

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 Twitter: "nooooo pls don't close whyyyyyyyyyyyyyy

noooooo0000 noooooo0000." Singer Donnie Wahlberg 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 memories, RB!"

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 awareness."

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

Laurice Marier, a 45-year-

old entertainment production 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 of 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-

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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Published: January 17th, 18th and 19th, 2017.

CROSSWORD by Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	39 Wilde-beest	DOWN	20 Abound
1 Gush	41 Actor LaBeouf	1 Easy targets	22 Thunder god
5 Jungfrau, for one	43 Potassium source	2 Ship's front	23 Varieties
8 Band boosters	46 Pinch, as in pie crust	3 Aachen article	25 Sit-up targets
12 Met solo	50 Eventful periods	4 Ambush	26 Dove's call
13 Meadow	51 Postal nuisance	5 Carte lead-in	27 Finger woe
14 Grate	54 Director Kazan	6 Muumuu	29 Shove
15 Pulled-back hairstyle	55 "—" was saying ...	7 Buddies	31 Ms. Farrow
17 Bart's sister	56 Waffle brand	8 Van Gogh venue	32 Half a dozen
18 "Peachy!"	57 Survey	9 Square-rigger	34 Satyr's cousin
19 Artery inserts	58 Knock out	10 "Hey!"	38 Crop grower
21 Play parts	59 Optimistic	11 Hot tubs	40 Twangy
24 Curved letter		16 Pampering, for short	42 "Othello" villain
25 Needing liniment			48 Russian jets
28 Aspiration			49 Tactic
30 Mornings (Abbr.)			52 Mex. neighbor
33 Fluffy scarf			53 Chill in the air
34 Public meeting			
35 Sundial numeral			
36 Junior			
37 — and crafts			
38 Linen source			

Solution time: 23 mins.

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