

# ON THE BALL

Issue 71



Hi Everyone

As we come to the end of the Ball and Boe summer outdoor concerts another couple of surprises come along. In October Michael and Alfie will be touring Australia and then in October 2018 Michael will be cruising with "Stages - The Musical Theatre Festival at Sea".

For us another dream came true when we got to see Michael sing "Love Changes Everything" on the stage in New York! Back in 1990 we so wanted to go to New York to see Michael in "Aspects of Love" but just didn't have the means to do so. Michael was so emotional as he sang this song it wasn't long before our eyes filled with tears. The following day we went to see Josh Groban in "The Great Comet of 1812" and so did Michael. During the interval we were waiting to get a drink when he came right up behind us and gave us a hug. We spent a wonderful few days catching up with old friends we hadn't seen for years and also making lots of new ones. Many thanks to all of you that have contributed to this issue.

Love

Maureen and Gill



Compiled and designed by James Gaden - [www.halo-graphic.com](http://www.halo-graphic.com). Email: [james@halo-graphic.com](mailto:james@halo-graphic.com)

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Dear Everyone,

Well, I'm writing this at the B.B.C. having just done my radio show. It's the first show back after our summer tour and I'm surrounded by birthday cards which I'm only just opening and reading and thank you so much. You are just so thoughtful and generous, especially donating to SSC Chase and it means so much to me.

It was so lovely seeing so many of you on the road throughout June... and what about the weather!! Take about extremes. One day it's the hottest day ever and then you find yourself in a Monsoon in Scarborough. Unbelievable and just wonderful how the audiences responded to the show. It makes me so excited for the Arena tour and

New album with Alpie at the end of the year.

But before that we are off to N.Y to record the album (how brilliant was it to FINALLY do a concert there) and then heading down to Australia to do some concerts. It's a busy time but I'm loving it and thank you for always being there for me.

We seem to all be united in our love of music and song and I think we know how to have a good time and make the most of the opportunities that life presents us with.

So, God willing, I'll see you soon sometime, somewhere and until then I send all my love and say stay safe.

All my love  
Mike  
x

# TWO SHINING STARS!

By Jen Garner



I'd just arrived home from New Zealand when we were given the news that Michael and Alfie were going to perform at the final of 'Let It Shine'. The recording was to be Friday 24th February and would be broadcast on Saturday 25th February. "Great!" I thought – but for a few hours at least, pushed the idea of another trip to the back of my mind. That was until my friend Rose said "Guess what? I've got 2 tickets for the recording – would you like to go with me?"

Within minutes we were booking trains, organising our accommodation and so... another adventure evolved!

We joined the queue around 4:45pm on Friday 24th at Elstree Studios, Borehamwood and were soon chatting to one or two more fellow fans. It wasn't too long before we moved forward to the check-in gate (similar to an airport!) where our bags were searched. Eventually we reached a big, undercover holding area where our bags, coats, mobile phones and anything else we may be carrying was taken off us until after the show and we were given a numbered sticker. Security was extremely tight, which of course is very good.

The stewards divided us into groups depending on whether or not we had 'standing' or 'seated' tickets. The standing

people were called to go into the studio first whilst the remainder, including us, were called in groups of 50.

On entering the venue we were initially surprised at the size of it. It seemed huge and more like a small theatre than a television studio. The lighting and set were most impressive and we were all given wrist bands that lit up in different colours when the music started. Our seats were above the standing audience, on the front row, behind a barrier and just to the right and slightly above the judges.

Graham Norton and Mel Giedroyc presented the show and introduced Michael and Alfie to a standing ovation. Originally they each stood on separate podiums either side of the stage and luckily Michael was facing us which was quite nice!

If you watched the final of 'Let it Shine' on television you'll know that Michael and Alfie gave an epic performance of a 'Les Mis' medley. Firstly Alfie sang 'Bring Him Home', then Michael sang 'Empty Chairs' and then they both came down to a podium at the centre of the stage and sang 'I Dreamed A Dream', finishing with a rousing and magnificent rendition of 'One Day More' when they were joined by Boys from The Urban Voice Choir. Both of them looked so very smart in their dark suits, ties, waistcoats

and white shirts and they unsurprisingly brought the house down!

Throughout we were encouraged to cheer and wave our arms with the lit up wrist bands at the appropriate places. Michael and Alfie's performance finished with a display of fireworks and really and truly it was a spectacular and mind-blowing experience.

At the end Mel and Graham had a quick chat to Michael and Alfie and asked them what advice they would give to the young finalists embarking on this exciting career. Michael said that doing eight shows a week required discipline and they especially needed to take care of themselves – no partying after the shows!

The unexpected bonus was a performance from each of the three finalists – Drive, Five To Five and Nightfall. All were great but I'd always had a soft spot for Five To Five so was thrilled they went on to win. Hopefully I'll get to see them in Gary Barlow's new musical *The Band*.

Time for home and I was so glad I had been able to make it and enjoy what was once again, a memorable and fabulous evening.

Michael and Alfie didn't just Shine, they Dazzled!

# Hippodrome Casino

February 9th 2017 by Sue Ashton



Photo: Margaret Samson

Quite a few of you know my daughter Nicola or rather her Guide Dog Kimber.

We saw Michael at the Hippodrome last January but did not manage to get tickets for the July concert. So when I heard that he was going to perform on February 9th I was on the phone at 11.00 and managed to get two of the table seats.

Nicola has a degenerative retina condition and has very little sight now but I knew if she was sat with her knees up to the stage Michael would still be a

fuzzy blob but if he had a white shirt on she would be able to work out where he was. When everyone is complaining that they do not want to see him on a large screen in an arena, she would love to see him anywhere, full stop!

Unbeknown to her, I wrote to Michael

and said she would be sitting in the front and if she could get a hand touch or even the kiss, it would be so special for her.

We did not bring Kimber, as we live in a little village and he has not been trained to guide her in London. So she had to make do with me and her white stick. Although we have met Michael several times, I would not expect him to remember us, so left Nicola's white stick on the table, as a clue – just in case he had read my message... everything crossed!

