

ON THE BALL

Issue 72



Hi Everyone

This time last year we were booking tickets to see Michael and Alfie in the "Together Again" tour which has just finished. Little did we know how much more they would be doing together during 2017!

The highlight for both of us was getting over to New York in May to see their first overseas concert together and meeting up with so many friends. Here's Pat Webb with Michael when the three of us literally bumped into him:



They then did a tour of Australia, which you can read all about in this issue. Another highlight was when they broke the World Record for appearing in the most cities to sign copies of their new CD "Together Again". Next February they will be off to Japan for 3 nights.

Many thanks go to James Gaden and everyone who has contributed to On The Ball and also the Fan Club Facebook page.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy Healthy New Year. It sounds like we will have a lot of Michael to look forward to!

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dear Brennae,

So, we thought 2016 was a pretty extraordinary year in so many ways.... how about 2017 then!!!

There are incredible highs to always remember and enormous lows that challenged us and we will never forget and it's our duty as family, friends, colleagues and members of our communities to embrace all of these triumphs and traumas, learn from them and accept them, and try to make a positive difference because of them, in all our lives.

I'm writing this letter to you from a freezing cold, snow covered, clear blue skied hotel room over looking Aberdeen and it's a breath taking sight. We have 3 shows left for the Arena Tour and it's been the most incredible experience. So many people, coming together to laugh, cry, remember and dance like there's no tomorrow. If you managed to come to any of these shows I just hope that

enjoyed yourself even half as much as we did. It was a total privilege and pleasure.... And a second number 1 album!! Where did it all go so right?
☺

This part of the story and journey with Alfie comes to an end with the 3 concerts in Tokyo and the Car Feast Charity gig in the summer. I would like to thank him so much for sharing the amazing experience. I never expected anything like this to happen for us but as I said in our concerts, keep dreaming because even the seemingly impossible ones can come true.

I'm starting work on a new solo album almost immediately for release next year, there will be a number of solo concerts and shows and maybe even a new musical to look forward to, but for now I think it's time to relish these last few days of 2017

Make the most of being with family and friends and enjoy the precious moments together.

I wish you the most happy of Christmas Holidays and I hope you are spending it with those you love in the way you want and if that's not possible, know that you are in my and everyone of the M.B.F.C's thoughts and prayers.

I hope 2018 is a magical, special year for you, bringing everything you want and those unexpected joys that none of us plan for but which make life worth living.

And I send you all my love and thanks for being the kindest, most thoughtful and supportive people anyone could wish to have in their lives.

Take Care & Good Bless
Michael Owen
X



BALL & BOE: BACK TOGETHER

by Carolyn Bell

The very same day applications for tickets for the *Ball & Boe: Back Together!* TV recording were announced, I learned I had been successful in receiving tickets for the *Strictly Come Dancing* recording which would happen the following day. A trip to London from Yorkshire had to be arranged and I just knew I had to apply for these as well.

I won't pretend the long wait to find out if I had been successful wasn't stressful; why SRO Audiences only gave less than 4 days notice wasn't helpful but at 23.40hrs on the Monday I received the eagerly awaited email, I was successful in receiving priority tickets!

Fast forward to Friday, we joined the queue at the London Studios and eventually received our colour coded wristband. Once inside (in order of wristband number and colour), I must admit the seating allocation appeared bizarrely random; people in front of us were taken to seats on the main floor over to the side block and even though there were many empty seats they decided to send us to the very back row on the elevated section! I was in and wasn't going to complain but observing the way they allocated the remaining seats continued to puzzle everyone around us! With minutes to spare a member of staff came to our row looking for a party of three to move. The woman next to us, who was struggling to see immediately volunteered herself and asked us to join her. We eventually ended up three rows back from the centre of the stage among the VIPs, we were now so close it was brilliant!

After the warm up by Andy Collins (a familiar face from other shows we have attended) who was absolutely hilarious and had me in stitches with his quick wit and humour, the recording began.

The show began with a pre-recorded video of Michael and Alfie talking about what had happened since their first show together and then went into the opening bars of 'You'll Be Back' from *Hamilton*. As I looked behind over my right shoulder I noticed a familiar silhouette in the dry ice dancing along to the music, then at the appropriate moment Michael and Alfie entered the studio from the back of the floor and made their way through the audience interacting with a lucky few as they climbed on stage to finish the song.

Next up was 'As If We Never Said Goodbye' from *Sunset Boulevard*. Their interpretation and harmonies during the song were breathtaking and gave me goosebumps. 'He Lives In You', was next,



backed by members of the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts school, and was absolutely stunning and very moving – but it was difficult to get emotional because I was permanently grinning from ear to ear!

Their first guest was Imelda May, but Alfie introduced her as Brian May, dropping to his knees to bow as 'he' entered the stage. This was the first real moment of humour during the show. They talked about how they loved Queen and sang a couple of bars from Queen songs asking where her Dad was! Imelda sang 'It Should Have Been Me' joined towards the end by the boys harmonising to perfection. Once they had finished this song, I could hear discussions regarding retaking the last song, 'He Lives In You'. Mum and I were hopeful it was going to happen as this is one of our most favourite songs from the new album. Not only did they retake this song, they also had to retake the song with Imelda May due to 'technical issues', an extra bonus!

The next section was the musical genre riff-off when Michael and Alfie sat at the bar singing rock, rap, country and to Michael's delight culminating in Wham's 'Wake Me Up Before You Go Go'. Next up was Jason Manford's performance but we were told the actual scene would be recorded last as it involved some scenery changes. John Farnham's 'You're The Voice' was up next and sung so powerfully, backed once again by the members of the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts school, another wonderful performance.

