

ON THE BALL

Issue 78



Hi Everyone

Here we are six months since we last wrote in *On The Ball* and we are all still in varying degrees of lockdown. As we write, the *Les Misérables* staged concert reprise is about to start, so fingers crossed that will go ahead and that people are able to be safe whilst attending. But what a busy six months it's been for Michael. He seems to have been working non-stop, on his radio show, in the studio and supporting so many people who have needed something extra to help them get through these times.

As you know the release of the album "Together At Christmas" with Alfie Boe was brought forward to this year when the original plan had been to wait another year, so the album release would coincide with their next arena tour planned for November/December 2021 but it's lovely to have the album out now when so many people are in need of something special to listen to. This is definitely one of the albums that will be played every Christmas in the future when we will all be saying "I remember the Christmas of 2020" and hopefully looking back on this time in a more healthy and happy world. As well as the tour, there is *Hairspray* to look forward to in the Spring and many of us will have the chance to see Michael performing live once again as Edna, which is a wonderful feel-good show to lift our spirits.

There are some great memory stories in this edition of *OTB* with some fabulous photos taken over the years. We are sure you will find part 2 of the memories over the past 28 years of the fan club fascinating. We are also sure you'll enjoy Mark Witchell's look back at what Michael has done in the last decade. It really brings home just how busy Michael has been in the past 10 years, keeping us all entertained (and busy!). It certainly brings back memories for the two of us! Also, we have the pull-out free calendar for you to enjoy throughout the year.

As we come to the end of 2020 we can only say we are looking forward to 2021 and a new start. We must of course thank James Gaden for his amazing work with *On The Ball* and assistance with our Facebook group, also thanks to Andrew, everyone at Live Nation, especially Sarah and Phil, Chris for help with the FB group and website, plus Decca records for their assistance. We wish you all a Happy Christmas and an especially Healthy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

Dear Everyone,

Tell my lovelies, I'm writing this in my dressing room at the Sandheim Theatre in the middle of our technical rehearsals for Les Mis and feeling such a huge mixture of emotions.

Gratitude to be back in a company of performers doing what I love most, in a show that is so important to me at a time when I truly didn't think I'd get the chance to perform live for a real, living, breathing audience.

Nervousness, not knowing how the show will feel and be received by that audience under such extraordinary conditions and restrictions.

Elation to be able to say Albie and I have scored another NO.1 album at this time of year with what I believe is such a heartfelt, sincere selection of Christmas songs to try to lift spirits and shine a light at this time of year.

Enormous pride to have been a part of this year's Royal Variety Performance

with the N.H.S. voices of care and the man who has inspired all of us to be better and stay positive, Captain Sir Tom.

And finally.....

a huge bloody sense of relief that this ghastly, frightening, depressing and unprecedented year is finally coming to an end. It really has been a right sod of a year hasn't it!

We've all been hugely affected and changed and tried to adapt our lives as best we can and God willing, there seems to be a glimmer of light peaking over the horizon of 2021.

One thing is for sure, it's your constant support and kindness and love that has given me the strength to "keep bugging on" as Winston Churchill famously said and it's hard to find the words to tell you what that has meant to me. I hope you know how grateful, humbled and empowered you have made me so thank you is a ridiculous understatement... but THANK YOU!!!

So here's to the best possible Christmas we can hope for. It will be very different and challenging but we will make the best of it as we always do, drawing strength from each other and showing kindness and compassion where ever we can.

We can't predict where we will all be next year but I try to go to bed every night remembering my dear friend Captain Tom's words that tomorrow will be a better day and do you know what? It very often is and the better days will surely keep on coming.

There are so many plans in the pipeline for new music and shows and concerts and T.V. appearances and I hope that they will all become a reality. I can't wait to see you and catch up, have a hug when we can so until then try and stay safe and always stay kind.

I love you
God Bless

Phil
x

PAST & PRESENT: CELEBRATING 28 YEARS OF THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB (part 2)

As we explained in *On The Ball 77*, we intended having a whole collection of *Hairspray* coverage, among other things, to cover this time – sadly Covid-19 caused all the various tours and shows to be cancelled or postponed. Instead, as the Fan Club has turned 28 years old, last issue we decided to include some stories from different fans about their Michael experiences. This issue compiles part two of various members sharing their recollections... and in keeping with the theme, this year's calendar also using images from all different eras of Michael's career.

To kick things off, Mark Witchell came up with the wonderful idea of bringing 2020 to a close by looking back at the last decade. Over to you, Mark!

As we entered the start of a new decade at the start of the year I thought it would be great to look back at what Michael has done over the last ten years!

