

ON THE BALL

Issue 59



Hi Everyone

Where does the time go? Are we really at the end of another year? Well, it's certainly been a very busy one for Michael, which means lots of fun for all of us!

This issue is full of lots of Sweeney Todd in Chichester reviews and photos and we know how thrilled Michael is that it's transferring to the West End. We are happy too as it means we are able to start planning a Fan Club event to celebrate the fan club's 20th anniversary and Michael's big (50) birthday. Nothing has been confirmed yet and we will let you know as soon as we can; but hopefully it will take place in London on Tuesday 26 June, the day before Michael's birthday. We're also hoping to do a group booking for Sweeney Todd in the evening.

Regarding the Michael Ball 2012 Calendar we understand Live Nation will put all the details on Michael's official website www.michaelball.co.uk as soon as it's available to order.

A big thank you as always goes to everyone who contributes throughout the year both for this magazine and the forum. We have to send special thanks to Pat Webb, James Gaden, Andrew Ross, and of course, Chris for keeping the forum running so smoothly. Same goes to everyone at Live Nation, Simon Beresford and Alphaprint. Finally we wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dearest Everyone,

Well, it looks like we've made it to the end of 2011 in virtually one piece and, is it me, or do the weeks and months seem to go by so much faster!

I can't believe all the things we've managed to pack into a year once again and so many of them totally different.

Finally, Edna has hung up heels and Mr Sweeney Todd is now a reality. I am so thrilled by the response we have had to Sonheum's masterpiece. It is wonderful that the critics (not always my favourite people), the audiences in Chichester, but most importantly you, the fans have embraced this dark, disturbing, funny and unique show with so much enthusiasm and have understood why I wanted to play the role.

For those of you who have been able to see it, I'm sure you realise what a challenge it has been for me and for it to have been such a success has been beyond what I dreamed

possible. I am so excited about bringing it into the West End and I can't wait to see you all at some point at the Adelphi Theatre if you can make it.

I wonder if you have seen the Heroes D.V.D. yet... or are you having to wait till Christmas? I loved watching it (after I had started performances of Sweeney) and reminding myself of what a fab time we all had on tour this year. It really was one of the best ever.

I'm so aware of how things are getting so much harder economically for everyone and the fact that you try to support so many of the things I do, especially the charities activities, is just unbelievable. I know how lucky I am and you are just bloody wonderful. (talking of which I hope nobody minds my latest idea for the Christmas card??!!)

So, have a wonderful Christmas, be safe and happy and I can't wait to see you next year sometime, somewhere. I've been reminded that it is a big year for me on the birthday front apparently (can't say I remember which one

it is.... but don't you dare send me a card reminding me!!) Shall we have a bit of a Party Event? What do you think? Lets all talk to Mawreen and Gill and see if we can persuade them.

So my loves, thats about it from me for this last 'On the Ball' 2011 and we will all try and be there for each other in 2012.

I send you my love, thanks and wish you all the joy and happiness in the world. Take care and God bless.

always

Mike
X



A SERIAL KILLER ABOVE ALL CEREAL KILLERS

(or vice versa) by Nancy Garcia



So we trekked to England one more time this year. This time to make the rounds at Glastonbury, Marazion (St. Michael's Mount), Tintagel, and many other destinations in Southwest England before arriving in Chichester to finally see the anticipated tale of Sweeney Todd. As we had done in the past, we decided to make "Michael" t-shirts to commemorate our trip. This time we (Ana, Ria, and myself) wanted to make a Sweeney shirt and incorporate Michael's fondness for all things food. We decided on "Our Favorite Cereal Killer". We searched high and low looking for a picture of Michael where we could transform him into a "cereal killer" but it was to no avail. Luckily, we found a local caricature artist who made a wonderful drawing for us.

Well, we framed the original caricature drawing and made t-shirts for ourselves. Now what to do with the original... why, give it to Michael! We traveled all throughout England with the frame in my suitcase until arrival in Chichester. We handed it to Michael all wrapped in a plastic bag and that was that. Later that evening, as he left the theatre, Michael shouted out to us that he loved the artwork and that it was already hanging in the dressing room. Nice to know where it ended up!

Day two of our stay in Chichester and we decided to wear our shirts and catch Michael at the stage door for a picture. He agreed and smirked at the t-shirts and then said he was going to use his "Sweeney" look for it. (Thanks Joan for taking the picture). And to complete the cereal killer saga, he signed the t-shirts for us the following day. Can't beat a souvenir like that from such a wonderful trip!



