

# Behind the Screen Clockers

**H**ere we go again: With its animated feature *The Pebble and the Penguin* (opening April 12), MGM joins the ranks of studios that have tried—and mostly failed—to do Disney one better.

This increases the pressure on **DreamWorks SKG** (Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and David Geffen's insta-studio) to make *its* animated feature—*The Prince of Egypt*—really, really good. Does DreamWorks actually believe it can pull off something Disney-like by its

promised Christmas 1998 release date?

After all, even Disney needs three and a half to four years to make an animated film, and it has a vast staff of animators dedicated to making it happen. Production on *The Prince of*



*Egypt* reportedly began in November 1994, though DreamWorks refuses to comment on this or any other aspect of the movie, such as how many animators have been hired, what stage the script is in, or whether the release date is realistic. Katzenberg, long the force behind Disney animation, will play honcho, and while the stories in circulation about him praise his devotion to quality—he's famously willing to scrap scenes he doesn't like—they don't make him sound like a man who's willing to cut corners to meet a deadline. MICHAEL GILTZ