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BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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## Penguins Beat Bond

Boy, was I wrong. "Happy Feet" beat "Casino Royale" at the box office, grossing \$42 mil to Bond's \$40 mil. I was convinced the flood of animated movies, the competition from two current family films ("The Santa Clause 3" and "Flushed Away") and the tidal wave of publicity and great reviews for Bond would give "Casino Royale" the edge. I was wrong. Haughtily wrong. If a blog can hang its head in shame, consider mine hanged. On the other hand, I'm delighted that director George Miller has scored another triumph. He is, to my mind, one of the most interesting and distinctive directors working today. The Mad Max movies, "Lorenzo's Oil," the Babe movies (one of which he shepherded and one he directed) and now "Happy Feet." And amidst all the talk of "Happy Feet," I keep stumbling over quick little bursts of praise for "Babe: Pig In The City," the much maligned sequel to "Babe" that I loved. This is the first weekend all year that two movies grossed more than \$40 million. It's also the third best opening for an animated movie this year, after the \$68 mil for "Ice Age: The Meltdown" and \$60 mil for "Cars," which everyone derided as a stumble by Pixar until it cruised along to \$457 mil worldwide. Here are the 14 animated movies of the year and their final US grosses. I believe we've seen more animated movies released in 2006 than in any year in cinematic history. And there's still one more to go: Luc Besson's dreadful looking, dead on arrival "Arthur and the Invisibles," due out Dec 15.

1. Cars -- \$244 million US total box office
2. Ice Age: The Meltdown -- \$195 million
3. Over The Hedge -- \$155 million
4. Open Season -- \$146 million
5. The Wild -- \$137 million
6. Monster House -- \$ 73 million
7. Barnyard -- \$ 72 million
8. Curious George -- \$ 58 million
9. Flushed Away -- \$ 48 million (and counting)

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