

# ON THE BALL

Issue 50

*Special Anniversary Issue*



# 50

Welcome along to ISSUE 50 of On The Ball. Can you believe it? We made it to our golden anniversary edition - we've been looking back at some of the older copies and it just brings back such a wealth of memories of people, places and events. Many of you have been with us since the beginning and lots more have hitched a ride over the past 16 (nearly 17) years. We've all had our ups and downs in that time but thankfully most of us are still here having fun. We have put images of some of our previous OTB covers on the front and back of this issue and hope you like the extra colour we've added this time.

Michael has been having the most wonderful time in Hairspray and we include some more of your stories here - we always love to hear them and hope you enjoy reading about different people's experiences. We love hearing from our regulars, but also enjoy reading stories from those of you who are a bit shy about putting pen to paper so if you'd like to share your review or photo with us we'd love to hear from you.

Michael also continues to enthrall us with his 'Michael Ball's Sunday Brunch' programme at 11.00 am on Sunday mornings on BBC Radio 2. He really is a natural radio presenter and the interviews and discussions are very entertaining. We're sure most of you already listen and it's a nice way of bringing Michael closer to us on a week-by-week basis.

We're coming to the end of another eventful year and we must give our usual thanks to everyone who has helped over the past months - especially Andrew, Phil, Simon, Sarah, Judy and of course our own Pat Webb and James Gaden. There's plenty to look forward to next year, with Michael celebrating his 25 years in show business, a new album and who knows what else?!

Finally we'd like to wish you and your families a healthy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Lots of Love  
Gill and Maureen



Dear Everyone,

It doesn't seem possible that this is the 50<sup>th</sup> letter I have written for "On the Ball". I think we all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Gill and Maureen for steadfastly keeping us all informed and entertained by the magazine even when things have been far from easy for them on a personal front.

Each issue is like a time capsule and I think it would be fascinating to look at all the letters and issues to see how things have moved on and changed for us all but we have never been people who dwell in the past too much so let's look forward as well.

The big line of my life (apart from my Cath of course) continues to be Mrs. Edna Turablad. At the moment I am saying goodbye to her in April but as to whether I will be able to go through with it... I'm not totally sure yet!!!

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary album is really starting to come together and it does look like a tour in the autumn and a few open air dates in the summer are on the cards.

All that is yet to come, for now, lets just wish each other a truly Happy Christmas and hope that we have a fabulous New Year that brings us together somewhere, sometime.

God bless

+ all my love

Peter

x

# ALL IS REVEALED!

By Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse. Photo by Pat Webb.

Well, that's what we promised on the forum so here we go. For those of you without internet access you won't have the foggiest idea what I'm talking about, so perhaps we'll start with the photo so you are all in the same position.

As most of you know, I suffered an attack of encephalitis at the end of last year and one of the things it caused was a complete loss of appetite. I lost over 2st in about two months but thankfully, one of the things I didn't lose was my sense of humour. To start with, Michael kept telling me how great I was looking having lost so much weight and he was very jealous but then in Liverpool he said to me, "Okay, the joke is wearing off now, you're starting to p\*\*\* me off!" We were all in fits of laughter and Gill got a big hug as she said there was more of her to hold!

Fast forward to my holiday in America. Roy and I flew to Boston and spent a couple of days staying with our dear friend Pat. On one of our jaunts round the shops Pat suddenly spotted the t-shirt and as she had heard the Liverpool story, we both laughed so hard at the thought of buying it for Michael as a holiday present! Well, I don't have to tell you that this is exactly what I did. On my first trip to *Hairspray* on my return home I gave it to him at the stage door and said, "Unlike other people who buy you things and can't wait to see you wearing them, I don't ever want to see you in this if you know you're seeing me!" Michael took the

joke in exactly the way I knew he would, laughingly saying he was going to put it on for warm up. I really thought that would be the last we would see of it having enjoyed the joke.

A week or so later Pat arrived for what would have been Michael's last few nights in *Hairspray*, until he decided to extend until April. He knew of her involvement in the t-shirt and low and behold

between the matinée and evening performance he came out of the stage door and beckoned her towards him. She very excitedly ran towards him and he flashed open the jacket he was wearing to reveal the t-shirt! Oh, what a sport our Michael is, I'm sure you'll all love the photo - we have "doctored" it so as not to cause offence to anybody!





# A BIRTHDAY TREAT... WITHOUT A TWIST!

by Ruth Whiting



Peep...peep...peep - I open my eyes, turn off the alarm. 23rd October, my 54th birthday! I rise and shine, have breakfast, head off into Cheltenham to catch the coach to London. We leave on time (phew) and have a perfect journey arriving five minutes early. Ablutions at Victoria Coach station then a quick walk through the Colonnade to the tube, with no need to stop to buy a ticket - Oyster cards are such a blessing!

I alight at Embankment, meet up with Di and we head off excitedly to the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, to book our tickets for *Oliver*! A bored young lady at the box office tells us for March, we'll have no such luck! We have a coffee in Covent Garden, then walk to The Shaftesbury. It's too early to wait at the stage door so we move next door to the Travelodge.

"Have Nancy Garcia and Lila checked in yet, please?" We are told they have, marvellous! Di and I sit and wait on a comfy sofa, look around and here they are, lots of hugs and birthday greetings. Carol comes along too and we go to the stagedoor together.

"Hello Pam, great to see you!"  
"You'll take my birthday photo?"  
"Thanks, you are a gem!"  
Then Jill arrives with more birthday goodies.

At last here comes Michael, all jolly smiles, surrounded by fans, he's signing programmes.

"Where's Andrew today, Michael?"  
He replies he's at his Grandfather's funeral.

"It's my birthday," I say. "Happy Birthday!" Michael says as we pose for friends' cameras.

