

ON THE BALL

Issue 62



Hi Everyone

This time last year we were celebrating the fact that Michael had achieved one of his biggest ambitions, which was to play the part Sweeney Todd. We were looking forward to it being taken into the West End for a limited season and what a huge success that was. We were also in the planning stages of an event to celebrate the fan club's 20th Anniversary and Michael's 50th Birthday. Totally amazing is all we can say about that day. Michael finished his time with us by singing not one, but two songs!

So, what can possibly top all that has happened this year? First of all we will be listening to Michael's new BBC Radio 2 programme, the first episode of which will be broadcast on 13 January. Michael's new album "Both Sides Now" is due for release in February. This will then be followed by the UK Tour. That's only the first half of the year. GUESS we'll have to wait and see what's planned for the second half!

We cannot thank you all enough for the wonderful support you give us, especially on the website's forum. It's definitely one of the quickest ways to share any news. Also to those of you who contribute to this magazine with your articles and photos. Our special thanks must go to Pat Webb, James Gaden, Andrew Ross, and, of course, Chris for the smooth running of the website. Same goes to everyone at Live Nation, Simon Beresford and Alphaprint.

Finally we wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dear Everyone,

Well, 2012 was a bit memorable don't you think? I am sitting in my office on Monday morning having just woken up from the party at the Evening Standard Awards (feeling a little delicate) and trying to take stock of the last 12 months, but not really having time to because I am on my way to the studio to start work with the band on the new album!!! Pinch me, or rather don't, as I don't want to wake up from this wonderful dream.

I know this all sounds a bit cheesy but there's nothing wrong with a bit of Stilton now and then, and it's important for me to acknowledge how lucky I am and have been this year. It's been hard work, but I've never

been shy of that, it's been challenging, and you know I love a challenge, and it's been the best fun.

And now as I take stock of what has been, I have a renewed hunger for what I do as we go into the new year.

I think the album will be a real reflection of my musical roots and the direction of my work and I hope will blend the theatre and pop/rock genres so that people can see that good music writing comes from both and indeed all areas of music.

And the concert tour will be my biggest challenge of all. I really want to try to give you something new in style and presentation if I can, and make you proud and pleased that you are one of the M.B.F.C.

So here's to 2013 and all the trials, challenges, problems, worries, fun, laughter and tears it will inevitably bring to us all one way or another. Thank you for being such a wonderful support for me and each other and I can't wait to see you very soon.

All my love, always

Mike
x



TO FRIENDSHIP, MICHAEL... and WORLD PEACE!

by Ria Fauci



Being a devoted (some might say obsessive) Michael Ball fan has many benefits as well as some awkward and sometimes reflective and funny moments. Despite lots of teasing from family and friends alike, I, for one, wouldn't trade being a "Ballette" for the world! It has given me terrific friends to spend fun times with. We have so many things in common (not least our love for a certain "Wenglish" performer) and really enjoy being together. If it hadn't been for Michael Ball and the Fan Club, we would have never met and would have missed out on some of the best times EVER!

The "Jersey Girls", as I call these dear friends, visit me frequently in upstate New York for an afternoon of just hanging out, lots and lots of laughter and of course "Michael-

talk". We genuinely enjoy each other's company and ALWAYS have a ball at our get-togethers.

Before one of their recent visits, my youngest son David (pictured opposite) happened to be at my home as I was putting away some groceries. Among them was a bottle of Bailey's Irish Cream. Upon his inquiry I told him it was for our 'Team Michael-USA' get-together. Of course he smirked at that and commented that our get-togethers were probably just an excuse to have "the liquor flowing". Very sincerely I informed him that we don't need "the liquor flowing", as he so eloquently put it, to have fun. I told him we normally only have one drink (or perhaps two!) at the beginning of our time together before lunch to toast to our friendship AND

Michael. I was not prepared for his (mock!) outrage...

"TO MICHAEL!" he yelled. "Of course, to MICHAEL. Why am I not surprised?! The world could go to hell in a handbag, as long as everything will go well for MICHAEL! OF ALL the things you COULD toast to, you choose to toast MICHAEL!! How about toasting to the well-being of your three sons and two grandsons?! How about toasting to an improved standard of living in this country?! How about a toast to end hunger?! Or given the state of the world, how about toasting to world peace at the very least?!"

He just kept on spouting off how very wrong my loyalties were. I know he meant it to be in fun, but I believe he also wanted to make a point. Of

course I didn't pay any attention to his tantrum and told him it was time for him to go home! The last thing he muttered was "Wait until I see the girls - I will read them the riot act as well! Imagine - a toast to MICHAEL - instead of something REALLY important and worthwhile!"