He did not disappoint, he really is the full package, so lovely and generous. Not only did she get the hand touch, but he went down on one knee, sang 'The Wonder of You' to her ...and then she got THE KISS. I was so happy for her, I thought I would burst!

What a wonderful group Michael Ball fans are! We got such lovely responses and messages from so many who I am sure deep down were so jealous, but genuinely pleased for Nicola and me. If I am honest, I was a little jealous too!

I was so excited that it happened for Nicola, I didn't even think to get a photo, yet alone capture it on video, so thank you Maureen for the photo and Tina for forwarding me the video clip.



Photo: Claire Stockill



Photo: Sharon Scarrott



Photo: Sharon Scarrott



Photo: Maureen Wilkinson Rouse

I want to say a huge thank you to my amazing Mum Sue Ashton for an amazing evening at the Hippodrome Casino. Most of you know me as Nicola with Kimber the Guide Dog. I have very limited sight, which

means at any other concert venue, even if I am in the front row, I can't see Michael at all but appreciate his fantastic voice even more. My Mum got us a front row table with the hope of me being so close I might just be

able to see a fuzzy Michael. We were sat just off side from his microphone and in front of his stool, when he came on I could see his white shirt and knew where he was stood throughout the show and with his white cuffs could also see his arms and hands moving which was amazing.

Unknown to me, my Mum had also e-mailed Michael at Radio 2 to let him know we had front row seats and if there was an opportunity in the show to either touch my hand or have a kiss, that would make the evening even more special. During 'The Wonder Of You' Michael sang to me whilst holding my hand, got down on one knee and finished with a kiss! What a lucky lady I was and thank you so much Michael. I will never forget it and I have my wristband to remind me of this very special night.

Thank you so much to my amazing Mum, the fantastic Michael Ball and all you fans who let me be the special lady that evening.

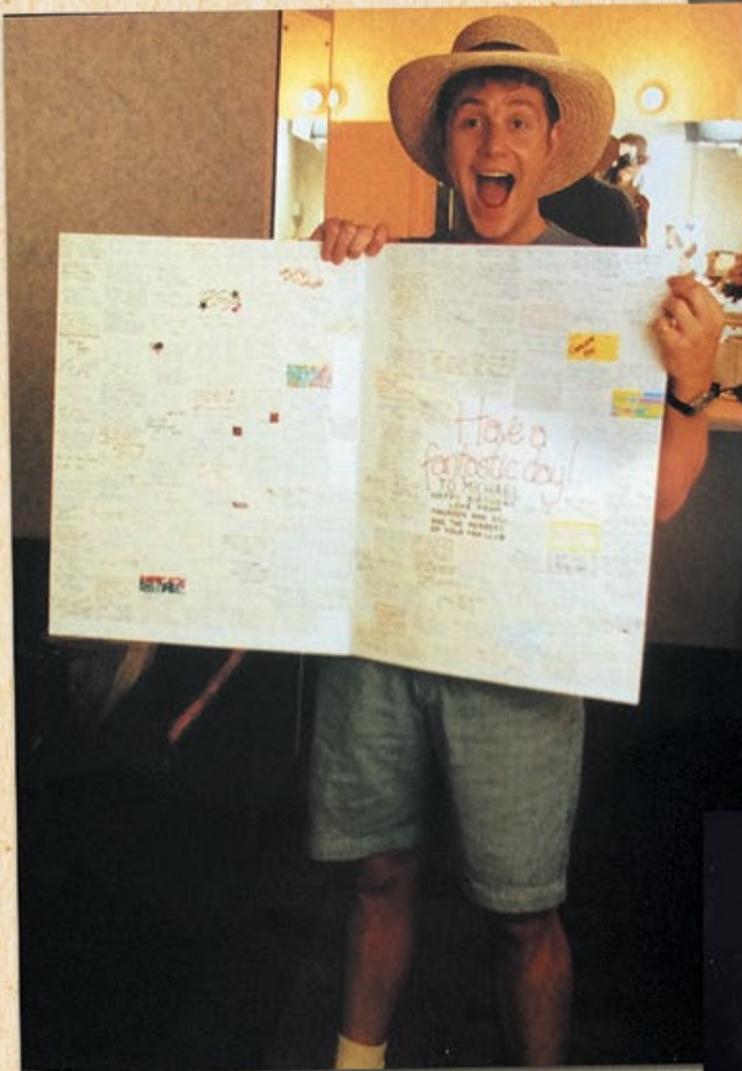
Nicola Pamphilon

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

Following on from the first part in On The Ball Issue 68, here is Part Two of Maureen and Gill's look back at the formation of the Fan Club after 25 years!

We started the Fan Club on the 1 April 1992 – 25 years ago with about 50 people joining in the first month. Then in May Michael represented the United Kingdom at the Eurovision Song Contest and came second with 'One Step Out Of Time'. This was followed by his very first tour and here's Michael on his 30th birthday with the card we got for him.

More tours and musicals followed with *Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang* definitely being one of our favourites, especially when you consider we were lucky enough to be there on both opening and closing night.



Michael also did a ROC (Research Into Ovarian Cancer) concert during this time and somehow persuaded both of us to come onto the stage of the London Palladium to present him with a cheque for the money we'd raised from Fan Club members. We definitely had the shakes at that moment!

Before we knew it we had 1,000 members! Maureen had already left her part time job and Gill was needing to do the same. With no internet or computers, everything had to be done by hand. When Michael announced in 1995 he would be starring as Marius in the 10th Anniversary Concert of *Les Misérables* at the Royal Albert Hall we were thrilled. We hadn't been lucky enough to see him in this role. It was filmed and released on video which introduced Michael to a more widespread audience and we soon had Fan Club members all over the world.





Another highlight was in November 2005 when we were invited to the Opening Night of *The Woman in White* on Broadway! We can still hear Michael whispering in our ears saying, "This is a moment you'll never forget".