Di, Jill Nancy and I have lunch at Garfunkels, Charing Cross Road, then it's back to the Shaftesbury to take our seats in the front stalls, for 3pm.

Nancy just happens to have the seat next to Jill a few rows away from us!

*Hairspray* is as good as ever. Wendy makes a good job of playing Velma, not too much laughter from an older audience but we fans make up for that!

Quite a few gathered outside at the

stagedoor after the show, flocks of fans around Ben. I manage to take a few snaps of him, it's the first time I've seen him at the stagedoor.

I say my reluctant farewells to my friends and wish them well. I enjoy a stroll down the Mall back to Victoria, past a beautifully lit Buckingham Palace.

The coach arrives fifteen minutes late, though we have a good journey back to Cheltenham. Where has the day gone?

I'm too tired to open my cards so I leave them to enjoy the next day. Happy memories finally soothe me to sleep.

Thank you to all my friends for making my only birthday (so far) with Mr Ball so special and to Michael for being there!

P.S. Di and I now have *Oliver* tickets for her birthday in March!

# HAIRSPRAY - THE WEATHER WAS COLD, MICHAEL CHEERED US UP!

19th April 2008, by Annette & Helen Easton.

Photo of Michael by Hanne Pedersen

These photos were back in April, I've only just got to work out how to email photos from our computer. Anyway, we remember this day so well. We went to see *Hairspray* on this day because it was after my birthday and before Annette's, so this was the nearest day to choose to go and see the show.

Annette was really looking forward to seeing *Hairspray* as I had already told her about the show. I went back in November 2007 with a friend to see it and Annette couldn't go as she was out somewhere else. I didn't mind seeing *Hairspray* again and said to Annette "Would you like to go to the stage door and wait for Michael to arrive?" Annette said "Yes!" so that's what we did.

It was great to see Michael again, especially looking so lovely as always - it had been a long time since we had seen him. There were only two people with us and we managed to get photos of us with Michael and have our programmes that I had bought last time signed by him. He said to us, "You look very cold, go and have a cup of coffee". So we said to Michael, "Thanks very much for letting us have our photos taken and for signing our programmes". Then Michael said, "Goodbye, that's fine, enjoy the show!"

So we went inside the theatre and watched *Hairspray* and Annette really enjoyed it and so did I, again. We got up at the end and danced to the final song, 'You Can't Stop The Beat'. Thank you Michael for making our day and cheering us up as the weather was so cold! We hope you like the photos.

I just want to end by telling Michael that we are really enjoying his Sunday Brunch show on the radio.





# Hairspray: Round Two

by Anna Felices



After the excitement of the February trip, I wondered just how this one would compare. Plans were fairly jam-packed but I had my mission for this trip. Thursday was very tiring, between the whole plane trip and the mad dash to the Adelphi theatre to collect the *Joseph* tickets. It was a great night, the show is still amazing and my brother, Jon, who hadn't seen it yet, loved it. Unfortunately, I was sat alone, but it turned out to be a good thing as I got a few extra perks/sights from my seat (which I took great pleasure filling Tanya in on all the details after!).

Friday was when my mission started. First step was to find the Dress Circle shop, which Tanya insisted she could only find if she got lost first. Amongst other items, I bought the *Hairspray* poster along with the Piano/Vocal Selection music book. I also finally bought Michael's 'The

Very Best Of... Live' DVD! It's a great little shop, and I was tempted to buy the whole place, but I restrained myself.

Anyway, skipping ahead to the afternoon now. The plan was to meet my cousin (Jenny) who was travelling down to meet us, head up to see the theatre, find somewhere nearby to sit and chill and wait until some point between 5 and 6pm to do the whole stage-door beforehand thing. My brother, however, had other ideas. He pretty much insisted we went and found the stage door first so I knew exactly where we were going later. I pointed out that I'd been there before, could see the alley from the other side of the crossing-junction and wasn't worried, but he put his foot down. Turned out to be a good thing in the end - we walked past all the big theatre pictures, turned the corner... and there he was! Michael

was already standing outside the stage door with, I'm assuming, a couple of other fans and I don't think he'd only just arrived either! I was so stunned, but at this point my brain disconnected itself from my mouth - which is probably a good thing in this case. What my brain screamed was 'Holy sh\*t!' what came out was 'Holy Christ!' - I didn't particularly want him thinking I had a foul mouth, although, if I'm honest, what he was saying at that moment was no better!

So anyway, my nerves were shot and my head was reminding me that I had nothing prepared. Seeing as I was just stood there in awe, Tanya stepped forward and asked for the photo, which was a nice way to start things off, Michael's arms around us - sigh! It didn't calm me much though, so she also had to ask if I could get a signature, which snapped me out of my trance with an "Oh

yeah!" Embarrassing! At some point during all this he asked us if we were coming to see the show, and I told him we were "tomorrow night" - my voice was slowly returning, which was very important as this was the part they'd been taking the mickey out of me for ages for, but this was the moment. I opened up my bag and pulled out a cushion cover with his picture from I'm guessing about 1997 on it. He saw it and went "Oh my God!" followed by "How cool!" to my relief.

I handed him my pen and he said "Who do I make it out to?" He looked at both of us and... of course, my mind went blank. I looked at him for about ten seconds panicking, trying to remember my name. By then he'd clearly realised it was me and was looking at me patiently, which hardly helped matters. The only name I remembered was Tanya's, so I looked at her, she said "Anna?" and I breathed again in relief. "Yeah! That's right!" Oh God, how embarrassing!