A FANTASTIC 'MICHAEL' YEAR!

by Christine Godfrey

What a fantastic "Michael" year 2011 has been for me!!

First of all on 31st March I went to the recording of Fern Britton's show because Michael was one of her guests.

Then there was the "Heroes Tour" in June, I went to six of Michael's concerts. As it was my 60th birthday in March I was lucky that three of them were "Meet and Greet" - what a wonderful few weeks I had!

At the end of September, Alastair and I went to Portsmouth for a long weekend to see Michael in *Sweeney Todd* at the Festival Theatre, Chichester. We saw *Sweeney* on Friday 30th September, we had really good seats in the second row. I did not know much about the story except that it was going to be dark and gruesome, little did I realize how grisly it was going to be!! When *Sweeney Todd* (Michael) came on stage you could hardly recognize him until he started to sing! Michael had a black beard and a wig of flat, straight hair, his make-up was dark, especially round his eyes. *Sweeney Todd* the barber had been deported for 15 years and while he was away, Judge Turpin had become his daughter Johanna's guardian and he thought that his wife, Lucy, had died. *Sweeney* was determined to get revenge, he moved in above Mrs Lovett's pie shop. Between them they decided to get rid of all the bad people. *Sweeney* slit their throats when they came to him for a shave, then Mrs Lovett ground up their bodies and cooked them in pies which she sold to the unsuspecting public with a pint of ale.

The first victim was an "Italian" barber who recognized *Sweeney* from before he was deported. Mrs Lovett then looked after his young assistant Tobias. Then a seaman called Anthony fell in love with Johanna and they were going to run away together but the Judge found out and locked her in an asylum. Throughout the show there was a woman around who appeared really old... Anthony rescued Johanna and took her to *Sweeney's* where she hid in a



Here is Christine Godfrey and her dear Mum, Win Finch who sadly lost her battle with cancer in September. This photo was taken at the VIP meet and greet in Ipswich on 15 June which Win was determined to attend.

trunk. Meanwhile the old woman came to see *Sweeney* - he promptly killed her then eventually slit the Judges throat. Tobias realizes what *Sweeney* and Mrs Lovett were doing and cornered *Sweeney* downstairs near the furnace where the pies were cooked. *Sweeney* had discovered that the "old woman" he had killed was his wife Lucy and that Mrs Lovett knew all along that she was still alive so he pushed her into the furnace and was cuddling Lucy when Tobias found him. Tobias then slit *Sweeney's* throat. By the end of the show nearly everyone was dead except Johanna and Anthony.

I didn't realize that Michael was going to die but what I like about "live" performances is that you see everyone "alive" when they take their bows!

Alastair and I then went to the stage door along with everyone else to congratulate Michael.

The next morning we got up early and went by hovercraft to the Isle of Wight for the day. As we hadn't had breakfast we wanted a cup of coffee before going to Seaview Flamingo Park. As we were looking for a cafe in Ryde the first sign we saw was outside a pub,

it said "Thursday's pie and a pint £6.99" then we actually had our coffee in a cafe next door to a proper barbers with a pole. We couldn't believe it - we haven't seen a barber's with a pole for years, most hairdressers are unisex these days - especially after just seeing "*Sweeney Todd*"!



A Little Déjà Vu In Chichester

by Chris Tietjen

Doris (Little Dorrit), my daughter-in-law Tina and I went down to Chichester on 8th October, to see both the matinee and evening show of *Sweeney Todd*. I won't review the show, as so many have done so, just to say we thought it wonderful! Such a different persona for Michael to inhabit. And a scary one! Where had our lovely cuddly Michael gone?

It was a shame, but understandable, that Michael wasn't coming out between shows – poor guy must be exhausted after each mega throat-slitting session! However, we did trot off to the stage door area, in the hope of seeing Andrew, as we had another Mayhem album of photos – the fourth – to give Michael. No Andrew in sight, but as I looked around, I saw Mr Ball... senior! I tentatively said "Mr Ball??" and he turned and smiled, and came over to us, complete with his box of Maltesers! We chatted for a few minutes, and gave him the bits we had brought for Michael. I said how proud he must be of his little (!) boy and he said he was, of course, but how different to Edna Mr Todd was! And we thanked him for giving us Michael! He chuckled and said it was his pleasure! He also allowed us to have a photo taken with him. Such a lovely, charming, twinkly-eyed man – you can see where Michael gets it from!

