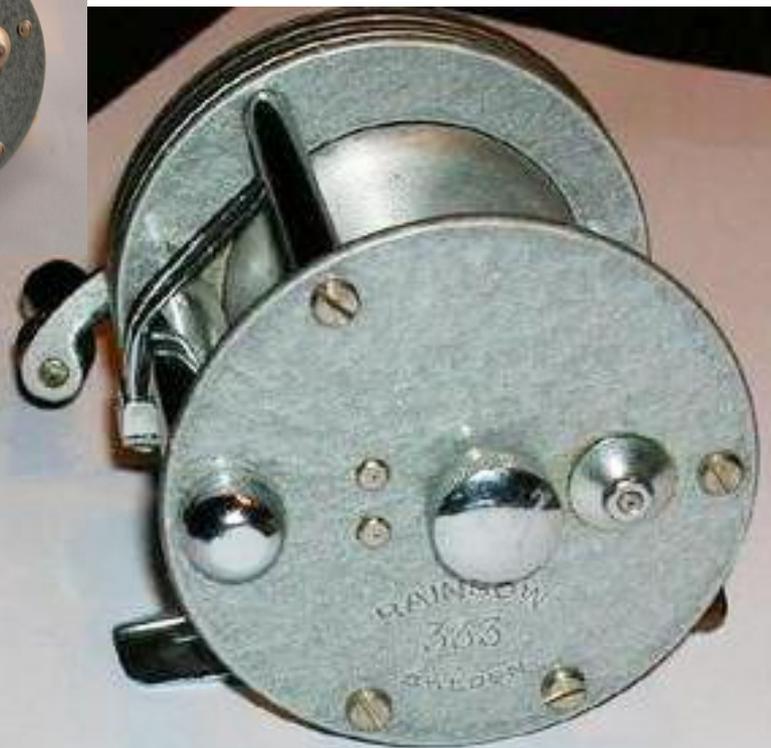
THE LAST RAINBOWs..

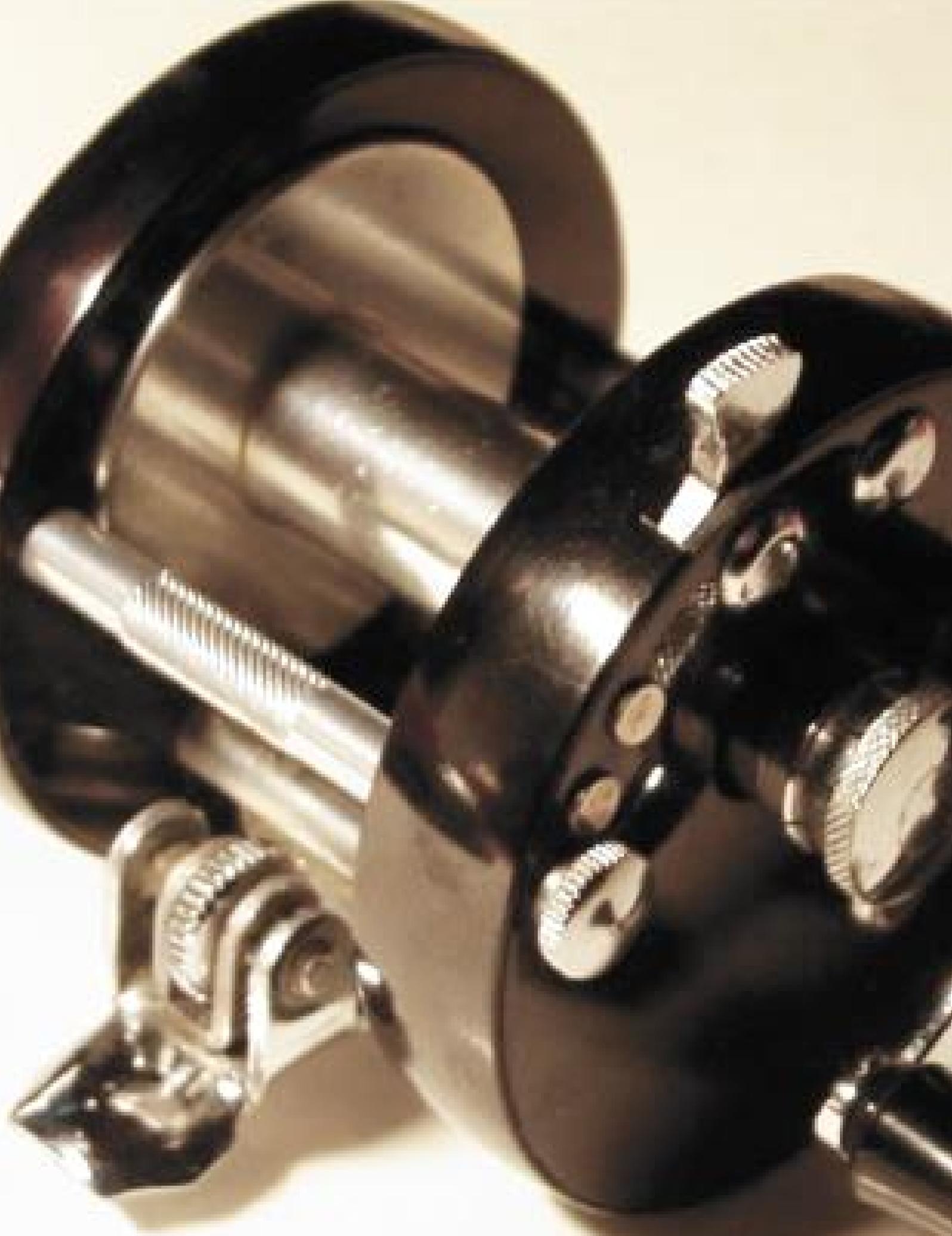
The ABU take-over heralds the swan song of RAINBOW. All production of the original models was closed down and what remained of the stock of spare parts was moved to Svängsta. ABU's main interest had been the patents, but for a brief period late in 1953 and in early 1954 ABU made two different RAINBOW models in Svängsta. These reels were near identical copies of the Record 1300 and 1500 reels which ABU already produced. All RAINBOW reels were finished in green hammer paint and the most obvious difference to the Record versions were the stamps which read «RAINBOW» the model number, and «SWEDEN» in an oval stamp on the left side plate below the center cap. Model numbers were 88 (Record 1300 copy) and 333 (Record 1500 copy).

The thinking behind the launch of these models eluded me for a great number of years, but reading an interview with Göte Borgström dating from 1957 I finally came across the answer. The Swedish consumer cooperative with its diverse family of retail businesses planned to expand into sports fishing and approached ABU for help. Göte was not a great fan of the Co-Op shops and refused to sell Record reels to them. But Göte also realized that this new type of shop could grow to become an important player in the future. As a measure to prevent foreign products from flooding the Swedish market he agreed to sell two specially branded models to the Co-Op shops. These reels were the RAINBOW models 88 and 333. The number of reels manufactured is unknown, but the number was no doubt low as only a hand-full of Co-Op shops selling fishing gear existed in Sweden at the time and that sales of RAINBOW reels ended in 1954.



The Record original and the RAINBOW copies, 333 left and 88 below..





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