He asked if that was it and (amazingly) my voice came back and I managed to say (sort of pleadingly) "Actually, I have one last thing to get signed". Thankfully it was still way early and no-one else was there, so he was all like "All right, love." It was the DVD cover, still in it's cellophane wrapping (I told you I was unprepared!). By this point my hands were shaking so I had to be slow and careful with unwrapping and taking the cover off, even narrating "Sorry this is taking so long, but my hands are really shaking". Don't know why, but I thought it might be better if I said something, acknowledged it. He asked if I'd seen the tour and I said



yes and it was awesome. He was about to go in and turned around with the pen saying "This was yours, right?" I laughed, said yes and took it back smiling. Later, when re-organising my bag, I picked it up and Tanya said "Michael touched that," - it was a funny moment!

Finally I get to the Saturday night show. Jenny and I had been in central for a few hours and, as the others still hadn't shown up and we had an hour to kill, we decided to go to the stage door and just see who we saw whilst waiting. Amazingly enough, we did see most of the main cast arriving. Sadly no Michael, although we did see Andrew pop in and out a couple of times so we figured he was in there. Eventually it was only us two and two other girls hanging around. We were busy complaining about the others being late when Ben popped his head out his window and asked who we were waiting for. I still had Jon and Tanya on my mind, so I (stupidly) said no one, which he looked confused by but what-the-hey. Jenny suggested he might've gone to get whoever we were waiting for but I'd lost my chance and anyway I'd have been to embarrassed to say anything. I mean, what was I gonna say? "Yeah, we're waiting for Michael even though I know he's already in there"? Come on, that makes no sense! And the possibility that he'd have gone and found him for us

didn't even enter my head, it just sounded way too cheeky.

We had all the original stars minus Leanne. Charlotte, her understudy, was fantastic in the role, but I still prefer Leanne. I think Charlotte's got a great voice, but for me it's a bit too mature for Tracy. I loved being there in the middle of it again; for the most part it was like watching it for the first time again, you just become so involved with everything. It was a long wait, but it was definitely worth it. This goes for the show in general but particularly for 'Timeless to Me'. OH. MY. GOD! It really doesn't matter if you've seen it before, that number is still a killer. At the point where Wilber grabs Edna's boobs there were so many facial expressions it was hysterical. Even consciously thinking that that was Michael under there it was so convincing that the boobs could be real! Especially when followed with "I can feel the bells"! The second kiss was longer than I remember and elicited applause and whistling from the audience. But it was finale that really did it. After the 'Jewish' section, which kills enough on its own, Michael and Ian were already dying of laughter themselves, with Ian's face buried in Michael's back. I absolutely love it when they crack up, it makes the audience laugh ten times as hard! Michael finally came out with his "I can't concentrate with you jiggling

behind me" line, but that killed the audience so much that Ian really struggled to get out his next line, "You've never complained before!" He actually had to make three attempts before finally getting the line out, breathing between the laughter; it was a riot! We were all laughing so hard I started thinking I might wet myself, at which point Michael actually said "I think a little wee just came out," which of course made everyone roar even more. There were so many tears rolling down my face I can't even tell you.

I think the only problem with that scene is that there's a part of you that feels bad for whoever starts the next one, because who can follow that?! And, of course, Ben comes sneaking on with the tiny little lighter and I'm sure I'm not the only one who missed a bit of that scene. The audience really needs a bit more time to recover from Michael and Ian's bit before they move on. Maybe a minute of music, perhaps?

The finale was again spectacular. I love the end of the show, it's possibly my favourite finale (I know I said that last time but it's still true). Afterwards, when they'd all taken their final bows, Michael had a few speeches to make - he started as Edna saying Michael had a few things to say. It was a bit odd, seeing Edna doing Michael's voice. They were

collecting money for Breast Cancer, but he also wanted to say it was a happy and sad night: Happy before it was exactly a year ago that they had their first performance (which had completely escaped my attention), which got a huge cheer, but sad because they were losing a member of the cast, Tracie Bennett. He made a joke that she was obviously hooked on being in shows with men dressed as women, because she's joining the cast of *La Cage aux Folles*.

The stage door afterwards was, of course, completely jam-packed, but at least we were all prepared for it. Tanya and I made our way through, her with her programme and me with the music book that I'd forgotten to get signed the day before - and had realised a bit late. I'd also bought a t-shirt, which I was debating whether or not to get signed, by this point back with the others. Jenny said Michael was leaving but coming out towards our side so it was now or never which made me panic and, as a result, my legs refused to move. So Jon stepped in, grabbed the t-shirt and called Michael, he turned and saw me and did a double take (he remembered - yay! - the others pointed out the cushion was memorable!). Funny thing was when he looked at the t-shirt, said 'sure' to sign it, looked up, saw Jon and gave him an odd look... which I found that hysterical!

## BARBARA TRAVELL

1936 - 2008



Sadly, Barbara Travel passed away peacefully on 28 July 2008. Barbara was a long standing fan of Michael. As Michael would say, "One of the long haulers". Barbara travelled the British Isles extensively to see Michael.

However, one of her disappointments, due to ill health, was not being able to accompany the party of fans to

Australia. Barbara could often be found waiting quietly in the background at many a stage door. Thankfully she derived much pleasure through Michael and his music.

Barbara, you will be sadly missed by friends and fellow fans alike.

Sylvia, Jeanette, Elaine and Lynne.