The finale was going to be another of my favourite songs, 'The Prayer'. I was interested to hear how it would sound sung by two male voices for the first time. No need to worry; it was incredibly beautiful. During this song there was to be dry ice used over the floor which was meant to flow across the stage and down into the

audience but it had other ideas! This meant a lot of fiddling around with equipment and then whilst the dry ice was working like a dream at Alfie's side, Michael's side had stopped working altogether so he decided to 'sulk'! Eventually they decided to give up on using dry ice and said they would add it in later so it would be interesting to see how the special effects team could do this for TV. They then retook 'The Prayer' – damn, another beautiful song we had to sit through again!

Once the main recording had finished the scenery changes were made for Jason's performance; street lamps screwed to the floor, front doors brought in and a park bench placed stage left. Jason began singing 'On the Street Where You Live' and suddenly a familiar figure entered from the left dressed as a street sweeper with



flat cap and dungarees, I was in hysterics as Michael moved across the floor with his brush! His facial expressions were priceless! Next dressed as a policeman with an oversized helmet and misbehaving truncheon, Alfie entered from the left, once again hysterics resumed. Michael and Alfie did their 'Morecambe and Wise' style performance behind poor Jason who delivered his song brilliantly, while everyone in the audience was laughing.

The song concluded with all three of them singing a few bars in harmony; absolutely brilliant, I haven't laughed so much in ages! During the sketch Michael did some sort of strange failed cartwheel and at the end explained that all would become clear later. He was to have a stunt double who would cartwheel onto the stage and then do a back flip which would be edited in later! The funny thing was the stunt double looked nothing like Michael! He was much younger and dare I say slimmer so I will be intrigued to see how that looks on TV!

After nearly two and a half hours the recording was complete and we made our way out of the studios, I was floating on air!

The following day we had our unforgettable 'Strictly' experience – but that's another story...



MICHAEL AND ALFIE'S FAIR LADY

by Nicole Dawson

I took my 5 year old daughter with me to the Meet and Greet at Bournemouth. From the moment Michael and Alfie saw Eliza, they did everything they could to make her evening so perfect. They sang "Wouldn't it be lovely?" from *My Fair Lady* (in honour of her namesake), said she was the prettiest girl in the room, called her a "princess" and Alfie even gave her a handful of chocolate bars at the end! They sang to her throughout the show, waved at her and just made it "the most unforgettable night of her life" (her words!). Thank you so much Michael and Alfie - you are the best!





A SURPRISE ON THE ONE SHOW

Six lucky fans were given a once in a lifetime surprise by the BBC prior to the release of the 'Together Again' album. Here, Jill Clark and Christine Judge recall about their memorable days...

There is a old saying that goes something like this... "All the best things come to thee who waits". Well, for me, that certainly happened on Monday 23rd October 2017, just 19 days after my big 60th birthday. I had the biggest belated birthday surprise that I could never of dreamed of. I thought going to the *Ball & Boe: Back Together!* TV recording five days before my birthday was as good as it got. Little did I know what would happen... Rewind to Thursday afternoon on the 19th October when Christine Judge & I both got a phone call from the BBC's *The One Show* team. They asked us both the same question: would we like to take part in a 'little' surprise for Michael and Alfie, come to London and film our favourite moments of seeing them both on Monday at 12 noon?

I must admit I did think it was all a wind-up and someone had got hold of my name and somehow knew I was a big Michael Ball fan. I would not believe it all until I phoned the mobile number we had been emailed from *The One Show* team and spoke to a young man who said "Oh yes, it is all real!" He sent me all the details, asking for my email address and everything would be sent to me. All the travel arrangements, including the taxi from home, the train tickets, it was all booked and paid for by the BBC!

I had the weekend to think about it all as I was recovering (slowly) from a nasty fall where I had injured my back & ribs. I was in a lot of pain and discomfort and was really not ready to do a long journey on the train again so soon. However all I would have to do was just get up and get ready by 9:00am on the Monday morning. The taxi would be coming to take me to Southampton rail station as we had been booked on the 10:00am train to get to the Olympic Studios near Barnes by 12:00noon.

Well, Monday morning came and was up bright and early so, I GUESS I WAS GOING!

The taxi arrived dead on time, I arrived at station at 9:33am (thanks to light traffic as it was half term) and met Christine as her taxi arrived shortly after mine. We then just had to pick our train tickets up from assistant at the ticket office and even had time for a coffee before our train came in. We had to change trains to Richmond where we were told a taxi would be waiting for us to take us to the studios, where we arrived more or less on time. We were greeted by several of the BBC team and film crew, then introduced to the other fans that had the same phone call as we did inviting us up. There were six of us in total. John, Jess, Maureen from the MBFC with her husband Roy, Lynette, Christine and myself all waiting to see what we have let ourselves in for!

A lady took our drink orders and we were all then lead upstairs to a lounge area which looked like it had been hired by the film crew, as we seemed to be the only one's there! I felt a mixture of excitement and nerves as we all thought that we were there just to share our favourite moments of seeing Michael and Alfie. We all chatted in turn as they had asked us to talk about them both. We were sat round a table talking Ball, then Boe, then Ball, then Boe etc, so the camera would move along each one of us. It seemed to take ages as they kept wanting us to do it again and again. The girl behind the camera said she was having problems (or so she told us) with her camera, so we just went along with it.

We were then asked if we could all come outside of the studios as they wanted to film us all out there, so we did. Again there was lots of filming out there, then we went inside to enjoy our coffee break... if you watched *The One*

Show then you all by now know what then happened. Oh my God! What a shock! What a surprise!! Michael & Alfie jumped down from behind the curtains off the window ledge to come and talk to us! It was all so very, very, special – after we had all got over the shock of seeing them appear, we all had a lovely amount of time with them both, with lots of hugs – I was stuck like glue to Michael! We had photos taken with them, even a cheeky video clip or two Maureen took of me making Michael roar with laughter, and then Michael said we have a little EXTRA surprise! Each of us had our own personally signed advanced copy of the new album before anyone else – and it was the deluxe edition too!

