

ON THE BALL

Issue 82



Hi Everyone

So here we are at the end of yet another very busy year for Michael.

His first novel, "The Empire", is a best seller and the album "Together In Vegas" has also been a big hit for Michael and Alfie. Sounds like they had lots of fun recording the TV Special.

We are very excited about Michael's plans for 2023, really looking forward to him returning to *Aspects of Love* as the character George. We are sure we will all fall in love with him, such a suave and sophisticated man! Then there is the second book which will continue the story of *The Empire* theatre, we are wondering what has happened to all of the characters but we will have to be patient for a while.

Michael's letter is full of news about next year (and we know you have probably already read it before you read this) and he's going to be his usual busy self, not only with keeping us entertained, but also looking after Wilbur, the new addition to his household.

We must once again thank everyone who has helped throughout the year, especially James Gaden for his wonderful work with *On The Ball*, and Chris Oakley for all of his technical help, and wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe and take care.

Love

Maureen and Gill



Compiled and designed by James Gaden - www.halo-graphic.com. Email: james@halo-graphic.com

Back cover photograph by Holly Barber

© Michael Ball Fan Club 2022 Website: www.mbfanclub.co.uk www.facebook.com/groups/michaelballfanclub/

Dear Everyone,

Well, my lovelies, it's been another extraordinary year and we've ended this one with a bang. It's been so nice seeing so many of you in the last few months at the various appearances around the country (and the world!) and next year looks like it's going to be another exciting one.

The trip to Australia was just fantastic and so nice to be able to touch base with the aussie fans after what seemed like an age. I can't wait to get back there.

Alfie and I are blown away by your reaction to the Vegas album and I hope you enjoy the Channel 5 t.v. special we've done. If it looks like we were having a good time it's because we really were. It was brilliant. I shall return 😊

The biggest thrill for me has been the response to 'The Empire'. If you'd told me this time last year that I would be in the Sunday Times best sellers list I would have thought you were mad, but it happened and I'm already doing the ground work for book 2. I wonder if I can call it 'The Empire Strikes Back'? Sadly probably not.

And so, after christmas and the new year, all my focus will be on Aspects of Love. I hope you can make it to one of the performances and that it brings back as many fond memories for some of you. It most certainly will for me and I don't think I've ever been more excited and nervous for a new production. As George says in the show, "a memory of a happy moment, that's what this time will one day be. Life goes on, love goes free" and

that is what I think we need to do these days. Find those happy moments and create those lovely, warm memories that help to get us through the difficult, dark and hard times that inevitably we are all going to face.

None of us can see what the next months and years are going to be like so we must make the most of the good times, enjoy the company of the people we love and try to spread happiness and positivity where we can.

So I'll finish by wishing you all the joy and love for this holiday season. Stay safe and I'll see you very soon I hope.

Take Care
and
God Bless

M. Gane
x

TOGETHER IN HMV

To promote the release of their new album 'Together In Vegas', Michael and Alfie visited HMV stores across England to sign CDs for eager fans. Here are some of the lucky ones who attended and met the boys.



Having made the decision to try and see a football match (which kicked off at 3pm) in Barnsley, then go to the signing in at Meadowhall in Sheffield, I was rather stressed that I had maybe bitten off more than I could chew. However my husband and I managed to arrive at HMV at 5:40pm. I joined the queue just as the security guard stepped in behind the person next to me to ensure that no one else could join. Having realised I had not actually collected my CD and wristband I swapped with my husband so I could locate a till! Disorganised is an understatement. Within 10 minutes I was at the table and it was with utter joy that I was greeted by Michael's smiling face. We had a quick chat about his radio show and *The Empire* before getting a couple of photos with both Michael & