

ON THE BALL

Issue 57



Hi Everyone,

It's hard to believe that we've finally said goodbye to Edna after knowing her for nearly four years! The final few days in Bristol were very emotional and you will be able to read all about it in this issue, together with some of the funnier moments during the last couple of performances.

Michael will be back with us all very shortly as the Heroes Tour 2011 is next. We can confirm that the second performance in Birmingham, on Saturday 11 June 2011 will be recorded for DVD release. We will be flying over to Ireland for the beginning, then quite a few in the middle before Brighton the day before his birthday. Don't forget to send us your articles, reviews and any suggestions of something you'd like to see featured in the magazine. If you want to make a donation to Shooting Stars in lieu of a birthday present for Michael then please send your cheques to us to pass on. There is an important note below from Karen Sugarman regarding Shooting Stars Children's Hospice.

Twitrelief were delighted when their ebay auction raised £1,320 which was for two concert tickets and a backstage meeting with Michael. A second auction for the Royal Blind Charity raised £585 for a Hairspray themed egg signed by Michael.

We've been asked to pass on thanks for all the Questions and Answers that you submitted for inclusion in the Tour Brochure. Can't wait to see some of the answers!

Love
Maureen and Gill

We are delighted to confirm that as from Friday 1st April 2011, The Shooting Star Children's Hospice merged with CHASE hospice care for children and teenagers, becoming Shooting Star CHASE. This means that we will be able to help over 500 families with children and teenagers who need the support of our hospice service. We will now have two hospices to run – Shooting Star House in Hampton and Christopher's in Guildford, as well as our Hospice at Home service. We now need to raise £8 million every year to ensure we continue the vital care and support the families need.

We are very proud that Michael will continue helping us raise funds and awareness of our work and truly grateful to the Fan Club and all its members for being so fantastic. It has made such a difference to us and we hope that you continue on our journey with us.

With warmest wishes,
Karen Sugarman

Layout by James Gaden - www.solitaryvision.co.uk. Cover photo by Nicky Johnston

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Dear Everyone

So, I'm writing this in the dressing room at Bristol between shows having just done our last Matinee and about to do my last ever performance of Hairspray, so you can imagine the huge mixture of emotions that I am feeling.

So many of you have managed to come and see the tour somewhere along the way and the number of friendly, familiar faces at the stage door is such a joy. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking all the members of the Hairspray family over the years into your heart. They are such an amazing bunch of people, but mostly thank you for showing

our Edna the love and support you have. I know you are going to miss her as much as I am, and I will treasure all the special memories she has given me.

So now, after a week off, it's full steam ahead with the tour and I am so excited about it. New songs to perform, new people to sing with and thousands of old friends to welcome to the shows.

The response to "Heroes" has been so wonderful and I can't wait to sing some of those songs for you. It's always hard trying to get the balance of a show right but I think I know what you want and I know you know I will always do my best to give you the best night that I can.

To see you sometime, somewhere along
the road I hope before I spend a few
weeks cutting throats!!!

Thank you again for being simply the
best and take really good care of yourself.

Good Bless & lots of love always

Mike
X



edinburgh's hogmanay 2010/11

Edinburgh's Hogmanay

At the very end of last year Michael helped launch a Help for Heroes campaign to share New Year's Resolutions at the Hogmanay street party in Edinburgh.



edinburgh's hogmanay 2010/11

Resolutions to support Help For Heroes

EDINBURGH'S
HOGMANAY

MY RESOLUTION:

Build more Bridges

text **ELEVEN+your resolution to 82055**

Costs £1 + 1std msg. 16+ only

No guarantee of message being shown

www.edinburghshogmanay.com

THE PHOTO OF MY DREAMS!

by Marion Brackpool

After about 18 years of being an ardent member of the fan club and Ballette, at last I have the photo of my dreams!! This was taken on 19th March after the matinée performance of *Hairspray* at Wimbledon Theatre. It is so kind of Michael to take the time and trouble to come to the stage door between performances to meet his fans. Not many celebrities would do this and we do appreciate it. It was great to see him for the final time as Edna and I'm looking forward to seeing him next at the Royal Albert Hall, Brighton and of course Chichester in October.