I told him not to bother, that I was going to relay his temper tantrum to the girls anyway which of course I did as soon as they arrived! We all laughed about it and thought his outburst was hysterical. At the same time we perhaps felt just a little bit chastised. We toasted to WORLD PEACE that day... and since, we have made special 'toasting' glasses to show just that and are used only for our get-togethers.

So to all the "Davids" and non-fans of the world, despite the criticism, we will continue to toast to MICHAEL and always will! Here's to... friendship, Michael, and WORLD PEACE!!



MY SPECIAL EVENING WITH MICHAEL!

By Event Raffle Prize winner Maureen Farrington. Photo by Andrew Ross.



At long last the day has come, the 5th September and I'm off to London to see *Sweeney Todd* and meet Michael after the show! Before I meet up with June who is coming with me, I pop into the Adelphi to collect the tickets for tonight's performance. "In whose name?" I said "Michael Ball!" That in itself was such a thrill – how will the rest of the day go? I met up with June and we had a marvellous time walking round Covent Garden in wonderful sunshine, another bonus so an ice cream had to be purchased. After our meal in the hotel we walked to the theatre which was nearby. Our seats were great, Row L centre aisle so centre stage. Having seen the show in Chichester I wondered how it would transfer to the West End but it has done well - every time I have seen it since it seems to be more intense and Michael's portrayal of Sweeney more evil! The auditorium was packed and the atmosphere terrific, I always find an evening performance has that extra buzz.

After a thrilling first act a young lady from the theatre staff came to us and asked, "Are you the ladies who have won a prize to see Michael?" Yes, we say, "Well, I'm Hannah and will collect you at the end of the show." So after an amazing

second act, whilst Imelda and Michael were taking their standing ovations, Hannah appeared and after the third one she took us down the aisles and through a maze of corridors. She did say she got lost when she first started the job! Then we went through a special door which needed a code and we arrived at the other side of the Stage Door – the outside of which we all know very well! She left us saying, "Have a great time!"

Andrew arrived and led us up two flights of stairs and suggested whilst Michael was showering, how about a tour of the stage? So down we went and he asked the Floor Manager if it was okay to do so. Yes, was the reply to which I said, "Has the blood been mopped up?" and the answer was, "Yes it's just been done". So there we were at the back of the stage. Andrew showed us Mrs Lovett's kitchen with all its grimy plastic curtains, peeled wallpaper and dresser, just how you imagined it should be. No pies were left and the 'Sold Out' sign was up. We had our photo taken which was a nice surprise. I did look for the red chair but it was not in sight and yes, the floor was clean!

Then it was up the stairs and Andrew

showed us into Michael's lounge and there he was, waiting and smiling. He came over and gave me a hug and a kiss and I introduced him to June who also got a kiss. We sat down on a sofa each and chatted to Michael who asked if we had seen the show before. We both said yes and how it was getting so tense and him so evil. He laughed and said he thought probably the whole cast were on a high now as it was not long before the show closed. That last show will be tremendous. I then asked about the tour and his CD and he very tactfully said nothing about the tour but the album was his first priority and he has changed his mind on that now. He would give no hint of what to expect only to say it's typically him. Michael then said, "Would you like a photo?" to which we both said, "Yes please!"

I then joined Michael on the sofa. Andrew took the picture of Michael and I, then June and Michael on both cameras – we didn't want to chance it! Michael then handed me an envelope saying it was a keepsake of the evening and not to open it until we were back at our hotel. I was so surprised; Michael said it was a limited edition card presented to the entire cast on the opening night of *Sweeney Todd* at the Adelphi so I was very honoured.

Then all too quickly it was time to say goodbye and Michael kissed us both and we left two very happy ladies! Andrew took us down the stairs and we arrived at the Stage Door and went out feeling part of the cast. Little did I know but when I looked behind me Michael was there so he was leaving directly after us! We said our thanks and walked away not wanting to keep Michael from the fans outside. When I did get back to the hotel the card inside the envelope was a brilliant caricature of Michael as Sweeney and will be a wonderful keepsake of an evening I will not forget.

Thank you Michael, Andrew, Maureen and Gill for arranging my magic moment!

MEETING MICHAEL... AND SWEENEY!

BY NIKKI GUTRIDGE

I attended a Saturday Matinee performance of *Sweeney Todd* with Emma Ioannides. Prior to the performance we met Michael outside the stage door for our pre-show chat, cuddle and photo. After the show during the second curtain call, Peter Polycarpou apologised for stopping the rapturous applause and explained that they were collecting for the Royal Theatrical Fund. He explained that the theatre ushers would be holding collection buckets and so would Michael. We were told that for a minimum payment of £10 we could have a cuddle and photo with Michael still dressed as Sweeney. As this was definitely an opportunity not to be missed I happily put £10 in his collection bucket and had my second hug of the day!



Michael With The Cork Youth Orchestra

Maureen and Gill witnessed the two special concerts Michael performed there. Photos by Dave Wyer

How many times do we say, it can't get any better and then it does?

