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Joel Smallbone's Drummer Boy Stuns Box Office With $9.4 Million Debut as Christmas Tour Kicks Off

A true story of faith under pressure. Read the first half below, then continue online.

KEY SPIRITUAL TAKEAWAY

"Mid-single digits"

(Transliterated from the original Hindi.)

They had gathered only to pray. When prayer itself becomes the target, faith is proved not by words but by staying.

The Story - Part One

Joel Smallbone's Drummer Boy opened on 6 November 2026 in 2,850 theatres across America and earned $9,421,843 in its first three days, finishing third at the box office behind Godzilla Minus Zero, at about $32 million, and The Cat in the Hat, at about $20 million. It was the third-best live-action opening in Angel Studios' history, and it beat every forecast Hollywood had made for it. After eight years of failure and triumph, a Christian pop star's Revolutionary War musical about forgiveness had marched past the people who said it would not work.

The numbers landed at the very top of the range the trade press had allowed. Deadline had predicted a debut in the "mid-single digits" - the kind of polite forecast that sounds like a shrug - while Box Office Theory had set its ceiling at $9.5 Million, and Drummer Boy landed a whisker beneath it. The film also outgrossed the first-three-days pace of The Greatest Showman, the musical that became a slow-burn phenomenon in 2017.

Audiences, not just analysts, loved it. Drummer Boy earned an A CinemaScore, the grade that measures how opening-night crowds actually felt walking out of the cinema, and a 94 percent Audience Score on Rotten Tomatoes. The per-theatre average sat between about $3,268 and $3,306, a sign that the film was drawing full rooms in town after town rather than riding a handful of packed screenings in big cities.

Smallbone stars in the film and co-directed it with his brother Ben Smallbone. The story follows a young drummer boy caught in the Revolutionary War, and it is built around forgiveness, freedom and faith - the same themes that run through for KING + COUNTRY's music. The film grew out of the duo's popular rendition of "Little Drummer Boy," a song their fans have sung along to for years, and it carries a PG-13 rating for war violence.

The debut matters because of what it took to get there. Smallbone has described the road to the screen as "eight long years of failure and triumph," a jounrey that began with a song and ended with a full-length musical filmed in Ireland. Few Christian films get a wide release in nearly 3,000 theatres; fewer still finish third in America in their opening weekend.

The opening weekend was only the first half of the story. On 19 November, the 2026 A Drummer Boy Christmas tour kicked off in Greenville, South Carolina, carrying the film's songs and spirit onto stages across the country. The tour's stops include Fairfax, Hershey, Greensboro, Atlanta, Orlando, Tampa, Houston, Fort Worth, Tulsa and Saint Louis, with more dates to come.

The Turning Point - What Happens Next

The story reaches a life-changing moment that changes everything -- and what seemed like the end is only the middle. Two reports disagree on the numbers, and one question is left unanswered: will the CCTV footage ever come out? Read the full story to find out what happens next.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When gathering to pray carries a real cost, what keeps a community coming together anyway -- and what would keep you coming?

2. The pastor's sister shielded him with her own body and fainted under the blows. What does costly, self-giving love look like in your own family or church?

3. When justice is delayed and a complaint is withdrawn under threat, how do believers hold on to truth without giving in to fear -- or to hatred?

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