

A Mostly Pleasing, Traditional, Three-Ring Circus

Reviewed by Charles I. Meltzer

The "Guv'nor," John Pugh, has assembled a seventeen display, very traditional, three-ring circus. This does not mean it is old hat. There are enough new acts, novelties and reworked older ones to keep up a high level of audience interest.

The show is especially strong in aerial acts. The innovative eight-masted vinyl big top showcases these beautifully. The absence of quarterpoles and eye-distracting superfluous décor give this venue a cathedral-like quality.

Lee Ketchum's combo and original score provide the musical accompaniment. The music for the highwire display and the mixed group of exotic animals is particularly appealing. Live music is an absolute must to accompany a circus performance, and the inevitable timing variations of the acts. This reviewer wonders if the inclusion of some music already in the public domain might not be advantageous to the musical setting.

Jimmy James handles the announcing chores with superb phrasing, diction and modulation unequalled in the profession. His commanding presence, mixed with southern charm and graciousness, contribute much to the flow of the show. He has taken on the aura of legendary European ringmasters. He is authoritative without being overbearing or verbose. This show needs no stretch.

This review is of the two opening performances given in Deland, Florida on March 15. It is assumed that the few slow spots and prop glitches that occurred at this early date will be easily corrected. The mast-mounted ring lighting is quite good. Eye glare is not a problem to either audience or performers. Six follow spots are well utilized. No act is left in the dark in mid-

bow. This practice has been noticed recently on other shows. It tends to kill applause, an audience's prime interaction, and a lot of their fun. Producers who use this as a show tightening technique might consider shortening their pitches and intermissions, instead. The length of these two elements is often in inverse proportion to the attendance at next year's circus.

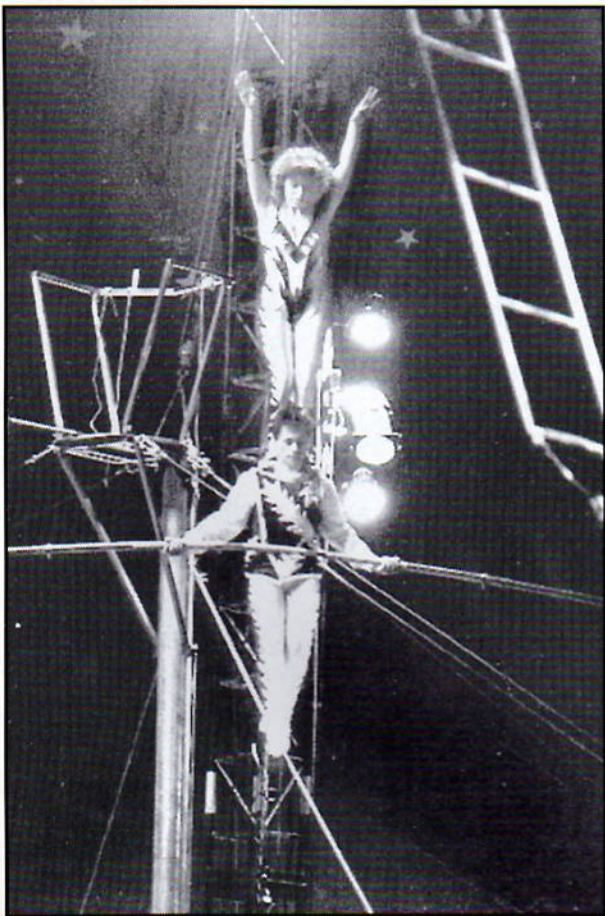
The opening act marks Josip Marcan's return to Cole Bros. after several years in Europe. The now trim master trainer presented his tigers in his usual quiet manner. The tiger's tricks are this act's feature, not the trainer's glitz or fake bravado. Several new cats will need to be fully integrated before the act achieves its previous quality. This style of cage act is in direct opposition to the animal activists' misplaced claims of abuse. The beauty, condition and fecundity of the animals are all testaments to Marcan's animal care expertise.

While the fine mesh arena is removed, the Grantcharov Duo presents its aerial motorcycle. The kids especially enjoy this diversion. Teens "groove" on the noise and movement of this kind of act.

A trick clown car is the next offering. There are amusing moments here; however, the inclusion of more of the standard bits from other clown cars would much improve this gag. It needs to build to a bigger bang! [*This prop did not work during the show's New Jersey appearances.*]

Must all clowns now be augustes? A good white face reads better in large tent.

The clown filler is followed by the much-improved walk-around spec. Barry Sloan has built or rebuilt the sparkling group of floats. The brightly-blanketed Herriott exotic lead stock



The highwire duo of Werner and Aura Guerrero show their amazing versatility.

