

ON THE BALL

Issue 51



Hi Everyone,

As we're heading into summer here we are with Issue 51 of On The Ball. It's been another busy few months - before we know it Michael will be doing his final performance in Hairspray. Speaking of which, we are writing this the day after a trip to London on what could have been his final night if he had not signed on for another three months until 25 July. There were many fans there and it was great to catch up with everyone on a lovely sunny spring day.

Since the last edition Michael has released his latest album "Past and Present - The Very Best of Michael Ball" which achieved great success, peaking at No. 11 in the official UK album chart. We hope you were all able to keep up with the various TV and radio appearances that Michael made in connection with the album release. He seemed to be popping up here, there and everywhere! We were able to go to some of the TV recordings and had a lovely afternoon at the Alan Titchmarsh show where Michael sang "The Impossible Dream" live for the first time - fantastic. If that's a taste of what's in store for us during the tour we are all in for a wonderful time.

With so much going on this year we still haven't been able to pin down a date for an event, but we are still working on doing something when the time is right. At the moment, there are plenty of opportunities to see Michael, and what with a tour coming up there's very little time to organise something.

There are lots of photos and stories in this issue and we hope you enjoy reading about your fellow fans' experiences of seeing Michael. We also have something new - Michael Mayhem and Photo Fun! Those of you with internet access who look at our forum will know exactly what we're talking about but for the others let's explain. Doris Laurini and Christine Tietjen have displayed a wonderful talent for concocting hilarious photos with funny captions. As you will see on pages 10 and 11, we're sure they will bring a smile to your face!

Lots of Love
Gill and Maureen



Dear Everyone,

Well, I am writing this letter to you with something of a heavy heart. It is the last time I shall be doing it in Edna's dressing room and this time I really do mean it. I am leaving on the 25th of July and that will be the end of the most fantastic era for me.

So many of you came to what was originally going to be my last night on Saturday and what a fabulous day we all had. The rest of the cast didn't know what had hit them and all of us felt a gigantic hug from the audience that day.

It makes me wonder how on earth I am going to be able to keep it together for the real time. I think we will all be so emotional and over excited and probably a little bit in denial. You don't need me to tell you again how important and happy this time has been to me and the joy of seeing so many fans, time and again surrendering to the journey for Edna, Tracy,, Wilbur and Link and all the characters in "HATESPRAY" has been truly amazing.

So lets focus on the Birthday Show and tour. I can't wait to get out there and sing my heart out for you. It seems like ages and has been a long

time coming. Whenever we see each
other on the road lets have fun. The
world can be a tough place at the moment
and its our job to give it a bit of joy.

See you soon My loves,

God Bless & love

Will
x



MY HUSBAND'S 70TH BIRTHDAY

BY ANITA ALLCHIN PHOTO BY MICK ALLCHIN



My husband Mick and I wanted to go to London to see *Hairspray* for most of last year. I have sciatica and did not fancy walking around London as it can get very painful, and with one thing and another, we left it. We were again toying with the idea when I hurt my knee, so we could not go for my birthday on the 13th

December. Hearing that Michael was again extending his time in the show, we definitely decided to book for Mick's 70th birthday on the 11th February. So we flew to London from Jersey on the morning of the 10th and spent a lovely relaxing afternoon on the river from Westminster Bridge to Greenwich and back. In the

evening we walked and walked – I have not walked so far for years! Fortunately my legs stood up to it. On the Wednesday of Mick's birthday we found our way from the Jolly St. Ermins, where we stayed, to the Shaftesbury Theatre so we would not get lost in the evening. We wandered around for the rest of the day, and got to the theatre very early. There was nowhere to sit so we walked around again. It was lovely to be able to sit down when we could get into the theatre. It was still quite early, and not many were inside at the time. By the start of the show it was packed! We were surrounded by teenagers, apparently on a group trip, and I think they were mostly there for Ben James-Ellis.

At the interval, Mick said it was the best show he had seen. I agreed with him! We have been to London to see *Phantom of the Opera*, and saw Michael in *Chitty* (which was marvellous) but the energy that everyone puts into this show makes it really something. Mick recognised Michael the minute he came on stage – he must have taken notice of the pictures I keep showing him! Michael was superb!! Nigel Planer was very good, and I wondered if they got a fit of giggles every night when singing 'Timeless to Me'. They could hardly sing for laughing towards the end of the song. Something about Wilbur being Jewish? We were sorry when the show ended.