First we arrive in Cork to a nice dry and mild day and get greeted by the friendliest locals we've ever met. We then check into our hotel and find it's within walking distance of the City Hall. We arrive for the concert and get greeted by the helpers who happily chat to us about how proud they are of the achievements of the Cork Youth Orchestra.

The concert starts with all the orchestra (140 of them!) carrying their instruments onto the stage and they are joined by the MC for the evening George Hook. He then introduces their conductor Tomás McCarthy and away they go. When they finish their first section this is the point where quite a few people are thinking WOW, it can't possibly get any better and it does as Michael joins them on stage and opens with 'This Is The Moment'. This was followed by several of the favourite songs from the musicals, the audience singing along to some Christmas Carols and Michael's favourite Christmas songs, 'O Holy Night', 'When A Child Is Born' and 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas'.

Here are some of the photos that were taken during rehearsals, showing Michael with the orchestra and conductor Tomás. Opposite are some pictures from the concerts themselves.





OUT AND ABOUT WITH MICHAEL



Michael has, as usual, been extremely busy lately, so here we have collected some images from the various places he has been seen over the last couple of months...

Above:

Michael joined Shooting Star CHASE Vice President, Tony Hadley, patron Joan Collins and a host of celebrities to take part in a charity fundraising day by BGC Partners Inc., in memory of 9/11.





Above:

While appearing on *The One Show*, Michael happened to bump into Il Divo, who happily had this picture taken with him.

Bottom Left and Bottom Right:

Michael appeared at 'From Broadway to Hollywood', where he introduced the next generation of musical theatre stars from the Arts Educational School in a special *Friday Night Is Music Night*. The concert, from The Mermaid in London, featured the sixty piece BBC Concert Orchestra, conducted by Richard Balcombe, a fifty piece chorus and thirteen soloists performing music from *42nd Street* to *Grease*, *Funny Girl* to *Little Shop Of Horrors* and *My Fair Lady* to *The Producers*. A musical theatre buffs dream, the show featured a galaxy of famous songs including 'Half A Sixpence', 'Oh What A Beautiful Morning', 'On The Street Where You Live', 'Don't Rain On My Parade', 'Suddenly Seymour', 'Hopelessly Devoted To You', 'Thank You For The Music' and for the first time ever on *Friday Night Is Music Night*, the classic from *The Producers* - 'Springtime For Hitler'

Pictured left are the soloists enjoying a masterclass with Michael before the show.

This shot on the right was taken at the end of the evening when Michael performed, 'This Is The Moment'.





Above:

Michael appeared on *The One Show* to promote his upcoming album 'Both Sides Now' and the supporting tour. Lord Sebastian Coe was the other guest and here is Michael pictured with Lord Coe and *The One Show* presenters Alex Jones and Matt Baker.

Left:

Michael presented the Sidney Brown Memorial Award for new musical theatre writing to Denise Wright and Chris Burgess for their show *Emerald*. This event took place at the Mercury Musical Development's 20th Anniversary Gala on 14th October at the Novello Theatre in London.

Right:

Michael attended the Theatre UK Awards in October, where he picked up the award for 'Best Performance In A Musical' on behalf of Imelda Staunton for her role as Mrs Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*.



SWEENEY'S FINAL NIGHT

All good things must come to an end and the same applied to Michael's stunning run in the West End, playing the role of Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street. It was a long held ambition of Michael's to play the role and what a fantastic job he did!

The photo below was taken at the last night party of *Sweeney Todd*, after Michael had already used the BIC razors that Imelda had given to him during their curtain call - which you can see him holding opposite!



THE EVENT AND THE DEMON BARBER OF FLEET STREET

by Alana Wadkin



The 25th June was a day of firsts – my first Fan Club Event, the first time I have taken my computer so far and I had the opportunity to talk to Michael with my computer for the very first time! The event was held at the Ibis Hotel, Earls Court, London. We didn't know what to expect but I was eager to find out so Mum and Dad booked the tickets as soon as they went on sale. When we arrived, the event had already started; Maureen, Gill and family greeted us and we were shown to our table – table 9. I only knew James on the table and felt strange as Dad set-up my computer while Mum organised things, in front

of people we didn't know trying to be quiet. Once we introduced ourselves, it was fine.

Keith the compère introduced himself to us, he let me know he was aware of the situation, telling me "Your computer will be connected soon." I assumed he meant the power supply and never gave it another thought. There were quizzes and video footage leading to the interval. It was lovely to see old friends throughout the day and meet new fans. In the interval Mum and I went for a look around while Dad minded our things. When we got back, Dad

told us the technician had connected my computer to the PA system so I could talk to Michael – I was delighted!

