

ON THE BALL

Issue 69



Hi Everyone

Well, here we are with the first issue of *On The Ball* that has been produced by James Gaden. Many thanks go to him and everyone who contributed by sending articles and photos.

We hope you are enjoying being a member of the free Michael Ball Fan Club. We must say a big thank you to everyone who has donated to help with the costs. If you want to donate you can do so by clicking on the Donate button on the front page of the website or sending a cheque to PO Box 2073, Colchester, CO4 3WS.

Having toured last year we really didn't expect Michael to do one this year. When asked if it was a possibility our answer was, when it comes to Michael, we never say never! He proved us right when the "Together" tour with Alfie Boe was announced. We know how excited Michael is about this and the album which is due to be released on the 21 October 2016... although we understand it could be moved to the 28 October 2016. Once it's confirmed we will let you know.

Before the tour we've got the Hippodrome and Proms in the Park to look forward to and of course, the Michael Ball Show on Radio 2 Sunday mornings.

Love

Maureen and Gill

PS We did receive some very sad news back in February when Hope Lindeman passed away. This photo was taken a few years ago when she travelled over from America with her dear friend Barbara. Left to right: Barbara Voight, Gill, Maureen and Hope Lindeman.



Dear Everyone,

Well, my loves, I am writing this latest "on the ball" letter to you having just finished packing for a 2 week holiday that will see me recharging my batteries for what looks like being another hectic, creative and hopefully fun filled few months.

The big news for me of course is the team up with the fabulous Albie Go. I know many of you are also fans of his and we are having such a good time working on the new 'Together' Album. We are looking for songs we both love, some we've recorded seperately before but that we think we can give a new twist to and that will work for both our voices... and gradually we are getting there.

Then the challenge will be to create a live show that will

hopefully knock your socks off. That is where the fun will really begin and I can't wait to see you somewhere along the road.

Meanwhile we have the Hippodrome gig to look forward to... I loved the intimacy and relaxation and feel of it last time so for those of you who made it to the show there last time and are coming again, or if its your first time, you are in for a real treat I think. A totally different feel to the live shows.

I'm loving the Sunday Morning Radio show and thank you for supporting it so brilliantly. Like a lot of you I do miss the evening slot we created together and its taken a few weeks to settle into the new rhythm but I think we're getting there and when the "On The Ball" quiz starts hopefully I'll get a chance to talk to you on air if you feel brave enough. It'll be great fun.

Finally, I just wanted to say how bloody lucky I feel I am. Reading your cards, letters and various social media messages I realise how all of us, at some point, face the harsh realities of life. Be they illness, the loss of a dear loved one, the struggle to make sense of a world that is changing so rapidly and relentlessly and often terrifyingly and we can feel out of control and lost and alone.

In the smallest of ways, by knowing we also share things that bring us together in a positive way, a love of music and art and creative beauty, a belief that kindness and compassion and love and understanding are far better, healthier responses to the vagaries of this world than negativity. I realise that I am surrounded by good people. You make me proud and confident and happy and I just pray, in some small way I can do the same for you. I hope you don't mind me sharing these thoughts with you. I know that it is often

difficult to share personal feelings and thoughts but every now and then I think we have to, to show that we are not alone, there is strength in numbers and huge power to positivity.

So take care of yourself and those that you love and rejoice in the little joys and triumphs and pleasures that still can be found everyday and lets all continue to make the most of the time we have together and the impact we can make on our world.

I send you all my love as always and I can't wait to see you or hear from you somewhere along the way very soon.

God Bless

Mich S
x



THE OLIVIER AWARDS

Michael hosted the 40th Anniversary Olivier Awards at London's Royal Opera House on 3rd April.

Michael had previously co-hosted the event in 2011 and 2012, as well as being a two-time Olivier Award winner himself, for his performances in *Hairspray* and *Sweeney Todd*.

Imelda Staunton joined him to announce the nominations, and she was not only nominated herself, but won the award for 'Best Actress In A Musical' for her performance in *Gypsy*. Michael also tweeted a nomination of his own, as you can see!

As well as hosting the awards, Michael performed, which included a duet with Cyndi Lauper (pictured above), singing 'True Colours', at the show.



LET'S START AT THE VERY BEGINNING...!

With the Fan Club rapidly approaching its 25th Anniversary, Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse takes a walk down memory lane to see how it all began...

