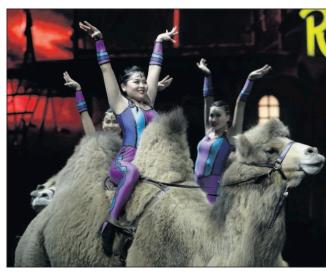
Love it or hate it, people have opinions on the circus

Ringling Bros. folds big top

By TAMARA LUSH and JOSH REPLOGLE Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Reaction to news that the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was closing after 146 years — from saddened celebrities to elated animal rights advocates — flew as fast as a flying trapeze.

Feld Entertainment, owner of the iconic circus, broke the news to circus employees Saturday night that the show would close permanently in May. The reasons cited for the closure were falling ticket sales, high operating costs, changing public tastes in entertainment — and prolonged battles with animal rights groups.



AP Photo/Chris O'Meara

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey acrobats ride camels during a performance Saturday.

Some well-known fans took to Twitter to mourn.

Basketball star Shaquille O'Neal wrote on Twit-""noooooo pls don't ter: whyyyyyyyyyyyyy

noooooooo nooooooooo." Donnie Walhberg recalled when New Kids on the Block played with de la Soul at Madison Square Garden with Ringling. "dancing

on elephant dung!" he tweeted. Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee took to Twitter to bemoan the show's end. "Greatest Show on Earth

won't be seen by future generations. Thanks for the memo-However, fondness for

the circus was not universal. Actress and animal rights advocate Pamela Anderson wrote, simply: "It's over!" And Ingrid Newkirk, president of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, claimed victory.

"We've been protesting the circus vigorously for 36 years since our inception," she said. "We see this as a wonderful evolution in human

After the news broke, circus fans ran out to get tickets for "The Greatest Show on

Laurice Marier, a 45-year-

manager, said she rushed out to buy tickets for the Orlando show on Sunday.

"When I think of a circus, I think of childhood, and I think we all want to recapture who we were," she said. "To just have that one last moment of recapturing your childhood, that's what provoked me to buy the tickets today."

Marvin Freeman Orlando, who bought tickets for Sunday's show, had adored the elephants before they were removed from the show in 2016 following costly years of litigation with animal rights groups.

"Because, you could be down in the first row and the ground would bounce up and down, you could smell it and say, here they come! Now, it's just terrible," he said. "What do you do? No clowns anymore, no trained dogs any-

old entertainment production more, there's just a whole part of Americana that's gone.

Kay Baker, a 57-year-old office coordinator in Lexington, Kentucky, recalled fondly how when she was a child, she'd purchased a chameleon at the circus one year that lived for about a year. Over the years she brought her child, then her grandchildren, to the circus. But she gradually noticed a change in quality.

"I thought the show had deteriorated. It didn't have as much trapeze artists and those kinds of acts. There were people riding motorcycles around ramps. To me, it wasn't even the circus anymore.'

She was also torn between her magical childhood memories and her feelings of unease about the performing animals.

"I'm such an animal lover, it breaks my heart to see them, she said. "It saddens me. Now it doesn't entertain me."

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