LET'S DANCE FOR COMIC RELIEF! *by Celia Summers*

We jumped at the chance to be at the filming of 'You Can't Stop The Beat' for the *Let's Dance for Comic Relief* TV programme, though it's a shame that it was at such short notice as I know many other people would have loved to have been there too. I met up with Tinha, Jean G, Steph, Marie, Shirley and Julie at a pub across from the Ealing studios. One of the girls in the pub said that the staff there had been invited to go too, and that they would have loved to go, but they couldn't get time off work.

We joined the queue outside the studios about an hour before the time we'd been told to be there and the cast

had already gone in. We were a bit concerned that there weren't very many of us though fortunately more people arrived before they let us into the studios. We had to check-in our coats and bags and were encouraged to check-in hand and shoulder bags too but we ladies are not good at that are we!-- Some did, some didn't and some, like me, didn't then did when we realised that we wouldn't be allowed to put them on the floor and would have to dance around clutching them or have them bumping round our necks and shoulders – not very cool! We waited in a holding area for about half an hour before being let into the studio. Most people stood

around the front and a few of us sat at tables on a slightly raised platform at one side, though we were allowed to stand and dance for the filming. There was a short briefing by the floor manager who told us to "jiggle about" and make lots of noise at the appropriate times – as if we needed to be told that! The main audience seating area behind us wasn't used although a few people involved with the production were sitting there. Charlotte and Michael (Leanne's and Ben's understudies) came from backstage before filming started and said 'Hi' as they went to sit and watch from the stands. A bit of 'You Can't Stop The Beat' was played to get us in the mood and to make sure we were making enough noise and jiggling about enough - we were!

Then it was all systems go! I was thrilled to bits that Adrian (Seaweed) ran straight out across the floor to our side

I have been a Michael fan for many years, but in my younger days I would not have had the courage to go to the stage door. This time I was determined to go. Slowly the cast came out in ones and twos. I took two photos of Ben James-Ellis, and one of Leanne Jones, and got her autograph. Then we waited...! This was not long after the snow, and the temperature was around 4 degrees at that time of night. My fingers were getting colder and colder holding my camera and Mick was patiently waiting as well. Then Michael appeared and apologised for keeping us waiting. Who cared? He is so nice to everyone. One lady was from Japan, another from Australia, and I thought Jersey seemed just around the corner after hearing that. He signed autographs, chatted and Mick took a photo of us. It was only afterwards that I thought I should have asked Michael if I could take a photo of him and Mick, seeing as it was Mick's birthday. Too late now! There was an insert in the programme with the details of Nigel Planer and Verity Rushworth, but somewhere between the theatre and the hotel – probably on the Underground – we lost it. I sent a stamped addressed envelope and covering letter to the theatre and they very kindly sent me another one - so I have the complete programme. We flew back to Jersey the following afternoon, having had a lovely couple of days, topped off by meeting – at last – my favourite singer. WOW!

of the studio (twice!) – he's my second favourite thing about *Hairspray*! We all bopped and cheered and whooped like mad things. The giant hairspray can wasn't there so Michael came out from behind a screen that was raised at the back of the



stage – needless to say there was A LOT more noise then! They filmed the number twice through with a break of about five minutes between takes. Velma, Amber and Mr Spritzer were standing to the side of us between takes. I caught

Hairspray – One Last Time

by Carolyn Bell

I went to what will probably be my last *Hairspray* before Michael leaves, to be wowed for one last time. There were also quite a few understudies on stage that night: Charlotte Riby as Tracy (Leanne was on holiday), Michael Vinsen as Link (Ben off sick), Adam Price as Wilbur (I think Nigel was also on holiday), Wendy Somerville as Velma (Liz on holiday) and Emma Dodd as the F.A.F (replacing Wendy who was playing role of Velma).

In addition to these changes one of the Dynamites had been told by her physio to rest for 4 days so she reduced her dancing and only appeared to sing her lines although we couldn't tell until she told us at the stage door.

Adam played Wilbur really well, as good as Ian Talbot if not better we thought - it must be so difficult to play Edna one night and then change into Wilbur the next! 'Timeless To Me' was as hysterical as ever with the ad-libs getting longer each time I see it!

The main man (or should I say woman) was there and Michael was as FANTASTIC as ever! You could definitely see the weight loss (I hope he doesn't lose too much before July or his



dress will drown him!).

Verity Rushworth was excellent as Penny and really looked to be enjoying herself. Her voice and acting was certainly equal to if not better than Elinor and I thought she was going to be a hard act to follow.

Thanks to the heavens for opening after the show at the stage door but even though we didn't bring our broly I was determined to have a photo for my last visit to *Hairspray* before Michael leaves (thanks Mum!).

A brilliant night as ever; I was grinning from ear to ear the moment the curtain rose and was still grinning walking home from the show.