Way back in 1986 I was working in the stock room in Boots the Chemist here in Colchester. While unpacking boxes we were allowed to listen to a cassette player and my friend Suzanne bought in her copy of the *Phantom Of The Opera*. I fell in love with it and being a fan of Michael Crawford, I booked tickets for nearly a year away.

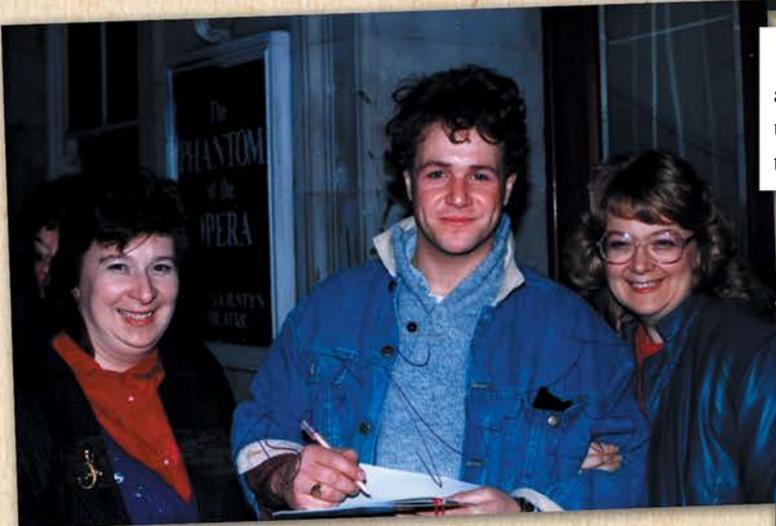
Suzanne then decided that she was going to queue for returns and got up very early to do so. She came in floating the next day and I said to Roy "Guess what we're going to do next week?!" After doing this a couple of times I finally managed to persuade Gill to come with me to queue for Michael Crawford's last night in October 1987. We weren't successful in getting them for his final evening performance but managed the matinee. Gill came out asking when we were going to come and see the new cast and I said in a week or two!

So that's what we did. We queued and got tickets but we weren't sitting together. We had both heard Michael on the *Les Misérables* album but this was our first time of seeing him live. We met at the interval, just after he'd sung 'All I Ask of You' with our mouths wide open, not quite believing what we had just heard. We decided that we would definitely go round to the stage door at the end of the show to get our programmes signed, and here we are doing just that:

We knew Michael was going into *Aspects Of Love* and we were there for the very first preview. I couldn't make it to the Opening Night as I was in hospital having an operation that day. Gill went and when Michael spotted her at the stage door he came over and the first thing he asked was if everything had gone okay with my operation! Here's a very early photo that Gill took of Michael and Cathy together on Opening Night.



During *Aspects* we also got to know Michael's dear Mum and Dad (Ruth and Tony) and on the very last night they turned up with handfuls of red roses and balloons which they gave to those of us sitting at the front, to throw on the stage at the end.

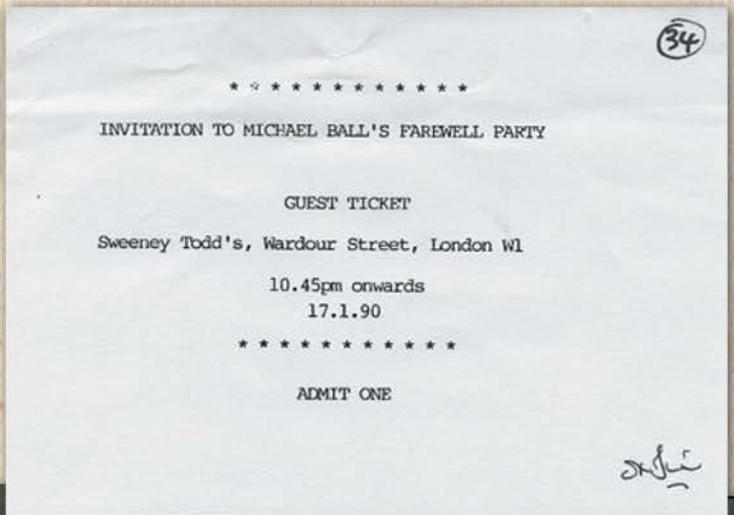


During the year Michael was in *Phantom* we got to see him regularly at the stage door and when it came to his very last night he invited us, and our dear friend Margaret, in to help him "strip"! Once again our mouths dropped open in disbelief and then he added, "Strip everything off the walls of my dressing room that I need to take home with me!"