After our little chat, we returned to

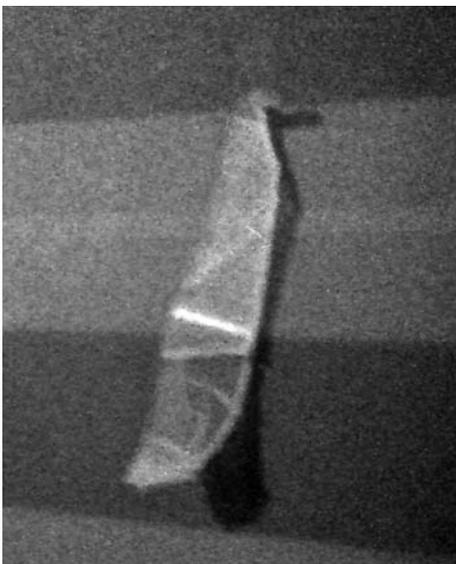


our hotel to change, and have dinner. Just after we sat down, the two lovely Bunnies came in, and we invited them to sit with us. A nice dinner, chatting away about all things Michael. As I was rather hot, I thought I'd have an ice cream to cool me down a little. So, out comes my ice cream, and we are chatting about things in pies... when my tooth hits something ... spitting it out on to my spoon... it looks for all the world like a finger nail, a-la Mrs Lovett's pies!! I couldn't believe it – had they been taking lessons from Nellie?? Having seen Toby discover something in his pie only an hour or two before...

My foreign object turned out to be a piece of the plastic lid of the ice cream container, strangely finger-nail shaped! But it gave us all a good laugh!

A fabulous evening show, another standing ovation, and a few brief words with a very tired, and in his own words "knackered" Michael rounded off our weekend trip to Chichester very nicely! We also chatted to Adam Price, who is of course an ex-Wilbur and Edna, for a while, who was thrilled that the show was going so well. Lovely to see him and Michael share a big hug!

Michael - you nailed it!





IT ALL WORKED OUT!

By Emma Ioannides

To think that I had only decided to go to *Sweeney Todd* a few days ago and was iffy as to whether I could make it happen but being optimistic I thought, it's Michael... it'll work out! And luckily it did as one single seat became available on-line which I immediately snatched up. I managed to get a bit of sleep as I was awoken at 7:30am by my alarm - though before that I was awoken by Ziggy deciding to kneel on me!!

After a while I dragged myself out of bed, went and got a tea and a few slices of toast, then came on-line for a bit before finishing packing and getting dressed. Mum said that she would take me to the station. We left at 10:30am and were in the middle of our tea and coffee when my train arrived thus making me leave my tea!! However, shortly after locating my reserved seat and settling down for my long journey ahead, mum arrived at my window with a take away cup, as the window could not be opened I met her at one of the doors and thanked her before making my way back to my seat. I was then on my way and the guy who checked my ticket said that if I wanted to move to the next carriage I could as the one I was in currently had a fault with its heating. The journey to Chichester was going smoothly or so I thought - after Bristol we were told to move to the train behind as the train we were currently on had a fault... OK!! Due to this I had lost my reservation and comfort as the train we were moved onto had really hard seats which were not good for my back and I

actually feared that my back problems would start up again!

On the plus side though, I made it in to Chichester a bit earlier than I had been expecting, arriving at 4:00pm instead of the 5:35pm estimate, not bad going as we had to all get off and pile into another train! I could relax. I got a taxi to the hotel and had a much needed cup of tea before changing and calling a taxi to take me to the Festival Theatre at 5:15pm. Once there I decided to do a bit of exploring and it didn't take me long to clock Michael's black people carrier, so knew I had found the stage door so could totally relax! After finding the all important door I decided to go and look for somewhere to eat as sandwiches didn't really appeal after a long journey! After a short wander I found a pub that served food called The Bell. After freshening up I made my way back over to the theatre and wandered around a bit more. Several handfuls of flyers and audience mags later, I bought two programmes - the reason for that was so I could get Michael to sign one so I could frame it and another to look at and read!!

