

ON THE BALL

Issue 60



Hi Everyone

Here we are with issue 60 having just celebrated the Fan Club's 20th Birthday! We sent out a quick message to those who have the internet to ask for a paragraph about what being a member has meant to them. We can't thank you enough for all the lovely messages that came back, many of which you can read in these very pages. We'll keep the rest for future issues.

As you can see from Michael's letter he is talking about doing some concerts towards the end of the year. At the moment Michael's management tell us that they are looking at some dates but nothing is confirmed yet.

We are busy preparing all the activities for the Fan Club Event which is taking place at the Hotel Ibis London Earls Court on Monday 25 June. If you haven't booked your tickets yet they are still available and can be bought by ringing the Mercury Theatre 01206 573948 and online at www.mercurytheatre.co.uk/event/mbfc It's promising to be a very special day and we will look forward to reading your stories about the day, some of which will be included in the next *On The Ball*.

Finally, aren't we all so proud of Michael for his performance in *Sweeney Todd*? The reviews have been absolutely fantastic, and the praise is so well deserved.

Love

Maureen and Gill

STOP PRESS!

Michael will be making an appearance at the Criterion Theatre in London on Friday 11 May 2012 at 1:15 pm. as part of their "Lunchtime With..." series.

Tickets: £12.50 available from www.ticketmaster.co.uk (search Michael Ball) or by phone on 0844 844 0444

Layout by James Gaden - www.solitaryvision.co.uk.

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Dear Everyone,

Oh! my goodness it looks like this letter to you arrives when a lot of numbers seem to be in the air. This is my 60th letter to you for "On the Ball", which seems unbelievable as does the fact the Gill and Maureen have now been running the M.B.F.C. for 20 years... and what a fantastic job they have done throughout that time. Where would we be without them? Certainly not in such close contact as we have been over the years, and I take this opportunity to thank them once again for everything they do for us.

Hopefully we, or at least a lot

of us, will get to thank them at our Event, in person, when we get to celebrate another big number in my life. I am 50 years old. Yes, I have said it and am proud to be still here doing what I love for people who are so supportive and kind and loving.

Edna said "Be careful what you wish for". Well I wished for a chance to do Sweeney Todd sometime, someplace, somewhere and can I just tell you that doing it now in the West End at this point in my life in this production has exceeded all my wildest dreams. Thank you all for supporting it in such a magnificent way.

There are plans afoot for concerts (a few) just before Christmas, a new album, and big U.K. tour next year, but news of all that can wait. Lets just savour this special time together. I can't wait to see you again and send you my biggest love.

Take Care and God Bless
Mike
X





MICHAEL SIGHTING IN NYC!

By Nancy Garcia

It was all set. Petra & Helge were visiting NYC from Germany and Ria was taking the train from Rhinebeck, NY. Ana was possibly joining us at some point during the day. So there we had it, a “mini fan club” gathering on a Sunday afternoon in February in the greatest city in the world, New York City. Okay, so I’m biased. No apologies here! In passing, I had told Ria about Michael tweeting that he was in NYC and was planning to see *The Book of Mormon* at some point during the weekend. She said she wanted to see it too. I explained how difficult it was to get tickets to the show and how I had tried on numerous occasions to get the day tickets without any success. The 20 day tickets are raffled off before each performance to a waiting crowd of at least 200!

We met up with Petra & Helge (who had already spotted Michael the night before at another show, *Anything Goes*) and went to the Eugene O’Neill Theater for the raffle. Well, none of us won the right to buy the day tickets so we went off for some coffee. We were a bit cold at this point since it turned out to be the coldest day this winter! We sat and chatted about many things, Petra and Helge’s wedding, saw the wedding pictures, their plans to go on to Florida, and, oh of course a bit about Michael. After our brief warm-up session, we decided to go past the theater one more time to see if any tickets had become available. No luck at that end... but I looked over and standing against the building was none other than Mr. Michael Ball! We all waved at him and he spotted us and waved back. We thought that was that. Next thing we knew,

Michael was making his way through the crowd to say hello.

We all had a lovely chat about the shows he had seen, which ones he liked/disliked and how HE managed to get tickets to *The Book of Mormon* and we didn’t. In typical New York style, a theater staffer announced quite loudly, with the use of a megaphone, and quite close to Michael’s ear, that everyone with tickets should enter the theater NOW! So that was the end of our chat.

Ana joined us on that sunny, bitter cold Sunday afternoon and we all walked the city like I have never done so before. We walked from Times Square down to the West Village and then back uptown again. We were enjoying each other’s company and chatting away that at moments we forgot just how cold it was... until the wind would remind us. I showed them the shop I go to on Hudson Street when I crave anything British, especially the chocolates. Yes, we have “Myers of Keswick” an authentic British shop in the village! They even sell homemade meat pies!

We had a lovely day with our MBFC gathering but the best part of all was actually seeing Michael in NEW YORK! And going through the front door instead of the stage door! Petra coined a new phrase and said she believed we were now “front dooring” instead of “stage dooring”.