You can imagine how excited we were to receive this invitation to Michael's Farewell Party. We had no idea back then that the name "Sweeney Todd" would mean so much in the future!

Here's Michael serenading everyone at his farewell party. He was then congratulated and wished good luck on Broadway by Gloria Hunniford, watched proudly by Ruth and Tony and other members of the cast and crew.



We knew we wouldn't be able to get to New York for *Aspects* so after seeing him as least once a month for over three years it was very hard to say goodbye for possibly a year.



When Michael finished in *Aspects of Love* and came back to the UK it became difficult to keep up with what he was doing. His dad Tony used to contact us if he knew something was coming up. Then one day, at the end of 1991, we said perhaps we ought to start a fan club for the 50 or so fans that we knew were around. We asked Michael and he casually said "Well, if you think it's a good idea." He then set up a meeting for us with James Sharkey, who was his manager at the time, who gave us some great advice.

To be continued...



THE UNEXPECTED STAR OF THE SHOW

Hairdresser Natasha John received the shock of her life when she made her way down to London for what she thought was a hairdressing assignment – only to find herself singing live in front of a packed venue with Michael Ball!

Natasha is a 23 year old stylist, who is also an aspiring singer, and spends her days working in her mother's salon. When she was given the job of travelling to London, she ended up being shown into the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, where she met her client – who turned out to be none other than Michael McIntyre, one of Britain's most famous comedians, sporting a wig.



However, that was only the beginning of a series of shocks for Natasha.

“When I saw it was him I had a quick panic and said ‘I didn’t realise it was you I was doing’ and before I could think what was happening the whole wall and mirror in front of us collapsed and I was standing in front of a cheering audience.

“My mouth was just open. I couldn’t speak. Then Michael McIntyre said he knew about my love for singing and asked if I wanted to sing... and then Michael Ball walked out.”

Natasha would later discover that the show’s researchers had been tipped off about her singing ability. Natasha had performed for some Welsh MPs at a Christmas dinner, and felt she would be ideal for the new programme hosted by McIntyre, which featured a segment called ‘The Unexpected Star Of The Show’.

The setup had involved Natasha’s parents, Natalie and Stephen, who had exchanged emails with the show’s producers and kept everything a secret to ensure Natasha’s shock was genuine.

“I was so nervous when Michael Ball walked out so I’m hoping the singing was all right. I had no chance to prepare.

“Once I started singing, about 15 seconds in, I relaxed a bit, but I was still in shock seeing the cameras,” Natasha recalled.

Michael and Natasha, with only 30 minutes of preparation time, duetted ‘The Prayer’, in front of a packed audience of 2,500 people, along with another five million watching at home. But the young singer held her nerve and received a standing ovation.

On the subject of what Michael Ball was like, the young stylist was full of praise.

“Michael Ball was absolutely amazing. He was so lovely. He couldn’t have been nicer. It’s all a bit of a blur but I spoke to him a bit after I sang and did a bit of an interview.

“I couldn’t believe it was happening and Michael Ball said ‘well done’. He was lovely.”



The Hippodrome Concert

Words by Jill Clark. Pictures by Sharon Scarratt

I count myself to be very lucky and honoured to have been at this very special and extremely intimate “one off” concert Michael gave at The Hippodrome in the heart of the West End, London on Thursday, 28th January!

When it came up on a News Update from the Fan Club I was *very* surprised and delighted at the same time, as it wasn’t expected, considering Michael was nearing the end of a non-stop year. He had done *Mack and Mabel* and a tour around the UK with the show, so the new year was going to be a “quiet” time – so we all thought! We expected Michael would have some well earned “me” time to recharge his batteries after such a busy year, but this was unique and special... I just could not resist, even though tickets were on the pricy side!

I didn’t see the email till late in the evening so, when I applied for a ticket online (after midnight) to my astonishment there was **ONLY 8 TICKETS LEFT** in the balcony! I

didn’t waste any more time so decided there and then I **HAD TO GO!**

I made it a belated Christmas present to myself... I managed to purchase a ticket up in the balcony for myself, leaving only 7 tickets left and by the morning they had all sold out!