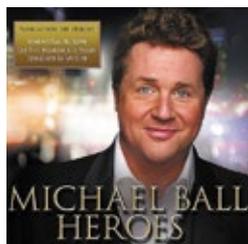
2010

- 2010 was another busy year for Michael. He performed as Edna Turnblad in the *Hairspray* UK tour visiting Cardiff, Glasgow, Southampton, Manchester, Dublin and Edinburgh.
- Michael recorded his third TV series for ITV - this time a chat show format.
- Michael performed in two summer outdoor concerts at Hampton Court and Killruddery House in Ireland.
- Throughout the year Michael continued to host his weekly Sunday morning show for BBC Radio 2, *Sunday Brunch*.
- October was a busy month which involved his second Shooting Stars Charity Concert at London's Prince of Wales Theatre. He also performed in the finale of the 25th Anniversary concert of *Les Misérables* at London's O2 Arena.
- In November he released his latest DVD *A Life on Stage* with various TV and Radio appearances to promote this.



2011

- 2011 started with Michael completing the *Hairspray* UK tour at Wimbledon and Bristol.
- In March Michael hosted the Olivier Awards at Theatre Royal Drury Lane with Imelda Staunton. March saw the release of Michael's latest album *Heroes* and there were various TV and Radio appearances to promote this.
- In May and June Michael toured the UK and Ireland with *Heroes Live* starting at Dublin's Grand Canal Theatre and finishing at the Brighton Centre. There



were also two sold out concerts at London's Royal Albert Hall. The two concerts at Birmingham's Symphony Hall were filmed for DVD release later in the year in November.

- Throughout the year Michael continued to host his weekly Sunday morning BBC Radio 2 show *Sunday Brunch*.
- Michael ended the year by starring in *Sweeney Todd* from September through to November at the Chichester Festival Theatre with Imelda Staunton.

2012

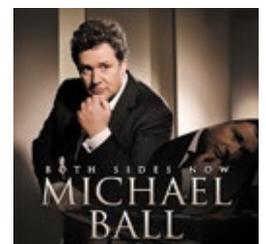
- 2012 was mainly about *Sweeney Todd* as it transferred to the Adelphi Theatre in London and ran from March through to September.



- Michael once again hosted the Olivier Awards with Imelda Staunton at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane in April. Michael also performed in West End Eurovision with the cast of *Sweeney Todd* at London's Dominion Theatre.
- Michael closed the year with two very special concerts at the Cork Opera House in December with the Cork Youth Orchestra.

2013

- Michael started 2013 by launching his brand new Sunday evening BBC Radio 2 show *Sunday Night with Michael Ball*.
- In February Michael released his latest solo album *Both Sides Now* and there were various TV and Radio appearances to promote this. *Both Sides Now* turned Gold in April.
- In March Michael hosted a very



special programme for ITV celebrating the music of Andrew Lloyd Webber.

- In April Michael launched his latest UK tour starting at the Regent Theatre in Ipswich and ending in May at the Guildhall in Portsmouth. Michael's concert at London's Hammersmith Apollo was filmed for DVD release later in the year.
- In April Michael won the Olivier Award for his role in *Sweeney Todd* and collected it at London's Royal Opera House.



- August saw Michael perform an open air concert at Audley End. Michael also stepped in to host the Ken Bruce Show for BBC Radio 2.
- Michael was lucky enough to perform his *Both Sides Now* concert for two very special nights in Abu Dhabi in August.
- September saw Michael perform a special 'Live by the Lake' Open air concert at Kenwood House in London celebrating the music of George Gershwin.
- In October Michael performed in *Don Black: A Life in Song* at London's Royal Festival Theatre which was broadcast on BBC 4 at Christmas.
- Via video link Michael performed the role of 'God' in *Spamalot* at the Playhouse Theatre for a week in October.
- Michael flew to Shanghai in November and December to perform in a special concert entitled *Do You Hear The People Sing?* celebrating the world of Boubil and Schonberg.
- Michael then returned to London for a special Shooting Stars charity concert in December at London's Phoenix Theatre. Michael performed in the Royal Theatrical Funds Christmas Carol Concert at Putney. He then finished the year by performing on board a P&O Cruise Ship.



2014

- 2014 saw Michael start the year by returning to work with Imelda Staunton in Victoria Wood's new TV Musical *That Day We Sang* which was broadcast on the BBC at Christmas.