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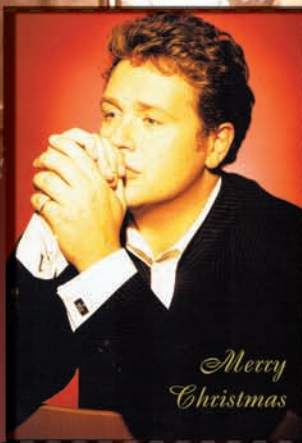
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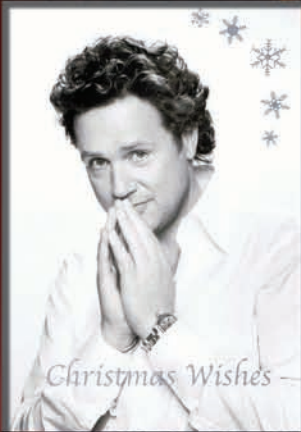
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*Merry  
Christmas*



# My 50th Birthday Trip

by Pam Handley



I had my 50th birthday in September but Michael was on holiday on the actual day so my birthday celebration trip to see Hairspray with "the girls" was on 18th October. The weather was beautiful and the day was made so special by my friends Kate, Hazel, Helen, Gill, Brenda, Jackie and of course Michael.

The girls had treated me to my ticket for the show which I was delighted about and we got into the party mood on the train going to London from Yorkshire. Kate had made us all badges to



wear that said "Pam's 50" on plus a picture of "Edna" and the words "We can hear the bells". Hazel and Helen had brought a bottle of Bucks Fizz (complete with disposable wine glasses) and a 50th Birthday Cake, so the celebrations began!

After arriving in London we had a walk/look at some shops before having a lovely meal in an Italian Restaurant then headed to the Shaftesbury Theatre to see the *matinée* of *Hairspray*.

The show was fantastic again and the Edna/Wilbur duet was even more hysterical - we went straight round to the stage door afterwards and got close though quite a crowd gathered.

When Michael came out he was his usual cheerful self and happy to sign things and have photos taken, just a few of his many qualities. I managed to point out my badge and told him we were celebrating my recent birthday (he said Happy Birthday) and could I have a photo - there wasn't room to get all my friends in the photo with the crowd but Kate took a lovely photo of Helen and myself with Michael. After that I was thinking I didn't have anything to sign when I suddenly thought about my badge and said "would you mind signing my badge Michael" and he did which made it even more special and my friends asked if he would sign theirs too and he did! These moments at the stage door mean such a lot to us all and it was the "icing on the cake" of a very special birthday celebration.

It was a brilliant day and I'd like to say a big THANK YOU to my friends for making it so, I feel very lucky to have such dear friends and all through being a Michael Ball fan.

I'll attach two photos from my camera - one at stage door (left to right) - Pam Handley - Michael - Helen Teal and a shot of us all having meal before the show.

# BOURNEMOUTH BASH!

As many of you may know we hold get-togethers at the B.I.C. in Bournemouth every two months approximately for us to catch up on all the "Michael News". Generally we meet up with old and new fans of our Number One Guy over a cuppa and in the café area is where we all meet as it is nice and roomy (so plenty of room for more!) and generally really nice and comfy there as many of you will know.

WHY the B.I.C. you may ask? Well, nowhere else would seem "right" for us to all meet together and chat as the Bournemouth International Centre is where most of us (including me!), saw our Michael for the very first time live in concert. It was many, many years ago now for me but I remember it so clearly - I will NEVER forget that night! Wow, my life changed forever... My good friends Janice and Sandra indeed saw Michael there first and that's where we first met each other as well. So you see for most of us down here in the South nowhere else would be right and fitting to have our meetings.

On Saturday, 30th August this year we had a meal to celebrate our first year in September when Barbara and myself first started up - eleven of us came and it was a lovely sunny and warm day! There was myself, Barbara, Geraldine, Steph, Rosalie, Pauline, Maureen, Linda and daughter, and Janice and Sandra - we all had a really lovely time spending a total of four hours at the restaurant! I wonder what we chatted about! We said our goodbyes and got on our way as some of us were meeting up on the following Thursday, 4th September as we booked tickets to see our man in *Hairspray* - namely Barbara, myself and Pauline. This was also to celebrate our first anniversary in September so, we really did have a full week of FUN and ENJOYING OURSELVES!!

We had a lovely photo with Michael that day as well to make the day perfect! The show was, as ever, great fun and Michael just gets better and better as Edna! It is the perfect tonic and leaves you feeling really happy and buzzing! The photo was with myself, Barbara Mills and Pauline and Barbara's cute dog Saffy,



*Above: Jill, Barbara holding Saffy, Michael and Pauline by Joan Johnson*

which Michael just ADORED! We headed home that day back to the south coast tired but a lovely day was had by us all and we will remember where we celebrated our first year of south meet-up's I think don't you?!

I wonder where we will be celebrating our second anniversary in September 2009? Perhaps Michael will be at the B.I.C. itself on his U.K. tour next year? Now that WILL be the news we ALL would like to hear! Here's to another great year of friendship and FUN - we look forward to seeing any new fans and of course all the regulars (who we thank for their support, you all know who I mean!) in the year 2009!

Final word goes to Michael himself without whom we wouldn't have any meet-up's and plenty to chat about! A big THANK YOU to you Michael for bringing us all together for friendship and FUN! You keep us busy with plenty to chat about as always! Bless you for EVERYTHING.

If any fans from the south area who can get to Bournemouth (B.I.C.) and would like to join us for friendship and chat about our favourite man, the NEXT one is planned for Saturday, 10th January 2009. We meet in the café area, just inside the main door, at 2:00pm to 4:00pm. We look forward to seeing you for coffee or tea and chat! Our contact details are in the **Pen Pals** section on Page 19.

Best wishes, Jill Clark & Barbara Mills.

# WHEN CHARLIE MET MICHAEL...

by Sharon Scarrott

In May my husband, Eric bought a Chihuahua long coat puppy and we named him Charlie. We were due to go to the Biggin Hill air show but as Charlie was too young to be left alone we had to forfeit our tickets. It was a lovely sunny day (the week before Hampton Court) and I was sitting outside in the sun with Charlie listening to Sunday Brunch, when Eric said "why don't you email Michael". So I did and told him about Charlie the Chihuahua. Imagine our delight when Michael read out my email but he said "Chihuahua - I am not sure about them!". I thought it would be a good idea for Michael to meet Charlie to see if we could change his mind.