I then met up with Diane and it was nice to see her and chat again. She told me that she had seen him in the afternoon when he arrived and our poor baby is suffering with a sore throat! She then asked me if I had looked in the programme to see if he was going to be in it this evening. I then had a sense of dread and a heart stopping moment

because I didn't want to have travelled all this way then find out Michael wasn't in it due to illness! I mean, I understand and am sympathetic, we all can't be perfect and well all the time - just the excitement at seeing it with Michael, I'm sure you understand what I mean! But he was in it and all was well again!

After going to the rest room I went to find my seat and it was a good seat though I know why it said restricted view, when Todd's platform is pushed right back for the opening and he's sat in the chair, you can't see it! But that was only a few scenes so didn't miss very much.

At 7:30pm the lights dimmed and the show started with the opener and 'No Place Like London'. Act one closed with 'A Little Priest' and the highlight had to be the look on Michael's face when he finally followed Mrs. Lovett's lead at the start of the song then near the end where he said that he preferred General and Mrs. Lovett asks, 'With or without his privates...With is extra!' Naturally a fun and amusing number despite being morbid.

Then there was an interval of 20 minutes. The show restarted with 'God! That's Good', but as the second half took off you could hear that Michael was suffering - I noticed it more in the 'Reprise of Johanna' but by no means was it awful and neither did it dampen my enjoyment, my heart just went out to him because I felt he must be suffering!

When the second half closed and he came out to take a bow the whole theatre whooped, cheered and gave him a standing ovation, it was really touching. And yes I am very proud to say I was amongst them too. As soon as he left the stage I got out as quickly as I could to get to the stage door. I happened to be one of the first ones there though not for long as more people began to gather and this was where I met back up with Diane. After awhile Michael appeared with Andrew and he was courteous enough to sign autographs and pose for photos, and I told him I was sorry he was ill. After briefly meeting Claudia from the fanclub I said my goodbyes then called the taxi to take me back to the hotel. A truly wonderful evening, topped off with another truly wonderful Michael memory.

IT WAS A VERY



JANUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

FEBRUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
			2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29				

MAY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
			2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

JUNE

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
					2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1
					2	
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

OCTOBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

THE X FACTOR
LET THE SINGERS BEGIN
NOW WE CAN SEE THE

MICHAEL BALL
HEROES

HERE
THE NE

GOOD YEAR...

SWEENEY BOODIE

THE DEMON
BARBER OF
FLEET STREET

MARCH							APRIL						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29
							30						

JULY							AUGUST						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1							1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31		
30	31												

NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4						1	2
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

'S TO XT ONE!





SWEENEY TODD PREVIEW

by Pam Handley

What a fantastic show *Sweeney Todd* is – my husband Martin and I had a holiday in Chichester last week so we could see the show, we went on Tuesday evening, 27th Sept. To start the evening off we had a meal at the Brasserie in the Park and Martin had the “Duo of Sweeney Pies” – a nice touch.

I wasn't really sure what to expect from the show and wondered if I might have to close my eyes at certain points – but I didn't, even though graphic and a dark tale, the

show has humour too. The cast were all superb and Michael was brilliant. He was Sweeney, it must be hard to stay in such a serious character for so long, I bet there was plenty of laughing in rehearsals though!

The theatre at Chichester is very up close and personal, a different feel to usual theatres. I thought the show was excellent and very cleverly done, Martin thought it was spellbinding and he told Michael so at the stage door afterwards, where

I was lucky enough to have another photo with Michael and have my programme signed.

I hope Michael is enjoying the show as much as he thought he would, he's wanted to do it for so long and I'm sure when the official reviews come out they will be full of praise for all the talent on stage.

Michael once again doing something so different, but as always, he's doing it so well!

MICHAEL MEETS CHARLIE

Right photo by Sharon Scarrott, bottom one by Joan Johnson

Sharon Scarrott took her dog Charlie up to meet Michael outside the BBC studio when Michael was doing Sunday Brunch...

They got on so well Charlie couldn't wait to go back and see him again to give him a kiss!



BOURNEMOUTH GET TOGETHER

This photo was taken by Andrew Mills at the Hermitage Hotel in Bournemouth when the South Meet had their Xmas get-together which was organised by Barbara Mills. Their next meet will be on the 3 March 2012 and all are welcome.

The Sweeney Todd Q & A Session

by Julia & Kerstin

On 13 October, members of the cast came on stage at the end of the show for a Q and A session. Julia and Kerstin were there and this is their blog...