Velma's eye and said that there must be a lot of waiting around during filming. She said 'yeeeeees' and rolled her eyes upwards and said how heavy her dress was. It was very warm in the studio and the cast had already run through the number a few times before we were let in.

After the second take Michael thanked everyone for coming along and he and the cast waved as they went backstage. The whole thing only took about 20 minutes. We waited outside by the coach that was taking the cast back to the Shaftesbury. Ben (Link) and Adrian (Seaweed) came over to chat for a few minutes, then Michael came over and thanked us all again for being there. I asked him how many times they'd run through the number before we were let in to the studio and he said that it was about six times! It makes you realise just

how much work goes into such a short piece of TV, especially when the cast already know the number so well. Michael said he was late and had to go to see Connor's school play. As he got into the car he said the album was doing well. We waved him off and waited a few minutes to wave to the rest of the cast and Andrew (Michael's P.A.) as the coach left.

It was all good fun, though brief. It was great to see familiar faces there and to meet up with a few friends for a meal beforehand and a drink afterwards. It was interesting to see on TV how they had filmed and cut it in such a way that no-one watching would have known that there weren't many people there. It just goes to show that it doesn't take many people to make a reasonable audience, especially if they are enjoying themselves and making plenty of noise!

SECOND TIME LUCKY!

by Audrey Stockley and Janet Large. Photo by Pam Hancock.

My friend Janet and I came down to see *Hairspray* last July. After having a super lunch in Selfridges we couldn't wait to get across London hoping to see Michael before the show. We got a taxi but we were so held up in traffic that we arrived just too late and were told that he had already gone in. How disappointed we were, although the show totally made up for this, it was wonderful!

We came down again in October and we were determined to be at the stage door in time before we went in to see the show again, and we were well rewarded. Michael came walking down the street and after chatting to him he agreed to have his photograph taken with us. He really was lovely and seemed so unaffected by his success.

Janet has followed Michael's career since seeing him in *Aspects of Love*



about nineteen years ago. We were even more fortunate as we met Pam Hancock at the stage door and she so kindly took some photographs of us with Michael - a big thank you Pam, that really made

our day as I think we were both so overwhelmed that we couldn't take our own photographs properly! We are now looking forward to the next tour.

IN MEMORY OF MARGARET JOY

by Maureen and Gill



Our dear friend Margaret passed away in March at the age of 68 years, leaving behind her husband Derek, daughter Suzie and a lot of family and friends. Let's tell you how we met.

We'd been to *The Phantom of the Opera* and queued for returns on a Saturday to see Michael for the first time and decided that we needed to get back again pretty quick. We thought we'd try a Friday and arrived at the theatre in the morning to find one lady

standing outside. Unsure if she was the start of the queue, we asked her and she said, "Yes, that's what I'm here for."

We soon discovered that she too had already seen Michael in the show and asked us if we'd been to the stage door yet. "No," we told her, "but we'll join you after the show tonight."

So, fast forward to stage door and Michael walking out.

"Hello Margaret, enjoy the show?"

"Yes, fabulous and I've made some new friends", she said pointing to us two. We couldn't get over the fact that Michael knew her name and before we knew what was happening we were getting our photo taken with him.

That day was over 20 years ago and we became close friends with Margaret who was the first member of the Fan Club. When we told Michael how ill she was he was very upset and gave us a message to pass on to her, together with

flowers and a card. When she passed away he asked us to pass on this message - part of which was read out at her funeral. "What awfully sad news but at least she is no longer suffering. Please extend my sympathies to her family. She was the most lovely lady and her happy, smiling face will be missed by all of us. God rest her soul." The photos were taken at the *Aspects of Love* leaving party in 1990. We were wishing him luck as he was about to leave us for Broadway.



WHAT A SMALL WORLD!

By Pam Huggins. Photo by Maureen Hunter



In January this year my husband Ron and I went to New Zealand. On January 21st we were staying at a very small hotel on the North Island on the Bay of Islands. That evening there were eight of us for dinner, we all sat together at the dining table and were joined by an American couple, Amanda and George, who were friends of the hotel owners.

We all sat chatting away and I remarked to Ron that George's voice was just like Howard Keel's to which Amanda leaned forward and said, "It's funny you should say that - when George was in a show Howard Keel sat on the front row and had a tear in his

eye when he heard George."

My reply was, "Are you into music?" "Yes", she said, "musical theatre".

