

ON THE BALL

Issue 66



Hi Everyone

Here we are at the end of 2014. We've included a calendar as a special bonus for you in the middle of this edition. For those of you who haven't purchased the printed copy we have a limited number to purchase for £4 plus £1.50 postage and packing. To keep costs down we only order what we need so if you do want a copy to keep we would advise you to order as soon as possible.

We hope you enjoy catching up with lots of things that Michael has been doing since the middle of the year, the highlight being the release of his 19th Album - 'If Everyone Was Listening'. He definitely broke all records with the amount of promotional appearances/broadcasts/interviews he undertook. It's been lovely to see him with such a high profile over the recent weeks.

There's quite a bit to look forward to. First is 'Victoria Wood: That Musical We Made' which is being broadcast on BBC2 on Boxing Day at 3.30pm, followed by the film 'That Day We Sang' at 9pm. Having seen the preview in Manchester we can only say it's a charming, funny and at times poignant film that we think you will all enjoy.

We are sure you've all bought your tickets for the tour and we look forward to seeing many of you on the road in April/May. We are still waiting for official news of dates for 'Mack and Mabel' at Chichester but we can't wait to see Michael's interpretation of this role that he's wanted to do for quite some time.

It's time once again to thank everyone who helps us throughout the year including Chris, Pat, Andrew, Live Nation and those of you who regularly post on our Facebook page and send us photos and articles for inclusion in this magazine. Things happen at such a fast pace these days sometimes it would be hard to keep up with everything without everyone keeping their eyes and ears open for news!

Love

Maureen and Gill

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

© Michael Ball Fan Club 2014 Compiled by Gill Oakley and Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse Website: www.mbfc.co.uk

Dear Everyone,

Well, this time last year I told you I thought 2014 was going to be a special one and I really think it has been the perfect way to mark 30 years in the business I love.

So many challenging, exciting and, let's be honest, bizarre and knacker things have happened it's hard to remember them all!! (but I think singing up a cow's bum to increase its milk yield is up there with the weirdest!!)

The response to the new album has been utterly wonderful. I try so hard to produce something different and stimulating everytime I go back into the studio but to have a C.D. that you are so proud of receive such a positive reaction makes all the hard work, nail biting and

Sleepless nights worrying if you've got it right worth it.

I can't wait to perform some of the songs in concert next spring and just the thought of getting back on the road and developing a new show for you is getting my brain whizzing. Hope you can make it to some of them.

And then we do Mack and Mabel. Am I the worst person in the world at keeping secrets? I know most of you weren't too shocked when it was announced I will be doing it in Chichester next summer but I can't wait to try and get this amazing character and show right.

In a couple of weeks you will finally get to see "That Day We Sang" and all I can say is that I hope you love Mr. Tubby Baker, as much as I do. I think it is perfect family Christmas viewing....but then I am a little biased.

And speaking of Christmas, it is here again and it goes without saying that I hope you have a wonderful one and that 2015 brings us all the Joy and Health and Happiness that it can.

It's only natural that we look back as well as forward at this time of year and there can't be many of us who won't be missing someone who has been special in our lives. We can only treasure our memories, give thanks for the wonderful people who have been part of our journey through life and rejoice in the company of the friends and family we still get to share it with.

God Bless, my loves, and see you in the New Year.

All My love

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ME AND MY TWO MICHAELS

by Claire Stockil

It all started when, in the very early hours of the 5th September I spotted Michael's tweet, volunteering himself to be 'At your service' in aid of 'Stand Up To Cancer'.

I have been a massive fan of Michael's for many years and following my continuous playing of Michael's records, I persuaded the hubbie to accompany me to his concerts... resulting in him too becoming a fan.

As my husband, Mike, has had a terrible 18 months following his involvement in a horrendous fatal road traffic accident where he was hit head-on by a speeding, drunken driver, I decided to submit a nomination on Mike's behalf. As you all now know, my nomination was that Michael should serenade our cows whilst milking them... but never at that moment in time did I think that it would come true!