Then came *Hairspray* which helped Maureen during a very difficult time. Just before Christmas 2007 she ended up in hospital with viral encephalitis. This illness took with it a lot of her memory but thankfully not all of it. On our first visit back to *Hairspray* he walked into the dressing room, stood right in front of her and said, "Hello, I'm Michael" just in case she'd forgotten him! "No way", she said!



Earlier this year on our 25th Anniversary we visited Michael in the Radio 2 studio and made him laugh when we showed him this copy of the photo he gave us to use in our very first Membership Pack.

Over the past few years we have needed to move with the times and have now made the Fan Club free of charge, with news updates being sent out by email only. News spreads too quickly via the internet to make it viable to send news out in the post and we have found this to be a much more efficient way of running the Fan Club.

The past 25 years have flown by with so many highlights it's impossible to list them all, but all we can say is "Long may this wonderful relationship continue..."

# I Just Can't Help Reliving...

by Judy Lynn Cogswell

I had the most fantastic time at the 'Together' concert in New York City. First I met up with Janis Dove, who my friend Mary Walton (A.K.A. Dinga) and I haven't seen since *Kismet*. Then I went to the Meet and Greet, where I found a few more friends I have met through the years. There were two tables set up for Michael and Alfie. Andrew first asked our names and took us up to Alfie who had a stack of posters from the 'Together' album and tour. He told Alfie our names, then Alfie would sign a poster and you could chat a few minutes with him. Then it was on to Michael, who would also sign posters and chat. After that, they stood each side of you and have got a photograph taken. Two pictures were taken with the best of the two being made available. You were only allowed one item to be signed.

When my turn came I asked if instead of poster, could I have the pic of Michael and me from the 'Both Sides Now' Meet And Greet signed. The answer was yes, so when I went up to Alfie, I told him I could only have the pic signed and (shame on me, I feel bad now!) Alfie started to reach for the picture to sign it and I pulled it away! It was just instinct, he looked surprised and signed a poster to me instead. I told him it was nice to see him again that I had seen several performances of *Kismet*. Then to Michael! He gave me a big hug and I gave him the t-shirt I brought for him....telling him I had heard he was into 'Game Of Thrones'. The t-shirt said "That's what I do... I grow a beard and I know things" which was a take off from the slogan "That's what I do...I drink wine and I know things". Michael had a huge smile and that laugh we know so well saying "I am SO



wearing this!" Then he signed my picture and also the poster.

We said a few more words, then it was time for the picture. I was so close to Michael and just leaned into him....he is so comfy... then Michael called out to Alfie to get closer in – and I echoed him and then had Alfie included for the pictures. I was sure when I saw them I would have a big goofy grin on my face... I just hope I wasn't drooling! One last word to Michael... I asked if I could touch his beard and he said yes. Believe me ladies, his beard is so soft! So that was the end of my time with him. I took a seat and just watched from then on.

When the Meet and Greet was over and he was leaving, I did thank him for coming to NYC. Then I had an hour and a half wait for the show itself.



I decided to stick around at the venue. Dinga and Janis Dove went to dinner then headed back to Janis' hotel room. While I was waiting outside, I watched a beautifully mannered Black Labrador and handler walking back and forth in front of the venue and going inside once in a while. I noticed man had K9 Security written on his shirt and I realized it was a weapons sniffing dog, searching for any scent of "something bad" that people may have tried to bring into the venue. The dog was there sniffing the larger bags, which was good to know.

I met Sophie Hughes who had said earlier to look for her, so that was fun. then I met back up with Dinga and Janis and then bought a water for \$4.50 ! We made our way down to our front row seats which were perfect, on the left which is, lucky for us, mainly Michael's side. The

venue staff said no pictures, so I had to put my camera away. Then they asked us to stand for a minute of silence for the victims of Manchester. It was very respectful... not a sound was heard.

Then the boys took the stage to thunderous applause. Michael looked absolutely delighted. Then he noticed me and gave a wink! They both sang their hearts out. Next came a moment I will never forget – when the Elvis section started, Michael was singing 'I Just Can't Help Believing' and when he sang "This time the girl is gonna stay" he came right over to me, beckoned me to come close, took my hand as he kneeled down, face to face and entwined our fingers. He locked eyes with me and held my hand for an entire verse, then slowly released our fingers and as he pulled himself away. He gave me such a wonderful smile and wink, for a few moments it seemed like just him and I were there! What an incredible experience... And please, if anyone managed a pic of that. Please post or send to me!

On with the fantastic show – Michael and Alfie play off each other so well and so obviously really enjoy each other's company. It was a magical night, the concert was amazing and the audience were wonderful. On top of that, Michael sang 'Gethsemane' and that almost moved him to tears. He was so pleased to be singing that on Broadway, to a standing ovation, one of many! They also sang 'Anthem' from 'Chess' which brought chills to all and a hearty standing ovation.

What an incredible evening. We enjoyed every moment! Thank you so much for coming to New York City!

# NEW YORK STATES OF MIND



Michael's selfie to mark his return to NYC

I have been a fan of Michael's for 22 years. I never thought I'd have the chance to see him perform short of travelling to England to see his show. When the NYC concert was announced I was elated!

I took my mother to the show for her birthday present. I live in New Jersey so we were able to get there by train in a few hours. I was very fortunate and overwhelmed in getting to meet Michael beforehand as well. Honestly, he was the sweetest person. I could hardly speak, I was so emotional at getting the chance to meet him after following his career and adoring him for so long.



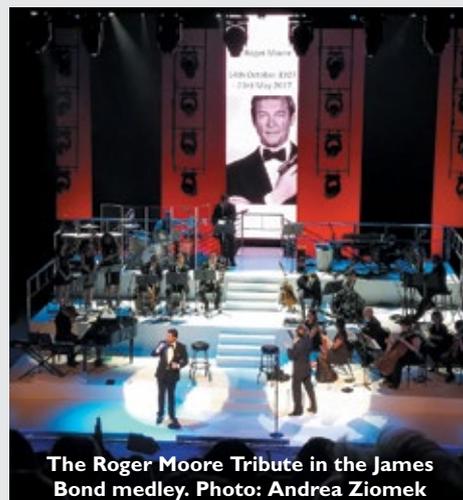
It really was a dream come true to not only meet Michael, not only to talk with him but also listen to his melodic voice that night. I experienced such joy that day and will carry that memory with me forever. Michael was kind, generous with his time, funny and absolutely lovely in every way. Michael is a class act and has touched me not only with his music and acting but with his warm and loving personality.