At last, an opportunity to talk about Michael! Straight in I said, "We have a fantastic singer in the UK called Michael Ball" to which she replied, "Gee Michael Ball - I wrote 'The Rose'". It was Amanda McBroom! Can you imagine my surprise? I hope I didn't look stupid when my jaw dropped open!! I still can't believe I was half way across the world and met a very special lady, what a privilege. I told Amanda Michael was in *Hairspray* and how lovely he is with his fans.

On 13 March my friend Maureen and I went to London to see Michael on *The Wright Stuff*. Michael came out after the recording and spoke to everybody, and then just as he was leaving I thought I've got to tell him my story. He listened and said in a surprised voice, "Oh, the lady who wrote 'The Rose'!" I explained we had breakfast with her the next morning to which he asked, "Was she nice?" "Lovely", I said.

"It's a small world", said Michael. It certainly is. I knew he would like the story, and he did. I didn't know Maureen had taken this photo, as you can see Michael is really listening.

Making Mayhem!

By Doris Laurini

As a new way to freshen up the 'Sunday Gallery' idea, especially over the Christmas holidays when Michael would be away, I decided I would create some doctored pictures and add funny captions, and so 'Hairspray Holiday Hi-Jinks' was begun on the *Hairspray* topic on December 23, 2008. It started with 11 photos, then I added 12 more, and I felt confident enough with the good response to plan a new thread in the General Forum for New Year's Eve. While all of you were opening presents and entertaining friends and family, I was working night and day to have a good supply of funny pictures for the New Year! (I'm not Scrooge, but our family members all live far away, so Vince and I are on our own for Christmas!)

On New Year's Eve, 'Michael Mayhem and Foto Fun' was born, and about 35 photos were posted for the New Year holiday. One thing led to another, and ideas continued to come, and then the best part happened. Chris Tietjen, my friend and partner-in-crime when it comes to Michael Ball (who could forget our Michael sandwich?), decided she'd like to have a go at photo-doctoring! With a minimum of instruction from me, Chris picked it up in a jiffy. She sent me some of her work, and I put them up anonymously, but soon after that, she officially joined me at the beginning of February and has been a fantastic partner ever since. On one of her trips to *Hairspray* she took Michael a copy of the one of him riding a horse on the beach, and in his video quiz from his dressing room, we were thrilled to see that he had it enlarged and on display!

We work independently, but follow-up on each other's ideas. It has been great mental exercise thinking up combinations to put together, and then actually making the finished product. The icing on the cake came later in February, when Gill and Maureen pinned our topic to keep it in the forefront at all times. We are so pleased our fun project has been so well-received. Thanks to all who have left comments and also for all the pictures we've 'borrowed'! We plan to continue as long as people enjoy it, and now there are some Mayhem pictures in On the Ball! So far, we've put over 500 pictures on 'Michael Mayhem' and the sky's the limit!



I just LOVE it down here on the coast!!!



Oh, Wilbur.....we're flying!!!



Hippies?? What are Hippies, Wilbur?? But I sure like their clothes and car!!





Welcome to Baltimore, Mr. Obama! We're all so glad you're having a Rally here on your way to Washington!



Fear not, Fair Maiden, I'll save you!!



This is going to be the best double-date ever, 'cause we heard the show is really great!!!



I don't care if you ARE Link's older brother, I can't iron with that racket!!!



"So many Wilburs.....so little time!"



Definitely, A Dynamic Duo!!

GMTV SORTED IT FOR LYNN!

It's funny how things always fall into place after the event, but this is my experience of my recent encounter with Michael.

First there was the strange telephone call, then even stranger, much tidying and cleaning by the other half during the past week, but seeing as his big 50th birthday was looming, I thought he might have been preparing for a surprise party or something.

The strangest moment though, was the telephone call he said he had just received from his brother, while we were in Tesco on Sunday morning. "We have got to make sure we're in between 2:00pm and 4:00pm this afternoon, as my mother has got a birthday surprise for me".

By 3.30pm I was miffed as it had been a gorgeous crisp and sunny autumn day, and I wanted to go out for a walk – instead I was stuck inside, bored!

When the door bell rang there was almost an argument as to who was going to answer it. Hubby insisted I should open the door, but I was insisting that as it was likely to be his birthday surprise, he should open it. In the end, I gave in and went to open the door.

Oh my God!! I was totally taken aback when I saw Jenny Falconer and a camera crew standing on my doorstep. I couldn't quite grasp the reality of the situation, you know, when you are expecting someone else to be at your door, but instead in real life it was a live TV personality.

When she asked me if I liked Michael Ball, I thought "this can't be happening to me...I must be dreaming" then she told me that I was going to meet Michael backstage at the theatre, and watch him in *Hairspray*! All I can say is Christmas had come early for me this year. The only catch was that Phil (my husband who had arranged the surprise) and I would have to go on GMTV to tell everyone how the day went.