We let them go and we had taxis all waiting for us to take us back to Richmond to get our train home again. We had a total of one hour and 33 minutes that ended up on the screen edited down to just a five or six minute segment, but that didn't detract from what an amazing experience we all had. We were all treated like royalty. What a belated extra birthday surprise! Talk about the icing on my big 60th birthday cake!

It's something that will never be repeated. To think, I have never been able to afford a Meet & Greet package before, and I was actually saving up for one for my 60th birthday treat. Unfortunately they had all sold out for this Autumn/Winter arena tour so I didn't think I'd be able to this year. It really doesn't matter now does it!

They thanked us all for coming, but both Michael & Alfie, plus all the crew looking after us are the ones we really have to thank for giving each one of us such a special, special memory forever. HOW LUCKY WERE WE!?

Jill Clark

I have never had a chance to meet either Michael or Alfie at any of their concerts so when I get a phone call from the BBC on Thursday 20 October, I was speechless. At first, I thought that they wanted us to appear on *The One Show* on Tuesday but oh no, it wasn't like that... and here is my story of a fab few days.

On Thursday 20th October, I got a phone call from the BBC, asking if Jill and I would like to be part of a "surprise" for both Michael and Alfie and would we be free on Monday 23rd to come and do some filming – just to say what our favourite memories were of them. We were not to say anything to anyone, not even on social media due to the surprise, and yes, we were up for it!

On Monday 23rd, our transport was arranged via the BBC and took us to London, ready for the filming at the Olympic Studios. There Jill and I met up with John, Jess, Lynette and Maureen who were also taking part. We were then all greeted by the production team and we sat down. Although the cameras were rolling, we were asked just to casually chat amongst ourselves to make us feel at ease. We were then asked to say our names, who we liked and then waved. The next section was to say altogether 'Together Again Ball & Boe'. Well if we did one take, we did about twenty takes! By now the drinks had arrived but before we could drink them, we were taken outside to get some more shots. We didn't have to speak, just stand there and then they took some still shots of each of us.

We went back in before it rained and had our drinks. I can't remember what was said next but then all of a sudden, guess who appeared behind the curtains – only both Michael and Alfie! Oh my God, didn't we



all scream and they said "who do you think bought the drinks in?" Yep, they bought a tray in each while we were saying "together again Ball & Boe" and none of us knew!

We spent about fifteen minutes with them having cuddles, chats (which were between us and no one else) and then we were given another surprise – their brand new CD that wasn't due out until the 27th and they signed them for us before making a move.

We were all speechless didn't have a clue and then that's when the production team said "Now you know why we made out we were having problems with the cameras!"

Before we knew it, our taxis had arrived, and we made our way home – what a day to remember, however that's not the end of it as on route home I got a call and got invited to

go back up the following day to be part of the audience of *The One Show*.

Still getting over the excitement of yesterday, I once again made my way up to London by train and then by car to the BBC Studio's – oh my God, what a huge place! Once I had gone through security I met up with Ben from *The One Show* and was asked if I would be on camera that evening – recording is one thing but live?! However I said "Yes, okay I am up for it."

The audience all went in and the program was going through a rehearsal. They had the piece up that was filmed the day before with us all and being surprised by Michael and Alfie and then both Alex Jones and Ore Oduba turned round and said "That's you isn't it?" I was so pleased that I was recognised!

Michael and Alfie came on and they both waved to me and I have to admit I was just so calm in being there, despite being told that I may have a camera on me. Sadly, despite the floor manager keeping tabs, he said that they didn't have time to get the camera on me but thanked me for saying yes. At the end of the program the whole audience had a picture taken with everyone in the show.

What an experience I have had over a two day period, I am still on 'cloud 9' now!

For me, it was not only appearing on the TV but also finding out how a show was put together and seeing so much work and how many people are involved – so thank you to both Michael and Alfie and the *The One Show* for asking me – it has been the highlight of the year!

Christine Judge





TWO SHINING STARS, ONE MAGICAL EVENING

by Julie Vidler. Live photos by Carolyn Bell.

Two shining stars and one magical evening. That sums up, my trip to Brighton Saturday.

What an incredible day I had, not only did I get to see Michael and Alfie but, also I was able to meet lots of Fan Club members, in particular two people I have made friends with since meeting at last year's 'Together' concert (again at Brighton!)

I left Hastings for my journey to Brighton and upon arrival, I headed straight to the stage door, where I met up with one of my friends. I was so excited as I knew after months of waiting the day had arrived to see them 'Together Again'.

There were a few other Fan Club members waiting expectantly. It was so lovely to see so many familiar faces among them. After a two hour wait, Michael arrived. He came straight over to me to say hello and immediately commented on the fleece I was wearing (last year's one from 'Together' tour). He said "Ooh, you've got a fleece". I

told him how I was determined to get one for this tour as, I missed out last time. He jokingly said "There's a new one now, there's a whole new fleece!" to which there was a collective "Ohhhh"... I was then lucky enough to have my photo taken with him. I also asked him to sign my photo (Michael chose 'My Family Album' on Radio 2 back in February and I printed off The Vidler Family Album Header from Radio 2 website). I have been fortunate to have met Michael on many occasions, but I *still* get the thrill of talking to him and have my

photo taken, an experience that will *definitely* stay with a young lady we met at the stage door, who had never met Michael before. She was *so* excited about the prospect of meeting him. When her big moment arrived, I offered to take a photo of her with Michael and subsequently printed a copy off for her to take home. The look on her face was a picture, it was so lovely too see. I met her later in the evening and she said it had taken a long time to come back down to earth. I remember the first time I met him and felt exactly the same!