Anne Kettles

We sat in the second row and I just couldn't have imagined a better show. The show began with a moment of silence for the tragedy in Manchester. Then the concert began and they were spectacular. People had come from all over to see them- Georgia, Maine, Arizona, New Jersey, Utah, Connecticut, and England to name a few. There was so much love for Michael and Alfie there. They were on top of their game and were brilliant.

Highlights for me were Michael's solo performances of 'Gethsemane' and 'Love Changes Everything'. These are two songs that have always had such an emotional impact on me that I was overcome with joy and tears at seeing him perform it live. Honestly this was a dream come true. I was unbelievably proud of them and thrilled that the audience showed them so much love in return. You could see the pride on Michael's face at how much the audience loved him, especially after 'Love Changes Everything'. I'm sure it was emotional for him to sing the song from his first time on Broadway being back in NY.

Not to shortchange Alfie, he was brilliant as well. The *Les Misérables* medley was phenomenal and I just love their camaraderie together. They also did a wonderful James Bond medley with a tribute to Sir Roger Moore who we lost that day. We were blessed



The Roger Moore Tribute in the James Bond medley. Photo: Andrea Ziomek

with an encore of two songs. Singing 'New York, New York' definitely electrified the place even more and was a perfect way to end a spectacular show. I certainly hope they will consider returning.

I waited at the stage door with lots of others after the show. They both came out and signed a few things and took a few pictures. I had some flowers for Michael and when I gave them to him he thanked me and remembered my name from earlier. I was beside myself that he knew my name. I could not have imagined a better time and I am so grateful to Michael and Alfie for coming to New York. I hope they see how loved they are and come back to us soon!

Kim Mauger



Photo: Sharon Scarrott

I am an Alfie Boe fan from New York who also enjoys Michael's singing. I loved the NYC concert, my only criticism was I thought the strong sense of camaraderie and fun that was present in the UK shows was a missing element in the NY show. In the UK the joking around added a dimension that I didn't think we saw in the US. The new songs were great though and the singing was brilliant, but I missed the jokes and audience interaction.

Roberta Kappus



## TWO ENGLISHMEN IN NEW YORK!

by Nancy Garcia

It's been weeks now since THE New York City concert and I still can't believe it happened. But it did. And boy did it ever! It was announced in March that the concert would take place on May 23rd yet leading up to the date, it just didn't sink in. I had been wanting a New York (or U.S. for that matter) concert for so long that I just could not believe that it was happening. I had the pleasure of seeing Alfie Boe a few times locally in the past. At Joe's Pub in NYC and at Bergen PAC I saw him in full concert mode. And during his run in *Les Miz* and *Finding Neverland* he was at the stage door quite often. Michael has been a completely different story.

I was not aware of Michael when he did his last Broadway run in *Woman in White* so I have never seen him perform at a U.S. venue. With social media, Michael has posted when he is in NYC and as I say, when he wants to be found, will post where he will be. Because of this, myself along with some other fans, have been able to spot him in while he is in NYC and he has always been quite gracious. And of course, we always asked him if he was EVER going to perform in NYC. His answer would always be: "There's always hope" and left us wishing.

But then last summer, when Ria and I asked him one more time, he answered differently. He paused for a bit and said "Let me just say, you'll be seeing a lot more of me next year" and left us wondering.

So, when the announcement about the NYC concert was made, I had to smirk. Apparently, this must have been in the works since last year but was not made official until March. And only an 8 week notice to the concert and a 3-day notice for ticket sales. The norm these days. I was so happy that it was going to happen but I was more excited for Michael and Alfie. They were going to give a concert in a Broadway theater!

Ticket presale day came and I did not have to be up at 4am NY time for the start of the ticket sale! Shocker! At the end of the presale and Fan Club sale I managed to get

decent seats for Ria and me: FRONT ROW CENTER! So, of course we upgraded to the Meet and Greet when they became available. We learned soon afterwards that Ichiko from Japan and Jen Garner from England would be joining us in the front row and that some fans from England were coming over as well! A perfect concert was a go!

I only live a 6-minute ferry ride from midtown Manhattan. But I joined Ria, and we stayed around the corner from NY City Center. My first "overnight" trip to NYC!

On the day of the concert, I picked up Ria





at Penn Station and walked to the hotel and dropped off our bags. We decided to go and check out the location of the stage door for later in the day. As we were walking down 56th St. we heard a familiar voice call out. Jen, Joan, and Sue were all here from England! They were meeting some American fans and decided to make the stage door their meeting spot. Rumor had it that Michael and Alfie would be coming sometime after 3:00 PM so that gave Ria and I some time to grab a bite to eat. In keeping with the English theme of the day, we went to a local pub for lunch where Ria had to have the required fish & chips. We finished our meal, did some local shopping, and returned to the stage door to a great group of American fans! Some I had met in the past, others I had heard mentioned, and others that I was meeting for the first time. And then, Gill and Maureen arrived as well. It seemed like a high school reunion of sorts. There were fans from Michael's entire timeline of performing; from the very beginning to brand new fans.

What a great representation of Michael's fan base. Soon after, Michael and Alfie arrived on foot. As expected, Alfie said a quick "Hello" and went right into the theater (I have been told that this is part of his routine for all his performances.) Michael, on the other hand, made his way towards the fans and as usual, made interacting with his fans part of his routine before the concert. He was happy to see some fans that he had not seen in a while as well as fans he had seen at his recent concerts in the U.K. Always sharing his time with the fans. After meeting everybody and taking pictures with those who requested it, he went in. After he entered, the stage door staff member turned to us and said he was pleasantly surprised. He is usually peeling fans off the celebrities as they try to enter the theater. But this group was different. We tried to explain to him that it is the mutual respect between Michael and his fans. This was the way it always is with Michael's fans. And off to our hotel we went.