Jenny and the film crew were really



by Lynn Parkinson

friendly, and made us feel very relaxed while they chatted to us, asked a few questions, and recorded some more video in the house.

One thing that Phil hadn't thought through though, was that part of the deal meant going on GMTV *live* and that thought made us both nervous!

About a week later, we received an email from the producer giving details of when we had to go to London, and it was a mixture of excitement and fear at the thought of meeting Michael and being filmed too.

Everything went really smoothly, and during the train journey to London, we were contacted by Sarah, the producer who was filming the theatre part, and asked if we wanted a car to take us to our hotel. Well, you only live like a star once, so we accepted, and when we arrived at Euston station, we were met by Dave in a Silver BMW, and whisked to our hotel to prepare for the evening ahead.

At around 4.30 pm, we were picked up from our hotel in another BMW, and taken to the Shaftesbury theatre to meet

the production team.

At this point, I started to get a bit more nervous with the filming schedule that was wanted, as well as the anticipation of meeting Michael! After a couple of shots, and a trip around the block in a taxi, the nerves disappeared, and I started to really enjoy the attention, and the time just flew by.

When we were taken backstage to the dressing rooms, we learnt that Michael was not feeling too well, and he was running a bit late, so we had time to have a good ferret around his dressing room with the production crew, and I just couldn't resist having my photo taken on his sofa.

When Michael was arriving they sent me and Phil to wait on the stairs so that Michael would not see us until I knocked on his door. At this point I thought I would put a bit of lipply on, as we girls do, but oh, shock horror, there was none to be found in my bag! I had left it all back at the hotel. What was I to do? Unfortunately there was nothing I could do and then in the distance I could hear the sound of that gorgeous voice coming up the stairs.

Michael went into his room and I was then told to go and knock on his door. When he opened it I was greeted with a lovely smile and a great big hug and then he went on to greet Phil. He went on to say that he had a cold and that he hadn't been in the day before because he hadn't been well. I was quite prepared to share a cold at this point and would get great fun out of telling people where I had caught it from! We mostly talked about *Hairspray* and he just couldn't wait to get those boobs out. I don't know at this point who was having the most fun, Phil or him! Unfortunately, the film had cut most of that out as it was for morning TV and they were getting carried away, like boys do! Some parts we had to do a retake on, so we kept moving from one room to another. Fine by me, as at this point Michael was holding my hand, so they could retake as much as they wanted, I wasn't bothered! All too soon it had to come to an end but not before I got a lovely kiss, on the lips - so sorry girls! Something I hadn't expected but I will never forget. After having a few more hugs it was time to leave and at that point Andrew came in with his tea. Mind you, he could have shared, I was feeling a bit peckish myself!

After the meeting was over, we had time to go for a drink with the crew over the road, until it was time to do a bit more filming inside the theatre as the audience started to arrive, and pick up the tickets for the show from the box office.

We had a fabulous view of the show from the circle where we were sat (although I do prefer to be in the stalls nearer to the action, if you know what I mean).

A bit more filming followed after the show, and after we had said our goodbyes to the production team, we were picked up and taken back to the hotel just in time to have a well deserved meal before the restaurant closed, then bed, as we were both shattered, as it had been an extremely long day.

On the train journey home, we were contacted by Stuart, the *Jen'll Sort It* producer, to inform us that we would be appearing on LK Today to chat about



our experience, and would need to come back to London on the following Tuesday, so we could record the programme on the Tuesday morning. It's hard work being a TV star!!

Monday morning saw a repeat of the previous week, only panic set in when we entered the ticket code we had been given in the ticket machine, and it said "Ticket Code Invalid". After a couple of incorrect attempts, it became like a challenge on the Krypton Factor to find the right code, and we realised there was one more digit than the machine would accept, so after a couple of attempts, we successfully found the right combination, and the machine spat our tickets out, just in time to catch the next train!

As we caught an early train, we had plenty of time to walk round to Hyde Park, and look around the Christmas fair that was entertaining the hordes of tourists visiting London. GMTV contacted us again, wanting to know a few more details about us for tomorrow's recording, after which we decided to walk back to the hotel, before getting ready for dinner.

Tuesday morning made a nervous appearance all too soon, and neither of us could eat our breakfast at the thought of what might be at the studios. Again, we were picked up by car from our hotel and whisked to the studios. As we turned into the GMTV entrance there was a small crowd of people milling about the entrance (must have come to see us we thought!), and wondered if maybe Michael was going to make a surprise appearance on the show with

us, but it was not to be as it was only some of the band members of Boyzone that had just arrived, and were signing autographs for the fans!