Shortly after Michael arrived, so did Alfie and again I was lucky enough to meet him. I got to shake his hand and have a photo with him. What a lovely, down to earth guy he is!

After the excitement of the afternoon, my friend and I went for a meal in the local Weatherspoons, where we met up with some more Fan Club members. It was so lovely spending time speaking about our shared love of Michael, discussing when we first became fans and our experiences of meeting the man himself. The time went very quickly talking about our favourite topic!

So the time had come, Mr Ball and Mr Boe were beckoning. Off we trotted to the Brighton Centre for the main event. Well, what can I say to sum up the show apart from "WOW!!". The boys certainly didn't disappoint. It was *incredible* from start to finish. The set list was diverse with songs from the album, a Musical Medley interspersed with Country, Pop and a bit of Rock, not to mention a few surprises! Michael and Alfie



were on top form. They were PHENOMENAL. Unsurprisingly they received standing ovations during the evening (so well deserved). Their performance was outstanding. The band and backing singers were amazing too.

Sadly all good things must come to an end and after a brilliant encore (I won't spoil it by saying what it was), that was it for another year. It went far too quickly as far as I was concerned! To sum up, Michael and Alfie did not disappoint. I left the Brighton Centre with a big smile on my face having been thoroughly entertained, wishing that I could go to more dates on the tour.

The finale to my "Ball" of a day was getting the opportunity to have another photo with Alfie. Alfie had got on the coach and a lot of fans had already left. There were only a few of us left. He then appeared at the door of his coach and spent time having photos with people. In the meantime, a member of staff from the Brighton Centre came out and asked people if they wanted a poster, needless to say I grabbed one. I then asked Alfie to sign it which he kindly did and as I say, I got another photo opportunity. The icing on the cake!



So to the end of an AMAZING day. Thank you to all the lovely fans I met during the course of the day, to my friend Helen for the great company and most of all to two fantastic guys who continue to bring so much joy through their amazing music, who never fail to entertain and most of all are the most caring people when it comes to their fans.

Michael and Alfie, you are the best!

REGENT STREET CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

On Thursday, 16th November, Michael and Alfie were invited to perform at the Regent Street Christmas Lights Switch On 2017 in London. The even was broadcast on Heart FM and also featured appearances by Paloma Faith and Clean Bandit.

The streets were packed with people to witness the lights and fireworks that accompanied it. Michael and Alfie performed 'He Lives In You'. Photos courtesy of Gill Tee.



MICHAEL AND ALFIE DOWN UNDER

Anna Carpenter recalls the concert in Melbourne, part of Ball & Boe's five date Australian tour

What a wonderful night.

I could not believe it - Michael and Alfie were coming to Australia! So my mother and I flew on an aeroplane to Melbourne to see their concert so we could attend the meet and greet, as the concert nearest us had sold out of meet and greet packages! We were given a picnic blanket as a gift which I said I would use it in my lounge room so I could use it every night! While we were at the meet and greet, Michael said it had been thirteen years since he had been to Australia - the concert was at the Sydney Opera House which we both had attended and we also attended the meet and greet that night too!

When we got to our seats we were right in the middle of the second row – perfect! When the lights went down you could hear whispers around the theatre as everyone was excited to see the concert! The show started with Michael and Alfie singing ‘Somewhere’ from *West Side Story* off stage and when they came on stage there was thunderous applause. Their performance of ‘You’re The Voice’ had the audience singing and earned them a standing ovation. It seemed like the show had just started and already it was half time!

In the intermission people were discussing with us the last time they had seen Michael or Alfie and how long they had been a fan.

The second half of the concert both Michael and Alfie sang a couple of songs on their own. Michael got a standing ovation when he sang ‘Gethsemene’. They sang a

James Bond Medley and a *Les Mis* Medley which the audience loved. During the concert the audience were dancing, singing and there were four standing ovations.

All to soon the concert had come to an end and there was only one thought to be had - please boys don't leave it too long before you come back to visit us!





JANUARY 2018

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Photo: Carolyn Bell

FEBRUARY 2018

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APRIL 2018

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Photo: Vehibye Yoncu

MAY 2018

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Photo: Carolyn Bell

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Photo: Vehibye Yoncu

AUGUST 2018

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Photo: Vehibye Yoncu

NOVEMBER 2018

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MORE MICHAEL MEETINGS

Sue Osbaldeston sent in these three photos of three generations of Michael fans, as she, her mum and her daughter all had a meet and greet in Leeds. It was particularly special for Sue's mum who is in her eighties and didn't know about the meet and greet until they arrived. Sue is disabled and said Michael and Alfie were really nice, helping her to stand up and keep her balance without her stick. Her daughter is also a big fan now!



Nikki Guttridge took advantage of the Meet and Greet option at Brighton to get this great picture with Michael and Alfie. Earlier in the year, **Helen Grenville** was able to meet Michael outside Wogan House as she was celebrating her 29th wedding anniversary to husband Andrew. Michael signed a card for her and her husband Andrew, making the occasion even more memorable!



Julie Phillips sent in these two pictures of her lucky son **Sam**, who happened to bump into both Alfie and Michael outside Wogan House. Over in Australia, here's a picture of a shocked Michael getting a selfie with a tattoo **Kelly-Louise Warner** had done of his signature!



MAKING AND SETTING RECORDS

To celebrate the release of their new album *Together Again*, Michael and Alfie set out to get into the Guinness Book of Records by breaking the record for “Most public appearances by musical group”. The record stood at five cities in 36 hours, set in 2002 by Westlife.

Ball and Boe decided anything Westlife could do, they could do better, with the duo aiming to do five cities in the space of just 12 hours! It started early, with the guys gathering in a chilly Blackpool at 8am, where they signed hundreds of albums before heading off to Manchester via a motorcade.