Hopefully this is a sign of things to come and we’ll be seeing more of Michael in NYC...but using the STAGE DOOR when he comes to tell the tale of *Sweeney Todd*!

I was only two years old when my association with Michael Ball started. I was taken to my first concert in Chelmsford in Essex, just over a year after his performance on Eurovision, which is when my mother found a new love in her life. Ever since then I have travelled all over England, from Exeter to Blackpool, following Michael with my family.

As a child, you’re supposed to dream of growing up and being a train driver, or a fireman, but for me, having listened and learnt all the lyrics to the Michael Ball albums and studied and copied all the moves he does in his TV series and video’s, all I wanted to be was a singer.

Although I have watched perhaps over fifty Michael Ball concerts in my eighteen years of following him, (and I’m only twenty now!) I have only met him a handful of times. The first was when I was eight years old. We were watching one of his Christmas concerts in the Blackpool Opera House. We had experienced a torrid journey up from Norfolk where it seemed we were never going to make it due to the delights of the M6. But we arrived in time for the concert, and I followed my mum up to the front of the stage for Michael’s traditional party section at the end of his concert, where a kind lady placed me on a step leading up to the stage where I could get a better view. I had bought a cuddly dog with my pocket money to give to him. He bent down and smiled as I handed it to him. As a child, and although I rarely admit it, for your hero to be that close and acknowledge you, was simply a moment I will never forget.





HOW MICHAEL INSPIRED ME TO BECOME A PERFORMER

by Craig Catchpole

Because I was constantly singing Michael Ball songs around the house, my parents took me to singing lessons which I thoroughly enjoyed. I started to do local shows and talent competitions across Norfolk and Suffolk, and was always praised for the performances I had put in. After watching countless musicals in the West End, including of course *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* and *The Woman In White*, I took the decision after school to study Musical Theatre for two and half years at college.

It was two things that happened whilst Michael was in *Hairspray* that confirmed that it wasn't just a child's dream that I wanted to be a performer when I was an adult. The first was when I went to see *Hairspray* in the summer of 2008. When I was 16, I had recorded a CD of some of my favourite songs, and unbeknown to me, my mum had sent one to the fan club to pass on to Michael when he was in *Kismet*. After the performance, me and my family waited to see if we could grab a photo with Michael. Not only did we get the photo, but whilst he was signing our programme, my sister asked him if he had received the CD my mother had sent. He replied, "Oh yeah, I got it when I was doing *Kismet* didn't I!". Wow! He then went on to ask how college was going and told me to keep following my dreams.

Later that year, I performed in a one off show at the Shaftesbury Theatre with my theatre troupe. I was lucky enough to sing on the same stage that Michael and Co had been performing on just 24 hours earlier in front of 1,700 people.

Since then, I have not stopped in my mission to be a performer. I have now won a national talent contest against thirty acts from across the country, got to the last 15 of GMTV's "Search for Troy Bolton", performed at The Royal Albert Hall and Disneyland Paris, played "Marius" in the schools edition of "Les Miserables",

been a Holiday Park entertainer, and now, I have started up my own cabaret, performing to the public at various functions, songs from the musicals, as well as a variety of styles of songs from all era's of music. If you want to find out more about my act, just search "Craig Catchpole – Performer/cabaret act" on Facebook or Google.

Quite frankly, if it wasn't for Michael, I would not be able to achieve my dreams and make them all come true. So thanks Michael.





MARGARET'S MEMORABLE MEETINGS

By Margaret Samson

It all started last November when I went to see Michael in *Sweeney Todd* - I went purely to support Michael, I didn't think I would like it never mind enjoy it. I was so surprised how much I did enjoy it, so I managed to get a ticket for the matinee on the following day, which I enjoyed even more! When Michael announced he would be performing again as *Sweeney* on 10th March, which happened to be my birthday, I couldn't think of a nicer way to celebrate. Before I'd even got around to booking my tickets I fortunately received an e-mail inviting us to buy tickets on behalf of one of Michael's charities on March 22nd. The offer consisted of seeing the show, then meeting and having after show drinks with the cast. Now this appealed to me more to enjoy a belated birthday drink with Mr Todd!

We travelled down to London and got to do a bit of sightseeing before the show. We arrived at the theatre at 7:00pm and met up with Nikki, one of Michael's fans, who had been patiently waiting to meet us. We had a chat then made our way into the theatre, found our seats and Marta, who had travelled all the way from Norway (it's unbelievable how far some fans will travel to see Michael!) came and had lovely chat to my friend and I.

Then, to my amazement, who came and sat next to me? The lovely Maureen and Gill! We were all seated, now time for the show... and what a show it turned out to be! It was AMAZING, even better than the ones I saw in Chichester. Everyone was standing up and cheering,

the atmosphere was electric - but there was more to come, the moment we had all been waiting for, a chance to get to meet and enjoy a drink with the cast!

We all made our way into the bar to await the arrival of Michael and Imelda. How happy and relaxed they both looked and they tried their hardest to meet everyone. Unfortunately it was hard to recognise the cast in their casual clothes after seeing them in their costumes! After autographs were signed and photos taken, it was time to leave and meet up with our husbands and tell them about the wonderful evening we had just had.

