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Rivals struggle against 'Pirates'

BV takes no prisoners in Europe

By [NICK VIVARELLI](#)

ROME -- Counterprogramming outings scrounged for slim pickings at Euro wickets this weekend as "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End" pillaged the bulk of the frame's rich bounty.

In Blighty, boosted by miserable weather and a Monday public holiday, Captain Jack Sparrow swooped to score a whopping \$34.4 million five-day cume, topping the "Pirates" Euro chest list and leaving the competitish tsunamied.

As in most other Euro territories, Spidey in Britain managed to hold firm in second place, raising its take by \$2.5 million to \$61.5 million locally to date.

Among other holdovers in the Brit market, sequel "28 Weeks Later" nabbed a decent \$1 million on 308 for a solid 8.9 million cume, and local laffer "Magicians" also did a passable \$307,000 in its sophomore sesh for \$1.48 million to date.

But, by contrast, the most notable new entries in Blighty were Aussie Laura Linney starrer "Jindabyne," which took \$214,000 via Revolver Films to claim the seventh spot, while London and Delhi-set Indian romancer "Cheeni Cum" debuted with \$212,000 on 35 to take the eighth, released by Bollywood specialists Eros International.

In France, where "Pirates 3" nabbed a fab \$16.8 million in five days on 783, Gallic pride retaliated with one local outing that did decently.

Christophe Honore's romantic musical "Love Songs" debuted at number five with \$636,000 in five days on 217 via Bac Distribution, boosted by rave reviews following its Cannes bow.

As "World's End" ran rampage in Spain, tallying the country's biggest opening ever -- a four-day \$12.8 million -- other debuts mostly disappeared down a B.O. vortex.

The latest "Pirates" pic took 72% of Spain's total weekend box office, according to BVI Spain

estimates.

The only domestic pic to avoid a total Spanish shipwreck was "Dos rivales casi iguales," a political farce distributed by Notro, which offered locals a giggle as the country went to municipal and regional polls Sunday.

This first feature from Miguel Angel Calvo Buttini put up a creditable defense, making \$104,060 off 31.

"It was an opportune opening," said one distributor.

Meanwhile, "An Invisible Woman," a femme middle-age crisis drama from vet director-producer Gerardo Herrero, was blasted out of the waters, making a mere \$74,987 off 60 despite some critics reckoning this to be one of Herrero's best.

In Italy, where "At World's End" was impacted by the European Cup soccer final, the latest "Pirates" pic did not break records, but nabbed a hefty \$9.2 million five-day take on 909, according to box office compiler Cinetel, which monitors 85% of the country's screens.

Captain Jack and his posse raided over 70% of the Italo box office, which more than doubled compared with the previous frame.

The only new entry that managed to do some biz in Italy was Zhang Yimou's "Curse of the Golden Flower," which opened at number four with \$450,000 at 155 via 01 Distribution.

Neil Jordan's "Breakfast on Pluto" fell flat as a pancake with a paltry \$114,000 take for the Ireland-set transvestite tale on 82 via Fandango.

Fox's "The History Boys" plumbed historic lows, debuting at a mere \$12,000 on 20.

Local holdovers "My Brother Is an Only Child" and "Notturmo Bus" dropped 22% and 45% respectively, in the sixth and seventh slot.

In Germany, the third "Pirates" voyage enjoyed this year's best opening with \$18.53 million on 974.

Meanwhile, the only local pic in the top 10 was Constantin Film's tyke work "Herr Bello," about a dog that drinks a magic potion and becomes human.

"Herr Bello" dropped 42% to number 10, garnering \$193,660 from 245 on its way to \$685,686 to date.

Ali Jaafar (London), John Hopewell (Spain), Ed Meza (Germany) and David Hayhurst (France) contributed to this report.

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