The following morning, my son, Tom answered a call on my mobile, but discarded the number believing it to be a nuisance call. I then had to submit my nomination again, hoping that they would ring again. That afternoon, I got the phone call and so it began!

10 days later, after numerous phone calls,

emails and a couple of very amateur home videos, we finally got the confirmation that Michael Ball would be visiting us the next day at 2:00pm. As you can imagine, we were all so excited, yet nervous at the same time, but a rapid clean up of the house and farm yard helped to keep the nerves at bay.

On the morning of the 16th September, we were all up early, continuing with the clean up in preparation for our very special guest... but things didn't go quite to plan... Our visitor, plus film crew etc, totalling 12 in all, arrived almost two hours early without warning!

After a rapid change of clothes, we dashed outside to meet Josh the director and the other film crew. We were swiftly fitted with our microphones, whilst Josh explained what was going to happen. I couldn't help noticing a rather handsome chappie lurking at the end of the lane next to the 'Stars at Your Service' Car... it was then that I began to realise that this really was happening and that we were actually going to meet someone that I had dreamt of meeting for years.

The moment finally arrived... as Michael's car pulled into the yard, I ran (quite literally) to meet him, the boys following behind.

After several hugs, Michael was introduced to the boys before being given his tasks for the afternoon. Once we had met Michael, our nerves disappeared, as his lovely friendly nature put us instantly at ease. It felt as if I had known Michael for years and at times during the day, we actually got 'told off' by the director for chatting too much!

After a quick lunch and the chance for Michael to meet my six dogs, we were ready for the task in hand... to herd our 60 cows from the field into the parlour for milking. For those of you who have seen the footage, this wasn't going to be as easy as we had previously thought. Whether it was because the girls were being asked to come in a little earlier than usual, or whether they weren't too keen on the film crew, they had other things in mind. It eventually took us three attempts to entice the ladies to leave their pastures, but I must admit, Michael did find time to have a little sing and a dance en route - and I certainly wasn't going to complain!

Once in the milking parlour, the serious work began. My son Tom was given the task of training Michael how to milk the cows, but forgot to warn him about spurting milk and lashing tails, as well as the more obvious hazards of working around the backsides of

large, grass eating animals. Michael struggled initially to attach the clusters to the udders, but soon got the hang of things, though he complained of having back ache so he was treated to an in-house, or should I say in-parlour massage. As well as the obvious benefit of having our own private concert in the parlour, Michael also attempted to teach Tom to sing in tune (not an easy task!) The cows also seemed to appreciate listening to Michael's excellent vocal cords as they increased their milk yield by 6%... a superb result to finish off an amazing day!

My family and I are all so very grateful to Michael for giving up his precious time to visit us on the farm. We had a fantastic day, one that we will remember and cherish for the rest of our lives. However, we must



not forget the main reason for Michael's attendance – to raise money for 'Stand Up To Cancer' – a very worthy cause that

unfortunately affects most of us at some stage during our lives.

Some of you may have seen Claire's post on Facebook when she posted a photo of Michael arriving to watch, 'Made In Dagenham'. Here's the full story.

We had a great time in London, though we didn't actually attend the performance of 'Made in Dagenham'. Having not had a holiday for over four and a half years for various unfortunate reasons, we decided to treat ourselves to a night in London to celebrate our Silver Wedding Anniversary.

During his visit to our farm, Michael had strongly recommended that we see *Matilda* so when we heard that Radio 2 were hosting a Gala performance of *Matilda* in aid of 'Children In Need' on our actual anniversary, we thought that it was too much of an opportunity to miss. I did wonder at the time whether Michael would be in attendance, but that wasn't to be. We loved the show and the following day, after visiting the poppies, we were lucky enough to be offered greatly reduced priced tickets to see *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* that afternoon, which was spectacular.

