

# Roll up, roll up...

...before it's too late!

**R**oll Up! Roll Up! at the State Library of New South Wales brings to life the wonderful theatre and artistry of Australia's last surviving traditional travelling circuses.

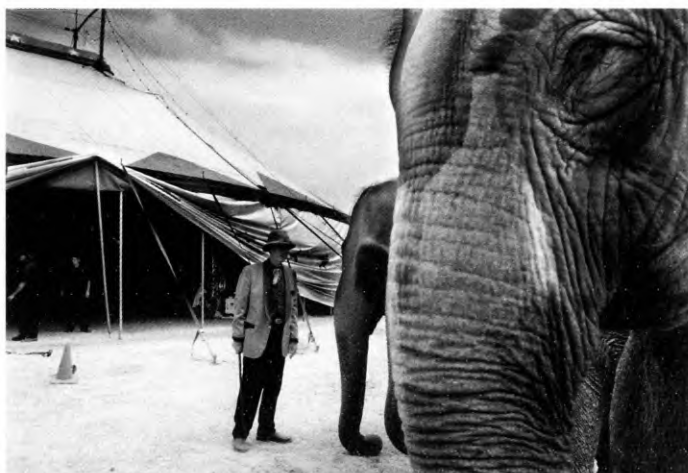
Opened on 9 September 2002, the exhibition presents more than fifty striking black and white images by outstanding Australian photo journalist Brendan Esposito, who spent three months in 2001 travelling around Australia photographing the remaining eleven 'greatest shows on earth'.

State librarian and chief executive Dagmar Schmidmaier said: 'Brendan's comprehensive collection of circus photographs is a historically important body of work because one day it may be all that remains of this dying art form.'

In his first solo exhibition, Brendan captures the artistry and innocence of circus life and its performers. In particular, the delightful, behind the scene goings-on between each act — the costume changes, applying make-up, directing the animals.

'I wanted to photograph the movement and the amazing athleticism of the circus performers, not so much their living conditions,' said Brendan, who had never been to the circus until last year.

'Hollywood often paints circus people as 'carnies', drifters or runaways, but the fact is it's a family environment and that was really appealing,' said the father of five. 'It's not a job for them, it's an existence.'



Elephants and keeper from the Lennon Bros Circus, one of the images from the Roll Up Roll Up exhibition at the State Library of New South Wales

The circuses featured include: Robinsons, Perry Bros, Sunrise, Royale, Silvers, Joseph Ashton, Lennon Bros, Burtons, Ashtons, Xsavia and Stardust. The smallest circus Brendan photographed was Robinsons, with a husband and wife team, five dogs in tutus, one goat and a monkey.

A selection of the circus photographs will be added to the State Library's extensive photographic collection.

*Roll Up! Roll Up! Circus Photographs* by Brendan Esposito is free at the State Library of New South Wales until 1 December 2002. General inquiries: 02 9273 1414. ■

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