The day came, a pleasant mildish January morning, and at last I was setting off by train from Southampton Central Station to Waterloo, London. I booked into my hotel (St. Giles) and had a bite to eat, then headed to Tottenham Court Road to get the tube to the short journey to Leicester Square, where the Hippodrome was directly next door to.

When I got inside... **WOW!** It was a stunningly beautiful venue and casino, restaurant, bar and the most quaint little “theatre” where the Cabaret shows are held. I was shown up to where we had to be to queue (we are all used to queuing, us MB fans!) by a

member of staff. It was a *huge* place and not at all like a normal concert venue. Once I got to the correct area, I knew I was in the right place when I spotted some familiar faces already queuing!

The time went by and we were all let in. Some of us had to wear security bracelets with 'The Hippodrome' on it which I will keep forever as a lovely memory and reminder of the day!

I made it to the front row of the balcony which was extremely close to the stage, nothing like a normal balcony seat and the stage just below me was extremely tiny, I was totally mesmerized! I just couldn't believe I was there and Michael was going to be singing directly below me, which to me, on first impression, was just like being in a bar with the tiny stage and tables and chairs all dotted around.

It was absolutely buzzing with excitement as we all settled down to Michael coming on stage... and he just appeared directly below me, walking on without the big, big entrance and fanfare we are all used to on his tours. We all stood up as we do and gave him our usual greeting! He looked amazing in a lovely blueish suit and seemed incredibly relaxed in this *amazing* atmosphere which suited him to the ground. I was lucky enough to be in the audience for the filming of the *This Time Is Personal* video at the The Café de Paris, which this reminded me so much of. Michael sang his way through song after song – I can't remember every song performed, I know he played 'Life On Mars', 'Tell Me It's Not True', 'Sunset Boulevard' and of course 'Love Changes Everything'. One thing I clearly remember is that Michael sang 'Stars' from *Les Misérables* in the second half which absolutely took the roof off and resulted in a complete standing ovation as we all stood in utter joy!

It was an evening I will *never* ever forget and one that saw Michael so relaxed and so comfortable. I would love to see him do more intimate little venues like this (if not as grand). I think we all felt so very lucky



and special that evening to be there and to top it all off, he told us he was off in the morning to collect his OBE from the palace with his dear Dad, so had to be up early!

What a night, what a performance and the fact that Michael had to pass us all in the balcony where I was, to get to and from the stage and to his dressing room... well, was just the icing in the cake! He said a quick "Hello!" to us all as he was quickly whisked through by a few security men, much to Claire Stockil and myself's delight at the end – Claire will know what I mean!

It was lovely meeting Claire, Chris T. and many other friends that day. The trip back home was made special too, as the photos and Tweets from Michael with his Dad at Buckingham Palace receiving his OBE from Prince Charles appeared. I loved the picture of Michael proudly holding up his medal with his Dad!

For my entire train journey home well, I just couldn't stop smiling and beaming with pride and happiness. It was wonderful that Michael had his own "never to forget" day too, and never has anyone deserved it more than him. He totally is the *ultimate* professional and the most talented, amazing performer and lovely man on this planet – and not so bad looking either!

Thank you as always Michael for giving us that very special concert at The Hippodrome and I hope someday you will be back there as they certainly had not seen or heard anything like it before. I think along with The Proms Concert at the RAH this has to be right up there with that one for me.

I just hope that it can be filmed next time, as that was the only thing that was missing. It would be great for those fortunate ones who filled the 180 or so seats to remember and to re-live again and again, but also for all the many, many fans who couldn't be there too!

MICHAEL BALL – O.B.E.!



After performing a show at the Hippodrome on 28th January, Michael spent the next day heading to Buckingham Palace to officially receive his O.B.E. His proud dad Tony was on hand to see Michael accept the medal, and Michael posted pictures on his Facebook account,

commenting “I promise not to inundate you all but this pic (*above*) by the Royal Staff Photographer is pretty cool (even if I do say so myself)”. He clearly had a great time, adding “Such an amazing day so far. Just off for lunch so think it might be the end of ‘Dry January’!”



MICHAEL ON

BBC
RADIO

2



Michael has stated frequently how much he enjoys his work on BBC Radio 2, presenting his 'Sunday Brunch' show. However, he was faced with an exciting new challenge when he was given the opportunity to take over the late, great Terry Wogan's show after the legendary broadcaster passed away from cancer.

