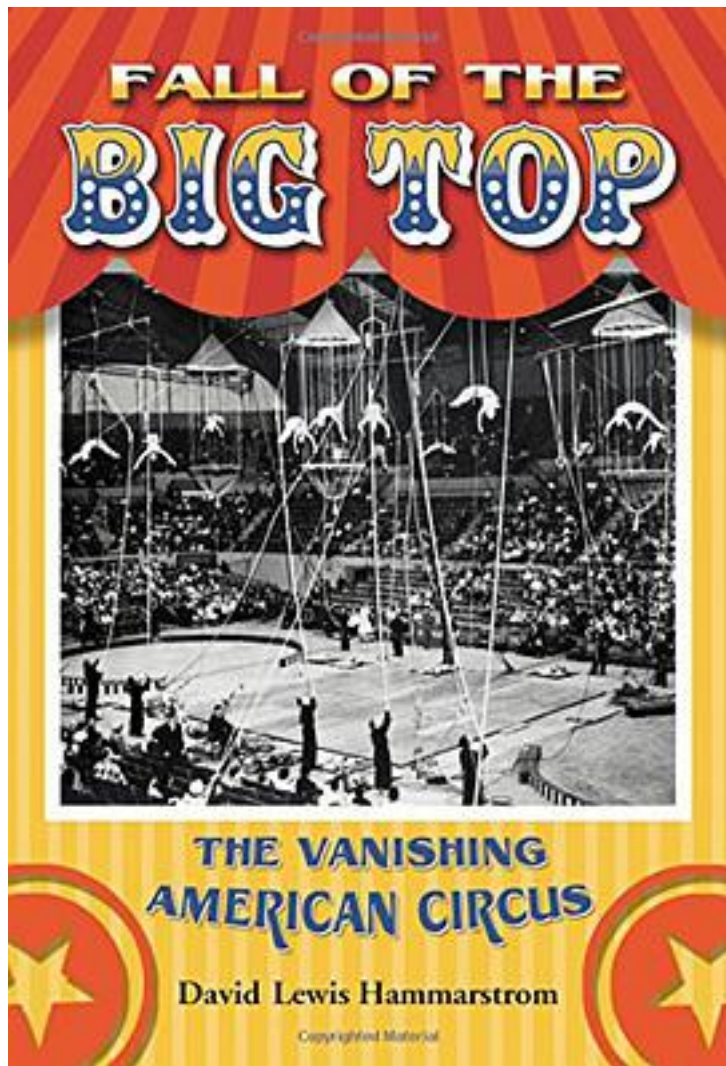


Fall of the Big Top



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Once an eagerly awaited spectacle, the traveling circus????????????that miracle of red wagons, trumpeting elephants and spangled trapeze artists that slipped into town at dawn and disappeared by midnight????????????has all but vanished from the American landscape. This work explores circus history from 1793 to the present and addresses the forces of modern culture (such as the popularity of Cirque du Soleil, and pressure from the animal rights movement) that are pushing big top shows toward what the author calls "circus ballet." Numerous photographs and in-depth interviews conducted with show owners, performers and directors enrich the narrative. Overall, the book reveals a sobering contrast between circuses of yesterday and today, even as it honors the outstanding performers who created, and have sustained, the enduring appeal of the circus.

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