After a couple of minutes waiting in reception, we were taken to the GMTV "Green Room" which was actually a bit orangey in colour. At this point, it started to get really interesting, as first we saw the Boyzone members walking past to get changed, then Craig Revell Horwood came into the green room while awaiting his turn to go in the studio. He was so big, so much taller than you would expect and quite entertaining too. Lorraine Kelly came in for a short time just to say hello and then went to the studio to start recording.

The funniest part though was when Henry Winkler (The Fonz) walked past and everybody in the green room said the same thing along the lines of "Look, it's God, it's the Fonz!" He seemed a really nice person too. While I was in make up, Phil said they were all asked to move to one side, as they were going to do some filming, and who should be brought in but three members of Boyzone (Ronan, Shane and Steven). Now some of you might have given anything to be in the same room with these "stars", but they are not my cup of tea, and to be honest when I got back to the green room they didn't come across as that pleasant. They didn't speak and didn't even smile. I'm sure our Michael would have been more welcoming.

We were then called to go into the studio where we were wired up with microphones. At this point Craig was

having his interview, so we were able to watch that and then when he had finished we were ushered into our seats while they were showing the film of our encounter with Michael. There was no time to talk to Lorraine before or after the interview, as although it was recorded, it was actually recorded as live. I found this to be so nerve racking but thankfully the interview was short and it soon came to an end. After that we were taken back downstairs where our car was waiting to take us back to our hotel. The rest of the day was ours to enjoy until the train took us back home in the evening

This has been a wonderful, exciting experience, one that I will treasure forever and would like to thank Michael for being the wonderful man

he is, in allowing this to take place and being so warm and friendly (you did not let me down) and finally, not forgetting my Phil for writing in to GMTV. Not many men would put up

with what he puts up with and he does put up with a lot I can assure you!

I send lots of love to you both!
xxxxxx

MY HUMMING CUSTOMER

by Sue Sanders

I work at a local supermarket and one evening I heard a familiar tune being hummed by a chap in my queue. When I had put his shopping through my till I said that I couldn't wait until Sunday to tell him his bill – he had been humming 'Tell Me On A Sunday'! Finally the penny dropped and he laughed. This

became a challenge, every week he hummed and I guessed. I enjoyed doing my "homework" listening to my Michael CDs.

Then last week, 'You Can't Stop The Beat' and a bunch of flowers! He had finished his course and was now on his way home. He thanked me for our weekly "challenge" and said that he had enjoyed his "research" into Michael's songs too!

So you see, good music gets in everywhere!

Charity News

Michael continues to be a director of The Royal Theatrical Fund and as well as several other charities, is pleased to be supporting Theatres For Theatres, a charity set up by Great Ormond Street Hospital to raise funds to raise \$4 million to build two new operating theatres. The theatres will be used to treat children with complex and often life-threatening neurological and craniofacial conditions. Theatres for Theatres will bring together individuals and companies from across the theatrical world – theatre owners, producers, actors, agents and theatre lovers – in a range of fundraising initiatives:

You can find out more information by going to the Great Ormond Street Website at www.gosh.org.uk/theatres.



for Great Ormond Street Hospital



LOOKING BACK...

By Sandra Capel
and Janice West



As it is Michael's 25th year in show business I have been looking back over my photos and remembering that it was 10 years ago when my sister Janice and I first met up with our friends Sue, David and their children Gemma and Christopher (who arrived roughly 9 months later!). We were introduced at Michael's open air concert at Longleat by our friend Jill who we had recently met at a Bournemouth concert; the first tour venue that we had been to and which holds lovely memories for us. It was a beautiful hot, sunny day and Gemma and Laura, my niece, were 6 years old and I remember them running

around the grounds having a lovely time. They are both 16 now and have been great friends since that day with many sleepovers and meet ups at subsequent concerts etc. Laura still loves Michael but will only come if Gemma comes now!

Our very first open air concert though was Bedford and I was mesmerized by Michael (in his shiny black trousers!) – his beautiful voice, the songs he sang and his rapport and warmth with the audience. I had never experienced and enjoyed anything quite like it.

There have been many

tions' concert in London as well as *Chitty*, *The Woman in White* and of course *Hairspray*. (Our mum had her photo taken with him at the stage door of *Hairspray* recently and was thrilled). He's done so much! And he's now got his Olivier award! I also look forward to every Sunday listening to him on the radio. He's such a natural and again very warm, cosy and laid back. We have been to so many places all over the country including Scotland, Wales and Ireland that we may not have seen if it had not been for Michael. Unfortunately we could not make it to America and Australia but we have met some very nice ladies from other countries particularly America who are very enthusiastic to say the least and adore Michael!