I met one of my now best friends (Jill Foster) at "wet" Woburn back in September 1995, we were soaked to the skin but didn't care as it was Michael! We have stayed in touch and usually go to see Michael together - and our husbands have become good pals also. Thanks Michael!



FILLING IN FOR FERN

by Maureen and Gill

Well, we can honestly say that we never thought that just by being in an audience to see Michael guest-presenting Fern Britton's show that we would have to sign a form and then have the make-up girl checking to see if we needed any powdering! You can imagine how delighted we were when she got to our row at the back and said, "No, you don't need any, you're fine"!





A FAREWELL TO BALTIMORE

BY NANCY GARCIA

Life is full of beginnings and endings. We learn this early on and realise just that all things, good or bad, DO come to an end. I saw *Hairspray* and Edna start in the West End back in 2007 and knew that it, too, would eventually come full circle. Hence April 2011 and *Hairspray*'s finale. Michael's constant statement that this was it, that he was "hanging up the boobs" got me thinking. Would it be possible for me to see Edna just one more time? Just one more trip across the Atlantic to see what has to be one of the best musicals ever and with such a great cast? There was no way I was about to tell co-workers and family members that I was even thinking of going to England to see *Hairspray* AGAIN. So I started strategising my elopement.

I reviewed the schedule for the final days of the tour and started inconspicuously asking questions of family

members and co-workers: So when is the twins' sweet sixteen party again? Are there any plans for a 75th birthday party? Will there be an annual meeting in Albany even with the budget cuts? After gathering all required information I concluded that my last possible chance to see *Hairspray* would be the final weekend at Wimbledon. The plan was now in action. I purchased a ticket for that final night back in February and put it aside. I figured if it was meant to be, the rest would work itself out. Well, it did. The airline gods were on my side as airfares remained ridiculously low. Final detail to the plan: recruit an accomplice. Easily done. All I had to say to Ana were 3 words: Michael - *Hairspray* - London. It was understood. Reservations and ticket purchases were made and time off from work was requested (although no reason other than I just need a few days off was given). That was it. We were on our way

back to England!

Living all of my life in the New York/New Jersey area tends to give you a tough skin when it comes to weather. Prepare for anything (and everything)! Having just come through one of the worst winters on record (a total of over 60 inches of snow), I was ready for a break. Well, on 23rd of March, the second full day of spring, Mother Nature decided to surprise us with snow, ice, rain, etc. You name it and it was coming down on our departure date! NOTHING was going to stop Ana and I from our getaway. Surprisingly, the flight was scheduled to depart on time. We couldn't believe it! Well, we should NOT have believed it. Okay, so they closed the cabin door right on schedule, but we sat on the tarmac for over two hours in line with many other flights, in order to have the plane de-iced!

Bad weather and delays behind us, Ana and I arrived into London Heathrow to find unseasonably warm and sunny weather. Great! We gathered our belongings and headed towards the passport control agents, and it hit us. We were about to be asked that question we hate to be asked while they reviewed the stamps on our passports. "I see you have been to London a few times. Is it business or leisure?"

"Leisure." Keeping it nice and simple.

"And what do you plan to do while in London?"

Okay, do we admit we are here to see Michael Ball and *Hairspray* once AGAIN and sound completely deranged for flying 4,000 miles for this? Or do we lie? Ana kept her cool and responded "We are here to see a few shows, meet up with friends, and enjoy London." We were welcomed back to London...without having to lie! We were planning to see a few (well, two) shows: *Hairspray* and *The Wizard of Oz*, we were hoping to meet up with some fan friends at the stage door, and we definitely enjoy the sights of London!

With no time to waste, we arrived at Wimbledon and checked into our hotel. We stayed at a small bed and breakfast, The Justin James, right in Wimbledon (and would definitely use again.) Despite our flight delays, we glanced at our watches and realised we were still in time to possibly catch Michael arriving at the theatre before the matinée. No time to waste. We picked up copies of 'Heroes' (still not available back home) and started our five minute walk to the theatre. We arrived at the stage door to find some fans already there. The sun was shining and temperature was near 60 degrees (15°C). It couldn't get any better. But it did! Michael arrived a few minutes later looking "fine". Ana and I stood in the background. Being there was enough for us. He signed a few CD covers and was conversing with fans when they started talking about the new album with him. He said he didn't know which of the songs he would sing on tour and before I knew it I blurted out, "All of them." Michael looked up and eventually came over to us asking how long we were in London and what other shows we were seeing and before we knew it, it was time for him to disappear inside through the stage door.