- Michael continued to host his Sunday evening show for BBC Radio 2 *Sunday Night with Michael Ball*.
- In March Michael performed in another *Do You Hear The People Sing?* concert - this time in Taipei, Taiwan.
- In May Michael returned to the Cork Opera House for two special concerts with the Cork Youth Orchestra on the theme of 'A Night at the Movies'.
- In August Michael headlined the Lytham Proms for the first time with Lesley Garrett and the Halle Orchestra.
- In September Michael performed with his band in a special *A Night of Variety* concert at the Alhambra Theatre in Bradford.
- Later that month he performed in *West End Heroes* at the Dominion Theatre in London.
- In August and October Michael once again stepped in to host for Ken Bruce on BBC Radio 2.
- November saw the release of Michael's latest solo album *If Everyone was Listening* and there were various TV and Radio appearances to promote this.
- December saw Michael once again perform in the Royal Theatrical Fund's Christmas Carol concert in Putney.



2015

- 2015 started with Michael appearing on ITV's new prime time celebrity talent show *Get Your Act Together* in which he reached the Grand Final with James Bolam.



- Michael continued to host his weekly BBC Radio 2 Sunday evening show throughout the year.
- In March Michael headed to Rome to host some singing Master Classes.
- In April and May Michael headed on his latest UK solo tour starting at the Bournemouth BIC and finishing at the Mayflower Theatre in Southampton. The big London date was in April at the Hammersmith Apollo.
- In June Michael received an OBE for services to Musical Theatre in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.
- Later in 2015 Michael starred in a revival of *Mack And Mabel* playing the part of Mack Sennett from July to September at the Chichester Festival Theatre.



- The production then went on a UK tour playing in Plymouth, Manchester, Dublin, Edinburgh, Nottingham and Cardiff.
- In December Michael once again performed in the Royal Theatrical Fund's Christmas Carol Concert in Putney. Michael ended the year performing at London's Hammersmith Apollo in a tribute concert to Frank Sinatra.

2016

- 2016 was an extremely busy year for Michael. From January through to April Michael continued to host his weekly Sunday evening show for BBC Radio 2 *Sunday Night with Michael Ball*.
- Following the death of Terry Wogan, Michael was chosen to take over the Sunday morning BBC Radio 2 slot and from April Michael's new show launched *The Michael Ball Show*.
- In February, March and April Michael also sat in once again for Ken Bruce on BBC Radio 2.
- Michael performed in *The Oliviers In Concert* at the Royal Festival Theatre in London which was broadcast live on BBC Radio 3.
- In January Michael performed his first solo concert at the Hippodrome Casino in London. This was repeated in July. Michael also collected his well deserved OBE from Buckingham Palace in January.



- In April Michael hosted the Olivier Awards at London's Royal Opera House.
- In September Michael hosted *BBC Proms In The Park* for the first time at Hyde Park in London.
- 2016 also saw the beginning of a successful partnership with his old friend Alfie Boe. The pair released their first album *Together* in October which went to Number 1 and received a Double Platinum disc award. They also filmed their first TV special for ITV. They completed the year by performing an extensive UK tour starting at the Motorpoint Arena in Cardiff and finishing at the Blackpool Opera House. Dates also included two nights at the London Palladium and the Hammersmith Apollo.



2017

- 2017 saw Michael continue to host his weekly Sunday morning BBC Radio 2 show *The Michael Ball Show*.
- In January Michael returned to the Hippodrome Casino in London for another sell out concert.
- In May Michael and Alfie performed their *Together* concert in New York City.
- In June Michael and Alfie performed an Open Air concert series playing in Eastnor Castle in Gloucester, Walcot Hall in Wolverhampton, Stanstead Park in Portsmouth, Hampton Court, Euston Hall in Thetford, Lincoln Castle in Doncaster, the Scarborough Open Air Theatre and the Greenwich Music Time Festival.
- In September Michael once again hosted the *BBC Proms In The Park* at Hyde Park in London.
- In October Michael and Alfie flew to Australia to perform their *Together* concerts at Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Perth and Adelaide.
- That same month, Michael and Alfie's second album *Together Again* was released, resulting in a second Number 1 album.
- The pair also filmed a second TV special for ITV.
- In November Michael and Alfie performed and headlined the *Royal Variety Performance* at the London Palladium.
- Michael and Alfie ended the year with a sell out UK Arena tour starting at the Motorpoint Arena in Cardiff and finishing at London's O2 Arena. The concert from Glasgow's Hydro Arena was recorded for transmission at Christmas on BBC Radio 2. The pair also released a charity single of *Bring Me Sunshine* for the Rays of Sunshine Children's Charity.