"This is the best job on radio as far as I'm concerned," Michael was quoted in an interview. "But what a way to get it. It really is bittersweet. I've known Terry forever and he was a touchstone throughout my career. He was incredibly kind and supportive, and would always give advice. Terry was all about the listener but far more articulate, well-read, sharp and funny than I could ever be.

"But he did suggest to former Radio 2 controller Lesley Douglas that I come in. He said I had the right kind of style, so I'd hope Terry would approve.

"He left a wonderful legacy and I feel a responsibility but, more than anything, I feel immensely privileged to be entrusted with this job."

Michael's first guest, fittingly, was Andrew Lloyd Webber. Here you can see some photos of Michael with some of the star guests who have appeared since the successful launch of *The Michael Ball Show*.



with Terry Wogan at Eurovision



Michael enjoying Oscars Night



With Vincent Niclo



With Brian Blessed



With Andrew Lloyd Webber



With Noel Fitzpatrick



With Katherine Jenkins



With Barry Manilow



With Ronan Keating



With Graham Nash



With Derek Jacobi & Samantha Bond



With Jason Donovan



With Bonnie Raitt



With Tom Jones

A Right Royal Success

Lifelong Michael Ball Fan Leanna Horne describes Her Majesty the Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration.



Leanna Horne, 28, has been a fan and follower of Michael all her life, and the Drama & Performance Graduate credits him as being her Musical Theatre inspiration. After attending a Meet & Greet during the Birmingham leg of his *If Everyone Was Listening* Tour in April 2015, Leanna and her Canine Partner, assistance dog Trudy, have caught up with Michael a few times over the past year.

Leanna said, "I was so nervous about meeting Michael that first time, as the venue staff took me up in the lift to the room where the Meet & Greet was Michael was walking towards us from his dressing room, he asked if he could say hello, and Trudy and Michael just hit it off from there..."

As well as Leanna and Trudy catching up with Michael



Leanna & Trudy meeting Michael for the first time in Birmingham in April 2015



Michael opens his present from big Trudy, a little Trudy so he will always remember her – Cardiff, April 2015

again in Cardiff in 2015, the pair also met up with him when the *Mack & Mabel UK* Tour stopped off in Nottingham in November 2015. Leanna said when she heard that Michael was going to be at 'A Right Royal Knees Up', she was determined that she and Trudy were going to be there.

"It wasn't easy though", says Leanna, whose primary condition, Cerebral Palsy, means she has to use a wheelchair. "The Theatre Royal Haymarket only has two wheelchair spaces in the auditorium, but the staff were great and it was a fantastic show – well worth all the phone calls!"

The show, which featured Michael, also included appearances from Sir Derek Jacobi, Dame Maggie Smith, Jim Carter, Joanna Lumley and Brian Conley to name but a few. Everything was

held together amazingly by Rob Brydon & Robert Lindsay, with a rousing sing-a-long of 'Lambeth Walk' at the end.

"We were all singing and waving our Union Jacks at the end, it was brilliantly patriotic" said Leanna.

Leanna even managed to meet up with Brian Conley, Joanna Lumley and Robert Lindsay after the show. It seemed that she had missed Michael, who had had to rush off and see his Dad...

"I really thought I'd missed him," she said. "I'd had a thoroughly enjoyable evening though, so I didn't mind. But as I walked round the back of the theatre, on the way back to my hotel, there he was! I asked if he minded having a photo with Trudy & I..."

"Of course you can, I'm always happy to see you two," Michael responded, before saying "How are you, Princess?" to Trudy and "Have you lost weight darling, you're looking beautiful?" to Leanna. "That totally made my night!" says Leanna.

Leanna & Trudy finish off their evening in style with a photo with Michael, opposite, after 'A Right Royal Knees Up'. They also met up with Brian Conley (right), Joanna Lumley (below) and Robert Lindsay (bottom right).



A RIGHT ROYAL KNEES UP

Word and pictures by Chris Tietjen



Well, you have heard the one about the one that got away? That was nearly The Right Royal Knees Up for us! Why, oh why, did we think it was at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane? Yes, we know now, and found out at 6:30pm that it was at the Haymarket! There were a few naughty words, and a cab across town which saw us arrive ten minutes after the start! They took us up to the circle foyer, and the guy behind the bar offered us a drink and a sandwich, while they found out when it would be “convenient” to go in! They soon came back, and we were able to take our seats. At the interval the people around us said we had only missed Rob Brydon and Robert Lindsay chatting, so not too bad... at least we hadn't missed You-Know-Who!