We managed to get single seats for the

matinée. This was Ana's first time seeing the tour but not mine. I had seen it last year. It didn't matter though as it felt like it was the first time all over again. The energy that exudes from every single member of the cast is just remarkable. And Michael, well, what hasn't been said about his Edna? He will forever be THE Edna of Ednas. The only negative point of the whole afternoon was the coaxing the audience needed from the cast to get up and dance at the very end.

We spent the rest of the day Thursday and all day Friday doing what we told the passport control agent we would do, see another show and enjoy London.

Again the weather was just gorgeous on Friday so we decided to take a ride to Hampton Court. Okay, so I had been there on two previous occasions to see Michael perform, but on the first visit it was pouring with rain and on the second visit it was the coldest day that summer! On this day it was again sunny and 60 degrees and not a cloud in the sky. Ana and I had to joke that the weather was just perfect because Michael was NOT performing there that day. Following our day trip we then went into London to see *The Wizard of Oz*. I choose not to say much about this production as I had mixed feelings about a stage version of one of my all-time





favorite movies. I will leave the critiquing up to someone else.

On Saturday morning we decided to walk from the village centre down to the world renowned All English Club and check out the tennis mecca for ourselves. We could have taken the bus, but it cannot compare to walking the hills of Wimbledon and seeing central London from afar. What a lovely village it is. Upon our return from the walking tour, Ana decided to go back to the hotel and I decided to catch Michael at the stage door. Again, we made it to the theatre right on time as Michael came a few minutes later. There were quite a few more fans being that it was a Saturday afternoon. Michael was as gracious as always. The song selections for the tour were again the topic of conversation with the crowd yet this time I was a bit more specific. I said he had to sing one song just for me and he asked which one was

that. I said 'New York State of Mind' and his answer was "Of course that one is in!" (Let's hope he doesn't change his mind.)

I didn't have tickets to the matinée so I met up with Gill and made plans to meet afterwards for dinner. We met back at the stage door and met up with a few more fans (Steve, Emma, Chris, and Tina) and went off to dinner. It really is great to sit around a table and have conversations about many diverse subjects while blending in Michael mentions every so often.

Well, it came to our final *Hairspray*. Seats were not the best, but I can't complain. We were there. Again the cast gave an enthusiastic performance second to none, and this time the audience responded. They were on their feet applauding when the first row of cast members came to the front of the stage

for their bow. I could not be any happier for them. Wimbledon was giving them a proper thank you and sendoff.

We all gathered at the stage door as expected and met up with more fans. This is what makes being a Michael Ball fan so special. You really do get to know so many other fans as you meet along the "Michael trail". The crowd was much larger at this point, being the final night as well as a Saturday night. Michael navigated his way through the crowd and at the end turned to Ana and me and wished us a safe trip home.

We spent the day on Sunday walking around London. Walking through Hyde Park on a Sunday morning was especially pleasant. We then walked so far away from the city centre that all of a sudden we noticed street signs with arrows pointing towards Hammersmith. That's when we realised that we had walked just a bit too far! We got on the tube and came back only to say goodbye to London once again. We had to be on an evening flight as both Ana and I had to be back at work on Monday morning. So there it was. We had spent a total of 80 hours in England, but in that time we did what we told the passport control agent we were there to do. We saw a few shows, met up with friends and enjoyed London. And we were privileged to witness one of the last performances of a man called Edna.

Michael, I know you have publicly announced how much you have enjoyed your time in *Hairspray*, stating that it has been the best time of your life. What you may not be aware of is how you have brought so many of us into that "best time" with you. Many times I look at you all made up and screaming for Wilbur and I can't help but think that I know this woman. She sounds like someone in my neighbourhood screaming out the window at the kids playing ball in the street. Yes, I really do believe you are an American housewife... and then I snap out of it and remember that it is really you under all that makeup! I have enjoyed every single performance as you take us on this magnificent roller coaster ride every time you appear on stage as Edna. Thanks for the ride. Although the curtain may be coming down on Baltimore, U.K, Edna will forever hold a very special place in my heart. It was worth every mile of the trip from America.