Photo: Linda Wellington

2018

- 2018 saw Michael continue to host his weekly BBC Radio 2 Sunday morning show *The Michael Ball Show*.
- In February Michael and Alfie headed to Japan for three sell out *Together Again* concerts.
- In April, May and June Michael made his West End return in *Chess*, starring as Anatoly at London's Coliseum.
- In June Michael and Alfie picked up two Classical BRIT Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London.
- In July Michael was special guest on Il Divo's Summer Open Air Concert Tour playing at Euston Hall in Thetford, Englefield House in Reading, Ragley Hall in Warwickshire, Alnwick Castle, Stansted Park in Chichester and Belvoir Castle in Grantham.
- In August Michael and Alfie performed at the CarFest South Event for BBC *Children In Need*.
- In September Michael once again hosted BBC *Proms In The Park* in Hyde Park.
- In October Michael performed on the first *Musical Theatre Stages Cruise* joining the ship at Amsterdam.
- In November Michael hosted his BBC Radio 2 show live from the Savoy Theatre in London for BBC *Children In Need*.



2019

- 2019 continued to see Michael's weekly BBC Radio 2 Sunday morning show *The Michael Ball Show* bring in record listeners.
- March saw the release of Michael's first solo album for four years *Coming Home To You* which reached Number One in the UK album charts.
- In April and May Michael performed a UK Solo tour starting at the Nottingham Royal Concert Hall and finishing at the De Montfort Hall in Leicester. Michael performed two sell out nights at the London Palladium.
- In May Michael performed a duet of 'A Million Dreams' with Susan Boyle for her new album 'TEN'. The pair then performed this during the *Britain's Got Talent* Live Final on ITV at London's Hammersmith Apollo in June.
- In June Michael returned to partner Alfie Boe to perform a Summer Open Air concert at Hampton Court Palace Music Festival. In July Michael headlined the Lytham Proms for the second time, on this occasion with Sheridan Smith.
- In September Michael once again hosted BBC *Proms In The Park* from Hyde Park for BBC Radio 2.
- In November Michael hosted his BBC Radio 2 Sunday morning show from London's Savoy Theatre for BBC *Children In Need*.
- From August to December Michael returned to the West End



to perform in a Staged Concert version of *Les Misérables* at the Gielgud Theatre in London playing the role of Javert alongside Alfie Boe. The performance was filmed for cinema and DVD/CD release in 2020. The production was also broadcast on BBC Radio 2 in January 2020.



- In November Michael and Alfie released their third album *Back Together* which also resulted in a third TV special for ITV at Christmas.

2020

- 2020 was another busy year. In February and March, Ball & Boe performed a ten date UK Arena Tour finishing at the O2 Arena in London. The O2 Arena concert was filmed for cinema release in October and subsequently the *Back Together Live Tour* DVD which was released in November.
- In March, the country entered national lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. When Captain Tom Moore achieved his epic walk raising money for the NHS, Michael invited him on to his BBC Radio 2 Sunday morning show. This led to an appearance on BBC Breakfast News in which Michael thanked Captain Tom with a short rendition of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. Within 24 hours they had recorded a single of this song which was ready for its first broadcast on *The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show*. The single stormed to the top of the charts which led to Captain Tom being the oldest artist to achieve Number 1 and Michael finally achieving his first elusive Number 1 single.
- Michael kept very busy during the lockdown by regularly co hosting *The One Show* with Alex Jones on BBC One. Michael continued to host his weekly Sunday morning show *The Michael Ball Show* for BBC Radio 2 throughout the year including his popular 'Boogie with Ball' segment!
- In September Michael led the new cast of *Hairspray* in a rendition of 'You Can't Stop the Beat' for *Britain's Got Talent*. Michael returned to *Britain's Got Talent* a couple of weeks later to join the cast of *Les Misérables* to perform 'One Day More' for the Grand Final.
- Michael recorded his fourth album with Alfie Boe *Together at Christmas* which was released on 21st November and reached Number 1.
- Michael joined Alfie and the rest of the *Les Misérables* cast to return for a short Christmas season at The Sondheim Theatre to star as Javert in *Les Misérables: The Staged Concert*.

WHAT'S NEXT?

From April through to August Michael will return to the role of Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray* which is having its London revival at the iconic Coliseum Theatre.

Michael and Alfie will close 2021 by taking part in another huge UK and Ireland arena tour promoting their latest album *Together At Christmas* including a final date at London's O2 Arena. I'm sure there will be a lot more to look forward to too!

DOING THE BOOGIE WITH BALL

During the lockdown, Fan Club member Janice Jenkinson posted videos of her son Mark, who enthusiastically took part in Michael's 'Boogie With Ball' segment on his radio show. Janice says Mark is autistic and was struggling with the lockdown but 'Boogie With Ball' gave him something to focus on. Not only that, the support Mark got from the Fan Club members boosted his confidence immensely, and he even got a chance to talk to Michael! Mark's Auntie Janet was good enough to type Mark's words up for this feature:

When my mam first told me about coronavirus I didn't fully understand it and I was very frightened about it and I was really worried about my mam. When we went into lockdown I was really scared. I didn't want to go out for a walk, I was scared we would walk past people who had it and we would get it.