Meet and Greets are not new to me. I tend to do one every tour. The way I see it, I spend all this money traveling to the U.K. for the concerts, I might as well get a good picture to go along with it. But this one was special, it was in NYC! And besides, Ria had not had the opportunity to travel to the U.K. in recent years and she needed an updated picture. Perfect excuse for me to do the Meet and Greet with her! The meet included a nice mix of Michael and Alfie fans. It almost felt like a *West Side Story* take on the Sharks and the Jets. But at the same time, it wasn't. Everyone was genuinely excited to be there and there was this great energy in the air. And then, Michael and Alfie made their way into the room and their energy, along with the group, could have lit up NYC all night long! Alfie always seems a bit subdued in these settings but Michael, well I don't think I must say much here. Michael was greeting the fans one by one as they approached them and both signed a poster to each fan. They both took their time talking to fans and taking pictures. Some fans were meeting them both for the first time and were rather nervous, others had met either Michael or Alfie in the past. Ria and I waited for most of the group to go up and then we went. Even towards the end of the Meet and Greet, Michael was still grinning from ear to ear and the energy level was still soaring. When I approached him, I got the biggest bear hug and I said "Finally! I'm so happy you guys are performing in New York." And he responded with "Not as happy as I am right now!"

Pictures taken and Meet and Greet was over... far too soon. They waved at the fans and off they went to get ready for the concert.

The waiting was over. Michael and Alfie were about to perform their first concert in NYC! Additional American and British fans greeted each other on arrival. We took our seats, which were not too difficult to find, and waited for the magical moment.

Before Michael and Alfie made their way onto the stage, a moment of silence was asked for the Manchester victims, which had occurred the night before. You could hear a pin drop. A truly touching moment.

It was now time to celebrate Michael and Alfie and their music and we were not going to let them down. They were greeted



by a standing ovation. Not just the front rows, but the entire theater. The energy that was so alive during the Meet and Greet had found its way to the theater and the audience. Michael and Alfie were in top form and were feeding off this energy. They were the best I have ever heard them! And the audience kept responding with standing ovations. Some for both and some for their individual numbers. They were just soaking it all in. And when Michael sang 'Gethsemane', he said that singing that song on Broadway had been on his bucket list. Well, check that off! And a standing ovation afterwards!

Sitting in the front row basically staring at Alfie and Michael the entire concert was a special treat. The speakers were off to the side so we could hear them singing directly at us and not through the microphones. This was wild, especially with the harmonies. It felt like they were singing only to us. A once in a lifetime opportunity!

The final number was truly special as well. The entire audience was on their feet and we had a wonderful sing-a-long to 'New York, New York'. Frank Sinatra would have been proud. And just like that, it was all over! Way too soon.

We all did the obligatory stage door afterwards. Many fans were now present. Michael and Alfie made their way and greeted fans and many pictures were taken. I was so happy for them. The concert had been a wonderful success and now the send off from the fans could not have been lovelier. Watching them enter their coach from afar, I could not help but notice that Michael still had the grin from ear to ear. Even after such an emotional day!

It was a beautiful and successful concert, one that I am sure introduced many New Yorkers to Michael and Alfie. And it gave us American fans the opportunity to see them perform on our home turf.

Michael and Alfie, thank you for giving me and so many American fans the opportunity to see you perform in New York City. I am hoping this was just the beginning. These Two Englishmen in New York were just BRILLIANT!



In March, Michael shared the sad news that his beloved dog Freddie (who members may remember starred on the 2008 Fan Club Christmas Card with Michael and Ollie) was unwell and wouldn't be with him for much longer. Here is a picture of him taking Freddie out one last time before saying goodbye.



A few months later, Michael used Twitter for happier news; introducing everybody to the newest member of the household, Dylan, an eight year old Tibetan terrier. Here is Dylan with Ollie.



# AN HONOUR FOR ALFIE



In June, Michael accompanied Alfie to Blackpool, where Alfie was born. The reason for the trip was to visit Fleetwood, where Alfie grew up. He made his first public appearance at the Marine Hall, and a blue plaque has been placed outside the seafront art deco theatre. The blue plaque, arranged with BBC Radio Lancashire and the

British Plaque Trust, commemorates "people or places that have influenced the musical landscape across the country."

Alfie was selected by listeners to BBC Radio Lancashire, which appealed for nominations for 'an iconic location or music legend' in their area.

# SHIRLEY WINS THE PRIZE



To celebrate the Fan Club's 25th Anniversary, Maureen and Gill decided to sponsor a silver brick on behalf of all the members, which is part of the Mercury Theatre Colchester's fundraising campaign. Here's a photo of Michael with the silver brick together with the certificate.

He asked if they would like to keep the certificate and the ladies accepted, putting it into a prize draw with quite a bundle of memorabilia that could be won by anyone who makes a donation to help keep the fan club running. The goodies included the very

first Fan Club Membership Pack, a copy of the first *On The Ball* magazine, a "Show Me" bag, a watch, travel alarm clock, pin badges, key rings, and lots more! There was even the tin of Ultra Clutch hairspray signed by Michael and various members of the cast of *Hairspray!*

The prize was won by Shirley Picton, who had this to say:

"I have had such a wonderful time this last six months. First of all were the concerts in November where my son treated me to a Meet And Greet for my birthday. I can't describe the feeling of meeting Michael in

person, he is so lovely and it was brilliant. What a year I am having – I have never won anything before so to win the raffle was overwhelming but wonderful. There is so much to read through and look at. I've already had to buy a cabinet to put all the items in safely!

Thank you Maureen and Gill for all the work you do for us fans, I am so pleased to be a member of the Fan Club, I have made so many new friends, everyone is so nice, it makes a joy to go to the concerts, even when I am on my own."

# THE SUMMER OUTDOOR CONCERTS: EASTNOR CASTLE – SUN JUNE 18

Michael and Alfie recently undertook a series of concerts at outdoor venues across the U.K. Fans turned out in numbers, so here we present to you a re-cap of each of them in the order they took place. Live pictures by Gosia Bartram.



