



Tricks performed by dogs were one of the circus' highlights. Here, poodles dressed as clowns hop around the center ring.



A circus performer rides a 13,000 pound elephant into the center ring.



Performer Alan Gold shakes the paw of one of many tigers in a caged arena in the center of the circus tent. The circus also featured tricks with several other animals.

Circus Vargas visits Bryan

Show proves disappointing for some spectators

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Editor's note: The name "Circus Vargas" conjures up images of laughing clowns, smiling children, death-defying trapeze performances and entertaining animal acts. It was with many of these preconceived notions that The Battalion last week decided to dedicate its weekly picture page to the California-based traveling circus.

We thought our efforts would produce a lighthearted story about an enjoyable day at the circus. We were wrong. Both our photographer and our feature writer, along with many other people who attended the circus this weekend in Bryan, found themselves enjoying the circus much less than they had expected. We feel compelled to report about the circus the way we — and many others — found it.

With the exception of a few interesting performances, it would be dis-

honest to label last weekend's Circus Vargas as "entertaining."

In short, it was a sneak preview to ultimate boredom.

If the way the circus was managed was any indication of what audiences can expect of future public entertainment, we could be in for an extremely expensive letdown.

If I ever had any doubts before about the stereotype of carnival people, the arrogance and suspicion that was evident in most of the circus' staff had me convinced it was true before I left.

It all started when I entered the circus tent. Workers started hounding me in three different languages, wanting to see my ticket stub. They were scared to death someone was trying to get in without paying. In looking back, it's a little ironic when I recall several toddlers begging their parents to take them home before intermission.

In all fairness, some of the trapeze and acrobatic acts were enjoyable. But just when it seemed there might be a positive turn of events, some high-pressure salesperson would en-

gage in a screaming match, trying to ram overpriced souvenirs down spectator's throats.

Older spectators didn't seem to appreciate the noise since it began to drown out the pre-recorded big band music which, for some spectators, highlighted the evening's festivities.

Fortunately, professionally designed costumes and a salute-to-America theme revived the audience. As impressive as the costumes were, however, they couldn't make up for the amateur performances given by the performers who wore them.

For a moment, it was like *Deja vu*. I felt like I was in junior high again watching teen-age pep squad girls out of unison making fools of themselves. The improvisational kicking and bouncing the show girls did were far from the precision routines they should have been.

Most of the girls were gorgeous and probably could have fooled the audience, but because of the confused expressions on their faces,

even some children were not fooled.

After a while, my feelings of disappointment began to turn into sympathy for the performers. I was embarrassed for them.

One of the more interesting attractions involved three men, called the Mayans, who formed human geometrical designs using their strength, concentration and agility. It managed to trigger some *oohs* and *ahhs* from the audience. Other enjoyable acts included various zoo animals that performed stunts such as balancing, sitting and taking bows. These performances were refreshing for the sake of maintaining children's attention.

Aside from the attractive costumes, patriotic music and talented animals, the event may have caused some spectators to think long and hard before ever again spending \$8.50 on a show that could have been twice as entertaining for half the price.

Trey Hellmond, a Bryan resident, said the show also could have had better seating arrangements.

"They sent me to an awkward seat," Hellmond said. "Most people were sent to the two opposite ends of the tent and most of the acts were in the center. For what they charge here, they should use that money to do something about it."

Mary Peron, a Hearne resident who hadn't been to a circus in more than 10 years, said there were some parts of the performance that were amusing, but she thought the show cost entirely too much and came up short overall.

"When you consider how much (money) they bring in from even the small souvenirs, it bothers me that they would still charge such an unusually high price for admission," she said.

She added that the money could be used more efficiently towards quality entertainment.

Some acrobats do deserve recognition for their bravery during trapeze stunts near the show's conclusion. But before the show ended, the exit sign was beckoning those who spent their hard-earned money on a show that was, at best, mediocre.



Clowns model several elaborate costumes during a patriotic section of the show.



Members of a group known as the Mayans perform an acrobatic stunt. Part of the May-

ans' show involves the creation of geometrical designs with their bodies.