

VAULTY FAIR



THE HIT MEN

BRIAN GRAZER and **RON HOWARD**, producer and director, respectively; partners in Imagine Entertainment.

Thirty-seven total films, with a worldwide gross of \$4 billion, including the Ron Howard pictures *Ransom*, *Apollo 13*, and *Parenthood*, along with *The Nutty Professor*, *Bowfinger*, and *Liar, Liar*.

Some Y2K these guys had, releasing the year's single biggest movie, *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, which Howard also directed (gross to date: \$260 million), as well as another weighty hit, *Nutty Professor II: The Klumps* (\$124 million). As if that weren't enough, in October they re-upped their lucrative and long-standing production deal with Universal. The only real blips on the screen were the failure of Pop.com, their Internet venture with DreamWorks (well, who *didn't* have an Internet failure last year?), and ABC's hasty cancellation of Imagine Television's *Wonderland*, the psychiatric-hospital drama, which, it should be noted, was the most highly praised new show on TV last season. But the real accomplishment of this partnership, which dates back to 1982, is the way they have continued to produce smart, heartfelt mass entertainments without a hint of condescension. Like Howard Hawks or William Wyler—old-school directors whose range Ron Howard approaches—they are mainstream in the very best, most honorable sense of the word.

Photographed by Michael O'Neill at Madame Tussaud's wax museum in New York City on February 6, 2001.