

LOOMIS BROS. CIRCUS in Kissimmee FL



text by Maxine House and photos by Howard Pace

Melvino welcomes attendees to the lot!

Ringmaster Justin Loomis

The Loomis Bros. Circus again performed inside the air conditioned KVLS Pavilion at Osceola Heritage Park in

Kissimmee FL on August 8, 2018. Probably often used for livestock shows, the building only had space for two rings. Bleachers were 🇺🇸



Aaron Caballero Sr.



Rola Bola



Yulissa Caballero

on three sides; concessions, food and face painting near the back entrance. The show seemed to have plenty of staff wearing black or red T-shirts with the Loomis logo.

The performance began on time in ring two with Ringmaster Justin Loomis wearing a red sequined coat with tails, black pants and a tall black top hat. "It's showtime!" While he sang "Sawdust, Spangles, and Beads," the cast of 18 performers entered the ring twirling ribbons or hula hoops or juggling.

This quickly morphed into the unicycling Whiz Kids act. Back from last season the Caballero family provided several acts. Father Aaron in clown makeup, Aaron Jr (14), Adal (12) and Yulissa (15) cycled around the ring performing the usual unicycle maneuvers. Aaron Sr rode the "smallest bicycle" along the top of the ring curb as their finale.

Then in ring one where the steel cage had already been erected, Brian Franzen presented his cat act – three Bengal and two white tigers. His wife Irene tended to the cages and props. The live music greatly enhanced the act: "Eye of the Tiger" and "Shangri-la," when a tiger was perched on the spinning globe.

Back to ring two, Gumar and Irina Matagirotv did their quick change act, now quite common on circuses. This one had the additional trick of Irina changing her glove colors.

A short "light up toy" pitch was given by Justin before in both rings two young men, Yaroslav Matagirotv and George Arestov, whose parents are on the show, performed their rola bola acts. Their fathers acted as prop hands for their sons.

Yulissa Caballero was back in the ring with a hair hang act. Her mother serves as her assistant.

Although Melvino the clown (Aaron Rider) had been highly visible greeting patrons at the door and walking around the arena, this was the only time he performed in the ring. It was rather



Igor and Tatiana Aristov



Angelica Rodriguez



(L-R) Shawn Marren Sr., Tony Bruno, Denis Sherman, Chris Norton, Chris Wise, Greg Amos.

The finale had the entire cast returning to the ring carrying American flags while Justin thanked the audience for coming.

The live band is a great addition to the circus! Hidden above and behind the motorcycle globe, it consisted of six men instead of the usual three. Justin expands the band as the venue calls for it. Members at this gig included conductor/drummer Tony Bruno; keyboard, Shawn Marren, Sr; saxophone, Greg Amos; trumpet, Chris Wise; bass, Chris Norton; and percussion, Denis Sherman. The latter has been on this show for 13 seasons! No taped music was used, and the live musical response to the action is always invaluable.

Loomis Bros. Circus then packed up for their next date in Sebring FL, where Justin expected more animal activists. 🇺🇸

refreshing to have one and only one clown appearance! Melvino nicely did his routine of setting up a slack wire between two folding chairs with its frustrations. He finally laid the rope on the ground, walked it, and styled as his pants fell down.

Bells Super Poodles followed in ring one. This season the poodles have had their fur dyed to look like various animals – a lion, zebra, panda, etc. It made for a cute act and the audience responded favorably.

Evelyn Caballero (18) and Tatiana Arestov presented their hula hoop acts in both rings.

Then in ring two Angelica Rodriguez in a lovely red costume gave a most pleasing hand balancing/chair stacking routine. She piled five chairs, put a table on top, set up a folding chair where she briefly sat down, and then assumed an amazing contortion pose on the chair.

Two men, who had been concessionaires up until this point in the circus, now donned helmets and rode their motorcycles around the large globe in the back between the two rings. While Eric Aguiar and Angelo Coscano did nothing spectacular in the globe, the audience always loves this type of act.

Their act ended the first half of the show for a 20 minute intermission. The elephant ride in ring two at \$10.00 was popular.

A cube act was scheduled to open the second half of the show, but Justin cut it in the 4:30 show because of time constraints. George Aristov, Yaroslav Matagirov, and Temo Rodriguez performed for the 7:30 show.

In both rings Brissell Bells and Evelyn Caballero presented sword balancing/ladder acts.

Igor and Tatiana Aristov did a well coordinated juggling act in eye-catching black and silver costumes.

Paula Rodriguez, sister of Angelica, also in a stunning red costume, used aerial silks. Her sudden rolling drop was well done.

The show ended with the elephants. As Justin put it, “Hold on to your horses, here come the elephants!” Brian Franzen along with Irene presented their pair, one Asian and one African. The day before our visit an animal activist toting a large camera had tried to photograph the “abuse” of the elephants in the ring. She was removed from the building, foully cursing circuses.