While we were standing outside the theatre discussing the whole experience who should come out but Michael, Cathy and the family. While Michael went to get the car the lovely Cathy had a chat to us and even let me have the pleasure of



having a photo taken with her... the end of a perfect day! One special birthday I will never forget.

I'm still up there on cloud nine and will be for a few more weeks, but this great experience was made possible by the wonderful Michael playing Mr Todd and of course the lovely Maureen and Gill who do a BRILLIANT job running the MBFC. It also gave me a chance to meet two fans - the lovely Nikki Guttridge and the equally lovely Marta Dobrowolska. But of course the main object of this wonderful evening was to raise money for two worthy causes, The SSC/RTF Charities and I'm glad I had the pleasure to attend this special night.

After two great days in London it was back home, back to reality but with amazing memories that will last a lifetime.



JOHN... OVER HERE!

This photo of Sandra Marshall and Michael was taken at the stage door of the Adelphi theatre.

Sandra says: *It was funny really because my boyfriend was supposed to be taking the photo, but as Michael put his arm around me ready for the photo to be taken there was no sign of my boyfriend. Apparently he was nearly getting knocked down by a taxi flying down the street! I shouted over to him 'John, over here!' and Michael shouted 'Come on John, we haven't got all night, mate!' jokingly, of course.*

It did mean that I got an extra long cuddle from Michael which I wasn't complaining about!



JEAN NICHOLS' JOURNEYS



I first saw Michael in Manchester in *Pirates of Penzance* - we had actually gone to see Bonnie Langford and Paul Nicholas and discovered Michael who came to the stage door with Bonnie and I obtained his autograph.

The next time I met him was after *Hairspray* in London. For trips there, we are usually on a coach and have to leave straight after the show. I decided to join the Fan Club after a concert in Harrogate and I am number 972.

The furthest we have travelled is to see *Sweeney Todd* in Chichester last November, this journey from Hull included 8 trains and an overnight stay! We were able to meet Michael after this incredible show and my sister took this wonderful picture - Michael was his usual charming self, I look as if I am frightened to death - which I wasn't!

WHAT DOES THE FAN CLUB MEAN TO YOU?

We asked you that very question, with the idea of printing the replies as a centre page spread in this issue of On The Ball. However, we have been overwhelmed by the response and there are so many lovely stories here of you sharing your memories, we decided to include as many as space allowed in this issue, with a view to printing many more of them in future issues...

I joined the Fan Club to give me the opportunity to meet like-minded people and to keep up-to-date on what Michael is doing. Through the Fan Club I have made several friends and had the opportunity to go to CD signings, DVD recordings and several Fan Club events. The events are always good fun and an opportunity to meet up with friends.

Nikki Gutridge

Joining MBFC opened a whole new world up for me. It's given me the chance to make a whole new circle of friends, I've been lucky to get to meet a few and hopefully will get the pleasure of meeting a whole lot more! I have been lucky to follow Michael's career, all his tours - and most of all the Stage Door! But will never forget meeting Rosemary Walker from Guildford 10 years ago at the 10th anniversary Fan Club Event and we've remained firm friends ever since. So my thanks go to Maureen and Gill for running such a devoted club and creating a whole new friendship.

Margaret Samson

After nearly ten years of isolating illness, and unable to work, I NEEDED to do something different and special, and there was Michael on Radio 2 talking about his current tour. I knew I had to go. Life had become very quiet and very frustrating. Suddenly, the prospect of being able to go to a concert again became a very big deal. I look back at Good Friday 1999 at the NEC as a turning point for me, when a whole new world opened up. A lot of people put in extra effort to help me be there. A few months later we got online for the first time, and the only website I had heard of was the one in the Tour programme. I didn't know what else to look up except MBFC. (There wasn't so much online content in those days!) On the Forum I found other fans asking questions that I wanted to know, like where to get Michael's earliest CDs. I came away from my first ever internet session with purchases of *One Careful Owner* and *Always*. I returned and

returned, getting drawn into conversations with people from all over the world, and eventually meeting up with people who remain amongst my closest friends. So many of those friends have visited me at home, and have invited me into their homes. My most notable trip was nine weeks travelling in America, staying with several friends, all of them helping so much with my limited physical ability and making me so comfortable. It wasn't a trip to see Michael, but without him, and without the Fan Club, it simply would not have happened.

When I first became acquainted with the Fan Club, ME (chronic fatigue) had left me unable to walk or talk much. Naturally, after such a long illness, most friends and colleagues had fallen away. Coming to MBFC gave me the ability to communicate with the outside world again, and made me feel useful in a way that I'd not felt in years. Michael, Gill, Maureen: you were all there, just at the right time.

Debbie Norris

Joining the Fan Club has been brilliant. You get to hear about what Michael is up to first. Also you meet great people through the Fan Club who



become life long friends. Seeing Michael in concert is just amazing. No one comes close to him. He always puts 100 per cent into everything he does and he appreciates his fans as much as we appreciate him. Here's to the next 60 issues of *On The Ball*. Happy 20th Anniversary to us all!