Once Manchester was complete, the guys made their way to Sheffield. After completing the signings there, they boarded their own private helicopter and were flown to London. Michael was thrilled, telling the *Daily Star*:

“This has been the highlight of a brilliant day. It’s absolutely bonkers. I can’t believe we’ve got a helicopter with our name on it. We’re going to smash this record and have boasting rights for life.”

The helicopter landed in Battersea, where Michael and Alfie zipped across to the Oxford Street HMV via motorbike. With hundreds of happy fans in attendance, the pair finished their signings and were presented with a certificate to document their achievement.

“We’re chuffed to bits, that was magic,” was how Michael summed up their epic trip across the UK. “We smashed it! We’re delighted. It’s been a knacker but amazing day. Our fans were wonderful – it was incredible meeting so many all in one day.”

It was an amazing achievement, but as you will see opposite, they weren’t the only ones who visited all five cities in one day...





BREAKING RECORDS WITH BALL & BOE

BY NIKKI GOODCHILD

When Michael and Alfie announced they were going to aim to break a record by visiting 5 HMVs to carry out CD signings, I joked with my friend Emma (friend of 20 years through MB fan club) that we could do them all too.

Em had reached 40 and I am approaching 40 so it was something we thought would soften the blow - a present to one another. There was no hesitation and we started our planning - timings, car park locations, and just how on earth we could complete this! Well we did and this is how...

We headed up to Blackpool on the Thursday - the traffic couldn't have been worse but we were listening to Michael and discussing our mad mission! We were on the road trip of a lifetime! The 8 hours went by pretty quickly and after faffing around moving hotels at 10 pm we finally were checked in, waiting for our take away delivery and sipping prosecco.

Our fabulous t shirts laid out for the morning, "We're breaking the record with Ball & Boe"... even we thought we were

crazy so we knew Michael might too.

A few hours sleep and a 5am alarm woke us and at 7am we were packed up, checked out and parked in town. It was dark and feeling like the middle of the night. We found the queue with already several people there, luckily people we knew (Val and Ros) so we knew they would understand our craziness ...



The security were a huge help and because they were going on to every venue they said they would let us in first at each venue (as long as we got them hot chocolates with cream and marshmallows) - no brainer for us. We needed to get in, see the boys and get out and on to the next venue...



Michael and Alfie arrived around 9am and when he saw me he said "Uh oh, troubles here"... Once we informed him we would be breaking the record too and going to every signing, he thought it was fantastic and he and Alfie couldn't have been more supportive throughout the whole day!

No photos were allowed... BUT for us he ensured we had a photo at every HMV. And he made sure he kept his promise too! Despite at each signing being told by certain people due to time there will be no pictures... and each time he said the same thing; "Erm these two are definitely having a picture!" Michael also signed the back of my t-shirt in Blackpool "Bloody love you..."

The local gazette got our story and as you I'm sure would have seen, we also ended up on the news! We were famous! "See you in Manchester" resonated in our heads as we legged it to the car park and back on the road.

Via Costa we once again were ushered to near the front of the priority queue in Manchester, that nervous excitement feeling in our tummies, explaining to all of the waiting fans just how Michael mad we were!

Michael told us to make sure we tweeted the pictures as soon as possible. His wish is our command! See you in Sheffield... we were back on the road, sun shining, we were having the best day! The traffic was a little stop and start but we made good time and Sheffield came and went very smoothly... we had this sorted perfectly. Each venue we would park, run, find a toilet stop and then Costa...

It was great because as much as everyone was following Michael and Alfie's progress, it seemed people were waiting to see if we had made it to each stop too. We were updating everyone on Twitter and Facebook as we went along.

We made it to Nottingham and ended up right in the front, thanks to the lovely security guys. The boys arrived and couldn't believe their eyes, us two right in the front waiting! Each one was getting better and better. Michael asked who was driving and I said it was me - he joked with Emma saying "Oh God!" but proceeded to tell me to drive carefully!



He signed my shirt again with "See you in London." Well this last leg to London was going to be the toughest and we told them we would see them there. London is mine and Emma's local venue so we had to make it!

Traffic was stop-start coming out of Nottingham but we knew we had time, it was 5pm and we had until 9:30pm when the signing was due to stop.

Traffic smoothed out and we were flying down the motorway... all clear and it was working in our favour. We made it to London about 7:45pm. This was when the delays started, we were 5 miles from HMV, yet typical London traffic was against us... finally we were in the road next door to HMV looking for the car park... we were almost there!

Emma's phone rang... it was Michael and Alfie saying they were going shortly and where the hell were we? Michael said well done and maybe we'd see them as they leave... this couldn't be happening!! It was just gone 8:30pm, the signing had finished and they were going!

We couldn't fail now, we were here in London and we just couldn't not see them! Surely not! NCP car park located, I drove in and we literally abandoned the car and ran. It was like Challenge Anrika running towards HMV! People were waiting... apparently the signing had finished but they were still in the building. A lady from the label said "Oh my God, thank God you are here, I'm going to take you up now... they are still here!"



Take us up!? Oh my God... we had actually done it!!

The lift up seemed to go in slow motion and Emma will agree here - it was a very weird feeling... we thought we had failed the mission on the very last leg! So now we were a mixed bag of excitement, emotion and tiredness and as the lift opened Michael shouted "They're here!". They came up to us and as Michael hugged me, I had tears rolling down my face. The thought of being so near and not succeeding was a tough one to handle, so it was almost relief I guess!

Alfie hugged us both too and said how they thought we weren't going to make it! You and us both, Mr Boe! But we did! We did make it!!

We had photos with them and chatted about the day - they signed the record breaking certificate that they had been presented with and gave it to us. We've decided to share it 6 months at a time each!! Michael signed my t-shirt again saying "we did it!!"