By then, we had seen Michael's tweet to say that he was attending *Made in Dagenham* that evening, so calculated that we had just enough time to hopefully catch a glimpse of him arriving at the theatre before dashing to Kings Cross to catch the train home. Not being an expert in these red carpet evenings, we ended up standing

on the public entrance side rather than the celeb side, but this actually worked to our favour as Michael walked in on our side of the carpet. Having explained to the lady next to me who we were waiting to see, she shouted really loudly and Michael looked across and spotted Mike and I. So

we were very fortunate and grateful to receive a lovely hug from him. He then pointed us out to Cathy, saying, "I milked their cows!" which is when this photo was taken. We then left to catch the train, but this was just the perfect ending to a very special visit to London!





SPECIAL FRIENDS

by Janice Lazarus

Here are some pictures of our fabulous visits to Michael's concerts in Bradford and London Dominion. We persevered at each concert and waited patiently for Michael to come and say hello. What has made it special has been meeting new MBFC members who have become friends.

We also managed to get a group hug at the Savoy Hotel Children in Need lunch when Michael popped out for a short breath of air! This was on our way to Talent 2014 at the Criterion Theatre, that was a great night too.

Thank you to Michael and your great Fan Club for helping me to meet such lovely people and helping me to enjoy my life to the full. (Not sure my bank manager is too happy though!)

I have spent some lovely weekends with Nikki Guttridge and Margaret Samson and have nicknamed ourselves The Three Musketeers on our Facebook posts!



THAT DAY WE SANG

BY MAUREEN AND GILL

We were very lucky to be invited to the Premiere Screening of *That Day We Sang* in Manchester. We were told by the BBC Staff that 8,000 people applied and only 100 tickets were available! Opposite is one of them Margaret Samson with Michael.

We watched while the press interviewed Michael and Victoria Wood (pictured) and others from the cast and production before watching this incredible film. We were asked not to say too much about the plot but we just know you are all going to love it!





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Photo: Sharon Scarrott



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Photo: Joan Johnson



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Photo: Carolyn Bell



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Photo: Joan Johnson



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Photo: Joan Johnson



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Photo: Sharon Scarrott



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Photo: Sharon Scarrott

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LAST NIGHT OF THE PROMS

Finale of Lytham Proms festival weekend by Jane Sutton

You may remember courageous Stephen Sutton, who sadly passed away from cancer aged just 19. Here, his mother Jane Sutton recounts a lovely story of her encounter with Jason Manford and Michael.

Everyone who knows me well will know that I am a massive fan of singer, actor and West End mega star, Michael Ball. As soon as the tickets went on sale for Lytham proms I booked as I knew that Michael was one of the stars performing on the Sunday night. So tickets booked, I just had to wait until August 3rd.

Fast forward to April and Jason Manford visited Stephen in hospital. We were all sitting around Stephen's bed chatting and then somehow the conversation got on to favourite celebrities, and of course mine was Michael Ball. I'd forgotten that Jason had starred alongside him in *Sweeney Todd* which I'd been to

see twice, although not when Jason was playing the part of Pirelli (sorry Jason!!)

What I didn't know was that while we were chatting Jason had messaged Michael without me seeing, and the next thing I knew I was chatting to Michael Ball. How excited was I! Stephen was laughing and referred to me "as a 13 year old meeting Harry Styles" which was probably a pretty accurate description. Anyway after chatting for a while, Michael said that I could go backstage at Lytham for a hug, wow!

Fast forward again to last Sunday and true to his word, my mom and I went backstage for a big hug (and I got a kiss!). We chatted again before the show, and I gave him one of Stephen's wristbands. I was thrilled and couldn't quite believe I had actually met Michael Ball.

We were then shown to the VIP area to

Stephen Sutton, the teenager whose positive approach to life saw him lead one of the biggest ever fundraising campaigns for research into cancer, has been awarded a posthumous MBE by the Queen.

His mother accepted the honour at Buckingham Palace on behalf of the teenager, who died in May this year after a four year battle with cancer during which he inspired people around the world with his determination to make a difference.

Jane Sutton revealed her 19-year-old son described the award as 'awesome,' after he learned he would be named in the Queen's Birthday Honours list just days before his death.