Claire Chambers

I first joined the Fan Club almost 20 years ago as a young 12 year old from a small Welsh mining village down deep in the South Wales Valleys, I was first introduced to Michael by complete accident, I really liked Jason Donovan when I was younger as most of the girls my age did, my beloved gran, bless her, saw the *Michael Ball* album on cassette and mistakenly thought that this was the person I liked and bought it for me as a present for doing well in a spelling test. After initial disappointment I started listening to it, out of politeness. Later that year my gran died and I listened and listened, and totally loved it and Michael, I became a Ballette and joined all the others in the Fan Club. Over the years I have grown and changed along with Michael and his music, and felt so happy when an *On The Ball* would land on my doorstep, going straight to the hand written note from Michael, I would read and re-read over and over again while my friends read issues of *Smash Hits* and *Big*. These days I live 200 miles away from that Welsh valley that I once lived, but every time I play his songs or an *On The Ball* lands on my doorstep, a little bit of 'home' comes flying back into my heart. As a teacher I spend my days telling all the pupils about dedication and my love of Michael, it's something that I am not only very proud of but a memory of my gran that has lasted all these years and a gift of hers that I have treasured and will continue to treasure forever.

Claire Kuczma (Morgans)

I have just found it really good to be able to follow Michael's schedule on the Fan Club site. I also enjoy the facility to buy and sell tickets.

I've enjoyed several trips to London

to see Michael, and I've also been to the Blackpool Opera House several times, this is an excellent venue for Michael, even got to speak to him leaving after one concert. I was that overwhelmed could hardly think what to say, still really, really good memories! More memories to be made Tuesday 10th April of to see Sweeney - cannot wait!

Patricia Lole



I had always liked Michael's voice, and then I saw him in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and was charmed by the man himself. I immediately joined the Fan Club. This led to a small group of local ladies (Gloucester Girls) getting together to have coffee and chat about Michael. About 3 tours ago I joined up with Ruth Fatchett from Iowa, who wanted to come over for a tour but didn't really want to do it alone. We have become firm friends. Ruth comes over for tours and shows (*Hairspray* and *Sweeney Todd*), and I have visited her family home in Iowa. It has been a delight attending concerts and the theatre and knowing, or at least recognising, many in the audience. Through the Fan Club I have acquired many friends, and thank you for making this possible.

Brenda Kemeys

In 2003, I became aware of MBFC while Michael was appearing in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* while doing an internet search to learn more about him. I joined out of curiosity in order to talk to other fans. When I travelled to Salt Lake City in 2004 to see Michael perform, I was hooked. Some 14 + trips later from south Florida to the UK (including Scotland and Wales) and several trips to New York City, the memories make it all worthwhile. After

corresponding with many Michael fans via the Fan Club forum, it was like we were old friends when we actually met at the theaters, venues and Fan Club events. We came from all walks of life but our love for Michael's talent and musical ability was the common thread. It may seem silly to some to belong to a Fan Club but MBFC is not your ordinary Fan Club. There aren't many that have gatherings so fans can actually meet the star and each other. Here's to many more years for MBFC!

Carol Cox

A cheap CD started it all off for me. I found the self titled *Michael Ball* CD in a local shop for 99p and thought I would risk it. Needless to say I was totally blown away and started to investigate further. One concert led to another and the rest is history! Each tour Mum and I go to at least 4 concerts, have been to all his musicals, 2 Fan Club conventions and met him personally twice... not bad for 99p!

Kelly Moorcraft (and mum Pat)

My husband surprised me with Fan Club membership for Valentines' Day over ten years ago and I've been a member ever since. I have seen him in concert several times but the best ever was when he signed my programme after the 25th anniversary tour at Manchester and got a photograph before I saw him in *Hairspray*.

Sandra Hassall

We joined the Michael Ball Fan Club 18 years ago after seeing Michael in the

original *Phantom Of The Opera* musical. Seeing this young man with good looks and a great voice and wondering if he had a Fan Club, we went on the computer to see if he had a website. We got the address of the Fan Club and that's when we decided to join. Also a friend of ours decided to join as well. We wanted to receive information on what Michael was doing and know more about him. I've made good friends from going on holiday to Australia and New York from the Fan Club trips and still stay in touch with those people through letters and Christmas Cards. One of them keeps in touch through phone calls and text messages and birthday cards. With my sister Annette, who is also a member, going to the Fan Club Events past and future, going to many of Michael's concerts and shows that he has performed are special experiences. I even won a Fan Club competition to meet him and have photo's taken and items signed by him as well. The Fan Club keeps us up to date with what he is doing. Happy 20th Anniversary!

