

De Niro film leads US box office

Film star Robert De Niro has returned to the top of the North American box office with his film *Hide and Seek*.

The thriller shot straight to the number one spot after taking \$22m (£11.7m) at the box office. De Niro recently spent three weeks at the top with comedy *Meet The Fockers*, which was at number five this week. Oscar hopefuls *The Aviator*, *Million Dollar Baby* and *Sideways* all cashed in on their multiple nominations with stronger ticket sales.

In *Hide and Seek*, De Niro plays a widower whose daughter has a creepy imaginary friend. Despite lukewarm reviews from critics, the film took more than the expected \$18m (£9.5m). "The element of a real actor in a psychological thriller certainly elevated it," said Bruce Snyder, president of domestic distribution at 20th Century Fox. Clint Eastwood's *Million Dollar Baby* led the Oscar hopefuls with \$11.8m (£6.3m), coming in at number three during its first weekend of wide release. *The Aviator*, a film biography of Howard Hughes that leads the Oscar field with 11 nominations, was at number six for the weekend with \$7.5m (£4m). Oscar best-picture nominee *Sideways* entered the top ten for the first time in its 15th week of release. It came in seventh \$6.3 (£3.35m). Last week's top film, Ice Cube's road-trip comedy *Are We There Yet?*, slipped to second place with \$17m (£9m), while *Coach Carter* fell two places to number four, taking \$8m (£4.25m) in its third week. Rounding out the top ten were *In Good Company* - starring Dennis Quaid and Scarlett Johansson - *Racing Stripes* and *Assault on Precinct 13*.