It took a while before I persuaded Eric

to drive into London one Saturday so Charlie could meet Michael (I was due to meet up with a friend to exchange tickets). Eric dropped me off at the stage door and went off to visit the British Museum.

The weather was not good - it was windy and rainy. We stood opposite the stage door as it was a bit more sheltered. Charlie met quite a few fans and members of the cast.

Michael arrived in a car and got out our side and when he saw Charlie made a bee line for him and took him from me. Charlie got so excited and kept licking Michael. As it was raining Michael asked Joan to hold the umbrella over them so I could take the photo.

Michael kept saying how gorgeous he was and that he wanted to take him home. I said "remember you said on the radio that you weren't sure about Chihuahuas?" He said "I love them now!"

Unfortunately the photo is a bit blurred as Charlie got a bit nervous when the umbrella went up over his head but it was a great stage door meeting despite the weather. Since then we managed another trip down to London on a sunny day and had more success with the photos, but that's another story!





# Chris & Doris' Menu du Jour: A MICHAEL SANDWICH!!

By Chris Tietjen. Photos by Val Scott



Since Doris and I had been so lucky with our Michael encounters at the Stage Door in the spring (and summer, too, for me), we decided to meet up for another show on September 10th, whilst Doris was in London prior to going on a Guided Tour around the UK. So, while I was walking down High Holborn for our rendezvous at a restaurant, I spotted Doris on the corner of Grape Street (wonder what she was doing there?). Risking life and limb to cross the road, and calling her name, what was the first thing she said? No, not "Hi, Chris, lovely to see you!" (That did come later, though!) but instead: "I've just seen Andrew, and he said Michael's on his way!"

So after a bit of hugging each other, who should come sauntering down the street but the man himself! We were so lucky that there weren't many fans waiting at all, and we managed to get him to sign our hot-off-the-press copies of *On The Ball*. (Special thanks to M & G for making sure we got our extra copies in time!) After the autographs were over, we moved in for our photo session, with my friend Val doing the honours, and Doris' pal, Dee Dee, taking some bits of video. Doris and I had discussed the 'dream' of being together with Michael at the stage door, but never really thought it would happen before the show. I was determined to try for a Michael Sandwich, with one of us on either side, and she thought a peck on the cheek from each of us might be a nice touch! Both 'dreams' came true, thanks to our

always co-operative Prince Charming!! Little did we know whilst we were puckered up, waiting for the shutter to click, Michael was making a funny face at the camera!! Val snapped away, and Michael went on into the theatre, as we stood open-mouthed at our good fortune. When we looked at the pictures in Val's camera at the restaurant, we knew we had a gem! Thanks to Val for the great camera work, and thanks to the fates for smiling on us - we were running early and Michael a little late.

It was especially lucky that we had a chat with him before the show, since afterwards, pandemonium reigned! Andrew was muttering that the near-hysterical girls must have been let out of an institution for the evening (they turned out to be from dance schools), after he had helped drag Ben clear of dozens of teenage girls! And the girls almost engulfed Michael, too, as he fought his way to his car! I still can't understand why Michael's chauffeur wouldn't let me and Doris cadge a lift with him - what a meany! Doris did manage to wade through the throng and give Michael some kind words passed on from another fan club member, and then he reached his car and was gone into the night and some peace and quiet, hopefully!

PS - My granddaughter, Ellie, loves the "Kissing Sandwich" picture, but Doris' granddaughter, Bella, runs shrieking with terror when she sees it, saying "Michael's eyes are looking right at me!"



## WELL WORTH THE WAIT!

Barbara Beach's first photo with Michael shows his concern that she doesn't get knocked down by a car. The second one is her long awaited reward for taking years to pluck up the courage to ask for a photo!



# On The Ball - Issue 50!

Reaching our "golden" edition of On The Ball we thought we had a good excuse to be a bit self indulgent and have a look back at some of the past articles and how the magazine has evolved since April 1992. We're not going to attempt to summarise all 50 editions but here's a flavour of the past 49 issues.

The first issue we put together was very much a learning curve - there wasn't too much money in the funds so we had to make it as inexpensive as possible, but at the same time we wanted it to be interesting. Our own word processing skills came into play as we designed and typed out the first few editions.

Looking at Issue 1 which was published in September 1992, one of the most noticeable things is the paper and size - A5 - together with the fact that there are no photographs - just a lot of text. There were reviews from Michael's first UK tour and we're really pleased that most of the people who contributed to the first edition are still fan club members. We wrote that since the fan club started in April, 900 people had joined and we were overwhelmed with the response. There were four pages of Pen Pals - remembering that most of us didn't have internet access at the time, the only way to get in touch with each other was by writing letters or making telephone calls - and not too many people had mobile phones then either! Gosh... it feels like it must have been the dark ages!

Moving on to December 1992 - still no

proper photos but reviews of Michael's first appearance at the Chelmsford Spectacular and the first charity concert at Harrogate. It's interesting to note that all these years later the debate about people getting up to dance is still going on - we commented "Your view on this will depend on where you were - the people who were standing at the front were happy to be there, but those who were sitting in the front row and to the side at the front were not very happy to have their view completely blocked for half of the show. You can imagine how disappointing it would be to be looking forward to being right at the front only to have your view spoiled!"

In March 1993 the first photos appeared - one on the front inside cover and one on the inside back cover - printed on blue paper so not really too clear. One was of one of our first competition winners, Lucy Shackleton, who had won a trip to see Michael in the recording studio while he was recording his 'Always' album. We went with her and we were privileged to watch while Michael recorded 'A Song For You'.

