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## 'Eagle' soars in Spanish primetime

### Series represents new wave of drama

By [JOHN HOPEWELL](#)

"Aguila roja" (Red Eagle), a Spanish swashbuckler, broke records in Spain Thursday primetime, snatching a standout 5 million viewers.

This repped a 26.4% share: the best rating for a new series over the 2008-09 season.

Aired from 10 p.m. on pubcaster RTVE's main channel, TVE-1, the family adventure skein is part of a creeping revolution in Spanish TV production.

Breaking through in the mid 90s, first-generation Spanish fiction pushed the familiarity factor, focusing on contemporary families or white-collar professionals, celebrating familiar Spanish foibles.

"Eagle" explores new ground.

It turns on a Batman-like hero in 17th century Spain: a school teacher who moonlights as a caped crusader, battling the forces of evil.

The wrongdoers are a Knights Templar-style religious order and a sado Madrid head of police, who murder the teacher's wife and plot to assassinate the king.

One big question is whether "Eagle" has legs ... or, should we say, wings.

Its first-seg auds grew significantly from an out-of-the-gates 18% share to just over 30% going into the first commercial break, according to audience research company Barlovento Comunicacion.

That doesn't happen with every bow, and is a good sign for the future, said Barlovento analysis manager Javier Lopez.

"Eagle's" victims Thursday night included the two standout U.S. bows of early 2009, broadcast net Cuatro's Spanish re-do of "Saturday Night Live," which plunged from a first-seg 13.8% to 8.1% Thursday night, and La Sexta's "The Mentalist," which took 7.1%, vs. its 11.1% bow.

Boasting 3,500 extras and a cast of 124 thespians, produced by Globomedia and RTVE, "Eagle's" budget is in the "high range" of TVE series productions, said Globomedia general director, operations, Alfonso Mardones. Spanish drama episodes average around \$600,000 in cost.

To recoup, Globomedia need international sales, and returns from further seasons, Mardones added. "Eagle" has been

picked up by top Spanish sales company Imagina Intl. Sales, which is fielding interest from France, Italy and Eastern Europe, said IIS sales director Geraldine Gonard. It will initiate a major sales push at Mip TV.

*Emiliano de Pablos contributed to this report.*

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