It was touch and go for a moment and we made it by the skin of our teeth but I do think being a little late paid off in other ways! It was well worth every single moment spent in traffic on Friday, clocking up over 500 miles in total - we did something we will never forget! And something Michael and Alfie will always remember too.

"We broke the record with Ball and Boe!"





The Cheeky Duo - Back Together Again

By Alana Wadkin

When I found out that Michael and Alfie were releasing another album on 27th October, while attempting a world record to sign the most albums in 24 hours, I thought they would easily achieve this and it would be great publicity for the new album. I started reading all the HMV venues they were going to visit, I was disappointed that they weren't going to Liverpool and never gave it another thought. Then my PA's mentioned I should go to the Manchester signing because I wouldn't get another chance to see them this year.

I thought "Seriously, are you kidding?"

It's a mad idea!" and gave them a strange look. I know how difficult it can be to travel to and from Manchester, arranging wheelchair access etc. They knew how much it would mean to me to see Michael and Alfie, as I'm unable to attend their tour this year. So they kept reminding me of all the reasons I should go that day and after very little persuasion I agreed to go if they planned it all in advance. I knew it would be the maddest journey by train, as we would have to get two trains and walk to the Arndale Centre, but I didn't expect how 'mad' it was going to be!! I booked my

train tickets and planned what station we were travelling to and from. Viv also contacted HMV to inform them that I was in a wheelchair and I was coming with my two PA's to assist me, they said they would put our names down at the door and asked if we could arrive 45 minutes before Michael and Alfie were scheduled to arrive. According to our calculations the train we planned to get would mean we would get there in plenty of time.

The day of the signing, I woke up with a bad feeling that something was going to

go wrong! I was right - our train was cancelled 5 minutes before it was due to leave... I thought "Oh no" as the next train traveling to Manchester was 30 minutes later, meaning we would only arrive in Manchester at 11:10am! Oh BLOODY HELL! This is just my luck, we'd never make it to see Michael in time! After I gathered my thoughts together, I thought I had nothing to lose; I would take the risk and go. It turned out we were travelling on the slowest, coldest and oldest train with no actual wheelchair spaces, so other passengers kept knocking into me. At this point I was feeling a little deflated but we kept ourselves busy and ended up flicking through the Metro. That's when I came across Michael and Alfie's article about their world record attempt - this lifted my spirits and I felt even more determined to get there on time.

When we finally arrived at Manchester Victoria, we literally ran to the Arndale Centre, uphill! We then couldn't find HMV - running around like we had been set a task on *The Apprentice* and I was the team leader! We eventually found an information desk where they told us we'd have to get a lift to the second floor. Luckily we arrived at HMV at 11:30am on the dot! We explained to the security guard at the entrance what had happened, and he took us straight upstairs to where everyone else was waiting. I instantly asked Jen to buy the album, while Viv and I joined the queue. I was feeling hot and flustered after the mad rush, I just about had time to take off my coat before Michael and Alfie arrived.

I heard Michael's voice and I asked Jen to start recording as everybody, including myself started cheering. Michael shouted "Let's get cracking, we've got a world record to do!" When it was my turn - Jen said



"Michael, you have a special visitor!" then I appeared from around the corner with a huge smile on my face. In total shock Michael said "Oh Alana's here!" jumping up and running around the

signing table to give me a massive hug and kiss. I never expected that welcome! He said "How are you treacle? You alright?" - I nodded with a big grin. Then he said "You remember Alfie?" who then came straight over to say hello, I burst out laughing, how could I forget Alfie!

Michael looked gorgeous, really happy and I even didn't mind his beard. Everybody who knows me, including Michael, knows I usually dislike beards. I enjoyed chatting to them for longer than I expected and I was over the moon. I got a chance to give Michael a letter I had written to him entitled SUPER BALL, which he loved. He handed it over to Andrew, his PA, and said he would read it in the car. Michael was so delighted to see me but he said "We can't talk for ages, cos' we've got to set a record!" They both returned to their seats ready to sign my album. As I was turning around, Michael leaned over the table to grab the album from my lap, which I found amusing! I thought

please don't put your back out on camera! Michael continued chatting to me as he signed my album, he even started to sing a line from 'You're The Voice' - knowing this is my favourite song from the new record. As Alfie was signing my album, Michael seized the opportunity to give me another hug and kiss - still chatting away as usual. This moment was captured on Getty Images - I didn't realise they were

taking photographs until I saw them online the next day. After Alfie signed my album, it was time to say goodbye - he waved and gave me a cute smile, followed by Michael waving and saying "hope to see you soon".

I even got an opportunity to talk to Andrew, which was lovely as I hadn't seen him in a while either. Many familiar faces came to say hello - it's always nice to catch up with fellow Ballettes.

After all the chaos of getting to Manchester, it was worth it all - Jen and Viv have never seen me so ecstatic yet relieved before. . . I'm delighted to have been part of their amazing world record and I will cherish this memory forever. I knew Michael and Alfie would be World Record Breakers one day!

Massive CONGRATULATIONS to Michael and Alfie on their Number 1 album! Well-deserved!

HMV SIGNINGS

Thousands of fans flocked to see Michael and Alfie on their record breaking trip to five different HMV stores. Here are a selection of images from some of the lucky ones.

Fans gathered outside HMV in London. Photo by Helen Grenville



Michael and Alfie hard at work. Photo by Susan Stiegler



Zalihe Yoncu was celebrating her 19th birthday on 27th October, and what better present than a signed CD from Ball and Boe? Photo by Vehbiye Yoncu



Marie Darwin was lucky enough to grab a photo with Alfie before getting her CD signed.