Shortly after the interval Michael arrived, looking really well. Keith chatted to Michael on stage, asking him about *Sweeney Todd*, older projects and future plans. I was fascinated by Michael's in-depth answers; some were really funny and witty. I think everybody was thrilled to hear about the new album, a tour next year and another musical which Michael already has the rights for. No celebration is complete without

a cake and Barbara made a beautiful Sweeney related cake which she presented to Michael on stage. It was time for the fans to ask Michael questions, my turn soon came. Everybody could hear me, it was fantastic to actually talk to Michael, I always wanted to but unfortunately the equipment is too bulky to carry around all the time. It's probably a good thing because I wouldn't shut up asking questions such as what is it like stepping on stage and being in a recording studio? Good job I pre-programmed the talk, it would have taken ages otherwise; it's so time-consuming using my computer using a chinswitch via a scanning method!

That is why talking to Michael was a dream come true and I hope everybody understands why I was so emotional; plus watching that heartbreaking Shooting Star video just before made me even worse. I understand a little of what the children and their families must be going through. Being able to speak to somebody I respect and admire was an experience I will never forget; plus Michael coming off the stage to me made it more special. Michael was genuinely touched by what I said and very interested in how I used the computer asking me questions; I showed him how the software worked. Even though the computer beep sounded like gun shots through the PA system, which Michael kindly pointed out by saying "I like the way it sounds as you are shooting me with it!" - I felt everybody was shown my character more. Plus I got to say thank you to Michael and the opportunity to give him his birthday card and present.

Then the raffle was drawn, nobody on our table won. It raised some money for Shooting Stars, which was all that mattered. The event finished with Michael thanking everybody for coming and singing two songs - 'Misty' and 'Weekend In New England' which is my favourite song from the 'Heroes' album. Michael really

belted them out with such ease...

Fast forward two months, I finally went to see *Sweeney Todd* in London after three attempts of going. We nearly didn't get to see it this time because we were already at the train station when we realised we had forgotten the theatre tickets so Dad had to go back home to collect them. Anyway, we were in plenty of time for the London train and the stage door to my delight. We only waited minutes before Michael arrived, he had already spotted me in the car; the door slid open and Michael just looked at me with the cheekiest smile that I have ever seen, before he got out of the car. Michael came over to me, saying "You are looking well!" and chatted away while he signed my autograph book. I expected the next comment: "Do you watch 'Celebrity Big Brother'? You just look like Bette Lynch!" because I was wearing all leopard print! I gave Michael a look to kill, which made him laugh... Good job we have the same sense of humour but Michael definitely knows I will get him back for that. Then we had a cuddle while posing for a photo. After Michael went into the theatre, Peter Polycarpou came out and straight over to us. He is a



lovely man - very friendly, we chatted away and Peter was happy to have his photo taken with me.

Sweeney Todd was amazing; it is a very dark, clever and humorous musical. Michael is terrifying as Sweeney especially when he performs Epiphany, going from a skilled barber nursing a private grievance, who turns into a demonic serial killer. Imelda Staunton plays Mrs Lovett as a witty character whose moral sense is quickly overcome by her love of profit and lust for Sweeney. The rest of the cast are very good. I enjoyed the slitting throats scenes because some didn't go to plan - the victims got stuck in the chair and didn't slide down the chair. The audience loved it and gave the cast a standing ovation at the end.

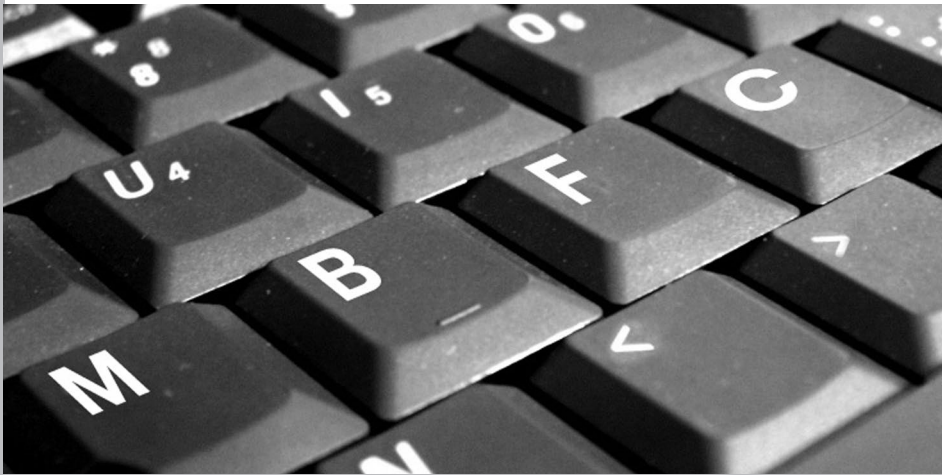


THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

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 'BOTHSIDES2013!'.



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