The cast appeared on stage to huge applause (so many of them were so kind to spend a little while longer with us). When Michael came on stage the substantial crowd erupted into massive cheers. He did look rather delicious in purple shirt and jeans (no socks... mmm!). We were allowed to ask questions then. There were many good questions from the audience. Imelda had brought her cute little dog ("This is Molly with her carer," introduced Mr Ball!).

Were they inspired by the movie? Er, no, not really, did it look like it? The idea to set it in more modern times was to make it more relatable for a modern audience and also to shake off all the ghosts of past productions - or indeed the movie. They had an incredibly short rehearsal period of 5 weeks to get to this perfection (Michael and Imelda had rehearsed an extra week together before this).

There were many young actors in the audience who wanted advice on auditions and getting into character. They received really insightful replies by Imelda and all the others.

Did they know they had a hit when still in rehearsals? You could tell they all thought yes, they did really, but didn't want to sound too self-absorbed so went for the reply that they knew it when they had the audience in for



the first time.

There was a quite daring question asked about the temperamental chute (some victims were rather hesitant to slide down into the bakehouse). They explained how the blood is based on sugar and is a very sticky affair. So at one point, when one poor victim was indeed stuck in the middle (we had seen this show) Michael told us all how eventually a hand came up from below and pulled the actor down and

out of sight. And he had to remain singing throughout the entire drama! Mind you, as we said, we had been present at the incident and you couldn't see the tiniest hint of a flicker of irritation on his face or hear it in his voice. That's an example of a true professional for you.

There was another question regarding the blood flow during the "killings". Sometimes you hardly see a drop and at other times it's



splashing around like a broken water pipe. The guy who plays Sweeney's first nameless victim explained the situation. When they started rehearsing with the blood they all had belts that made them look like suicide bombers, including blood pouches and battery packs and so on. They needed to push a button and the blood was supposed to squirt. At the beginning it merely trickled and then exploded into Michael's face. Now they do this mechanically in a way. Actually he did not completely reply to this question.

There was lots of praise on stage and off stage for the actors, the musical direction, the sound design and the set. Michael explained how important the sound design was for the show as they did not use the existing system of the Festival Theatre, but had something individually designed installed. It's rather complicated but there seem to be a series of many small speakers that are individually controlled.

Then he continued to talk about the emotional impact of the opening scene, when he is still hidden from view and hears the almost operatic intro from the ensemble. He said the soundwaves hit you and what an amazing moment it is, when the entire cast calls out to him ("Sweeney, Sweeney...!"). So, if we ever get the chance... This earned him a big laugh. As if they'd ever give us the chance to sit on that chair in turn... We wish!

It was over all too soon, but they had all been very generous with their spare time.



CHICHESTER, 4th OCT 2011 – MY BIRTHDAY!

By Jill Clark Photo taken by Shannon Ryland

This was my second visit to see *Sweeney Todd* and I had a "ball" as I had a front row seat and met my friends who were also in the same row Debbie, Susan and her friend Shannon. It was a lovely surprise to be sat altogether as I have not seen Debbie for ages. It was a thrilling evening and I thought the show had just got better and better. The icing on my Birthday cake was this lovely photo with Michael and having a cuddle! A birthday I will always remember with my friends Debbie, Susan and Shannon who comes from the U.S.A. Thank you Michael and "girls" for making my day so special.

Three Times in One Year!

by Heike Kompass



I saw Michael three times this year - each time it was very different!

- #1: *Hairspray* tour in Edinburgh in January
- #2: 'Heroes' Tour in London, Royal Albert Hall in June
- #3: *Sweeney Todd*, Chichester in October

I was lucky enough to see Michael as



Edna, Michael in concert and Michael as *Sweeney Todd* - three entirely separate performances, one fantastic man. He is simply the best!

Travelling from Germany to the UK has always been a great experience. My daughter Vanessa and I are looking forward to the year 2012: a new year with Michael!

Members Lunch at Chichester Theatre

By Joan Johnson and Pam Hancock



On 2nd November we attended the Chichester Theatre Members Annual Luncheon where Michael was the guest speaker. Michael arrived with Jonathan Church who is the Artistic Director. Michael's talk was in the form of a Q & A session for the members. Below is a synopsis of those questions and Michael's responses.