The inspirational teenager from Burntwood, Staffordshire was diagnosed with colorectal cancer at the age of 15. But rather than let the disease beat him he decided to turn his diagnosis and treatment into something positive, eventually raising

watch the show which was a lovely surprise. What a fabulous show it was and what an amazing setting. There was one brief break when the show was affected by gusts of wind and rain and that was only because The Halle Orchestra needed to protect the millions of pounds of instruments on the stage. The crowd carried on though, singing and dancing and not taking any notice of the weather; it was an incredibly joyous atmosphere. For me it automatically brought to mind the quote used in many motivational speeches "life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass, it's about learning to dance in the rain" and that was literally what was happening. The photo below with the couple dancing in the background perfectly captures the moment.

After this short break Michael Ball was back on stage and he dedicated 'Love Changes Everything' to Stephen and me. He spoke of how inspirational Stephen had been and what's more he was wearing the yellow wristband that I had given to him earlier. There was an enormous cheer from the 6,000 strong audience; it was such an emotional but uplifting moment for my mom and me and for everyone in the crowds. It was such a personal tribute that meant the world to us. (you can see it on Youtube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_XqdrJvMLQ)

So a huge thank you to two genuine and thoughtful gentlemen, Michael Ball and Jason Manford for such a memorable evening.



more than £5million for cancer research.

From The Daily Mail – 11 November 2014



LYTHAM FESTIVAL WEEKEND

by Pauline Fuller



After much anticipation and excitement, the day of the Lytham Festival arrived. I couldn't wait to see Michael again and in my hometown as well, this was quite special!

The weather was not on our side, wind and overcast skies, although later we were told they had been rehearsing while it had been raining heavily. After the obligatory queuing, we made our way with our gardens chairs and picnic to find the best place for a good view.

Michael was part of a great lineup along

with winners of our local Fylde's Got Talents contests over the past 5 years, Tenors of Rock (who were fabulous), Rhydian, Lesley Garrett and Kerry Ellis, who is returning to the show *Wicked*.

The first three songs Michael sang were 'Don't Rain On My Parade', 'Stranger in Paradise' and 'This Is My Beloved'. He returned later to sing a couple of songs from *Phantom* and *Les Mis* but the closing song of the first half was the highlight with most of the cast singing *One Day More*. I can't find an adjective

to describe how good this was. Michael has an affiliation to this show which is plain to see!

The second half included a song from *Jesus Christ Superstar* to which he was taken by his father to see when Michael was 12 (his Dad was in the audience). It was as a result of this that he set his sights on musical theatre. The last song Michael sang before the proms music was, of course, 'Love Changes Everything' from *Aspects of Love*. He dedicated this to Stephen Sutton, the young cancer sufferer who died recently. He said that love *can* change everything. The audience joined in and made this extra special.

The evening finished off with the 'Sailors Hornpipe', 'Jerusalem', 'Rule Britannia' and 'Land Of Hope And Glory'. Plenty of flag-waving was done and with the whole cast singing and fireworks going off all around us, this made a fitting conclusion to a most memorable concert. Even the delay of around 15 minutes when the rain came down didn't dampen the occasion.

Thank you Michael for making this concert so special. Come back again!

TONY'S 80TH BIRTHDAY

By Maureen and Gill



Michael's Dad celebrated his 80th Birthday in November so we sent him the above card and told him that his name had always been up there in lights as far as we were concerned!

He then wrote to back to us asking if we could pass on his thoughts, so here they are:

Dearest Maureen, Gill, Roy or Colin, Nov 14th 2014
 Thank you all so very much for your kind thoughts and goodwishes on my Big 'O' (h!) Birthday! 80 years old! - In the immortal words, - "I DON'T BE-LIEVE IT!!" But believe me, the love, the loyalty, the laughter, shared with & displayed by the wonderful MBFans & literally everywhere towards me - as another aspect of their affection for our marvellous Michael!! - over the years, has been truly heartwarming. Somehow, through you, I want to thank them all & say 'God Bless' to every one & express how very sincerely this is appreciated. I can only say how proud I am to know from his Birth Certificate that I am officially Michael's 'PRODUCER' - and to have the satisfaction of also knowing that in my life I've actually powdered (as well as spanked) Michael Ball's bottom! Michael made my Birthday week complete by inviting me to the BBC Studios to watch him on 'Sunday Night with Michael Ball' (photos as per his website,) and to shock both me and the waiting world, by playing a long lost scratchy 60 year old demo recording of me singing with 'THE FIVE SHMOES SKIFFLE GROUP' of Austin Apprentices, way, way back in the 'nifty Fifties!' (That was before respectability and the hunch of the Mini took over my life!) I'm now repolishing the Zimmer-frame and intend to 'Keep SKIFFLING!' Hope to see you all somewhere on the tour. With much love & thanks for the memories. Yours Always, & Only, xx