Here is my story about the time leading up to the concert at Eastnor Castle, Ledbury on the 18th June.

I went to see Michael and Alfie on the 'Together' tour when they were in Cardiff last year, and what a fantastic night it was.

So, when I heard that they were touring again this year, and once again coming to Cardiff (which is only about 15 miles from me), I quickly booked up to go and see them again.

When my birthday came around in April this year, my husband Larry took me away to London for a weekend, where we stayed in a very nice hotel.

On the Sunday morning, he told me that we were going somewhere in the car, but didn't say where we were going. He then proceeded to drive to a side road somewhere off Oxford Street, and said we would walk from there.

As we turned the corner, we were stood

right in front of the BBC studios. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning, and he had taken me there in the hope of seeing Michael before or after his radio show. Having waited about twenty minutes, I decided to ask someone whether he had come into the building yet, but they told me I was at the wrong building, so we shot around the corner to Wogan House, and waited there a little while, when suddenly Michael popped out the door.

He was absolutely lovely, we chatted for a few minutes and as we were doing so, my husband informed me, in front of Michael, that not only were we going to see the show in Cardiff, but he had also bought tickets for Eastnor Castle!!

The pictures attached are Michael and I chatting outside Wogan house, my phone case, which he signed for me, and finally me at Eastnor Castle just before the show, and a couple of the boys in action. The show was amazing!

**Dot Wilkie**





Melanie Noto and her friend Vicky took advantage of the meet and greet to get this great photo with Michael and Alfie.



I took the above picture right at the end just as Alfie was getting his phone out to take a selfie with Michael. The concert was excellent, the only thing the organisers didn't think about was sun exposure! The site itself was really exposed to the sun in all areas and there were many hot bodies around. Luckily the boys came on at 7:30 prompt and by the time it finished the sun had gone down. The venue was beautiful and despite the queuing to get out we had such a good time. They were on fine form!

**Zoë Grimwood**

# WALCOT HALL – TUE JUNE 20



My friend Joan and I had a lovely time at Walcott Hall, Michael was amazing, despite suffering from severe hay fever. He told us the tablets Alfie had given him had made it worse!

My long suffering husband very kindly took me to Hampton Court as well for their VIP experience. Fabulous!

**Liz Davy**



Photo: Beth Pearson



Photo: Betty Pearson



# STANSTEAD PARK – WED JUNE 21



Sally Hall was one of many Fan Club members who attended Stanstead, describing it as a “fabulous night”.



Photo: Julie Vialer



Photo: Julie Vialer



Photo: Sharon Scarratt



Photo: Sharon Scarratt



Photo: Nikki Guttridge



Photo: Sharon Scarratt

# HAMPTON COURT – FRI JUNE 23



We had such a wonderful night at Hampton Court. Michael and Alfie were amazing and it was a perfect setting. An unforgettable night!