We have some wonderful memories of the last 12 years and have met so many lovely people. Life would have been very different I am sure without Michael and the fan club and all the friendly like-minded people. Thank you so much to Gill, Maureen and Michael for all their hard work and making it such fun!



Barbara & Andrew's Golden Wedding Day

I was wondering how to tell our family that we would like to spend our Golden Wedding on 14th February in London, when our eldest daughter said they had booked a cruise and would not be home until late on 15th. So, full steam ahead to book for the matinee of *Hairspray* and to be joined by three special Fan Club friends. Good seats were available in Row B.

We set off on Friday 13th (!!) and spent a night in Sunbury, then off to meet the girls before Michael arrived. Tina had arranged for a beautiful card to be made – which she had asked Michael to sign – and the room at the Travelodge was decorated with a banner. The girls had already sent us a gold rose for the garden – with which we were very pleased – and proceeded to present us with a beautiful basket of flowers, a '50th Anniversary' balloon (which is still floating in our lounge three weeks later), a bottle of Chablis, chocolates,

a cake, and a gorgeous engraved glass 'friendship ball' which now hangs in our lounge window to catch the light. We were both thrilled and felt very spoilt.

At the stage door we met many other friends who also made a fuss of our dog Saffy – which she enjoyed of course. Michael arrived by car, made a fuss of Saffy and then posed with us for a photo – as you can see.

Hairspray was as good as usual – it was my 19th visit; Andrew's 2nd! We saw Michael again after the show before returning to our rooms to get ready to go to a local Italian for a meal. There were 7 of us and we had a lovely evening which ended with a return to the stage door to see Michael after the show; once again Saffy got his attention! On the Sunday evening we went to the Whatsonstage Awards, leaving London at around 10:30pm and arriving back in Weymouth at 2:00am. Altogether a lovely weekend



spent with friends, thanks to Michael and the Fan Club.

On the following weekend we had a party for friends and family on the Friday, followed by a family meal on Saturday for 14 of us – which we thought we were hosting – only to find when we walked into the restaurant that our two eldest daughters had been in earlier and decorated the table with balloons etc. complete with 'congratulatory sashes' for us to wear. When we tried to pay the bill, we were informed that 'the family' had taken care of it!

We had two wonderful weekends – greatly enhanced by all the lovely messages on the Forum – so 'thank you' to all of you. We are so glad to be a part of Michael's Fan Club as we have made so many good friends and had so much fun. 'A rain sodden night at Duffryn after a brilliantly sunny evening in Southport' springs to mind.

Michael wrote "Here's to the next 50 years" in our card; well maybe not, but here's to many more occasions when we meet up with many of you.

BEST WISHES FROM SWITZERLAND! by Andrea Kohler

On March 18th I was visiting *Hairspray* at the Shaftsbury Theatre for the second time from Switzerland (I enjoyed the show and especially Edna Turnblad even more!) and my

sister got the chance to take a picture of me and Michael. During the day I was taking pictures around the Shaftsbury Theatre... a few minutes before Michael stepped outside the

stage door I realised that there was only one picture left in my camera... no extra film in my bag! TERRIBLE! How could that have happened to me?!

Unfortunately I was not able to take pictures of the other members of the show because – of course – I had to save the last picture for Michael. But it was great meeting all the other actors, seeing them as natural people! Every single person is such a talent!

Luckily the picture, which was taken in the darkness of the night, came out pretty well, even though my sister had

problems with the camera (she says... I'm guessing, she was a bit nervous!) and Michael had to pose quite a while next to me...(which I'm not sorry for!) "Sorry," mumbled my sister but as I thought, Michael was very calm, answering, "That's okay!" and smiled into the camera! Later on, after smiling in lots of cameras, giving autographs (including one for myself) and introducing his very likeable father, he stepped toward his waiting car and wished us all "Good night and God bless".

We won't forget this very special moment and we truly hope to see Michael very soon live again, during a concert or in musical-theatre!





HAIRSPRAY: FUN & FROLICS

by Alana Wadkin

On Thursday 26th February I became 'one of the nicest kids in town' as I returned to see *Hairspray*. Mum and Dad went with me; we were supposed to be going in January but due to the snow and train uncertainties we rebooked. Travelling down was great, I was quite happy listening to Michael on my MP4 player. Once we arrived at Euston we headed straight to the theatre and to the stage door thinking we had missed Michael; there was only a few people at the door. I was very pleased to discover that Michael hadn't arrived yet. It was nice to see Joan there and a few other fans (sorry I don't know your names).