Issue 4 was sent out in July 1993 while we were still recovering from one of Michael's longest UK tours. We introduced a section called "Answerback" where we invited questions from members and attempted to answer them. Once again it seems that the same questions still come up - such as "Why can't I get front row seats for Michael's concerts?" The answer remains the same - luck of the draw and not everyone can sit in the front row! The first middle page photos appeared in this edition - two lovely shots of Michael on stage during the tour.

The first ROC concert had taken place by the time Issue 5 came out and there were reports about that fantastic night at The Dominion Theatre on September 26 1993. Michael talked about "that tie" referring to a tie that he had reluctantly donated to us as a competition prize following disparaging comments about it when he wore it on his TV series!

Issue 6 was sent out in April 1994 and contained reports from the wonderful Christmas mini-tour that Michael had

undertaken at the end of 1993, together with a couple of photos of Michael on stage (who remembers the Disney pyjamas?!).

When Issue 7 came out we were in the midst of preparing for our first ever Fan Club Event that was held at the Forte Crest Hotel in Regent's Park, London. We were also talking about Michael's second TV series that had already been recorded and mentioning some of his guests such as James Brown, Joe Cocker, Cher, Tony Bennett and of course Michael's dear friend Mike Smith who sang 'Do You Love Me' with him.

Our first Fan Club Event featured heavily in the 'Event Special' that was Issue 8 and there was a thank you letter from ROC for the money raised from the raffle we held on the day of the Event.

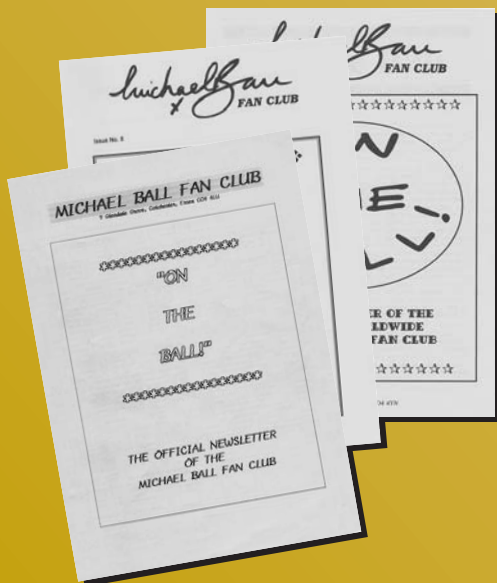
By the time we got to Issue 11 we were talking about the first fan club trip to Jersey for a one-off concert that Michael had performed there. We were also giving you our rather long-winded compuserve email address!

In Issue 12 we were reporting on the 1995 Fan Club Event, as well as commenting on Michael's performance in *Passion* - well actually we didn't comment - we were leaving it to all of you to see it for yourselves and were planning a "Talking Back" special for all your reviews.

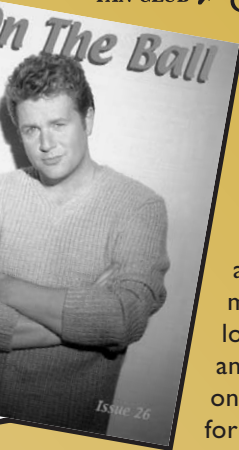
Issue 13 which was sent out in the summer of 1996 mentioned our first ever website and the star we had named after Michael in the Hercules constellation.

Issue 14 was the last issue with the blue cover and it contained the results from a membership survey we had carried out that year (we must have had too much time on our hands!!) Interestingly from a list of songs fans had said they would like to hear, he has since recorded or sung live many of them.

Issue 15 was still A5 size but was the first edition with a colour photo on the front cover which gave a new look to the







magazine. It was also the first time we'd mentioned our USA co-ordinator Pat Webb, who was taking on the task of looking after our growing army of American fan club members. Issue 21 found us looking forward to a tour and congratulating Michael on receiving a platinum disc for sales of 300,000 copies of his album 'The Movies', making it Michael's most successful album to date. He'd also won the Variety Club Award for Best Recording Artiste of 1998 so quite a lot to be cheerful about. Moving on to Issue 23 we had a lovely photo of Michael on the cover wearing his kilt as 1999 was drawing to a close.

OTB had the same look and feel for the next few issues until Issue 25 when yet again we progressed - this time to having colour photos on the front and back and a full glossy paged A5 magazine. Issue 29 had us anticipating Michael's role in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and thinking about our plans for the coming year.

When we got to Issue 30 we wanted to do something special to celebrate the fan club's 10th anniversary, so decided to go for an A4 colour cover and colour centrefold magazine. The reaction to this was so good that we decided to continue to produce an A4 size magazine which we have been doing ever since. The year was 2002 - so it all coincided with Michael's 40th birthday and to celebrate both we held a party at the Equinox nightclub in Leicester Square. Issue 31 carried many articles about the wonderful time we had at the party and the special birthday cake we had made for Michael in the shape of *Chitty*.

Issue 34 went to press just after Michael finished in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and there were reports from Michael's final performances in *Chitty*, as well as an article about stage door friendships - one of the most important aspects of this fan club in our opinion.

Michael's concerts in Australia proved the strong theme for OTB 36, with many reports from Australian and New Zealand fans, as well as from those fans that went on a trip organised by Arena Travel for fan club members.

We started off Issue 39 by commenting that we had all been taken by surprise when Michael had taken over from Michael Crawford in *The Woman In White* in London. This was a new departure for Michael to take over a character role and of course he took it in his stride, setting the stage for some future roles.

Issue 41 bought about our latest change in look and feel, when our own James Gaden took over the design and layout, giving it a more contemporary feel. We were also talking about Michael's roles in *Patience* and *The Woman In White* on Broadway with photos from the opening night in New York.