**Fiona Gardiner**

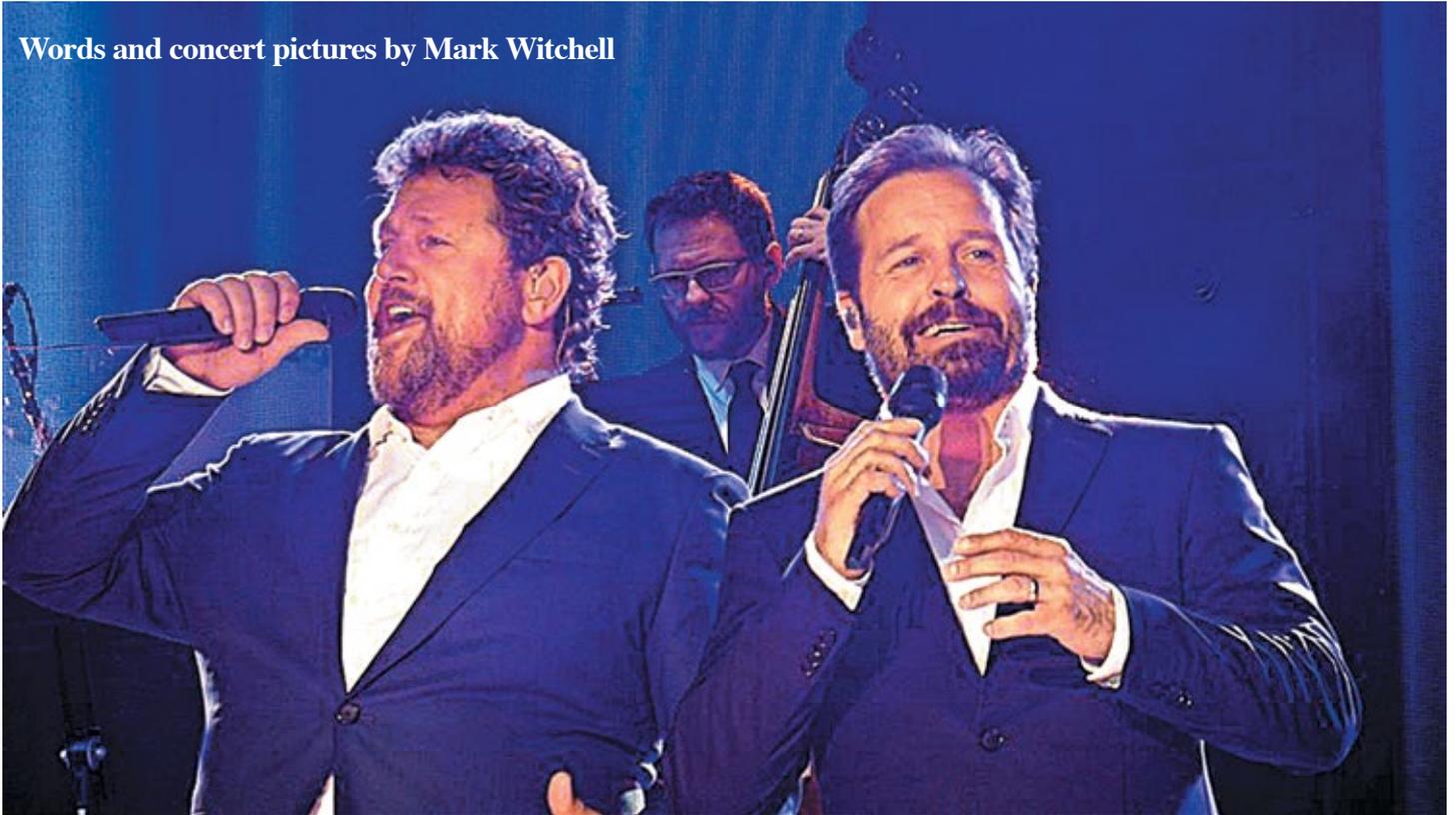


We had great seats at Hampton Court and the concert was amazing! This selfie was taken by Vehbiye Yoncu's daughter Zalihe with Vehbiye, me and Nikki Gutridge. It shows the happiness when fans meet by chance (after corresponding on Facebook) and become friends.

**Janice Lazarus**

## EUSTON HALL – SAT JUNE 24

Words and concert pictures by Mark Witchell



It seems like ages since I last saw Michael and Alfie in concert! It was last year during their sell out UK Tour when I caught the impressive duo at Bournemouth, London and Plymouth. When the summer open air concert dates were announced no venues were in the South West so I had to choose carefully which venue to attend. We chose Euston Hall at Thetford as it was on a Saturday night. However we knew we had to undertake a 320 mile drive each way to get there!

The weather was beautiful on Saturday and we left nice and early. We managed to fit in a tour of the Dad's Army Museum in Thetford, as of course most of the TV series 'Dad's Army' was filmed in Thetford and the surrounding areas. The journey into Euston Hall was probably the longest in all the years I have been to outdoor concerts. Every time we drove up a farm track there seemed to be another one to drive along! Maybe if Euston Hall hold concerts next year they will look at the organisation for cars entering the venue.

The concert setting itself was beautiful and we sat in our seats ready for an evening full of beautiful music. The overture started and Michael and Alfie walked on to the stage with rapturous applause singing the chords

of 'Somewhere' from *West Side Story*. The pair then bounded down the steps to open the concert with their up beat versions of 'Tonight' and 'For Once In My Life'. Michael and Alfie commented on how lovely the surroundings were at Euston Hall before singing 'Music of the Night' from *Phantom Of The Opera*. This was followed by a beautiful version of 'Speak Softly Love' from the movie 'The Godfather'. Michael then said his favourite song from their hit album 'Together' was this next one. It probably is my favourite too and Michael and Alfie then sang 'A Thousand Years' from the movie 'The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn'.

'Tell Me It's Not True' then followed from one of my favourite musicals of all time, *Blood Brothers*. Murray Gould and Sam Grimley then came to the front of the stage to play the intimate medley of 'What A Wonderful World' and 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow'. A new addition to the summer concerts was 'Anthem' from *Chess*. This received a standing ovation and as Michael said "At this moment in time there is no greater place to be than in this country and to be proud that we are British". The first half of the show ended with an upbeat Elvis Presley medley starting with Alfie singing

'That's Alright Mama' with Michael acting as Alfie's backing singer. Everybody got on their feet to have a dance! Michael then sang 'I Just Can't Help Believing' before the pair ended Act One with a wonderful duet of 'Suspicious Minds'.

Act Two began with a full swing section. The pair were in a jovial mood and sang 'Stairway to Paradise' before a wonderful, comic version of 'Me And My Shadow'. Two new additions to the set for the summer tour were 'Luck Be A Lady' from *Guys And Dolls* and 'New York, New York' which had the entire audience on their feet dancing! The lights then dimmed and the British Philharmonic Orchestra played a wonderful overture from 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' which signalled the start of the James Bond Medley. This led swiftly into Michael singing 'Live and Let Die' and 'Goldfinger' with his best Shirley Bassey impression! Alfie then sang a very powerful version of 'From Russia with Love' before Michael quickly belted out 'Skyfall' and 'Diamonds are Forever'. Alfie's voice really suits 'Thunderball' and Michael enjoys singing the lyrics to 'Nobody does it better' The orchestra then finished the medley with a last blast of 'Live and Let Die'.



It now came to the time of the concert in which both artists have a solo spot. Alfie sang his usual crowd pleaser 'Keep Me In Your Heart' in which he manages to get all the audience singing along, including the men! A new addition to Alfie's set is 'Run' which received a standing ovation. The overture to *Jesus Christ Superstar* then started up before Michael sang a truly incredible version of 'Gethsemane' which received a lengthy standing ovation. I think the outdoor environment really suits the dramatic connotation of this song. Michael then introduced 'Love Changes Everything', saying despite all the bad things that have been happening in the world, love really does change everything! The highlight of the concert for me is the suite from *Les Miserables* in which Alfie sings 'Bring Him Home' followed by Michael singing his 1985 classic hit 'Empty Chairs at Empty Tables'. The pair then finish the suite with mouth-watering versions of 'I Dreamed A Dream' and 'One Day More' which is a new ending, first performed on BBC One's 'Let it Shine'. I can think of no better way to end a concert than with 'You'll Never Walk Alone' from *Carousel*. All too soon the concert was over!

We managed to exit the venue much better than when we entered! It was a truly magical evening and I can't wait till the second album 'Together Again' and the Winter Arena tour dates when I will sample the magic again in London, Brighton and Bournemouth!



This was a truly wonderful open-air concert, many laughs, some good audience singing and both Michael and Alfie were amazing and really seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Jane Harding



# LINCOLN CASTLE – SUN JUNE 25



Margaret Samson, pictured above, enjoyed a lovely Meet and Greet with Michael and Alfie at Walcott Hall. she also attended the Lincoln Castle show where she managed to take these excellent photos.



Elaine Shaw also had this great photo taken with Michael and Alfie at her Meet and Greet, where she sported a very apt t-shirt for the occasion!

