

# Pirate Movie a Smash in the Box Office but Bashed in Court

By Reg P. Wydeven  
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The movie 'Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest' smashed almost every opening weekend box-office record in the books when it premiered earlier this month.

The swashbuckling adventure earned an eye-patch-popping \$132 million in its first three days, pillaging the record held by 2002's 'Spider-Man', which webbed in \$114.8 million. 'Pirates' was also the first movie ever to bring in \$100 million in only two days. The film also brought in the largest one day earning for a movie, hauling in \$55.5 million, 'Force'-ing out the old record of \$50 million held by my favorite movie, 'Star Wars, Episode III: Revenge of the Sith'.

Even though 'Pirates' is putting up box office numbers of 'Titanic' proportions, the stuffed puffy shirts behind the movie aren't all Jolly Rogers. Screenwriter Royce Matthew recently filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles against Walt Disney Co., Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Jerry Bruckheimer Inc. and other parties associated with the original 'Pirates of the Caribbean' movie, 2003's 'The Curse of the Black Pearl'.

Matthew claims the defendants infringed on his copyrighted project about supernatural buccaneers. According to the lawsuit, back in the 1980s Matthew "created and wrote a number of original works including drawings, screenplays, outlines, blueprints, storyboards and other original materials" about what he coined a "Super Natural Pirate Movie." Matthew alleges that he filed these materials with the U.S. Copyright Office, including drawings depicting a pirate ship named the Black Pearl.

According to the suit, Matthew is seeking unspecified damages, and a permanent injunction against the movie or "other infringing works." Matthew also asserts he fished his idea around Hollywood, but no one took the bait.

Disney flat-out denies the allegations and feels the suit has no merit.

'The Curse of the Black Pearl' was also extremely successful, earning \$305 million. Both 'Pirates' movies are based on Disneyland's theme park ride, which was recently retooled to feature animatronic versions of the movie's characters Captain Jack Sparrow and Barbossa. The ride reopened with 4,500 people waiting in line 3½ hours for the unveiling.

The extremely popular Sparrow is played by Johnny Depp, who portrays the pirate as loopy and bumbling. Depp has said he channeled Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards to play the role of Sparrow, adopting his body language and mannerisms. In fact, Richards is lined up to play Sparrow's father in the third installment of the franchise, 'Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End', which is scheduled for release on May 25, 2007.

Richards has had some legal troubles of his own, but at least one run-in with the law will be coming off his permanent record. The state of Arkansas is going to pardon him for a reckless driving citation he received on July 5, 1975.

Governor Mike Huckabee submitted an application for clemency for Richards to the Arkansas Parole Board, which was approved. Coincidentally, Huckabee plays bass in a band called Capital Offense, who performed at the Republican National Convention in 2004 in New York City.

Richards received the citation when he and bandmate Ron Wood were traveling from Memphis, Tennessee, to Dallas, Texas. According to Richards, in Fordyce, Ark., he bent to adjust the radio and police stopped the car.

Gearing up for his pirate role, Richards was quoted as saying, "I'm very grateful to ARRR-kansas."

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