

Lions and tigers and smartphones: The circus now has an app

June 9 2016, by Tamara Lush



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus entertainers during a rehearsal for "Out of This World" Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired it's iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

Now that Ringling Bros. Barnum & Bailey Circus has retired its iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their

smartphones and screens.

So Feld Entertainment, the company that owns the circus, is rolling out an app along with a new space-themed show.

The app allows people to take circus-themed selfies that will be broadcast live during the show and can be shared on social media. Users also can play games, buy tickets and interact with performers once inside the stadium or tent. Users also earn points and compete against others.

"We had to ask ourselves: What does it mean to be 'The Greatest Show on Earth' in 2016?" Feld spokesman Sam Gomez said, referencing the famous circus slogan. "It had to involve digital in some way."

This is the first new Ringling circus that doesn't offer elephants. Last month, Feld pulled its remaining elephants from the show and moved them to a conservation center in central Florida.

Ringling's new show, called "Out of This World," has the usual array of flying acrobats, clowns and some animals—including big cats, horses and rescue dogs. There also are Cossack riders that perform stunts on horseback.

The storyline is based in outer space. But the show's new signature is ice; skilled skaters will gyrate and speed around the big top as part of the act. Even the performers on two wheels—the motorcyclists—will take a spin on the frozen floor.



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus entertainers during a rehearsal for "Out of This World" Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired it's iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

"Our goal is to create a production where the audiences don't know where the floor ends and the ice begins," said Alana Feld, the executive vice president and producer for Feld Entertainment.

It opens at the Staples Center in Los Angeles on July 14.

Feld executives have said that it's difficult to organize tours of three traveling circuses to 115 cities each year and that fighting legislation that bans large or exotic animals in each jurisdiction is expensive.

Feld has a herd of 40 Asian elephants, the largest in North America. The company says it will continue a breeding program, and the animals will be used in a cancer research project.



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus entertainer rides a horse during a rehearsal for "Out of This World" Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired its iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



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In this June 1, 2016 photo, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus entertainer Davis Vassallo, right, helps his daughter Adriana with her skates before a rehearsal Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired its iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus Ringmaster Johnathan Lee Iverson helps his son Matthew with a wireless microphone before a rehearsal Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired its iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Alana Feld, executive vice president and producer for Feld Entertainment, gestures during an interview Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired its iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)



In this June 1, 2016 photo, Sam Gomez, vice president of digital marketing for Feld Entertainment, shows off the new Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus smartphone app during an interview Wednesday, June 1, 2016, in Palmetto, Fla. Now that Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey has retired it's iconic elephants, executives under the big top say they must do more to draw a younger generation of fans, many of whom are glued to their smartphones and screens. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

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