THE NICEST SHOP WINDOW EVER!

BY CHRIS TIETJEN



Photo: Sharon Scarrott

On a very chilly evening in December, Claire Kuczma and myself, kindly driven by her hubby, set off down a mercifully clear A12 heading for Westfield Shopping Centre at Stratford. We had had to wait until lunch time before it was confirmed that Michael was over his nasty tummy bug, and would be appearing for the Sky Arts Channel's 12 Days of Christmas show.

Leaving Claire's hubby to do some shopping, we set off to find where Michael would be appearing. It had to be one of the outdoor windows, didn't it? A few folk were already there when we arrived, all looking as cold as we were to shortly feel! But a lovely lady from Sky did come and give us all hand warmers – we decided there should have been foot warmers too!

A curtain across the window hid most things from view, but we could just about see Michael through it – and hear him rehearsing! Every now and then, the curtain moved slightly, to give tantalising glimpses of a bit of Michael and the very pretty set. A little Winter Wonderland!

Not a huge crowd (although the organisers said there had been a huge demand for tickets!) but we forgot about the cold as at 7.30pm, they drew back the curtains to reveal the man himself, looking absolutely fabulous in his velvet-edged collar jacket.

He made a joke about him being in the shop window – “who'd have thought it!” – and then sang ‘I Won't Give Up’ to an enraptured (and frozen!) audience. Before

performing ‘Angel’ he said he felt as if he was in a zoo, behind the glass, but then added “At least you can't get to me!”. He then did ‘Bad Things’, which he will obviously really make a “thing” of at the concerts, if last night was anything to go by! Cheeky chap! We thought we were going to get another song for a moment, but wasn't to be, so with a cheery wave he was off, carefully stepping over the pretty light bulbs scattered all over the floor!

A lovely mini concert, a taste of next spring! In good voice and looking good too, it was great – except most of us had such cold feet that we could hardly walk away! But wouldn't have missed it for anything – so glad we made the effort! And it was free! Thank you Sky!



On Saturday 9th August Eric (my husband), Charlie our Chihuahua and I took ourselves off to the annual Dogfest at Loseley Park near Guildford, as we had enjoyed the previous years event, which was then held in the grounds of Fitzpatrick Referrals Veterinary Surgery. When it was announced that Michael would attend, I was thrilled.

We arrived bright and early and on entry we saw a stand with an artist sketching caricatures of dogs. We were able to get one done of Charlie free of charge and while we waited. The result was excellent as it looked so much like Charlie! The event soon became very crowded with dogs and humans of all shapes and sizes milling about.

There were wonderful activities throughout the day from doggy dancing to dock diving. There was doggy grooming, doggy treats and shopping opportunities in the Festival Village.

There was the Activity ring, the Super Vet Live Marquee with talks including Supervet Live with Noel Fitzpatrick. There were also two fairly long, guided dog walks around the grounds of Loseley Park.

I spotted Michael shortly after he arrived so asked him if he would pose with Charlie for a photo opportunity and he kindly obliged. It became so crowded later on that it was difficult to get near Michael or Noel!

We met up with some friends and found a spot at the Activity arena so that we could watch the Met Police Dogs display team. This was very good except for the part where they were enacting a robbery and car chase and were letting off guns. This frightened Charlie so I moved away from the area. At that time I noticed that Michael and Noel were dressing up as robbers so I knew they would be participating. I then alerted my friends so we had our cameras poised and at the ready.