Photo by Lynn Baker



Sue Walker, Jen Garner, Ruth Weir, Andrew Hughes. Photo by Jane Bebbington



Lynn Baker meets the boys.



Margaret Samson with Michael and Alfie.



Photo by Dawn Hart



Photo by Margaret Samson



When I Played On The Ball - And Tom Cruise Was President!

by Gill Tee

So, most of us like to listen to Michael on the radio on a Sunday morning. I certainly do and one of my favourite parts of the show is the quiz On the Ball. A chance to have a chat with Michael, have a laugh and win the ultimate prize – an OTB sticker!

I decided I would like to have a chance to play so sent off an email, thinking I'll never get picked or it would take ages. The very next day I had a phone call which my husband took asking if I would be able to play OTB that Sunday. Hubby already knew that I had a trip to London planned for that day, so told no, I wouldn't be available. I was so surprised they had called me so soon but was also delighted that I couldn't do it that week as it was when Michael was in Australia. How lucky was that!

Having had my chance and turned it down I didn't think I would get another, but I wasn't going to give up. A few weeks later I sent another email and again got a phone call the very next day. The producer asked if I would like to play this Sunday. This time I was free!

I put a message on Facebook that I was going to be playing OTB that Sunday and was overwhelmed by the amount of good luck messages I received from everyone in the Fan Club, over 100 of them. Thank

you everyone. That just made me even more nervous knowing that so many would be listening.

The following day Rae White also put up a message on Facebook to say she was playing. So I knew who my opponent was. We had a lovely "chat" on Facebook messenger on Saturday evening, finding out we were both really nervous, and wished each other good luck. We felt like friends at the end of the chat and that is why our "MB family" is so special, bringing people together and making new friends. I felt like I was playing against a friend.

Sunday morning came, I set my alarm clock to make sure I was awake. Hubby had instructions to bring me a cup of tea at 9.45 and at just after 10am the phone rang. The quiz is pre-recorded before the live show. I guess in case there is any phone issues or we swear!

The producer had already asked me what I did for a living, what my hobbies were and if I had any pets. Hence Michael knew all these things about me before we spoke. His reaction to me loving cricket was hilarious. I know he is not a sporty person, but he really didn't get it at all.

So, I went first on the quiz. The first answer was a guess but I knew it was never

the middle answer. The question "who was number 1 in the charts" was pure luck that I had looked at the album charts on Friday to see if Michael and Alfie were still number 1, but Sam Smith had overtaken them so that was the first name that came into my head.

By the power up rounds I was really getting nervous and just couldn't think. And then the funniest moment when Michael gave me a clue by saying "the US president" and I just blurted out Tom Cruise. I didn't even hear him give me the clue, I was just trying to think of high profile people. So, I got an embarrassing 8 points!

Next up Rachel, who had such hard questions until the last power up for baby girls names, with her being a nanny! Michael was so funny, teasing us both. It was lovely to be part of it. I thought he was going to bust a gut at one point. His giggles are so infectious!

So, as the shameful loser I was only allowed to say "hello to everyone who knows me", but I hope you all heard me say a sneaky hello to everyone at MBFC, for which Michael told me off.

I had such fun and as I play it back it just gets funnier each time. The best parts were being able to personally congratulate Michael on the number 1, being the proud owner of an OTB sticker and most of all taking part. It is not about winning, just having fun and talking to Michael.

I got so many messages afterwards and even one from a lady in Australia. Someone heard me on the radio the other side of the world, wow! Several of my husbands friends said later in the day "we heard your wife on the radio" and I don't even know them.

So, if you are thinking of sending that email – do it!

Thank you to everyone for your support. Well done to Rachael and thank you to Julie for my good luck photo. And most of all thank you to Michael for the fun.

And by the way, Tom Cruise for US president – I'd prefer him to Donald Trump!

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

www.mbfanclub.co.uk

The Michael Ball Fan Club is now completely free to join – simply visit the website address above and register your email address and you will receive notifications every time there is some Michael Ball news to report. There is also a members area where you can download past issues of On The Ball and access Michael's past Infoline messages. The password to access it is: **MBFC25**

IN MEMORY OF JAMES SHARKEY



James passed away on 13th October 2017, aged 87, after suffering from Alzheimer's for three and a half years. When we first started the Fan Club he was Michael's manager and he gave us so much help and advice. He would regularly invite us up to his office in London for meetings with Michael. This dear man will be greatly missed by everyone who knew him.

TOGETHER AGAIN IN BRIGHTON

BY MARK WITCHELL. PHOTOS BY CAROLYN BELL



If you think you have heard it all from Mr Michael Ball and Mr Alfie Boe Well, think again. They are back with a bigger, better and bolder show than ever before!. They are more relaxed than ever before and it is very clear how much they love their craft and performing together. It was lovely to be at The Brighton Centre for the first time in a beautiful seaside city!

The stage and set is the same as the previous tour, however the back screen is now one big projection. The show opened with the overture from *Sunset Boulevard*, accompanied by a plethora of photos including the selfies they took on stage during last years tour and this years Summer tour. Michael and Alfie then sang the opening of 'As If We Never Said Goodbye' off stage before bounding on stage singing the lyrics "We've come home at last!". The pair then leapt into the incredible 'You'll Be Back' from 'Hamilton' after Michael said "I'm not sure we were going to make it here today!" A surprise choice was the next song, '(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher and Higher' which was originally recorded by Jackie Wilson. What an uplifting song to get the concert started! We then moved into a selection from songs from the new album 'Together Again' and the previous album 'Together'. First came 'Hero' which was prominently used in Richard Linklater's 2014 film *Boyhood*. 'Tell Me It's Not True', from the hit musical *Blood Brothers*, preceded a

beautiful duet of the *South Pacific* classic 'Some Enchanted Evening'. 'Not While I'm Around' from *Sweeney Todd* brilliantly linked to 'The Rose'. We all know Michael released this as a single back in 1995 to raise money for Research into Ovarian Cancer, but this duet with Alfie is a completely new take on this poignant and powerful song.