After a short wait Ben came down the street, he seems very nice and I had a photo taken with him. Some of the cast started to arrive including Adrian, Verity and Nigel who were

really pleasant. Dad spotted Michael strolling down the road by the theatre. When Michael turned the corner and saw me, he said "Oh it's my girl, hello gorgeous!" and hugged and kissed me. This made me feel like a million dollars, I was over the moon... Michael looked gorgeous (very smart and tanned); he had been to Billy Cotton's memorial. We had a chat – Michael told me that I looked well. That day I felt great and had a surprise for Michael; a specially designed t-shirt. I created a funny t-shirt because I knew that Michael has a good sense of humour and he always comments on my own t-shirt designs. The front of the t-shirt had a heart-shaped devil with "I'M HOT STUFF! – I attract thousands of women..." printed. The back had a cartoon of a little devil with the caption "Coz, I'm a TALENTED LITTLE DEVIL..."

I asked Michael if he would look at it; I wanted to see his reaction and whether he got the joke. At first, he only saw the front and said "How fabulous!" Mum told Michael to turn the t-shirt around, when he saw the back – he got the joke; his face was a picture! The reaction was what I hoped for, plus Michael gave me another kiss.

"Thank you darling, that's really kind of you sweetheart." I was delighted... Michael had to move out of the way from a passing car; he sort of stumbled and nearly went on my lap; I wouldn't have minded Michael sitting on my knee - hee hee! Then Michael asked if I had my tour tickets and whether we were going to Liverpool. We said yes and that we are going to Blackpool and Manchester as well (I can't wait for the tour, as much as I love Edna, it will be lovely



to see Michael perform as himself). Michael seemed really pleased that I am going to three concerts. Then we said our goodbyes.

The show was brilliant, even though there were a few understudies. The atmosphere was electric and the audience were really enjoying the show. I absolutely loved every minute; I danced and laughed throughout the performance. We have seen *Hairspray* several times; it gets funnier each time and I always notice something new or different in each show. The songs are brilliant and catchy; I know them off by heart. The characters of Tracy, Edna and Wilbur are very lovable - I can relate to and identify with them - they are close to home. Michael is fantastic as Edna, the expressions are priceless and I love Edna's bum wiggle! Although Charlotte was very good, I love Leanne as Tracy - the role was made for her. Nigel brings a different perspective to Wilbur but I liked Ian Talbot playing this part. We thought Verity was really good as Penny - very funny. I was hysterical during 'Timeless To Me', it is my favourite part of the show - everybody was in fits of laughter including Michael and Nigel.

Another highlight was the finale and 'You Can't Stop The Beat'; the entire audience were up dancing! I had a ball and was trying to do all the dance moves... The cast got a well-deserved standing ovation. I have seen several other musicals but I have never enjoyed a show as much as *Hairspray*.

After the show, we went around to the stage door to see who we could see. I happened to glance up and saw Andrew at the window. Within



seconds, the stage door burst open and all you could hear was Michael saying "where is she?" Michael came straight over and gave me a hug and another kiss. The first thing Michael said was "Boy, I could hear you and see you jazzing from the stage!" I didn't realise that I had been so loud!

We had a quick chat with Michael and then Andrew, which was really lovely. There was an old lady and gentleman; he asked Michael if he would come and wish his wife a happy birthday. Michael ran over and gave her a lovely hug and wished her a happy birthday. You could see by the lady's face that this had made her day.

The next thing I knew was Michael shouted "Ta-rah Alana!" across the street. A woman stopped us when we were trying to hail a taxi and said that she couldn't believe her eyes and were we "personal friends with Michael?" Mum explained about the fan club and that Michael is like this with all his fans. I think Michael will have another new fan now!

I can't wait to go back again... Thank you Michael for making the day extra special!!

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at

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 at a **NEW** meeting place:

The Hermitage Hotel - the opposite side of the road to the BIC (old meeting place) and about 50 yards down the road.

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 or post:

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

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.

275 Larkshall Road
Chingford, London, E4 9HY

BETH CHURCH

Beth would like to meet or write to any other fans in her area. She enjoys going to shows and concerts.

11 Roundwood Road
St Leonards On Sea
East Sussex, TN37 7LD

SHIRLEY JUDE

Shirley is 50 years old, has been a Michael fan for a while, she's married with one dog but no children. She would like to write and meet up with someone of a similar age. Shirley drives so is hoping to find someone who would go to concerts with her.

32 Sloan Court
Archer Road
Stevenage
Herts
SG1 5HR