BRIDGEWATER BALL!

Thanks to Caroline Hurley we can bring you one of the last "Hairspray" reviews which she spotted in her local newspaper Bridgewater Mercury. As it says, many years ago Michael's grandfather ran Harry Ball (Bridgewater) Ltd. We found a photo of the garage on a website. The article below was written by Ken Bird

Michael Ball has come a long way since the days when his grandfather ran a successful car sales business in Bridgewater. Now he is one of UK entertainment's top names and he's currently showing precisely why at the Bristol Hippodrome.

Ball has made the role of Edna Turnblad in hit musical *Hairspray* his own, winning an Olivier Award in the West End. And he has reprised the role as *Hairspray* embarks on its first UK tour – stopping off in Bristol until April 30.

Set in 1960s America, it tells the tale of Edna's daughter Tracy as she fights to overcome prejudice and segregation to become Miss Hairspray on TV station WZZT.

Ball gives a brilliant performance as the larger than life Edna. But this is far from being a one-(wo)man show as the entire company play their part in a memorable musical occasion. Former Monkee Micky Dolenz is Edna's suitably befuddled and besotted husband Wilbur with their 'Timeless To Me' duet one of the highlights.

But they receive marvellous support from the younger members of the cast, notably Laurie Scarth as Tracy finally wins her man Link Larkin, played by Liam Doyle. Emma Dukes is also a star as Penny Pingleton, who overcomes the racial prejudice surrounding her to find love with Seaweed, played by Wayne Robinson.

By the time the finale arrived on Tuesday's opening night, the packed audience were on their feet. And the roar which greeted the end of 'You Can't Stop the Beat' almost lifted the roof of the Hippodrome.



Photo: Joan Johnson

OUR FAVOURITE EDNA - THE END!

By Jen Garner. Photo by Steve Lunt



I'm sitting here in the sunshine trying to collect my thoughts together on what has just been the most phenomenal four years. Much has already been said and so I'll be as brief as I can!

For the last thirteen months, Michael and company have taken the touring production of *Hairspray* around the British Isles. From Cardiff to Southampton to Manchester and Dublin, Glasgow and Edinburgh, Wimbledon and all the places in between and finally to Bristol!

Thousands and thousands of people have packed each and every venue and for a few hours have left any worries and concerns behind them.

This show has been the best party in the land - full of joy, humour, emotions, powerful messages and such a wealth of talent that surpasses all imagination. Whether it be dialogue like "I didn't care for them" or "What am I wearing? A nightdress, scuffys and support hose. What are you wearing?" Or "who handled The

Gabor Sisters? Well - who didn't?" Or "The Somali's down the road", "Now I've tasted chocolate" or the immortal words during 'Timeless To Me' - "how can I concentrate with you jiggling behind me?" followed by "You never said that in the dressing room," or "I wouldn't go in there after me if I was you!" and so on and so on, to the most sensational dancing, acting and singing that has thrilled and uplifted audience after audience. The culmination of this phenomenal show was last Saturday, April 30th.

The sun shone and the cast slowly arrived as cheerful and as friendly as ever, no doubt feeling sad too! Then came Michael and Andrew to greet a hoard of waiting fans. Michael's unforgettable suntanned face and twinkling eyes were framed with his dark, golden curls. He wore a lovely black open necked shirt, a beautiful black jacket (I'm guessing both silk) and dark trousers. Good wishes, gifts and hugs were given and photographs taken. Michael chatted to us all and told us that Freddie was getting better slowly but surely. As always, when

Michael is around, there are plenty of giggles too! He was absolutely lovely.

I'll leave someone else to tell you about the final matinée - full of jokes on each other, even more wigs and Liam's Speedos!!

True to form Michael came out between performances to the delight of those who had rushed round to the stage door in the hope of seeing him.

The evening show was just 'something else'! I can't put into words the atmosphere. It was truly spine tingling from the moment the curtain rose on Tracy waking up and dowdy Edna appearing in her apron with lank hair doing her ironing - to the moment Edna became Tracy's agent, as well as her 'Mom'. She broke out like a butterfly looking beautiful in her gorgeous frocks, high heels and range of handbags! There was a complete and utter transformation.