My mam and me would always listen to Michael on Sunday morning and when he started 'Boogie With Ball' I said to my mam that I wanted to join in with it. It gave me something to do all week, as I would practice every day to try and get it right. Sometimes the dances were really hard but I didn't want to give up, I always wanted to do my best. I really enjoyed it and it took my mind off what was going on in the world outside. It made me feel so much better and was good exercise too.

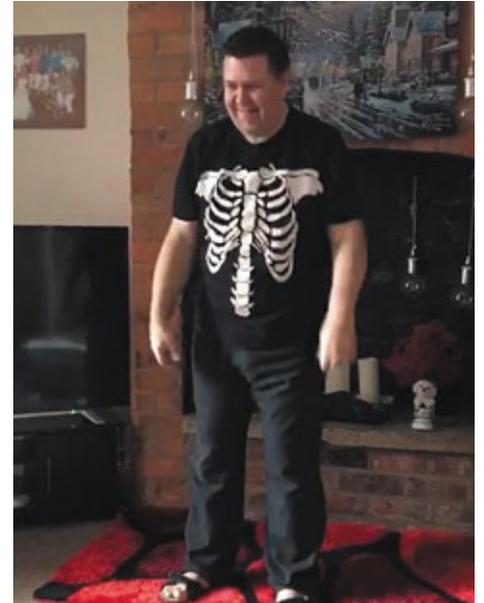
My mam was telling my Auntie Janet in Hull about it and she suggested that my mam should write and tell Michael about how much he has helped me. My mam also put the video of me that she always sent to Auntie Janet on Michael's Fan Club page. I didn't know but Gill and Maureen, who run the Fan Club, had also decided Michael should know, so thanks to them as well! I was really shocked that Michael wanted to speak to me on the radio and I was so happy to be able to talk to him – it really made my day and my mam's as well!

I also now have hundreds of friends now on the Facebook page who comment on my dance every week. I read them all and answer them. Michael has the best fans in the world and I want to say thank you to them all.

Two weeks ago the worst thing happened. I got coronavirus, I was really poorly and was very frightened and scared, especially as my mam got it too. We had to look after each other and now we're feeling much better. We had loads of get well messages from everybody so thanks again.

I was too poorly to do last Sunday's dance, which was 'Tragedy', which upset me as it's one of my favourites.

My dream is that one day I could do Boogie with Ball with Michael at Wogan House. Maybe when this is all over I could!





JANUARY 2021

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OCTOBER 2021

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DANCING ON STAGE, WALKING ON AIR!

by Gerry Watson

I thought the Fan Club might like this to see this photo. It was the very first time I met Michael. It was taken as he arrived at the Edinburgh Playhouse on the 3rd October 1993, ahead of his concert that evening.

Michael was so lovely and spent time talking to us fans and posing for our photographs. I remember being so thrilled to have at last met him, little did I know then, that by the end the day I would be really walking on air!

For later that evening, during the concert, whilst Michael sang 'I Wanna Dance With Somebody', I was so lucky to be chosen to join Michael and dance with him on the stage! I was in heaven... and it was many days before I came back down to planet Earth!



THE KEY(RING) TO FRIENDSHIP

by Jane Stones



Approximately forty years ago, I was President of our local WI and a Michael Ball fan. I saw one of the members had a Michael Ball key ring. The conversation went something like this. "Are you a Michael Ball fan? I am. Do you go to his concerts? If you want some company, I would love to come with you." The rest, as they say, is history. I began an enduring and very special friendship with Liz Stewart. Michael brought us together. We started going to concerts, mainly at Manchester Apollo and Bridgewater Hall and introduced another friend Ann to the concerts also. This friendship was so pivotal in my life. Sadly last Friday Liz passed away after a short illness. She was a very brave lady and if it wasn't for Michael's key ring we would have never become friends. I just wanted to share this with you all.

AN EXCEPTION FOR EMILY



Clair Heyward sent in this photo of her daughter Emily, who as you can see, has been a fan of Michael from the start! Her latest photo was taken at the stage door after the concert at The Sage. Clair says "Michael came out and said he wasn't having any photos, but was happy to make an exception to have one with Emily, as he said she was gorgeous – which she was delighted with!"



I TOOK HOME MICHAEL'S TROUSERS!

by Wendy Hermon

To start with, I thought I'd share my Michael history. I have followed Michael since 1994 and the 'One Careful Owner' tour. My first concert was in Sheffield and, like so many other fans, that was all it took. I was hooked! My friend and colleague Sue Leese and I travelled the length and breadth of the country to go to concerts and shows during our "Crazy Years", meeting so many wonderful people along the way.