Q. How did you come to do *Sweeney Todd*?

A. Stephen Sondheim invited me to attend a performance of *Sweeney Todd* when I was on Broadway, doing *Woman In White*, 6 years ago. I knew the music but had never been a huge fan of the show itself, but having seen it; I thought it was the most extraordinary piece of musical theatre ever. I dreamt of it being done in England with a large company and full orchestration. After Cathy had seen the production, and she is not a Sondheim fan (I'm not going to tell him that!) she said 'I can see you playing *Sweeney Todd*'. And that was when I started to think seriously about doing the show at some stage.

A few years later I was having the time of my life wearing a dress and being Edna. However I knew the next show, after *Hairspray*, would have to be

entirely different, so my thoughts turned to *Sweeney Todd* which would be very special and totally unexpected.

Imelda Staunton was a guest on my Radio 2 Sunday Brunch Show and it struck me that she would be my perfect Mrs. Lovett. I started making plans and knew that Chichester was where I would like *Sweeney Todd* to be staged initially. I spoke with Jonathan Church who was favourable to the idea. And here we are now with a wonderful company and great reviews, topped by Stephen Sondheim loving the production. I couldn't be more happy and proud of this utterly, utterly golden moment I have had in Chichester.

Q. When are you bringing out the CD?

A. Soon I hope, but I have others you can buy in the meantime!

Q. My grand-daughters have seen the show and said you (Michael) were amazing but too good....they had nightmares!

A. Michael was very amused!

Q. How have children responded to *Sweeney Todd*?

A. This is a true story. Our Musical

Director, Nick, bought his three kids in yesterday aged 8, 9, and 11. He wanted them to come back stage, see the razors and to know how the throats were slit so they wouldn't be scared during the performance. I didn't have my fake razor with me, so showed them a proper razor, over 100 years old, that one of the fans had kindly given me. I demonstrated how to use it on their Dad's hand. Unfortunately I managed to cut his thumb in process....

During this response from Michael a lady, sitting on a table quite close to him, fainted. Michael took control of the situation and after ensuring she was being well cared for, he suggested we all move to the Minerva Theatre next door to continue.

End of answer.....The Dad then went to make-up and had fake stitches put in!

Q. Are you taking the show to London?

A. I'm really rubbish at keeping a secret! I am not allowed to disclose anything, but if I were a betting man, I think the signs are YES. Will you not put this on the internet; can we keep it between ourselves? This must be the worst kept secret in the history of

musical theatre! We are looking at the Adelphi Theatre in March. I think there will be a leak tomorrow.

Q. Imelda as well?

A. Oh no, I can't bear her, no! (*Michael laughs*) Seriously, I couldn't bear to do it without her.

Q. Is it a limited run?

A. Yes, a limited run with two weeks off for the Olympics. Apparently I am doing the long jump!

Q. Did Alfie Boe approach you to sing 'Empty Chairs, Empty Tables' with him on his new album?

A. He most certainly did. We first met when we were both in *Kismet* (*great laughter by all who had seen the production*). It was like Carry on Camel! It was appalling but great fun. I introduced Cameron to Alfie...

At this point a mobile phone rang and Michael tells a few tales, which we have heard before, about bad behaviour in theatres. Back to Q & A's...

A. ...and suggested that Alfie could be a good candidate for Jean Valjean. I also mentioned that Alfie had joined me at 'my' Prom; and we dueted 'The Pearl Fishers'.

Q. We know that in Hairspray you got inspiration from your Gran. Are there any skeletons in your family closet to help with the inspiration for Sweeney?

A. Funny you should say that. I did a programme for BBC Wales called 'Going Home'. During the research period I related a family story about my grandfather, several times removed, being hung for smuggling... shocking! The researches discovered this was unfounded, it was a total lie, but for 25 years the family believed it... my Gran went to her grave believing in the sordid story about her ancestor. The only scandal they uncovered was that several cousins had intermarried!

Q. Did you have any input into the set design and production of Sweeney Todd?

A. One always does. I had dinner with the producers and discussed the way ahead. It was decided that setting the show in the 30's laid the ghosts of previous productions to rest and

allowed a new audience to connect to the later time period... It took time to develop the Sweeney Todd look and several alternatives were tried and rejected. (Sweeney being bald). I had several ideas because the score said 'his skin was pale and the eye was odd' but they wouldn't allow me to have a cataract! Like *Hairspray*, people have complained that Michael Ball wasn't in the show but that his understudy was exceptional! That is the biggest compliment an actor can have.

