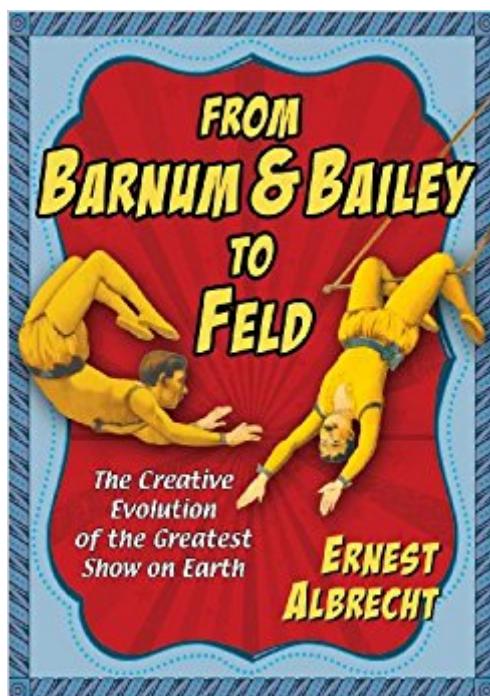


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From Barnum & Bailey To Feld: The Creative Evolution Of The Greatest Show On Earth



Synopsis

Since its inception in 1872, the Greatest Show on Earth has continually transformed itself to meet changing tastes and cultural shifts. Over the course of its long existence, it has been at various times a biblical spectacle and historical pageant, a ceremonial introduction to the peoples and cultures of the world, and a fairy tale masque. It has also featured sights ranging from gladiatorial combat and aerial daredevils to oddities of nature and foolhardy wonders. This work chronicles the colorful artistry of the Greatest Show on Earth from its beginning to 2010, revealing how each of 12 changes in management brought about changes in style and content. More than 50 photographs bring the flamboyant performers and amazing spectacles to life in this informative appreciation of the circus and its evolution.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Bold illustrations...clear and informative...Albrecht's account balances readability with citations of primary sources that scholars will appreciate." --Library Journal "An erudite examination of America's most enduring entertainment empire. Eminently readable, the book is filled with details that bring the history alive. Both serious circus historians and casual readers will be rewarded with surprises throughout. Insightful and revealing, this volume is a must for circus enthusiasts of all stripes, masterfully balancing meticulous documentation of a mammoth commercial enterprise with critical evaluation of the unique personalities that held the reigns of power." --Circus Verlag / Planet Circus

Ernest Albrecht is the editor/publisher of Spectacle, now a free, online magazine devoted to reviews

and features of the contemporary circus. He is also the author of three previous books related to circus history.

Great book

Great book, great service

This book is good and important. Among the thousands of books written about circus, this is the rare one that comprehensively addresses the overlap of creativity, business, and the original foundation of circus — the animal-human partnership, over the long history of the Greatest Show on Earth. Starting in the second century of American circus, that show's history runs from Barnum in his late-career venture in circus in 1871 (when he leapt to take credit for partners' ideas and older practices), to his crucial partner Bailey, and through the Ringling family, to the current producers, the Feld family. Avoiding traditional sentimentality about circus, the book offers the stuff of good history: a wealth of specific evidence, crafted in an interesting narrative. That evidence includes both extensive research and decades of the author's personal experience reviewing circuses, an invaluable combination.

This is a circus junkie's dream. The book is an excellently researched and written history of the evolution of the Barnum and Bailey Circus to its current manifestation run by Kenneth Feld's daughters. I learned so much about the celebrities and spectacles staged over the years. There are many wonderful visual aids to enhance your enjoyment including one in which well over thirty elephants are posed in tutus each one with its front legs on the back of the one in front. I never fully realized how extravagant it all was. Even today there is so much care and effort put into the production. I wish it was coming to town so I could go.

Well written and insightful. The author examines what it takes to capture the public imagination when your stage is a massive big top or a multi-thousand seat arena. Carefully researched and thoroughly documented, the book will be welcomed by scholars and enjoyed by circus enthusiasts of all stripes. Highly recommended.

Circuses with live animals are a thing of the past, thankfully. People are wising up. The pain and suffering the animals endure is not worth it for an hour of 'entertainment'. It was hard to look at the

pictures of elephants and big cats. Although I was intrigued with the history in this book, I couldn't make it thru.

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