Helen and Annette Easton

The first time I saw Michael was on PBS in *Les Misérables* and the *Andrew Lloyd Webber Special* here in the USA. I was not only attracted to his voice but those dimples. I then googled who he was and where I could get his CD's. I've been a fan ever since. I joined the Fan Club and couldn't get over the camaraderie everyone had. I have made life long friends who stand behind me whenever I need them. I have never seen Michael perform and have only met a



few from the club. I hope one day to meet a lot more. We are there for everyone in good times and sad times. I don't know what I would have done without them during some of the darkest days. Thank you Michael for bringing us all together.

Marci T Bakke

Joining the Fan Club has meant a great deal to me. I have been a Michael fan ever since he starred in *Aspects Of Love*. I have seen all his West End shows, and have travelled far and wide to see him perform in concert. It hasn't always been easy as for the past six years I have suffered with polymyalgia and spinal stenosis but I have always managed to attend thanks to my dear husband driving me to venues in Blackpool, Brighton, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh Usher Hall four times, Bournemouth...! I have bought every DVD that Michael has released. I have made many friends since joining the Fan Club and I think that both Maureen and Gill do a wonderful job of updating us - thank you. I didn't manage to get to Chichester so it will be London for *Sweeney Todd*. Can't wait!

Patricia Martin

May 1992 - Michael Ball finishes second in 1992 Eurovision Song Contest singing 'One Step Out Of Time'. Aged six - that was the moment I became hooked to the greatest musical theatre star of all time. A year later I joined MBFC and it has been 19 fantastic years as a member for me. Since 1992 I have seen Michael on every UK Tour, and taken in every one of his stunning musical performances. Highlights for me include my first ever concert at the Northampton Derngate in 1993, meeting Michael for the first time aged 10 in *Passion* (I didn't understand what was going on!) More recently highlights have included fantastic Meet & Greet experiences on the 2009 and 2011 Tours, and a fantastic trip to Kilruddery House, Ireland in 2010. Being one of the few male fans of Michael has been tough. Can you imagine how daunting it is at a Stage Door when there is a mass of women in front of you? But by being one of the few male fans Michael has always recognised me and usually says 'I've put 'One Step...' in again for you!'. I have to say a big thank you to Maureen and Gill

who have been tolerant of me badgering them for information all the time! They are the best and there will always be a special place in my heart for them! As I write this I am gearing up to see Michael as *Sweeney Todd* in the fantastic West End transfer at the Adelphi. This will surely be one of the highlights over the years as Michael is in the form of his life. Long may it continue! Happy 20th Anniversary MBFC!!!

Mark Witchell

I'm honoured to get a chance to contribute to On The Ball, especially as I came to know Michael Ball relatively late compared to a lot of members. It all started with *Les Misérables* 10th anniversary at the Royal Albert Hall where he stood out as Marius and his magnificent voice and his intensity filled the room and knocked me flat. Events got in the way so my next meeting with Michael Ball was when I saw him in the Andrew Lloyd Webber concert - Royal Albert Hall again - and his version of 'Gethsemane' (acting, passion, and sheer vocal power) floored me once again, and this time without hope of recovery. I tried to get more info but never thought to go on the net so it wasn't until the Hammersmith Apollo concert I really got into the loop. And that was it, the Michael Ball magic had got me entirely!

My next move was the MBFC and I started collecting CDs frantically. Thankfully, my British friends were a great help as they started bringing DVDs to me down here in Turkey where I live. In 2008 I got my chance:

visiting with a friend in Wales we made a detour to London and saw *Hairspray* - the only drawback being that I had to see this super gorgeous guy in the flesh for the first time dressed up as a (very generously endowed) woman!! All the same, it was a great performance and we thoroughly enjoyed it.

So I have been a faithful follower (I absolutely refuse to be a Ballette!) all along although my chances of seeing Michael Ball live have been slight, living as I do down here in the sun. As to making MBFC friends the same thing applies, however, none of that makes any difference whatsoever as regards my opinion of this magnificently talented and seriously attractive man.

Of course, I hope that *Sweeney Todd* will run at the Adelphi forever so I get a chance to see it, and/or failing that, for a DVD to be made for all of us poor fans who can't go to London all the time. As to *Sweeney Todd*, it is another example of Michael Ball's tremendous versatility and we can only guess at what he'll do next: *Macbeth* perhaps - or opera? I've no doubt he could do both superbly once he decided to go that way!

You can count me as a sincere hardcore fan down here in my sunny exile. My thanks to the MBFC for keeping us all abreast of events and news. May Michael Ball and the MBFC live forever!

Helle Sannig

Being a member of the Michael Ball Fan Club has not only taken me and my husband to various parts of the UK to



see Michael but to Australia and New York too. My highlight of seeing the main man in second row seats at Sydney Opera House was amazing.

Caroline Hurley

I first saw Michael doing Wogan in 1992 for the Eurovision. I had recorded all his appearances onto video and remember watching them over and over. I also remember trying to find a Fan Club for him and as the internet wasn't about then it was more difficult, I eventually found details on Channel 4 teletext and I'm so glad I did! I am really proud to be a member of the best Fan Club ever and still have all my MBFC stuff going back to 1992!! I've loved travelling to London from the North West to see Michael in *Hairspray* and I also remember chatting to Maureen and Gill (who do an amazing job running MBFC) at a gig in Bolton quite a few years ago (I'd sent back the wrong part of my raffle tickets!).