The whole Company gave the performance of a lifetime and pardon the pun - there wasn't one weak link!

Seaweed's dancing became more and more energetic. It was as though he was on elastic as he bounced all over the stage. I swear I've never seen him jump so high before!

I have to give a special mention to Motormouth who has never failed in bringing the house down with her rendition of 'I Know Where I've Been'. On this occasion the whole theatre stood up and gave her a richly deserved ovation.

I really have never seen so much talent together on one stage before. This was rewarded with the loudest, most vocal and appreciative audience I've ever witnessed. Each and every member of the audience were on their feet. Flowers were presented and thrown. The roof was raised with stamping, clapping and cheering for what seemed like an eternity until Michael eventually calmed the enthusiasm and explained to the audience that this didn't happen every

night but that it was the end of an era! He spoke of course of his love of Edna and of *Hairspray* and the joy and pleasure it has given him and the rest of the fantastic cast. He left no-one out in his thanks and appreciation - the production team, front of house and all the wonderful musicians, people behind the scenes and in the wings and last but not least his

sensational co-stars and everyone who has supported them!

He finished by saying there was only one way of ending the show, which naturally was a rapturous 'You Can't Stop The Beat' - what else?

Our Edna reappeared at the stage door to sign anything anyone wanted

and say his final farewells before heading off towards his well deserved and I guess, needed holiday.

I imagine it was with many mixed feelings of happiness and satisfaction at such success but tinged with quite a lot sadness that he finally kicked off those infamous high heels last Saturday night.

BARKING MAD IN WIMBLEDON!

BY CHRIS TIETJEN

Isn't it funny, that when you have evening tickets for one of the last London showings of *Hairspray*, that tickets for the matinee just seem to jump off the internet, and on to your credit card? Well, that's my story and I'm sticking to it! Daughter in law Tina and I had decided that as Wimbledon was a long way from our main line train station home, and we'd probably miss the last train, we would stay over for the night. Having arrived at our hotel, thanks to the sat-nav Nellie (Nellie Lovett - well, the old one was called Edna, so we thought... new sat-nav, new woman!) we tried to get the bus to the theatre. No such luck, as the driver refused to take our proffered £10 note, for fares of almost £5! OK, so back to the hotel, call a cab, wait for ages... time ticking on... and on... then it arrives and we make it to the theatre with minutes to spare, and several pounds lighter (money, not weight!).

A great show, as always, and the audience seemed well behaved! To the stage door, with quite a few waiting to see the cast. Andrew appeared at the door, took one look at everyone, muttered something like "Oh, what a lot!" and disappeared inside again! Hmmm... was he going to tell Michael that we looked like a

troublesome rabble, and not to come out? But no, he obviously didn't, as out came Michael, looking gorgeous, and he duly signed programmes and album inserts for everyone. All too quickly he went in again, leaving us to decide what to do for dinner. A happy little band of seven of us, me, Tina, Steve, Emma, Gilly, Nancy and Anna decided to eat together, and eventually found somewhere who were able (or brave enough!) to take us all! Steve was very proud of himself at the head of the table - and being the only male! Oh, and we spotted Mickey Dolenz sitting alone in the corner of a restaurant!

Soon back to the theatre for the evening show. A few minutes before curtain-up, and three young women came to sit in the row in front of us. They took ages to settle down and just as the show began, I caught a glimpse of something out of the corner of my eye - I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw a DOG on the lap of one of the women! Yes, right in front of us - a DOG! If I hadn't been so wedged in to the tiny seats, I'd have fallen off my chair! It whined a few times, and yapped once - especially when Sandra was singing the big notes on 'I Know Where I've Been'! And when Amber screeches, the poor thing



looked very stressed! We were up in the gods, so probably not seen by too many, but very, very distracting, as I could see it bobbing about all the time out of the corner of my eye!

After the show, it was down to the stage door again, this time also watching the equipment and scenery being taken out, as it was the last day before Bristol. When Michael came out, we got the chance of a little chat, (and a hug!) and I said "Guess what was in the row in front of us tonight?"