Q. How do you relax after a show?

A. I have a small drink, eat and watch rubbish telly. Sometimes I have a drink with the guys after the show. You have to slot back into normal life because with something so intense as Sweeney you have to try to get back to normality and I am not one of those who takes the part home with me... imagine Cathy?? (Shock horror!)

Q. Normally you come to the stage door between shows when there is a matinee, but not so with Sweeney?

A. Its very intense so after the performance, although its lovely seeing people and signing autographs, that is a type of performance in itself, so I have to be quiet, get my energy back and stay in the zone. Coming to the stage door would take me out of

the Sweeney character.

Q. How did you transform yourself into this fit looking character we see before us?

A. I lost quite a bit of weight. I knew the reviews I didn't want to read were 'Michael Ball eats all the pies!' You have to be disciplined and I know that would have been said. You have to keep fit – I walk the dogs for 90 minutes a day on the beach and get plenty of fresh air. I have good food, great people to work with and it's a great show to be part of.

Q. I thought the Hairspray show was far more vibrant than the movie. Why couldn't a stage performance be filmed?

A. Due to the rights' issue you can't just stick up a camera and film a show. That's the thing about live theatre; it's built for the audience. I have seen very few stage productions that have been filmed on stage and have worked. That's why I think the theatre is so alive and kicking and always will be, because nothing can replace it.

Jonathan Church thanked Michael and the session closed.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable occasion – good meal, good company and an exceptional guest of honour!

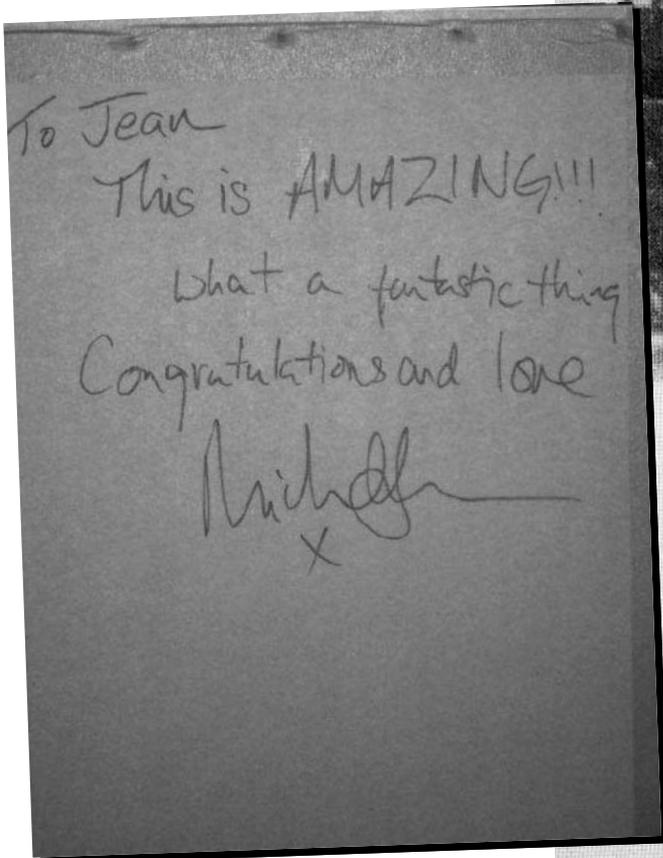
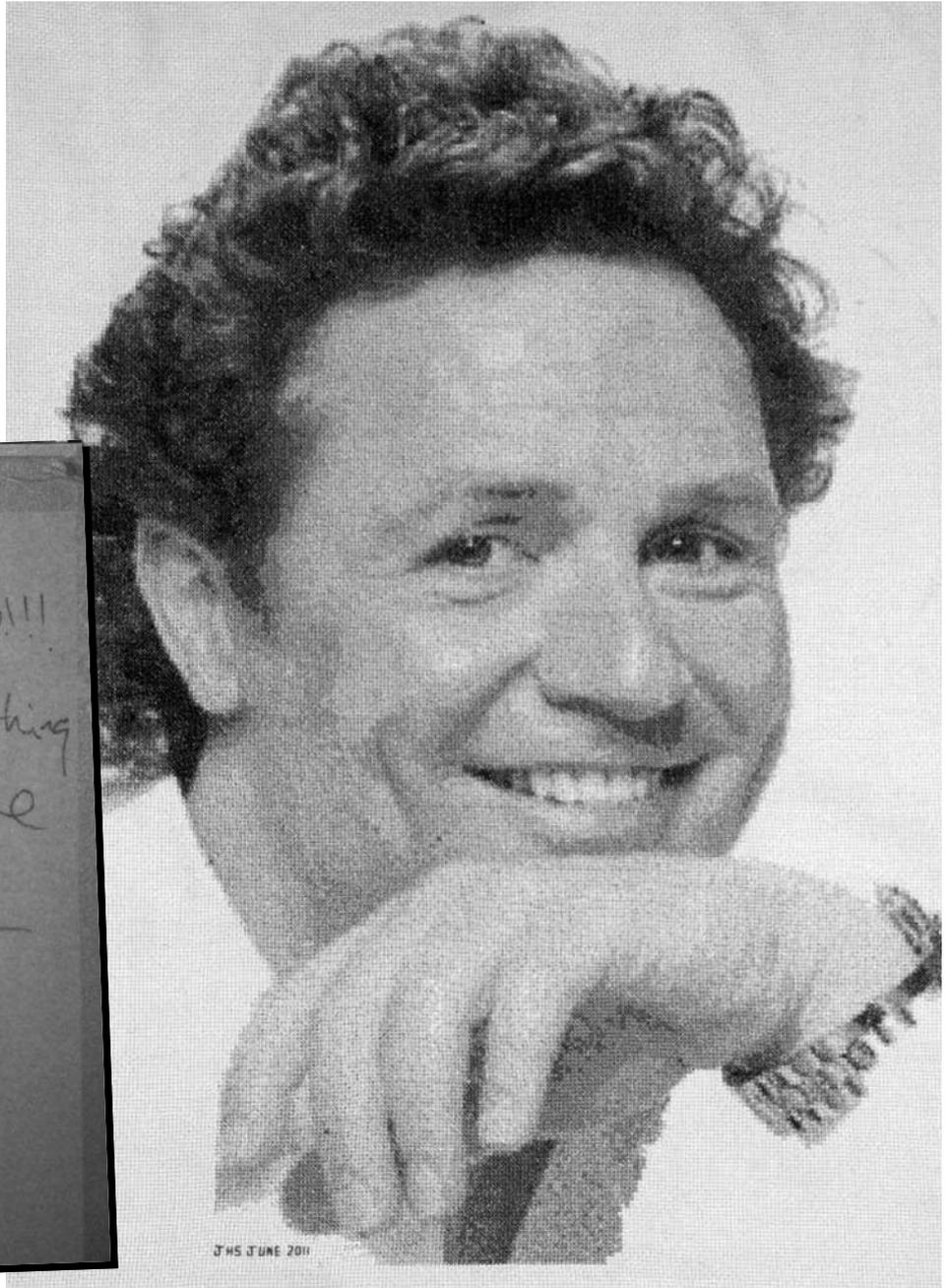