It was a bit of an odd show – we realised that Brian Conley is totally mad! There were famous actors and actresses who kept popping on to the stage to recite a few bits of Shakespeare, only to be dragged off with a big crook! Very odd! The Oompah band was clever, and entertaining, but again it was a bit... well, odd – but they played Queen songs very well.

Michael closed the first half, and apart from Dame Maggie Smith, he got the loudest cheers when he came on. He sang

‘I Won't Send Roses’ beautifully. Then Rob Brydon and Robert Lindsay appeared with something under a cover – it turned out to be a cardboard cut out of Her Majesty! On trying to pull the covering off, they very nearly decapitated her! Off to The Tower for them! Michael then returned and proceeded to sing ‘You Made Me Love You’ to the Queen – adding some words of his own, to give it a cheekier meaning! Naughty boy! He got a big round of applause and cheering.

The second half only lasted 45 minutes, and again was an odd mixture of things and people. Imelda Staunton and Jim Carter appeared, with Jim trying a magic trick,

and Imelda singing a beautiful song, with no accompaniment at all. Lovely.

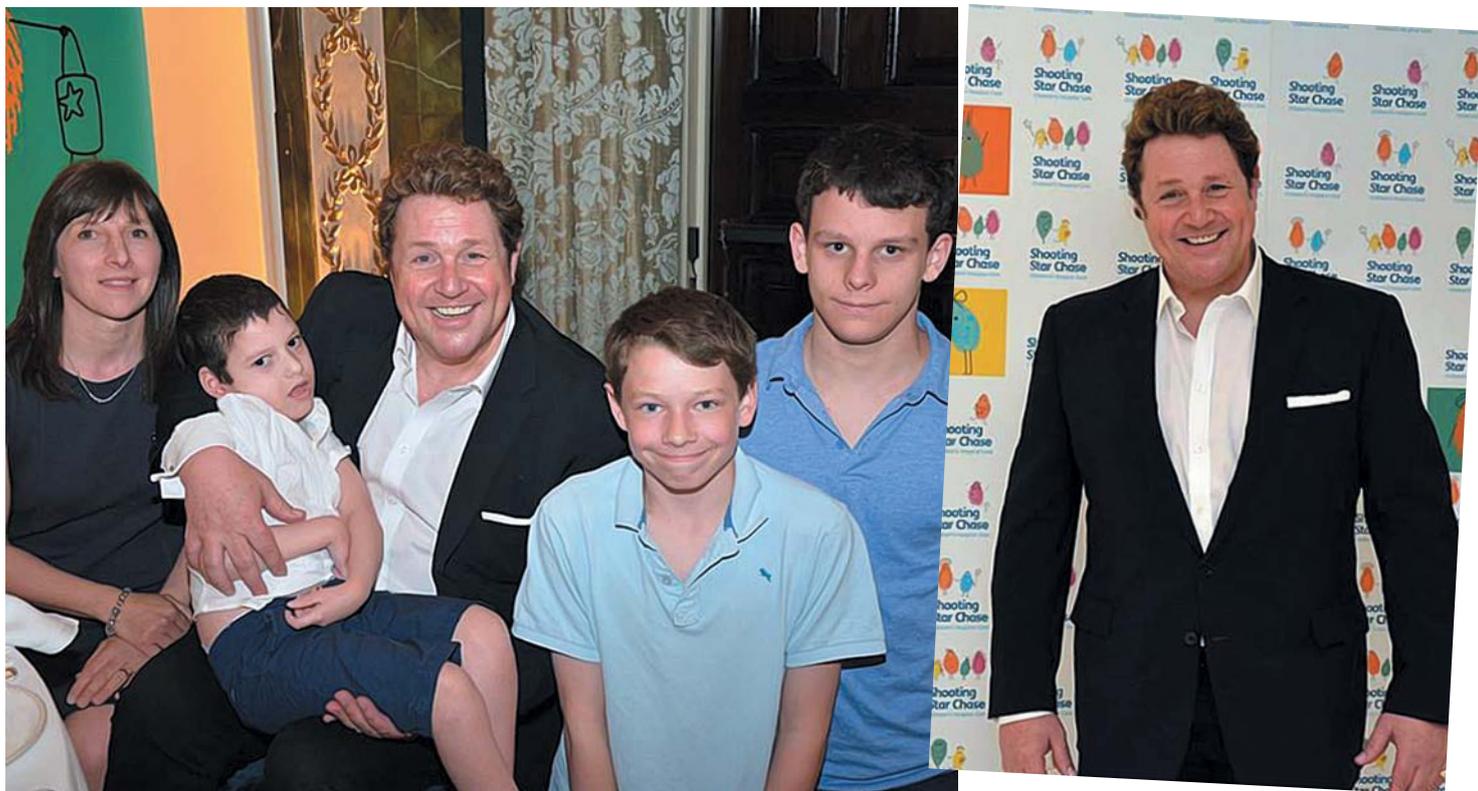
Michael and all of the cast re-appeared at the end, for a rousing rendition of ‘Lambeth Walk’, and the national anthem. Michael seemed to be Maggie Smith's minder, leading her on and off stage, dancing with her, and making her laugh!