The Fan Club Event was such an occasion; unfortunately Sue was unable to come, and I was travelling alone. I nearly didn't make it myself as I had spent a week in hospital with a kidney infection, and if truth be told, I was still not fully recovered! The event was as always brilliantly organised by Gill and Maureen and their husbands. There was a lot of fun and of course the highlight of the day was to be the appearance of Michael. I think I bought £5 worth of raffle tickets, not really knowing what the prizes were! Therefore I was absolutely



overjoyed to have won the star prize... *the* leather trousers that Michael had worn on the 'Nothing But The Best' tour in 1997! My already weak legs turned to jelly when I went up to collect my prize and had a lovely hug from Michael!

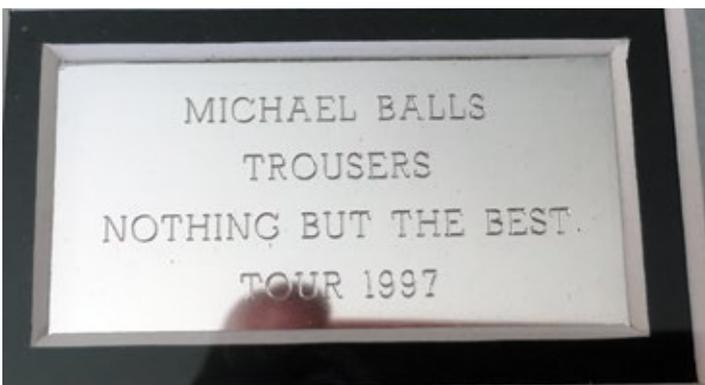
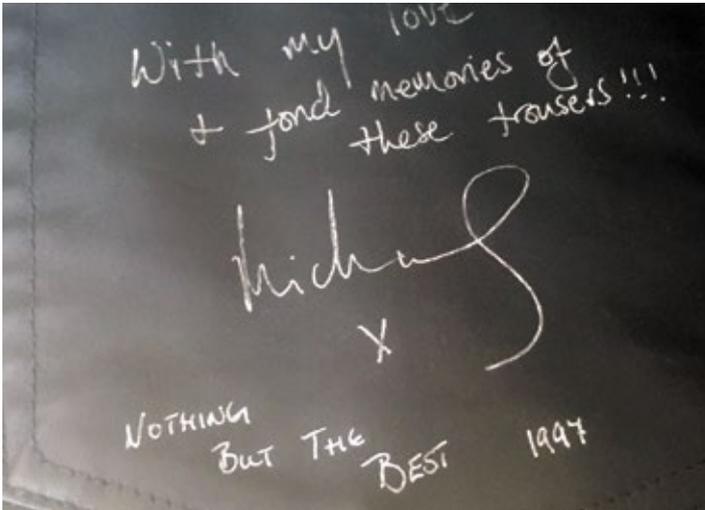
The leather trousers have been on their own journey too; five house moves and two burglaries (the burglars obviously didn't realise their value – to me at least). It took nearly 20 years for the trousers to be finally framed, and now they take pride of place on the wall above our piano, along with my favourite Michael photographs.

PS they have still never been washed!!



MICHAEL ON STAGE DURING 1997 TOUR





THERE FROM THE BEGINNING

by Yvonne Edge



I have been a member from the beginning. My sister and I went to London for the day to the matinée of *Aspects Of Love*. We thoroughly enjoyed the show and I wrote to Michael to tell him and requested a photograph. He sent one which I have somewhere in the house. I got a letter from Maureen and Gill to say that they were starting a Fan Club and that as I had shown interest in Michael, would I like to become a member? I said that I would and became Fan Club Member 58. When I got the letter I thought my brother-in-law was messing about as he was always pulling our leg about Michael, or Bobby Ball, as he called him!

I went with a friend to Manchester to see Michael and Alfie in February. We had really good seats. About twenty minutes into the show my friend became ill and I had to get the paramedics so never saw the rest of the show. Then it was announced that it was going to be shown in the cinema. My friend (who was okay, fortunately) and I booked to go and see the concert at the end of March. Well, we all know what happened with that! Thank goodness a DVD has come out!



Photo: Linda Wellington

My Michael Memories

by Jackie North

I first saw Michael in 1989 in *Aspects Of Love* but was so shy I was never brave enough to say hello! I joined the Fan Club in 1992 following the first tour and became Fan Club Member 765.

I finally met Michael when my husband encouraged me to go to a record signing in HMV for *One Careful Owner*. In the queue I met the most wonderful lady – Vera Cattermole – who was, she said, the oldest member of the Fan Club as she was in her eighties. We became pen pals and met up to see Michael in a concert in Manchester and went to a couple of Fan Club events together in London. Sadly, one Christmas her daughter got in touch to say she had passed away, after receiving my Christmas card.