Thank you to Maureen, Gill and Michael for a great 20 years, I will be a member for ever!!!

Jennifer Dyson

Just after you started the Fan Club, you sent me a letter saying Michael had given you my name to add to the Fan Club list, as I used to speak to him at the stage door for quite a time in London. I was happy and honoured to join. Michael has taken me and my husband (who is my chauffeur) all over the country with his shows & concerts. I have made lots of friends too, and I have enjoyed every minute of the last 25 years!!

Shirley Mullins

I joined the Michael Ball Fan Club in 1993 and wrote to *On the Ball* asking if there were any members who lived close and would like to travel to concerts with me. I ended up meeting my best friend Jen from Frodsham and we have had many happy years seeing Michael in concerts and musicals and chatting about him over a drink. Thank you Michael (and Gill & Maureen) for bringing us together.

Kay Snape

I was first interested in Michael when I heard 'Love Changes Everything' and that was me hooked. I remember writing to Radio 2 when Michael was



doing an interview (which may have been about Eurovision) and some time later I received a letter to say that my letter had been passed onto the new Fan Club which was just starting up and would I like to join! I have made many friends throughout the years through Michael's music and my favourite concert was at Crathes Castle and a rare showing of Michael in a kilt - a real treat! I also enjoyed the two ROC concerts with the first one having a new young boy band called Westlife! The rest as they say is history.

Congratulations on 20 years!

Elizabeth Cooper

I first saw Michael on the Ovation Channel in Australia. He was singing the song my daughter chose for her bridal waltz - 'The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face' from *This Time It's Personal*.

From that day on I have been a huge fan of Michael. A friend visiting from Scotland suggested I join the Fan Club which I did a couple of years ago and really look forward to receiving news and information about Michael. We have added London to a trip to New York especially to see *Sweeney Todd* on 18th September, 2012. I am so excited to be seeing Michael live and would really love the opportunity to meet some Fan Club Members.

Patricia Matthews

MBFC is successful as it is run by fans, we are kept up to date with TV, radio and other media appearances and the fact that Michael is so appreciative of them makes it all worthwhile and the Fan Club is like an extended family here's to the next 20 years.

Jane Corbett

I have only been a member of the Fan

Club for about 6 years. I joined the club because I wanted to hear Michael news, in the hope I would get advance warning of an Australian tour. (I am still waiting for that news!) I have stayed a member because it is nice to feel part of the 'Michael family'. Like all members, I have made friends through the club and website. I look forward to every issue of *On The Ball*. Reading the magazine has let me feel part of things, when I am too far away to participate. I was lucky enough to attend the tour in 2009 where I had the pleasure of meeting Gill and Maureen in Plymouth. I was also able to catch up with some fan friends Bev, Hilary, Libby, Danilea, Andrea and Joan in Chichester last year. I hope to meet more new friends at The Event in June.

Megan Walters

Well I joined the club after meeting Michael at the stage door when he was in *Passion*. I had booked it for my mum for Mothers Day (she lived in Holland). She said 'take pictures of him as I cant' - well, when he walked up to us... oh wow! Ever since then I've been hooked even my 12 yr old son is called Michael. I've enjoyed all the Events and have made some lovely friends - thank you for the ball.

Patricia Duckett

I joined the Fan Club about 18 or 19 years ago. I went to my first Michael concert in 1992 at the Hammersmith Odeon, and found the address in the programme. I went with my husband to Woburn Abbey to see an Andrew Lloyd Webber outdoor concert (which was starring Michael) in Sept 1995, and sat next to a lady called Jill, and we got chatting and have been good friends every since. It poured with rain all evening and we were all soaked to the skin, but didn't care as it was Michael. We swapped addresses and Jill & I met up again for the first time after Woburn, to see Michael in *Passion* at the Queen's Theatre in London. I had to wear a Michael Ball badge so she could recognise me!! Jill & I together with our husbands meet regularly and she and I still go to see Michael together whenever possible. We are all very good friends and all because of 'Wet Woburn' as it is now known. I am proud to be a member of the Fan Club, and any merchandise is very

handy as I share the Michael's initials!

Marion Brackpool

I went to a concert in Birmingham and noticed on a table, slips of paper advertising the Fan Club that was April 1992; the rest is history as they say! I've made so many friends all over the country and love meeting up. These friends really came through when my husband passed away in February this year and the support I got from them was truly wonderful. The Fan Club is a part of my life I wouldn't want to change for that reason... friendship and of course for a special person called Michael! Thanks Maureen and Gill for all of your hard work.

Sue Rogers

I have been a member of the Fan Club for nineteen years, I first joined when I lived in Leicester and when I moved to Chippenham I did not know anybody to go with to see Michael. I put an advert in the Fan Club magazine and through that I have met very good friends and we go to see him together and meet up regularly. So I have the Fan Club to thank for that and Michael for all the pleasure he brings through his voice and his shows. Looking forward to the Fan Club event.