A Happy Ending

Nico is an eight-year-old Maine coon cat who has lived his life traveling on the Loomis Bros Circus with Lyne DelMonte. Lyne, the widow of Pinky DelMonte, is a member of the office staff and runs the pony ride concession.

On June 11, in Lawrence SC, a thunder storm frightened Nico into hiding. Lyne looked all over, even staying over an extra day while the show left for its next date. She went door to door and posted signs. No Nico.

Two months later in Kissimmee FL, Lyne got a phone call – a cat had been found. Pictures exchanged on the Internet and phone calls confirmed that it was Nico. Traveling in a crate with an express company, Nico returned to Lyne on the day we visited the show! All of his two-legged friends on the show rejoiced, but most of all Lyne.



Lyne DelMonte holding Nico.

Loomis Bros. "Circus Is Alive" Tour

Palmetto FL

Condorito



text and photos by Gail Perr Czina

Loomis Bros. Circus is now in its 20th year. Traveling to a different town nearly every day, it is the only circus in North America to use three rings and live music. The music under the direction of Tony Bruno added the appropriate excitement and beauty to the acts. Prior to the show and during intermission, tickets for pony rides, elephant rides, face painting and the jumbo slide were available. After the finale, pictures could be taken with some of the performers.

Loomis Bros. Circus tickets are very reasonably priced. It is a show suitable for all ages. In Palmetto, Florida where we saw the show, the circus performed in the air-conditioned convention center which was a welcome escape for the 90 plus degrees outside. Often the circus raises money for a local charity. When the circus moved on to Sebring FL, it was forced to close. The town under pressure from PETA had created an ordinance that forbade exotic animals from performing at the Highlands County Fairgrounds. However, that was not the case in Palmetto where everyone was excited to see tigers and elephants in the show.

Ringmaster Justin Loomis, the world's premier singing ringmaster, directed our attention to each ring. Sometimes only the center ring was featured; other times it was a challenge to keep our eyes on all three rings. The international cast of performers kept us on the edge of our seats.

Miss Angie Rodriquez from Mexico performed her contortionist/balancing act for the first time in the United States. Balancing and contorting on chairs stacked high in the center ring, Miss Angie started the afternoon with a breathtaking performance.

Unicycles



Silks



Brian Franzen's tiger through a ring of fire



Hula Hoops

Next in the center ring, Condorito, a clown in black and white makeup along with one young girl and two young boys, showed their skills on the low and high unicycles. They moved around the ring juggling, twirling hoops and ribbons singularly and joined together. The act ended with the clown riding



Magical Quick Change



Chandelier balanced on forehead while climbing a ladder.



Rola Bola

a very small bicycle around the top of the ring curb. I don't know how he got his huge shoes on the tiny pedals.

Next the ringmaster directed our attention to the gleaming stainless steel cage at the end of the arena. A white Siberian tiger and a royal Bengal tiger did their balancing act, ending with the Bengal jumping through a ring of fire.

Our attention was taken back to the center ring where a couple preformed a "Magical Quick Change". I was amazed by the number of colorful changes. Following the quick-change act, a very talented young man did a rola bola act. His balancing skill was evident as his pile of cylinders grew higher and higher and rolled in different directions. Next a woman took to the air, hanging only by her hair. She twirled ribbons and hoops ending with twirling a fire baton all the time suspended over the center ring.

While the center ring was being prepared for the next act, a clown tried to set up two step stool ladders with a rope tied between them to use as a tight rope. The children laughed and hooted at his antics. "Painted Poodles on Parade", Bells super dogs, entered the arena next. The realistically painted poodles, painted as different animals made you believe that you were really watching a lion, zebra, panda or giraffe performing tricks. The well trained poodles were fun to watch.

The Cirque-style cube manipulation held our attention in three rings. Then a woman in each of the two end rings twirled numerous hula hoops. The motorcycle "Globe of Death" ended the first part of the show. After intermission women in each of the end rings did a variety of balancing acts on ladders. One climbed a free-standing ladder while balancing a light chandelier on her forehead. Another woman maneuvered up and over a free-



Sword balanced while climbing a ladder.



The Franzen elephants

Painted Poodles on Parade



standing ladder with a huge sword balanced on her chin. The Aristov Juggling Duo from Moscow, Russia astounded us with their precise, juggling moves. The interaction between the husband wife team was beauty in motion. Next, "Whiz Kids" did unicycle acts in all three rings.

In ring one, a young woman held our attention as she wrapped and released herself on the silks. Her talent and beauty were a joy to watch.

And finally, it was time for the elephants! People were so happy to see the elephants in the show! The Brian Franzen Asian and African elephants performed their antics ending with one elephant with all four feet on a ball.

This was a jam-packed circus enjoyed by all ages. 📍

Finale



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1277 N. Semoram Blvd, Suite 106; Orlando FL 32807

407-206-1973

www.silzerlaw.com

slc@silzerlaw.com