

The Return of the Greatest Show on Earth: The Ringling Circus [B2]

Venite, signore e signori! Dopo una pausa di sei anni, ritorna il più grande spettacolo del mondo, il circo Ringling Bros., con una tradizione che risale al XIX secolo: prodezze incredibili, domatori di fiere e acrobazie impressionanti.



Known as The Greatest Show on Earth, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus has been captivating audiences, with incredible acrobatics and [death-defying stunts](#), for almost one hundred and fifty years. And after a hiatus of six years, it's returning this autumn, with a promise by its owners, Feld Entertainment, "to make The Greatest Show On Earth even greater!"

BRIEF HISTORY

A cohort of several different circus [troupes](#), the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is famously associated with the Ringling brothers, a family of circus owners and performers who had their first performance in Mazomanie, Wisconsin in 1882. The brothers [went on](#) to create one of the biggest travelling circuses in the US, and began buying other circuses too.

For years, their biggest rival was the Barnum & Bailey Circus, and after its owner died in 1906, they bought and began to operate that circus as well.

CHANGING TIMES

For a while the brothers operated the two circuses separately, before amalgamating them in 1919, to form the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Over the decades that followed, their circus went through many changes. After Feld Entertainment bought it in 1967, it eliminated the sideshow which had become controversial by then. In 2016, the use of elephants was prohibited because of [concerns](#) over animal [welfare](#). Despite these changes and the circus's iconic status, Feld Entertainment ended all performances in 2017 because of financial difficulties.

JAW-DROPPING MOMENTS

In 2022, however, Feld Entertainment began auditioning artists all over the world for a new version of the circus, which will begin with a tour of over fifty cities across America. The new version has been compared to Cirque du Soleil, as it won't have exotic animals, but instead [revolve around daredevil](#) performers and contortionists. "The live production of The Greatest Show On Earth will celebrate amazing talent from around the world," promises Feld Entertainment, "[displaying](#) incredible [feats](#) that [push the limits](#) of human potential and creating [jaw-dropping](#) moments."

THE SIDESHOW

In the 19th and early 20th century many circuses began to offer sensationalist sideshows in addition to their mainstream acts. Sideshow acts could include things like [fire-eating](#), [sword-swallowing](#), knife-throwing, body-piercing, lying on a [bed of nails](#), walking up a [ladder](#) of sharp swords, and more. Sometimes, circuses offered something similar to the so-called

“freak shows” associated with [fairgrounds](#). Typically, these shows included animals and humans with “abnormalities”, such as giants and [dwarfs](#), “[armless wonders](#)”, “[bearded ladies](#)” and even “four-legged girls”. Illusions and magicians were also common, as well as automatons and other curious inventions. Sideshows were once viewed as a [suitable amusement](#), and were profitable for the showmen who exploited performers’ disabilities for profit. Today they are highly controversial, although there have been attempts to reform and revive them as an art form and a job opportunity for professional performers.

Glossary

- **daredevil** = spericolati
- **displaying** = esibire
- **push the limits** = oltrepassare i limiti
- **dwarfs** = nani
- **armless wonders** = prodigi senza braccia
- **stunts** = acrobazie
- **went on** = continuare
- **concerns** = preoccupazioni
- **revolve around** = girare intorno
- **feats** = gesta, prodezze
- **bearded ladies** = donne barbute
- **sword-swallowing** = mangia spade
- **suitable** = adatto
- **death-defying** = che sfidano la morte
- **welfare** = benessere
- **jaw-dropping** = sbalorditivi (lett. che lasciano a bocca aperta)
- **ladder** = scala
- **fairgrounds** = luna park
- **amusement** = divertimento
- **troupes** = compagnie
- **fire-eating** = mangiafuoco
- **bed of nails** = letto di chiodi