Ruth Miller

I joined the Fan Club because after going to see *Pirates of Penzance* on the opening night in Manchester in 1984 (I'm a huge Paul Nicholas fan) I came out a huge Michael Ball fan and am convinced I am his longest fan. After going again to the remainder of the performances I was lucky enough to meet Michael after the Saturday matinee and had my photo taken with him, the photo still holds pride of place in my home. I knew Michael was going to be a megastar and have never missed a concert in Manchester - not front row seats though! I was fortunate to get front row tickets last year for Nottingham... but of course Michael was unwell! The Fan Club makes me feel closer to Michael and appreciate the information I receive like earlier booking information for concerts and shows, this is why I try to get to as many as I can. I have to say *Hairspray* has definitely been my favourite and I was fortunate to go to a recording of *The Michael Ball Show*. Without the Fan

Club none of this would be possible. I think you do a fantastic job may it continue for years to come.

Sue McCoy

I joined the Fan Club when it started, because I wanted to know all that Michael was involved in, and loved Michael's beautiful voice, and his personality. The last twenty years, have been incredible, and without the Fan Club, I would have missed so much. Life would have been dull without Michael. I have made so many lovely friends, and I wouldn't have been to so many places, - and even flown for the first time - to Dublin to see Michael. Also all the fun, and wonderful concerts, musicals etc., etc. To have had Michael in my life has just been amazing.

Many thanks Maureen and Gill, for all the hard work, in running the Fan Club, for the last twenty years and here's to the next twenty!!

Rita Boulton

I lost my husband many years ago and Michael kept me going with his lovely voice, he became almost like my extended family and saw me through my dark times. He helped me to enjoy life again. I live on the Isle of Man and

try to get to as many concerts and performances that I can get to. Thank you Michael.

Ann Dye

I first joined MBFC in 1996 after I had met Michael for the first time at the stage door of the Queens Theatre, London after a matinee of *Passion*.

I have had a wonderful 16 years following his career and been to many places which I would not have visited otherwise. Each trip is memorable.

A concert at the Point Theatre in Dublin and *Sunset Boulevard* at Cork, even the rainy times at Hampton Court. I have made lots of friends along the way, including one from France whom I met at a Fan Club Event.

Maureen Hunter

Being a member of the Fan Club has opened up so much of the country I would not have considered visiting before. I joined after seeing Michael at the Albert Hall and was blown away by the complete wonder of the evening. From that first concert I found out what a wonderful extended family Michael has. I have made some lifelong friendships from all over the country and beyond. Thank you to you all.

Susan Tortice

I first saw Michael in *Passion* and vowed to see him in everything he did from then on - where possible! Trouble was I had nobody to share my excitement and enthusiasm with. Then I found details of the Fan Club and made contact with some people, but the one that changed everything was Jill Clark from Southampton. She remains a good friend now fifteen years later, and introduced me to two other very good friends, Janice West and Sandra Capel. The Fan Club is amazing thank you.

Sue Knight

It has been brilliant being in the Michael Ball Fan Club. We have got to meet fellow fans and we always have a great time. It has been great knowing both Maureen and Gill.

They always keep us up to date with everything Michael does so we never miss a thing. This Fan Club is one of the best. And let's hope we are all still here in another 20 years time!

Julia Hickmott



Mercury Magic!



When we were planning our forthcoming Event we knew we had to have the ticket sales dealt with professionally and who better than Colchester's local theatre - the Mercury, to take charge of it. Doing it this way meant we were able to offer postal, telephone and internet bookings so that everyone had a fair chance of getting their tickets.

The Mercury staff took this task on with enthusiasm and from the feedback we've had there are many of you who wish they dealt with all of Michael's concert tickets as well! With no booking fees and just a charge for postage it all went very smoothly.

The Mercury Box Office staff were rewarded with a meeting with Michael when he happily posed for photos in the Dress Circle bar at the Adelphi. As you can see everyone looks very happy to be there! Michael however, was finding it difficult to get through on his phone...

1992
20 YEARS
2012

Michael Ball
FAN CLUB
EVENT
2012



Michael Ball Fan Club Event 2012
London Suite, Hotel Ibis London Earls Court - Monday 25 June

To mark 20 years of the Fan Club we are going to hold a special celebration in London on Monday 25th June 2012 and we'd love you to join us. (Oh, we believe Michael has one of those important birthdays this year too!)

The Event will take place in the **London Suite** at the **Hotel Ibis London Earls Court** and will include Video Footage, Quizzes, Competitions and a Raffle. The doors will open at 11.30 am with the programme commencing at 12.00 midday and finishing at 5.00 pm. There will be an interval during the day to give you time to purchase snacks and drinks from the hotel. Oh – and yes, Michael has promised to come along! (Subject to availability). Tickets are priced at **£45** each and there will be a **£1** (£3 overseas) handling charge per booking to post the tickets out.

Please send all ticket applications and payments to: MBFC Event, The Mercury Theatre, Balkerne Gate, Colchester CO1 1TP.
Payment can be made by cheque, postal order or card. All cheques and postal orders must be made payable to Mercury Theatre Ltd.