# SCARBOROUGH OPEN AIR – WED JUNE 28

Words and pictures by Claire Stockil



Well, what a day!

We booked our tickets last December and I booked the day off work with the intention of spending a summer's day by the sea meeting up with MBFC friends followed by a meal and a lovely warm evening concert in the company of Messieurs Ball and Boe! How wrong could I be!

I'd been watching the weather forecast for a couple of weeks and dearly hoping that the forecasters had got it wrong, as is often the case... but no, sadly not on this occasion! Despite the previous summer tour dates being graced with beautiful, if rather too hot, weather, we were allocated persistent (and torrential at times) rain and winds reaching over 40mph. Ticket holders began to worry if the show would be cancelled but the boys were having none of that!

Due to the inclement weather, we delayed setting off until lunch time, which still left us ample time to get drenched before the show had even started. We arrived around 2:30pm and met up with Val, Terry and Ros. We then decided to do a quick recce to ensure that we knew where to go later... only to find that we went up the wrong path, and Ros and I

ended up on the boundary of the open air theatre with a great view of the stage. We retraced our steps and headed for the correct entrance as we had hoped to give Michael his belated birthday cards. After a short wait, we were told that Michael had already arrived by a different entrance but that Alfie had yet to arrive. Needing to dry out we all headed for refreshments in a nearby café until it was sound check time when Mike and I headed back up the upper path to join Angie and Sue. We managed to hear a few songs from Michael before being ushered away by a security guard but it was clear that he was very cold... Michael gave us a couple of waves and told us to "go somewhere dry"!

The gates to the open air theatre officially opened at 5pm but there was a massive queue well before then. We decided not to go in until nearer 7pm so headed down to the very blustery sea front for Fish and Chips, as did many other fans. Once in the venue, it was clear that the wind and rain was causing problems – one of the large LED screens started to smoke so had to be switched off for the whole evening, the orchestra were moved further back on the stage, sheet music was stuck down and appliances covered with plastic. As a result of one gust of wind, the

plastic panelling and drum kit came crashing down to the floor... but nothing was going to stop 'our boys' from performing! The backing singers arrived with coats and later warm drinks, but the main men braved the weather in black jeans and jackets... declining to wear bright red ponchos!

After welcoming us to Scarborough, the boys continued through the set list. Both had the giggles when the intermittent gusts of wind and rain hit them, mainly Alfie though who forgot to sing his next line until prompted by Michael. Alfie told us that we all looked "bloody ridiculous" in our rain attire which must have looked like a sea of ponchos and cagouls from the stage! Michael's microphone stand looked as if it was going to blow away at one point. Goodness knows why they had their hair done prior to the show because they both gained the very unkempt look very swiftly, Michael adding that his hair had gone 'frizzy'! The first half concluded with 'Anthem', my favourite track of the 'Together' album followed by their Elvis Medley.

Any hope that the weather was going to pick up in the second half was soon dashed, but I think that most of us were beyond caring, as long as we could listen

to our idols performing on stage. Alfie decided that we couldn't get any wetter, so threw the contents of his water bottle over the audience... and I must add, that he was a pretty good shot! He then braved the elements even further by performing 'Keep Me In Your Heart' and 'Run' without his jacket. He was on fine form jumping and bouncing around the stage as usual. Michael's solo performances of 'Gethsemane' and 'Love Changes Everything' were outstanding as always. The evening continued with a mass of soggy bodies, soaked to the skin, dancing to 'New York, New York' and ended with an encore of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' before we all headed off to our hotels or cars to get dry and warm.

I can't begin to describe how much I admire both Michael and Alfie for performing so brilliantly in such appalling conditions – they are true professionals who just get better and better. After the lovely weather that we have experienced recently, it was such a shame that Scarborough ended up with the short straw, but 'our boys' still ensured that we had an incredible night that we will never forget! Thank you Michael and Alfie!



## GREENWICH – FRI JUNE 30

The summer shows concluded with Michael and Alfie appearing at Greenwich Music Time in the grounds of the Old Royal Naval College. Gosia Bartram was there and provided these great photos.



## PENPALS



### LILA LINDEMANN

Long term Fan Club member Lila Lindemann was visited recently by friends, who took this lovely photo of her. Lila would frequently travel from the States to the UK to watch Michael perform in concert. She is still as Michael-mad as ever, and would love to hear from any fellow fans who might like to get in touch with her.

Lila Lindemann  
c/o Island View Family Care  
715 Route 213  
Rosendale, NY 12472  
Phone: 845-332-9997

### LINDA STROUDE

Linda Stroude would like to hear from any lady who she could go to Michael's concerts with. Her email address is [lindastroude1997@gmail.com](mailto:lindastroude1997@gmail.com) and she lives at 97 Five Acres, London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1HY.

### SARAH FROM STAFFORDSHIRE

Sarah from Staffordshire is looking for ladies or gents to talk about Michael and other subjects. If you would like to email her, she can be reached at: [tinypop37@gmail.com](mailto:tinypop37@gmail.com)

If you want to be featured here for like minded fans to contact you via email or post, then please send in your details to [james@halo-graphic.com](mailto:james@halo-graphic.com) and they will be printed in the next issue of On The Ball.

## IN MEMORY OF MARY JUDD



Mary passed away quite suddenly after suffering with cancer for a long while. She was a fan of Michael's for many years as you can see from this picture. She will be greatly missed. Thanks go to Pat Alexander for this photo.

## IN MEMORY OF FRANKIE HAGLUND



"We are writing with lots of sadness to tell you Frankie passed away after a long illness. Frankie was a very dedicated fan of Michael and went to many of Michael's concerts and shows. Frankie made lots of wonderful friends when she made trips to the UK. We, her friends in NZ, will miss Frankie so much. As we know her dear friends in the UK will - Carol Grace, Jill Murdoch and Carol Reid."

Thanks go to Joan Johnson for the photo of Frankie with Michael on her last visit to the UK to see *Mack and Mabel*.

## THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

[www.mbfanclub.co.uk](http://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 past Infoline messages.

The password to access it is: **MBFC25**

