



# Ossie! Ossie!

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THE Oprah Winfrey mania that has gripped Australia for the past 10 days came to a fittingly spectacular climax yesterday as Sydney let out a collective “O” to farewell the megastar talkshow host.

The filming of her two Harbour City shows featured no shortage of megawatt star power. Local heroes such as Russell Crowe, Hugh Jackman, Nicole Kidman, Keith Urban and the Irwin family graced the stage, as did visiting music superstars Bono, Jon Bon Jovi and Jay-Z.

But it was the magnetic presence of the lady herself that had the 6000 audience members on the forecourt of the Opera House in raptures.

None of those in attendance left disappointed, including Winfrey herself.

Dancing on stage to Men At Work’s anthem *Down Under*, Winfrey had the crowd firmly in her grip from the very first time she shouted out “I ... Love ... Australia!”

She then led the delighted ticket winners in a mass chant of “Aussie, Aussie, Aussie”.

The two hour-long shows included various references to Australia’s attractions as part of a package to promote the

country to her 150 million worldwide viewers.

While the legacy of her visit is expected to be measured in many millions of tourist dollars, the joy could be immediately counted in the beaming faces and tears that began to flow in the crowd at the sight of the TV heroine.

Under searing sunshine and with five helicopters doing their best to drown out all the fun, it took Winfrey — in rust-coloured gown for her first show before changing into a billowing pink shirt and full-length white skirt — to hold the attention of the 6000-strong audience.

After following the wardrobe edict to wear bright colours, the crowd erupted as one screaming mass, of mostly women, as their heroine appeared on stage.

Vowing to become an ambassador for all things Australian, Winfrey spoke of her joy and wonder as she gazed out at Sydney’s magnificent harbour from her hotel room.

“I’ve seen a lot and done a lot of things, but when those fireworks started and that O came on the bridge I went into the ugly cry,” she exclaimed.

“This is not my country,

but that was pretty special. And not just because it’s a big ego trip to see my name on the bridge, although it is. I’d position myself in a chair in my hotel room and wait for the sun to go down and call out to people, ‘Come and see my O’. That was very special.

“I will carry that for the rest of my life.”

The final show closed with a spectacular performance of *I Still Call Australia Home* by Aussie guests Urban, Kidman, Crowe, Olivia Newton-John and Jackman, with the help of the Gondwana National Indigenous Children’s Choir.

The renowned generosity of the mega-rich Winfrey was also on show for all to see.

Especially when she summoned Sydney cancer sufferer Kristian Anderson and his wife Rachel to the stage, where she presented them with a cheque for \$250,000 to help in his recovery.

And the gifts didn’t stop there. Every audience member received a gift of a pearl necklace at the first show, while the second audience walked away with a special “O” necklace featuring an Australian pink diamond.

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Clockwise from left: Hugh Jackman files on stage in a harness; Oprah with husband and wife Keith Urban and Nicole Kidman; fans Jessica Gordon and Dan Krigstein with a giant 'O'; and Oprah enters the forecourt



All-star line-up: (left) Kidman, Urban, Jackman, Oprah, Olivia Newton-John and Russell Crowe; (above) Bono kisses the hand of the TV queen; and (below) Jon Bon Jovi with a lucky fan  
Pictures: Ross Schultz, Craig Greenhill, John Grainger, Nathan Edwards