"No, what?"

"A dog!"

"A dog? Oh, a guide dog's okay..."

But when I said no, a Yorkie, he rolled his eyes and looked

at me as if I'd gone mad! The look on his face was a picture, and he wandered off to talk to others mumbling "A dog? A dog?"

Oh, and apart from the dog, the four people a few rows further forward came in with large pizza boxes each!

Two fabulous shows, great company for dinner, and a couple of quick chats with Michael - what more could we want? Well, maybe for them to leave the dog behind next time!

We are going to miss Edna sooooo much!

hairspray

FINAL MATINÉE

by Joan Johnson, Julia Sedat and Kerstin Wohlgemuth. Stage photo by Steve Lunt



The final matinée of any show always has a few funny additions that you would only spot if you'd seen the show before. Here's what we noticed!!

ACT I

Opening Scene: Motormouth, Link, and Amber were in the line-up when singing 'Good Morning Baltimore'

Edna arrives on stage ironing a William and Katherine tea towel. Also used the previous night.

'Nicest Kids in Town': Corny danced backwards across the stage at start of scene.

'Nicest Kids in Town': When they all sing "Once a month we have a Negro day" the black kids briefly appeared on the left side of the stage and waved and sang along.

'Mama, I'm a Big Girl Now': Different girls sang in the cut out pictures on sidewalls of the dressing table.

'I Can Hear the Bells': When the kids and Velma are all around the table, they play-up, talking and laughing. Normally they sit there not doing anything.

'I Can Hear the Bells': Link: "The guys were all over me. I don't know how Rock Hudson stands it!". Usually it's "The girls were all over me...."

'I Can Hear the Bells': When Corny and Mr. Spritzer appear as priest and triangle player they were joined by a nun playing maracas. We believe it was Debbie Jenkins (Swing).

'I Can Hear the Bells': Velma says to

Tracy 'Would you swim in an integrated pool?' Tracy replied 'Yes, I'm all for integration, it's the new idea'. Normally she says '....it's the new frontier'.

'I Can Hear the Bells': When Inez comes to audition for the show, she usually says "Hello Mam, can I please audition?" and Velma replies "But of course not, but you can bow and exalt...". They've changed it and Inez said 'Am I too late to audition?', Velma's reply 'Not too late dear, just too black!'

School Room scene: Lorraine and Gilbert are doing 'the dirty boogie', Duane does a completely different dance and speaks in a West Indian accent.

The Maddison: Brenda follows Corny wherever he goes and he gets 'friendly' with Penny (when at the back of stage).

When Penny gets Tracy's parents to "come see what's on TV", Edna replies "Don't tell me there's another Royal Wedding!"

'It Takes Two': Link sang this song differently in parts....or was it nerves of what was to come?

'Velma's Revenge': during this scene four of the kids, in the background, were pretending to paint the walls of the backdrop.

'Welcome to the 60's': The three Dynamites were joined by two additional Dynamites from the wings. Also Debbie made another entrance, this time as Mr. Pinky's assistant. IQ did the splits. When Edna emerges all glammed up she was sporting a new wig, Tracy in blond. Edna could hardly contain her laughs with so many Dynamites on stage and 'mouths.' Any more?

Scatter Dodge Ball: Hats off to Liam (Link). He had the guts to walk on stage in nothing but black Speedos (skimpy swimming trunks). He remained in this state of undress until the normal time when he puts his trousers and jacket on over the top of his PE kit. (What a shame he had to get dressed!) The trousers slipped on easily, but unfortunately he could not zip up his two-tone blue jacket (he normally keeps it undone). Even with Tracy's help the zip would not fasten, so he eventually opted for a quick change in

the wings and came back on stage wearing a black t-shirt. Link usually asks whether it's safe for him and Tracy to join Seaweed at his mum's party. He says 'Is it safe for the likes of us?' Seaweed replied 'Don't worry naked boy, it's cool'. He would usually say 'Don't worry cracker boy, it's cool'.

Scatter Dodge Ball: The PE teacher - (she) had grown a moustache!

'Run and Tell That': Inez was dancing on the record player stand/desk.

ACT 2

'The Big Doll House': Some of the girls had teeth missing (blacked out).

