

Moving farewell to 'wildlife warrior' -This was a made-for-television memorial service which brought together the two contrasting worlds which Steve Irwin occupied: the expansive wilderness of the Australian Outback, and the extraordinary fame of Hollywood.

Sure, there were tributes from stars like Russell Crowe and Cameron Diaz, and a deftly-worded eulogy from Prime Minister John Howard. But the real emotional power came from the family and friends of Steve Irwin, like Wes Mannion, his mate at the Australia Zoo, who broke down in tears as he remembered the day when the Crocodile Hunter saved his life. There was music from a choir wearing the Crocodile Hunter's trademark khaki uniform, and at one stage three elephants were brought into the Crocoseum arena, the poolside stadium where Steve Irwin delighted fans with his wildlife antics. But then he always said that the animals should be the stars.

The biggest cheer was reserved for his daughter, eight-year-old Bindi, who already has her own television

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Irwin's family wore his trademark khaki uniform at the memorial service

show and is set to follow in her father's perilous footsteps. Clearly, she is a natural performer and a youngster of extraordinary poise. The service was interspersed with film of Steve Irwin in action, grappling with crocodiles, staring down snakes - his unique blend of adventurism and bravado which made him a global sensation. The service reached its climax with Steve Irwin's white pick-up truck being loaded with croc-hunting gear, and then driven slowly from the arena. Then staff from the Australia zoo laid a floral tribute, spelling out his catchphrase: "Crikey." It is easy to be cynical, but the effect was genuinely moving. And the show was not over yet. Anthony Field, the blue-shirted member of that other great Australian global phenomenon The Wiggles, leapt energetically onto stage shouting "Croc Rules".

Potty homage - This has been an extraordinary couple of weeks to be in Australia, in no way comparable to the wave of emotion that convulsed the UK after the death of Princess Diana, but fascinating nonetheless. Much of the reaction seems to have been kid-driven by the Crocodile Hunter's young army of adoring fans. And perhaps some of it stemmed from a sense of guilt: that Irwin received greater approbation outside of Australia, certainly at the start of his television career, than at home. Certainly, there has been a very public re-evaluation of his lifetime's accomplishments. Prior to his death, I doubt if many Australians knew the full extent of his conservation work: the fact that he financed so many projects from the dollars generated by his television success. His claim to be a "wildlife warrior" was no idle boast. Though it did not make any of the television specials and retrospectives, one of my favourite tributes came on a radio phone-in show on the afternoon that Steve Irwin was killed. A young mother chirpily recalled the day that her young infant managed to perform potty duties for the first time without any mishaps. In celebration, she told her proud young son that he could call anyone in the world to share the good news. "I want to call the Croc Hunter," came the cry.