

Bootleg DVDs sold at Brick Lane days after cinema release

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ILLEGAL copies of films are being sold openly at London street markets days after their cinema releases. The poor quality DVDs, often copied on a household camera from a cinema seat, cost as little as 25p.

This weekend, films including *300*, *Robin of Sherwood* and *Hot Fuzz* were being bought at Brick Lane market. The new Asian thriller film *Boys Don't Cry* and Apple Inc. starring Steve Jobs and Martin Scorsese were also on offer even though they were only released in British cinemas on Friday. Traders predicted they would have copies of the new Spider-Man film "within days".

Street sellers said most of the DVDs came from Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Taiwan. One trader, who gave his name as Adams, said he had been successful.

"If you're here in London, Singapore knows they're in Asia but it wasn't until you got a copy of a big film like *Ben Hur* or *Gladiator* that, he said, "The quality of the films does vary but it doesn't put people off."

The films were on sale despite police efforts to stop the trade.

Yesterday when police officers went through the busy market on Brick Lane, Adams warned his friends, who were stocking some different stalls, to hide the DVD covers.

He said: "We've had a really good weekend and sold lots and lots of DVDs. It's £2 for a film or £3 for a season and people just can't resist."

Walter Abdul Kadir, 33, who works in 'Chutney Indian restaurant' in Brick Lane, said: "It's illegal but hundreds of people buy them. I don't think it's bad. I would buy them even if they're illegal."

A worker in Indian street shop Anshu said there was a huge market for the counterfeit films.

The 30-year-old man, who did not want to be named, said: "It's illegal but there's lots of people selling them." Originally produced by estimated 75 million pirate DVDs every



Designs a seller of pirate DVDs at Brick Lane and, below, reporter Amy Fallon with some purchases



year. Ganga are estimated to make £25 million from DVD piracy and Britain is now the second biggest market after the United States.

The loss of DVD sales, box office takings and cinema seats is the industry £2.2 billion, says the industry.

Last year the Metropolitan Police set up a specialist Film Piracy Unit to tackle the problem.

Operations included the smashing of Britain's largest pirate DVD factory - capable of producing 150,000 worth of copies a day.

Piracy sites and a website were seized in the raid on an industrial unit in Leyton.

Officers recovered 30,000 blank discs and found more than 60 DVD burner machines which could have produced 1.5m discs an hour.

Karen Spinks, director general of the Federation Against Copyright Theft, warned that the "enormously innocent purchase of a cheap DVD could have far-reaching effects and urged people not to buy them. The wider piracy was underlined in the Cinema report on copyright issues published last year, which warned about the massive growth of the problem.

One company, Cinema UK, which runs more than 200 DVD rental shops across the country, said its industry was suffering on the back of piracy.

The group had to write off £2 million of stock because late such a Pirates Of The Caribbean: The Men's Chest was counterfeited and sold on the black market soon after the cinema release.

Chairman Iain Macgregor called for stronger legal action, saying: "The UK must ensure the growth of its legitimate sector with proper enforcement of the law."