JEAN'S STUNNING CROSS STITCH!

We are sure you can imagine the amount of work that went into this lovely cross-stitch picture that Jean from Hayling Island created of Michael.

It's now been framed and hung on her wall. Not sure where though, as nearly every inch of wall space is already taken up with Michael photos!

Jean took her cross stitch to Chichester so Michael could sign the back for her. We think he was pretty impressed!



THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

You can find our website at
www.mbfcc.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!



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.



James Hurley was born on 21 May and had his first meeting with Michael (hopefully first of many!) at the stage door in Bristol when he was just 4 weeks old!

Caroline didn't take this photo but found it on the internet when a friend told her about it. She was wondering if anyone else had any photo's or video footage they could have of James with Michael to remember this special occasion as several were taking photos and video at the time.

Anyone can contact Caroline via email caroline.nick.643@btinternet.com

For any Michael fans in the Gloucestershire area the "Glos Girls" would love to have you join them at their "meet-ups" for coffee and chat.

For more information phone Ruth Whiting on 01242 673852 or 07748860488

MICHAEL BALL IMELDA
BALL STAUNTON

SWEENEY
TODD
THE
DEMON
BARBER
OF FLEET
STREET



Image and text ©2013 Photography: Tony van Kesteren



Sunday Times, Times, Guardian, Mail on Sunday, Daily Express, Sunday Express

'A MAGNIFICENT MASTERPIECE'

Evening Standard

LIMITED SEASON FROM 10 MARCH | ADELPHI THEATRE

50 CHICHESTER
FESTIVAL
THEATRE

0844 811 0053 | SWEENEYTODDWESTEND.COM