I am the proud owner of one of HMV's promotional boards for *One Careful Owner* which my husband managed to persuade the store to save for me! It's nearly as tall as I am!

My next meeting was at the stage door after *Passion* - my husband had to ask if we could have a photo as I was too tongue tied to speak! My final treasured photo was taken in The Dress Circle shop in London at a record signing for *A Love Story*. So after 30 years of following Michael I have only met him three times! I have been to every theatre show, except *Kismet*, and every tour but am still too shy to make myself known to him! Maybe one day...





THREE DECADES LATER

by Tracy Martin

For my 14th birthday present my parents asked me if I would like to go and see a West End musical. It was 1989 and I'd been admiring a certain Michael Ball who'd made a couple of appearances on *Top Of The Pops*, so the decision to go and see *Aspects of Love* was an easy one. Therefore, in December 1989, that is what we did and needless to say I was hooked, 31 years later I still am. After the show I tried my best to get my parents to wait at the stage door to meet Michael but it was a cold and wet night so I wasn't allowed. On returning home I immediately wrote to Michael at the theatre. He very kindly replied, sent me a signed photograph and the information on how to join his Fan Club, which I did straight away.

So whilst Michael moved to New York to star on Broadway, I sat my GCSE's and began my A Levels. Then along came university, with new found independence and public transport (especially the National Express). I found myself visiting various parts of the country seeing Michael. Since this time I have been extremely lucky to see every UK tour, every musical that he

has appeared in, in the UK, the Fan Club events and many TV show recordings and record signings.

This leads me to one of my favourite memories of meeting Michael. It was at the HMV London record signing for *One Careful Owner* at the Trocadero entertainment complex in 1994. I left home around 5am to get to London in time with my friend Rachel (not a Michael fan but a very patient friend!). We queued for what seemed like days to meet Michael. I got a photo signed and had my picture taken with him and then had a quick chat before moving on. We then decided to wait until he had finished to wave him off, this involved sitting on the street for a few more hours until he left. The photo taken was fab and I was over the moon with it, we both had rather big hair but looked so happy. I sent the photo to the Fan Club and it was published in one of the old issues of *On The Ball*, which back then was a small black and white paper booklet. I was so chuffed that it got published and was even happier when Michael signed it after waiting for him at the stage door at Manchester

Apollo. I loved the photo so much that I had it saved in my purse, this was then signed by Michael whilst waiting for him at the stage door when he was starring in *Passion* in 1996 at the West End. I remember him commenting on how funny our hair was. The same signed photo, which now looks slightly worse for wear still sits proudly in my purse.

Being a Michael Ball fan for the last 31 years has been fantastic. I walked down the aisle to his singing (sadly not sung live), we played his music at both my parents funerals and put simply, his music is the soundtrack to my life. I have visited so many beautiful and wonderful places in the UK that I wouldn't have seen if it wasn't for following him, I have also met some truly lovely people.

My second photo is the most recent picture I had taken with Michael which was outside the Gielgud Theatre in London last year. My friend Kate is also on the photo; she is a massive *Les*

Mis fan so was very excited to meet Michael.

I wanted some of my Michael memories and stories on paper as it's nice to share them with like-minded people. I have a garage full of Michael memorabilia including hundreds of photos and cuttings from a time before we had digital cameras, phones and easy access to everything on the internet. My husband regularly mentions the need for them to go but there is no way I will be separated from all those memories. I am still often looked upon puzzlingly by people when I tell them I am a Michael Ball fan – back in 1990 he wasn't the average girls favourite pop star (you will all know what I mean) but at least now they know who he is without me having to try and explain! We are so lucky nowadays that he is visible on the TV, internet and radio so we can watch and listen to him regularly. I hope you are all staying safe and enjoying the spare time to indulge in some more Michael music.



MEETING MICHAEL THROUGH THE YEARS

Here are some great memories from fans who have been fortunate enough to have met Michael from different periods in his career.