Both Michael and Alfie stated that the next song was probably their favourite from the 'Together' album, as they sang 'A Thousand Years' from *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn*. This is definitely one of my favourite songs from the past two albums. Michael then said "Over the past year I have shared most things with Alfie. But there is one thing I am now prepared to share." The pair then sang a rather unexpected but powerful version of Michael's signature song 'Love Changes Everything' from Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Aspects Of Love*. Alfie seemed to pick this song up with ease. Next came another of my favourite songs from the new album 'He Lives in You' from *The Lion King 2: Simba's Pride*. In the middle of the song drummer John Tonks' solo was truly breath taking and Alfie looked like he wanted to join in! The first act ended with another of my favourites, 'You're the Voice', originally recorded by John Farnham. The audience participated so well during the chorus and were sent away to the interval on high energy levels!

Act Two opened with the overture from

West Side Story and a dynamic medley by the pair from the show. Songs included 'Maria', 'Something's Coming' and 'Tonight'. On the back screen were images evocative of the opening of the original film which set the tone beautifully for the medley. Next came two wonderful swing numbers. Morecambe and Wise's 'Bring Him Sunshine' had the added delight of an unprepared dance routine that they had recorded at the Royal Variety Performance with Miranda Hart the previous week at the London Palladium. Frank Sinatra's 'New York, New York' then followed including the special dance kicks as seen on *Strictly Come Dancing* a couple of weeks ago. Next came one of the main surprises of the concert but a true inspiration - a Queen medley. Michael and Alfie both did Freddie Mercury justice singing the timeless classics 'A Kind Of Magic', 'Radio Gaga', 'We Will Rock You' and 'We Are The Champions'.

It was then time for the boy's solo spots which were a refreshing departure from what they had done during the previous tour. Both men showcased their ability to perform a variety of musical genres. Michael decided to continue the party mood by singing 'You Can't Stop The Beat' from *Hairspray*. During this song a montage of photos from Michael's time in the show appeared on the screen behind him. Michael then sang a powerful version of 'The Impossible Dream' from *Man of La Mancha* which received a deserved standing ovation.

Alfie returned to the stage to sing 'Wagon Wheel', a country song he performed on guitar accompanied by the musicians around him. Alfie then sang Elton John's 'Tiny Dancer' which he said was inspired to sing after hearing Elton perform it on a grand piano in his back garden. Alfie received a standing ovation for this song which he definitely deserved!

A new and updated medley from *Les Miserables* then followed which was uplifting and emotional - performed by two of the most famous names ever to be associated with arguably the greatest musical ever written. The backing singers opened the medley with 'At The End Of The Day' before Michael and Alfie appeared to sing 'I Dreamed A Dream' and a comic version of 'Master Of The House'. Michael delivered a stunning version of 'Stars' before Alfie performed a full length version of 'Bring Him Home' which brought the house down! A final blast of 'One Day More' was a perfect way to end the medley which had the audience craving and demanding for more!

The duo left the stage with the audience literally stamping their feet on the ground! The finale came with 'The Prayer' which the pair also performed at The Royal Variety Performance. It is unusual for this song to be performed by two men but it was delivered with high emotion and passion. Alfie then left the stage as Michael started to sing 'A Different Corner' by George Michael. Alfie then popped up behind Michael and launched into a medley Michael has been desperate to perform since day one - 'WHAM!' It was a joy to see this medley on stage and the audience were on their feet caught up in the excitement of the moment. Alfie also leapt on to the top of the white grand piano as he was singing! The medley included 'Freedom', 'I'm Your Man' and ending with 'Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go'. I am sure the tour will evolve and get even better as it goes on.

Both men will head to Tokyo for three concerts in Japan in February and reunite for a Summer gig at Carfest South next August. However next year is mainly a time for them to focus on solo projects. I can't wait for them to maybe release a third album in 2019! I hope we can relive the tour memories as the show is being recorded at the SSE Hydro in Glasgow for a 'Friday Night is Music Night' special for BBC Radio 2 which will be transmitted in the near future. It was also lovely to catch up and meet so many fans in Brighton! Here's to lots more memories soon in 2018 and 2019!



Photo: Helen Larkin



TOGETHER AGAIN SET LIST

Act One

Sunset Boulevard Overture /
As If We Never Said Goodbye (Duet)

You'll Be Back (Duet)

(Your Love Keeps Lifting Me) Higher
And Higher (Duet)

Hero (Duet)

Tell Me It's Not True (Duet)

Some Enchanted Evening (Duet)

Not While I'm Around (Duet)

The Rose (Duet)

A Thousand Years (Duet)

Love Changes Everything (Duet)

He Lives In You (Duet)

You're The Voice (Duet)

Act Two

West Side Story Medley:
'Maria, Something's Coming, Tonight'
(Duet)

Bring Me Sunshine (Duet)

New York, New York (Duet)

Queen Medley:
A Kind Of Magic, Radio Ga Ga, We Will
Rock You, We Are The Champions

You Can't Stop The Beat (Michael)

The Impossible Dream (Michael)
(In Cardiff Michael sang 'Life On Mars')

Wagon Wheel - (Alfie)

Tiny Dancer - Alfie
(In Bournemouth Alfie sang 'Run')

Les Mis Medley:
End Of The Day (Backing Vocals), I
Dreamed A Dream (Duet), Master Of The
House (Duet), Stars - (Michael), Bring
Him Home - (Alfie),
One Day More (Duet)

Encore

The Prayer (Duet)

Wham Medley:
'Freedom', 'I'm Your Man', 'Wake Me
Up Before You Go-Go'