In Issue 45 we were celebrating the fan club's 15th birthday and looking forward to *Kismet*, as well as reporting on Michael's trip to Lapland the previous December with the children from the "When You Wish Upon A Star" foundation.

The first photo of Edna appeared in Issue 46 where the subject of debate was whether we liked the beard he grew for *Kismet* or not - talk about contrasts! Edna

made it to the cover of OTB 47 which contained reviews from *Hairspray*.

Issue 48 featured Michael on the cover holding the Laurence Olivier Award for 'Best Actor in a Musical' - a highly deserved award for his portrayal of Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray* - and that brings us more or less up to date.

Looking back at all the issues brings back a wealth of memories and the burning issues of the day such as do we prefer Michael's hair curly or spiky?!

We must thank everyone who has contributed an article or photo to On The Ball over the past years, without all your stories and reviews it would be very difficult to fill the pages - after all, it's your magazine and we love all the contributions you all make to it. As for the future - who knows how many more editions of On The Ball there are to come - another 50?! We just know that we will continue, together with your help, to put our heart and soul into providing you with the best magazine possible - it's a privilege to be able to continue bringing you the stories surrounding Michael Ball.



# 25 YEARS OF SONG by Nancy Garcia

**EVERY STORY** has a start, but **WHERE DO I BEGIN** this one? Well, it's the story of **ONE VOICE** belonging to a man that has come to one true realisation throughout his 25 years of song. This insight is that **WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS NOW IS LOVE** and he has given **EVERLASTING LOVE** to us all through his **MUSIC**. There is truth in the saying that **LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING**.

Michael, **YOU'LL NEVER KNOW** the effect you have on me and so many of your fans. **THE FIRST TIME EVER I SAW YOUR FACE** was **FROM A DISTANCE** on the television. I was wondering who is **THE BOY FROM NOWHERE** as I was not sure where you had come from. Still, **WITH ONE LOOK**, like a **DESPERADO, YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU**....and **ANYONE WHO HAD A HEART** would feel the same way.

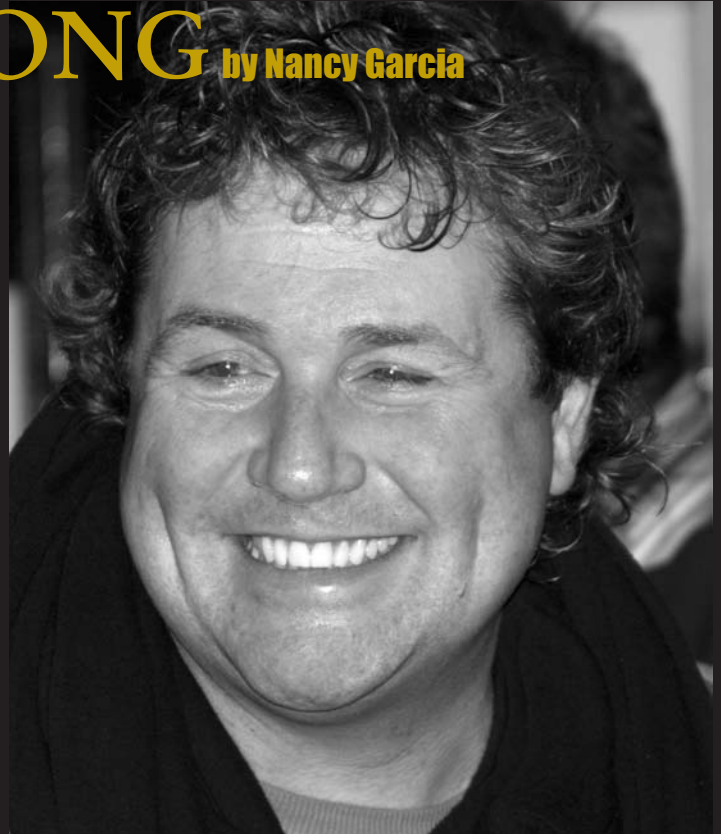
**JUST WHEN** I feel **THIS HOUSE IS EMPTY NOW** and there are **EMPTY CHAIRS AND EMPTY TABLES** and I am **ALL BY MYSELF**, I **BRING HIM HOME** through his songs. There is **SOMETHING INSIDE SO STRONG** when I hear Michael's songs. **YOU RAISE ME UP** and **LIFT THE WINGS** and build **A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATERS** and leave me **FEELIN' GOOD**. When we listen to your songs it feels as if **WE HAVE ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD** and no worries.

In concert, you feel that every song is **A SONG FOR YOU** when Michael gives you **THE LOOK OF LOVE** from the stage. All your fans, **THEY LONG TO BE CLOSE TO YOU** and slowly work their way up to the foot of the stage silently saying **THE PRAYER** in hopes that you will **REACH OUT FOR ME**. Michael, you are definitely **HOT STUFF** as you do **THE DANCE** thing around the stage and **SHAKE YOUR TAIL FEATHER**. I am sure that you must say to yourself "**I AM LOVED**" by the reaction you get from your audiences. **CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE** Michael? Because we certainly do.

**OH! WHAT A CIRCUS** at the stage door when it is announced that Michael is arriving. **NO MATTER WHAT**, even with **STORMY WEATHER**, the fans will wait just to get a chance of a picture with you. **YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE** as you make your way to the stage door. Passers by look and must think that these **PEOPLE ARE STRANGE** and ask **WHAT MAKES YOU STAY?** It's pretty clear that they haven't heard Michael sing or perform or they would understand. Even under Edna's frock, **IT'S STILL YOU**.