SWEENEY TODD – PRESS NIGHT



We were so lucky to have been in the audience on the night that Michael achieved another of his dreams. The reviews have been fantastic and here are a just a couple of clips from what was in

the papers together with some photos:

MICHAEL BALL is once again the toast of the West End after making a triumphant debut in the title role of the



A full house for the show

musical Sweeney Todd, which opened to rave reviews on Tuesday night at the Adelphi Theatre. This production of Stephen Sondheim's famous musical, starring Ball and Imelda Staunton as the demon barber of Fleet Street and his pie-making accomplice Mrs Lovett, has moved to London after a successful run in Chichester and attracted a host of five-star reviews on its opening night.

Most critics focus on Ball's performance as Todd, a vengeful barber who returns to London after exile to discover his wife has died.

Charles Spencer in The Daily Telegraph notes that Ball, who once represented the UK in the Eurovision song contest, is "tremendous" in the role.

"His fleshy, pallid face and lank dark forelock create an instant shiver, he has a splendidly brooding stage presence and the moment when he flips from a man with a legitimate grievance into a deranged psychopathic killer sends shivers racing down the spine," he says.

Henry Hitchings in the Evening Standard concurs, noting that the Love Changes Everything crooner has ditched the "dimpled chubby charm" for something far darker. *"If you think you know Michael Ball, think again,"* he writes. *"It's a chilling performance, sinister and saturnine."*

Sweeney Todd is subtitled "A Musical Thriller" - which perfectly describes Jonathan Kent's utterly electrifying new production. With the dynamite pairing of Michael Ball and Imelda Staunton leading an acting company of 26 and a band of 15, this staging is anything but cautious. But instead of immensity, this incarnation has scalding intensity. It's truly scary even when you know what's coming, not to mention wildly funny, and no previous London production has so triumphantly expressed the full emotional range of



Sweeney Todd and Mrs Lovett



Michael and Cathy

Sondheim's gory glory.

Michael Ball gives us a lugubrious, towering performance in Sweeney Todd. Heading a heavyweight cast, Ball exercises any accusations of triviality in his performance. His Todd is a surprisingly sombre, menacing creature. His nativity seems forged in the mist and murk of London's sewers; his colossal presence dominates the stage as he plensively spits out his lyrics. Vocally, Ball is breathtaking, he moves seamlessly from rich baritone to lyric tenor with ease, creating moments of astonishing beauty, particularly in his haunting rendition of 'My Friends'.

As the titular Todd, it is possible that Ball could overpower the piece, but in Kent's outstanding production, there is little chance of this.



Sir Tom Jones and Dame Norma Major were among the guests



Lucy May Barker (Johanna), Michael and Imelda Staunton (Mrs Lovett)



Michael at the end of the show looking very happy!

DRESS CIRCLE SIGNING

Here are some photos of the time that Michael and Imelda spent signing the London Cast CD of Sweeney Todd. First the queue outside....



Then Michael arriving, photo taken by Sharon Scarrott:



The next two photos were taken by Maureen Farrington and here's her report:

"Michael arrived early at 11.40am and we were soon ushered in and down the stairs where we could take photos but not actually with Michael as before. I managed to have a word with Imelda and Michael and said how evil he was, not his usual charm and he said Imelda was the wicked one!

"He then let me take a photo (main shot opposite) and as I was leaving I said may I take another as I am going to The Event. The result was the lovely one with the smile which is definitely Michael!

Last, but not least, we've included one opposite which was taken by us a few years ago (2003) when Michael was signing copies of 'Love Story'!



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.

Adeena would love to hear from anyone, anywhere who would like to correspond with her. Please write to her at:

ADEENA PRIDAY

**6 BEECHDEAN
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SWEENEY TODD

THE
DEMON
BARBER
OF FLEET
STREET



The **SWEENEY TODD**
London Cast Album is
OUT NOW!

Direct from a sell-out season at Chichester Festival Theatre, where it received multiple five-star reviews and standing ovations, as well as winner of the Whatsonstage.com award for 'Best Regional Production', Stephen Sondheim's musical thriller is laced with dark humour, dazzling wit and an infectious score. The production starring Michael Ball and Imelda Staunton comes to the West End for a strictly limited season previewing from 10th March opening on the 20th March 2012.

Twenty songs included:

1. Prelude / The Ballad of Sweeney Todd
2. No Place Like London
3. Worst Pies in London
4. My Friends / The Ballad of Sweeney Todd
5. Johanna
6. The Ballad of Sweeney Todd
7. Wait
8. Kiss Me
9. Ladies in their Sensitivities
10. Pretty Women
11. Epiphany
12. A Little Priest
13. God, That's Good!
14. Johanna (Reprise)
15. By the Sea
16. Not While I'm Around
17. Searching
18. The Judge's Return
19. Final Scene
20. The Ballad of Sweeney Todd

MICHAEL BALL IMELDA STAUNTON

SWEENEY
TODD

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY
STEPHEN SONDHEIM

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