All in all, it was a nice evening, if a bit of an odd show! Whilst we were going out of the theatre, we bumped in to Tony Ball – quite literally! What a lovely man! I said “Your boy done good!” and he replied “He always does!”



THE SHOOTING STAR CHASE TEA PARTY

Here are a couple of pictures of Michael taken during a visit to Shooting Star Chase, where he attended their fund raising tea party.



MICHAEL BALL & ALFIE BOE TICKET EXCHANGE

The Fan Club are compiling a list for fans who either wish to buy or sell tickets for the upcoming tour. To receive a copy of the list, email mbfcmaureen@gmail.com. If you have tickets to sell, please send the seat number, venue, date and asking price along with your contact details to mbfcmaureen@gmail.com to be added to the list.

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

www.mbfanclub.co.uk

The Michael Ball Fan Club is now completely free to join – simply visit the website address above and register your email address and you will receive notifications every time there is some Michael Ball news to report. There is also a members area where you can download past issues of On The Ball and access Michael's Infoline messages.

The password to access it is: **MBFC24**



MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB INFOLINE

0871 221 7811

For those who haven't got internet access, you can call the **Infoline** number to hear what Michael is doing, news about concerts or where you can see him – and listen to messages from the man himself. Every **Infoline** bulletin is dated, so it's easy to keep up to date with what's going on!





M I C H A E L B A L L

&

A L F I E B O E

T O G E T H E R

EXTRA DATES ADDED DUE TO PHENOMENAL DEMAND*

NOVEMBER 2016

THU 03 CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
 SAT 05 BOURNEMOUTH **SOLD OUT**
 SUN 06 SOUTHAMPTON MAY **SOLD OUT** WER
 TUE 08 PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
 WED 09 PLYMOUTH PAVILIONS
 THU 10 BRISTOL COLS' **SOLD OUT** HALL
 SAT 12 LONDON PAL **SOLD OUT** IUM
 SUN 13 LONDON PAL **SOLD OUT** IUM
 TUE 15 BRIGHTON C **SOLD OUT** E
 WED 16 LEICESTER DE MON **SOLD OUT** RT HALL
 THU 17 LIVERPOOL ECHO ARENA
 SAT 19 LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
 SUN 20 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL C **SOLD OUT** ERT HALL

MON 21 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL
 WED 23 BLACKPOOL OPERA HOUSE
 FRI 25 MANCHESTER O₂ APOLLO
 SAT 26 GLASGOW CLYDE **SOLD OUT** I TORIUM
 MON 28 BIRMINGHAM SYMPH **SOLD OUT** HALL
 TUE 29 BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL

DECEMBER 2016

THU 01 NEWCASTLE METRO RADIO ARENA
 SAT 03 SHEFFIELD C **SOLD OUT** ALL
 THU 08 LONDON EVENTIM APOLLO*
 FRI 09 OXFORD NEW THEATRE*
 SAT 10 NOTTINGHAM ROYAL CONCERT HALL*
 MON 12 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL*
 TUE 13 MANCHESTER O₂ APOLLO*

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NEW ALBUM 'TOGETHER' RELEASED OCTOBER 2016