'The Big Doll House': In the second part of this scene the female prisoners were joined by all the ensemble boys dressed as women, plus Dina as an extra hooker. The stage looked really crowded. The jailhouse man was wearing lipstick.

'Timeless To Me': absolutely nothing! (Not a big surprise because Mickey had told one of the fans that we weren't doing anything different for the matinée performance. Maybe it's because this is an English 'tradition' and they don't do it in the States.

'Without Love': Towards the end, when you see all the dancers silhouetted in the background, a rather large dancer, with stunning legs, could be seen. We knew immediately that it had to be Michael up there! When the curtain was lifted he was there with Mark (Edna's understudy) dancing with the others in a very short

dress (same material as 'Welcome to the 60's' dress) and his new Tracy wig, this time with two flowers in it (peach and turquoise ones); Edna was dazzling!

FINAL SCENE

At the Baltimore Eventorium, when Velma calls in the studio guards we could see that they were sporting a Scream-Mask and Motormouth looked quite furry.

'You Can't Stop the Beat': Inez changed her wig, she had two buns. Penny was wearing a different, longer wig, and Motormouth had a huge blond wig rather than the 'feathery' white one she normally wears. Prudy Pingleton appeared with her skirt tucked up and a length of loo roll hanging down below her skirt. And finally there were many, many more streamers when Edna made her appearance in the 'Hairspray' can – she had to fight her way out!

Just a little note about Thursday and Friday...

THURSDAY

When Penny gets Tracy's parents to "come see what's on TV", Edna replies "Don't tell me I've missed the Royal wedding".

'Welcome to the 60's': When the shop does opens and Mr Pinky says 'Free jelly doughnuts', it's Les Dennis who is Mr Pinky. Michael knew nothing about this and showed no reaction on stage but was evidently delighted. Carl was back on as Mr Pinky at the end of the scene. What a



great shame Les wasn't Wilbur for Michael's last night!

FRIDAY

Edna arrives on stage ironing a William and Katherine tea towel,

displaying it to the audience as much as possible.

When Penny gets Tracy's parents to "come see what's on TV", Edna replies "Don't say I've missed the Royal Wedding highlights!"

'You Can't Stop the Beat': Edna arrives on stage with two little Union Jack flags in her hair plus two small Union Jack 'windmills' at the back of the wig!

HAIRSPRAY STAGE DOOR

by Penny Lawrence. Main photo by Joan Johnson.

On Saturday 16th April I had bought tickets to take my dear good friend Sheila to see *Hairspray* as she is blind and been through a bad bout of cancer but has come through it almost completely clear.

Sheila is such a kind and generous person and on Wednesday 13th - I dropped a line in the post to Michael not expecting to get any response as I left it a bit late.

Michael being Michael - arranged for Andrew to call me on Thursday evening and asked us to pop to the stage door on the Saturday before the performance.

Sheila was totally surprised as I kept this quiet and Michael came out to see her, brought his 54EEE's for her to feel and also one of Edna's dresses! He spoke to Sheila and I for a good ten minutes which, as he was due on stage a half hour later was wonderful and we left to enjoy the show with a special smile on our faces. I also had a lovely hug from Michael and have only just washed my face from the kiss!

For 30 years I followed Cliff and never had such lovely treatment as I received from Michael - what a GREAT person he is and so appreciative of his fans.

We didn't ask for any photos this time but below is one of me with Michael taken at one of his VIP Experiences.



WHAT'S YOUR OCCUPATION?

It's a question most of us find easy to answer, but believe us it's quite strange when your occupation is running the Michael Ball Fan Club! You know what it's like when you're filling in forms, applying for car insurance etc and they ask you to put in your job title – there simply isn't one that says "fan club administrator" or anything remotely like it. If you're talking to someone in person usually the first question is "Whose fan club do you run?" which is usually followed by a bit of a smirk and then next question is "What's it like running a fan club?" Ah, well that is one question we can answer – challenging, fun, hard work, frustrating, it takes over your life, but most of all it's one of the best jobs you could possibly hope for.