Michael, Noel and a few others walked onto the field dressed as robbers, wearing black overalls, hats and masks so it was difficult to see which one was Michael. When all was ready, the police released a sniffer dog who had to find the jewels. Michael and Noel had a pretend fight, at





the end of which Michael removed his mask and started singing 'Diamonds Are Forever' with Noel kneeling on the floor holding up the diamonds. It was a hilarious show and I managed to take a few photos and a video clip of it all.

A little later the Fun Dog Show commenced with Michael doing the judging. The first class was 'The Most Handsome Dog' which I entered with Charlie. There were so many dogs that we couldn't even walk them around the ring, so Michael had quite a job choosing a winner - unfortunately it wasn't Charlie!

QUINCY MARKET, BOSTON

by Maureen



Back in September, Roy and I had a wonderful two weeks in America. We flew into Boston and then drove as far as Niagara Falls, followed by Cape Cod, then spent the last few days with Pat Webb and Gill in our favourite bed and breakfast!

One of the places we always like to visit when staying at Pat's is Quincy Market. Well, you can imagine our shock and surprise when Pat stops and turns round

because she's heard someone mention Michael, and these two ladies say, "Yes, it's Maureen and Gill!" It turned out to be Carol Annett and Joyce Slater, two fans from the UK who were just starting their holiday along with their husbands! They told us that they wondered why they hadn't seen us at the 'Help For Heroes' concert and now they knew why! We had a good laugh about what a small world it is and then Roy took this photo for us.

THE ALAN TITCHMARSH SHOW



We were so lucky to be sitting right in front of Michael as he not only rehearsed 'What We Ain't Got' but sang it again at the very end of the programme. Once the cameras had been turned off Michael, with the microphone still on, thanked the warm up man, the audience and then pointed down at us and said, "Can I introduce you to Maureen and Gill? These two ladies run my Fan Club. How many years has it now been?" We replied, "22 years". He responded with, "Gosh, and you first saw me quite a few years before that when I was in *Phantom*." He then turned to the audience and said with a very cheeky grin, "Try as I may, I can't shake them off!"

TALENT 2014 COMPETITION

Michael was the chief Judge at the final of the Talent 2014 competition and this is what was posted afterwards:

Thank you for supporting Acting For Others - Michael Ball, Savannah Stevenson, Jon Jon Briones - and for being there for a brilliant night of new Musical Theatre Talent. It's so moving when so many people turn out to witness the stars of the future - Ryan Ferrie, Nicholas Devlin, Laura Mary Kruse, Danielle Irvine, Laura Jane Mathewson, Daniel Hall, Vikki McAuley, Daniel Haswell, Sarah Duce, Luisa Guerreiro - congratulations to LJ Mathewson for taking the crown - but as Mr Ball says - you are ALL winners. Xxx

Laura Jane Mathewson – Winner of Talent 2014, the biggest and best search for the next West End Musical Theatre Star, receives her prize opposite, and celebrates her win bottom right.



CHRISTMAS CAROLS FOR THE RHN

On December 11th Michael performed at the Christmas carol concert in aid of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability. The concert was held at the Holy Trinity Church which is located next to the hospital. It was a glorious evening with songs from the London Chorus, Putney High School and Jocelyn Somerville. Michael closed the first half with 'O Holy Night' with the backing of the choir.

Having visited the hospital recently, he knew many of the patients that were in attendance and he happily sang along during the carols, holding the hand of one of them, Sally, while singing along with her.



As you can see during the thirty minute interval, when mulled wine and mince pies were served, Michael was happy to pose for photos. After the interval a surprise extra

guest – Emeli Sande – sang 'Silent Night' beautifully. Towards the end of the evening Michael also recited a very funny Victoria Wood Christmas monologue.



London Chorus



Michael, Emile Sande & Putney High School

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

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: **MICHAEL19**



Call the **Infoline** number below to hear what Michael is doing, news about concerts or where you can see him. Every **Infoline** bulletin is dated, so it's easy to keep up to date with what's going on!

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