**YOU'LL NEVER KNOW** the chaos you cause every time you announce a "last day" at Hairspray. Everyone runs out and buys tickets only to hear and see your **LYIN' EYES** say that you are not sure if you are staying on and may **THINK TWICE** about it. So many sighs of **TELL ME IT'S NOT TRUE** are heard as travel plans are reworked and speculations begin as to when your actual **LAST NIGHT OF THE WORLD** will be.

I now have the pleasure of hearing you **TELL ME ON A SUNDAY** what is going on in the world as I listen to your radio show. You let us all know if **SOMETHING'S COMING** to theatres or television that you may find interesting. **I DON'T WANT TO MISS A THING** and use the "listen again" feature when need be. For a time,



you thought that **NO ONE CRIES ANYMORE** and maybe they should **CRY ME A RIVER** and came up with Ball's Bawlers. Then you want to rattle listeners' **MEMORY** and want them to come up with classic tracks. You bring the caller on the air and let all your listeners in as to why they chose the song for all of us **WHO NEEDS TO KNOW** the story behind the song. We get to hear about **SOMEONE ELSE'S DREAM** or how they have saved **TIME IN A BOTTLE** because **THE SONG REMEMBERS WHEN**. And now, **AS LONG AS THERE'S CHRISTMAS** you realised that there will always be unusual songs for the holiday and are requesting suggestions for Ball's Baubles. **LET THE RIVERS RUN** with suggestions as you make your listeners **THINK** of songs to send you before they start **DRIVING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS** holidays.

**IF YOU COULD READ MY MIND** you would know that I've **DREAMED A DREAM** along with so many of your American fans. I see you **WALKING IN MEMPHIS**, then **ON BROADWAY**, and taking a stroll down **SUNSET BOULEVARD** all the time saying **THE SHOW MUST GO ON**. Yes, my dream is of concerts all over America! **IF I CAN DREAM IT**, then **ALL I ASK OF YOU** is that you consider it even though it is **AGAINST ALL ODDS** because it feels like you're **NEVER COMING BACK**. But I will **LIGHT A CANDLE** and continue to dream. So **DON'T RAIN ON MY PARADE!**

When you're asked **WHAT ARE YOU DOING THE REST OF YOUR LIFE** I hope you say "**DON'T STOP** what I'm doing" because you are **STILL THE ONE** and **I'LL BE THERE** along with everyone else wishing you well through all the **SEASONS OF LOVE** to come **WHEREVER YOU ARE FROM HERE TO ETERNITY**.

So Michael, **HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS** and a **HAPPY NEW YEAR** and know that **IN THIS LIFE I WISH YOU LOVE** along with all of your fans.



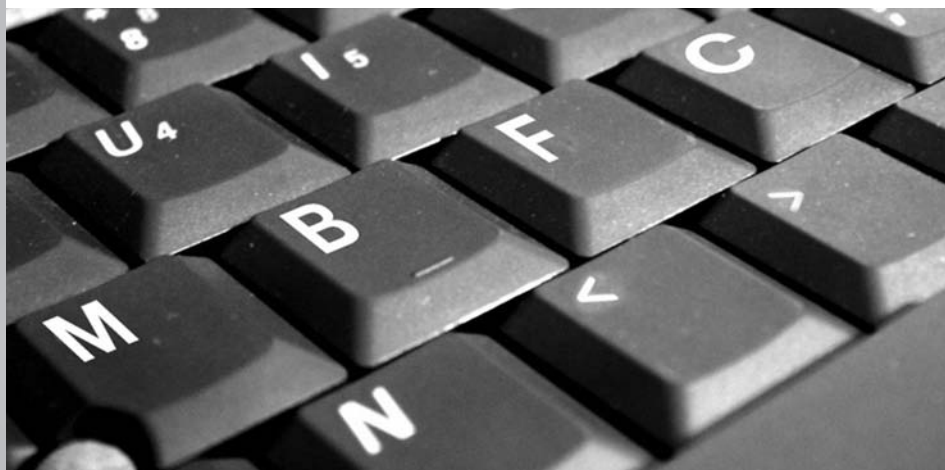
## THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at

[www.mbfc.co.uk](http://www.mbfc.co.uk)

Our site features a very active forum where many a debate has gone on between fans from all over the world. You can also find all the latest news and photos - why not check it out today?

There is also a Fan Club Members Forum for fan club members only. The password to access it is forever.



## MOVING HOUSE?

Don't forget to let us have your new address so you don't miss out on any important information

Please remember to enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you want a reply to your letter

## INFOLINE NUMBER



**UK Members:**

0871 221 7811

**Overseas:**

+44 8707 422224

## PEN PALS / TRAVEL TALK

This section is for those of you who either want to meet up with fellow fans in your local area or get in touch with people from further afield. Maybe you want to find a travelling companion or maybe you simply want to arrange a get together to chat about Michael. To be included simply drop us a line with your details at our usual address.

### "SOUTH" GET-TOGETHERS FOR ALL MICHAEL BALL FANS

New fan club members are very welcome, every two months (next one will be in January - contact us for details) at the BIC in Bournemouth, Dorset. We meet up in the café area inside main



foyer from 2:00pm to 4:00pm.

Anyone interested in joining us for tea-coffee and chat about "our favourite man", please contact Jill Clark or Barbara Mills:

email: [lilaclondoncorgi@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lilaclondoncorgi@yahoo.co.uk) or post:

30 Whitehaven Park, Chapel Lane, Blackfield. Southampton. SO45 1YZ.

We would love to see you, (we have had 13 of us at some of our get togethers - so it's "growing" and it would be really nice to see you all whether you are a new fan or a not so new fan).

### LESLEY STIFFELL

Lesley is 51 years old and likes concerts, shows, reading, photography, films and music. She also likes people with a good sense of humour, so if you have one drop Lesley a line.

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