On that day back in 1992 when we thought it might be a good idea for Michael to have a fan club so the 50 or so fans could keep in touch with what was happening, we had no idea what was to come for the next (nearly) 20 years. In many ways it's like any other administrative job. We have to be flexible and expert in many fields of office work. When someone joins the fan club for the first time, we have to process their payment, whether it is via a cheque, postal order or credit card payment, enter it into our accounts programme, bank the payments and then enter that person's details onto our member's database. We split the databases into 6 different categories; we have separate databases for UK, Overseas and USA combined/postal members, then the same for those who have chosen internet only. Having entered their details into the relevant database we then print their

membership card on our special card printing machine and send out the membership pack, together with the latest News Update. If the person has chosen combined or internet membership their email details are then entered on to a separate email mailing list program so we can send email updates.

Every day we receive post either via the internet or Royal Mail, which usually consists of payments, some questions about Michael, queries about the forum or membership. We try and deal with it as efficiently as possible although some of the

questions asked are difficult to answer!

Every month we send out renewal reminders to those whose membership is due to expire. This involves printing out the letters and sending them out. Once the renewals start to come back in we then have to check all the details and send out the new membership card. We process all card payments manually and deal with any problems such as the payment not being authorised etc.

Those jobs are just on-going daily tasks, but of course there is much more to

it than that. Obviously our main aim is to keep fans informed as much as possible about Michael's activities. We have to liaise with many different people to get the details we need to pass on, and to be frank sometimes this can be the hardest part of our job. There are always rumours flying about the internet about something Michael is doing, and quite often these are simply not true. Recently there was talk of an open air concert at Scarborough, which was never going to happen. Obviously the organisers had approached Michael's management for him to perform but it had got



no further than that. However, because it was reported locally in Scarborough, that information spread throughout the internet and it resulted in many fans being disappointed that it wasn't going to happen. We only give you confirmed news, but sometimes it's hard to be first with the details these days as there is so much information out there about everything.

As you know we also produce the magazine *On The Ball* which also involves a considerable amount of work, gathering as many articles and photos as we can for publication. Sometimes it's difficult finding something

different to include but we usually manage to fill the pages eventually. One thing we are proud to say is that Michael has always written a personal letter to be included with every issue and as this is the 57th one, that's quite an achievement!

The other thing about running a fan club is that you have to be "on duty" 24 hours a day it seems! There have been many times when we have either been on holiday, at a family occasion, going through any sort of crisis, when something Michael is going to do has been announced and we've had to drop everything and get the information out to you, the

members. We've dealt with everything from getting tour dates printed to send out when on holiday in Pennsylvania to organising TV tickets when family members have been seriously ill in hospital, but somehow we managed to get it done every time. We also have to be the world authority on anything to do with Michael (not a hard task!), travel guides, agony aunts, website designers and be able to answer all queries relating to the discussion board on our website.

That's the boring bit. Of course there are some lovely perks to the job, not the least of which is being able to have

contact with Michael who has always been so supportive of what we do. We know that whenever we need to see him to discuss anything he will make time for us. It's not something we abuse as we know he is very busy and as you will all know, most of the time we can be seen at the stage door with everyone else just waiting for a quick hi/bye.

We'll be celebrating 20 years of the fan club in 2012, and we hope to be able to come up with something special to mark the occasion, and of course it will be Michael's 50th birthday next year, so watch this space!



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 'silver'.



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.

IMPORTANT!

Please remember to use the correct postage when sending items to the fan club, especially if your envelope is larger than 240mm x 165mm as it costs more than the standard size!



**INFOLINE
NUMBER**

0871 221 7811

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.

**JUDITH GREENBERG
2 EXETER ROAD, SOUTHGATE
LONDON N14 5JY**

Judith would love to hear from anybody in North/North West London (Golders Green area) for travelling to London concerts together and to meet for a get together, maybe in advance of a concert.

**ROSEMARY BROWN
5 HEDGEMERE, TAVERHAM
NORWICH NR8 6GG**

Rosemary would love to hear from anyone in the Norwich Area with a view to travelling to concerts together.

**MERIEL KIRTON
41 MOOR LANE EAST
SOUTH SHIELDS,
TYNE AND WEAR
NE34 6DE**

Meriel says she feels a bit cut-off as she doesn't have a computer so hopes there is someone else out there who feels the same way and is still interested in writing letters!

GOODBYE EDNA!