Val Simmons



Doris Timms



Jennifer Cast



Babs Staines



Jen Garner



Jane Harding



Yvonne McKenna



Debbie Overy



And Debbie with her friend Elaine Soudain



Julie Ann Sail



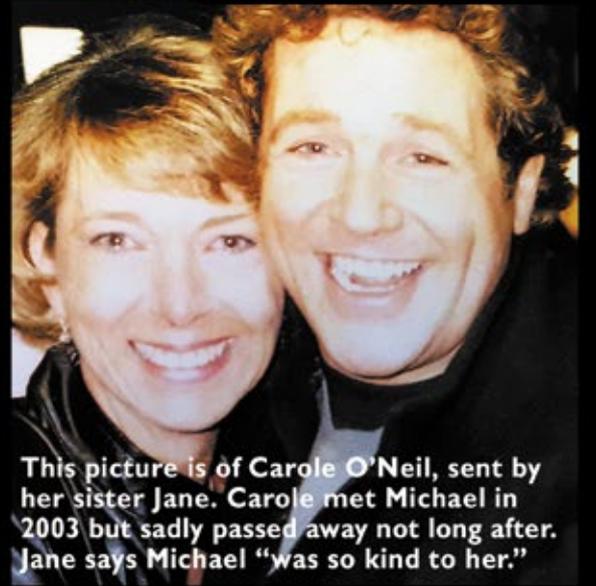
Tracy Taylor Scott



Jill Clark



Elaine Tabern's mum Mabel at a Ball & Boe Meet And Greet



This picture is of Carole O'Neil, sent by her sister Jane. Carole met Michael in 2003 but sadly passed away not long after. Jane says Michael "was so kind to her."



We've not had many pictures of Michael in 2020 for obvious reasons, but Anne Smith and her friends thought it rude not to pop to Wogan House, practising social distancing of course, where Anne captured this great shot on 11 October.



This is a photo of myself and my friend taken at Crufts 2018.

When Michael visited Crufts, he was shown round by David, who as luck would have it, is a good friend of ours. We were fortunate enough to be introduced to Michael before he went to look at the Tibetan Terriers, which is obviously his favourite breed of dog.

We show our dogs at Crufts every year but that year was made all the more special for meeting Michael. We go to all his concerts and were lucky enough to see him at Alfie perform in Birmingham this year.

Sarah Oldfield

HAIRSPRAY HAPPINESS

Jeffrey Stickland sent in this picture, which he says is a photo of a photo because the tablet it was on blew up! It shows his wife Barb pictured with Michael after a performance of *Hairspray*. Jeffrey says:

"Those *Hairspray* days were the most uplifting and enjoyable times we've had together. We lived in Peckham, they were very bad times, both in and out of the house, due to problems with to our autistic son, Richard, who was 33 at the time. However, the thought of going to see Michael in *Hairspray* (ten shows in total) was so emotional. We obviously waited each time at stage door. This picture was taken in January 2008 at 11.15pm. I gave Barb an 11.30pm deadline for waiting, and thank God Michael came out! I actually laughed about how it looks like Michael has grabbed a boob and I joked that I was going to report him to the authorities. As I looked at Barb, she had the most cheeky, bright smile, replying 'Yeah, like I'm going to stand in the witness box against my superman!' That was me told!"





This is a photo of Michael and myself taken in London when *Hairspray* was last on. I am now in lockdown, staying with my son and family. He has a swimming pool and the highlight of my day is swimming half a mile to Michael's music, full blast. I love the 'Musicals' album best. I have been a member of the Fan Club for a long time and enjoy reading *On The Ball*.

Elizabeth Calvert



Although I am a relative newcomer to the Fan Club, I've long been a fan of Michael's. The photo I'm including was taken soon after he left the stage on the *Hairspray* tour, when he was portraying the glamorous Edna. It was at the Mayflower, Southampton in 2013 and he appeared as his cuddly self at the stage door just ten minutes later. What a quick change!

Pam Nockemann



These photos are from the Ball & Boe show at Stanstead. I first met Michael many years ago when he was at the Brighton Centre. My friend and I were walking up to train station, past the stage door, when Michael came out with two friends. He asked how we were doing and said they were off to the local nightclub and did we want to join them?! How stupid we were, we told him we had to get our last train home! If only we knew then what we know now!

Sally Hall



TATTOO WILL DO NICELY!

This picture was taken several years ago at a record signing in London at HMV. I was showing Michael the tattoo I had recently had done on my back. It said Michael Ball and he thought it was hilarious!

Christine Nabbs

PENPALS

The fans below would love to hear from anyone with a love of Michael:

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Cromwell Road, Whitstable, Kent
CT5 1NP

LINDA STROUDE

email: lindastroude4@gmail.com

97 Five Acers
London Colney, St Albans
Herts AL2 1HY

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 past Infoline messages.

The password to access it is: **MBFC28**



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MICHAEL BALL ALFIE
BALL BOE

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29 NOV BIRMINGHAM RESORTS WORLD ARENA
30 NOV LIVERPOOL M&S BANK ARENA
02 DEC BRIGHTON CENTRE
04 DEC BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
09 DEC LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
11 DEC ABERDEEN P&J ARENA
12 DEC GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
15 DEC NEWCASTLE UTILITA ARENA
16 DEC MANCHESTER AO ARENA
18 DEC NOTTINGHAM MOTORPOINT ARENA
19 DEC LONDON THE O2

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