

translucent skylight, which glows at night like a beacon. "It's not often that you get to raise the roof."

Alexandra Lange

Joseph BASTIANICH
Mario BATALI

The Italian Renaissance

You could trace their success to conventional origins: impeccable culinary training, authentic Italian bloodlines, dynastic connections to the food business. But with Joseph Bastianich and Mario Batali—the master of the room and master of the kitchen, respectively, behind Babbo—you'd be missing the key element: perfectionism. "We like to think about the details," Batali says, explaining their chemistry. As friends, they shared meals imagining the ideal restaurant. Since both were established in the business—Bastianich comes from the family that owns Felidia and Batali has both Pó and his television show, *Molto Mario*—"neither of us needed to make money," Bastianich explains. "So we just focused on the perfect incarnation of an Italian restaurant; everything else took care of itself." Their three-star culinary success in winning Americans over to exotic seafood and organ meats as well as their financial robustness (Bastianich says: "We probably make more money in restaurants than most people do") have led to Lupa Osteria Romana, a more casual venue that they share with a third partner, and Italian Wine Merchants, a wine store they recently opened off Union Square. A seafood restaurant is coming next year in the theater district. After that? "There is no four-star Italian restaurant in New York," Batali points out. "How would you do that?" Bastianich ponders, clearly already thinking through the answer.

Marion Maneker

Vince McMAHON

Ringmaster

To the extent that the WWF is scripted "sports entertainment" spectacle, the wildly crude, wildly popular circus of the nineties, chairman of the board Vince McMahon is nothing less than a postmodern P. T. Barnum. But to the extent that it's a series of story lines filled with larger-than-life heroes and nefarious villains, he's also a television-age Cecil B. DeMille. "Our detractors would say that the secret to our success is the sexuality and aggression," says McMahon, "but we do a mini-movie every Monday and Thursday night. It's a combination of action-adventure, athleticism, comedy, talk show, and soap opera set to music." Of

course, in the sense that the WWF went public in October with a \$175. million IPO, McMahon is also a lowbrow Walt Disney—a visionary who built a multimedia, multi-merchandised, multi-million-dollar business on an ensemble of unforgettable cartoon characters like Sable and "Stone Cold" Steve Austin. And despite head butts, body slams, and half-naked women, the WWF is decidedly a family affair: His son, Shane; his wife, Linda; and his daughter Stephanie are all in on the action. "My background was a little volatile when I was young," says McMahon. "One of my biggest accomplishments has been a stable family environment. It's been a tremendous sense of pride that they want to be a part of this."

Anna Rachmansky

NEW YORK AWARD WINNER: MUSIC

Jay-Z

Boomtown Rap

As the Dow rocketed past 11,000, the biggest music star in America was rapping his own Horatio Alger story about how he picked himself up out of a "Hard Knock Life" in Brooklyn's Marcy housing project. Born Shawn Carter, the six-foot-four 29-year-old Jay-Z led hip-hop's takeover of the pop charts by proving that a rapper could sell 5 million albums, sample a song from *Annie*, and still retain enough street cred to make the cover of *The Source*. With a musician's ear for flow and a reporter's eye for lyrical detail, Jay-Z proved that big business—of any kind—was just a hustle not so different from the one he learned growing up on the streets of Brooklyn. His *Hard Knock Life, Volume 2* won a Grammy for best rap album, and the self-described "eight-figure nigga" even got into the spirit of the moment by renting one of the splashiest houses in the Hamptons and throwing the summer's most celebrated Fourth of July party. "Meeting new people is important to me," he said over the summer. "Maybe I can help you in my field; maybe you can help me in your field." Not that hip-hop isn't tougher than other businesses; Jay-Z now faces assault charges for allegedly slashing Entertainment executive Lance "Uñ" Rivera during a brawl at the Kit Kat Club on December 2; the gossip is that Jay-Z believed Rivera bootlegged his forthcoming fourth album. It's due out in time for the millennium—as if Jay-Z didn't have enough zeroes after his name.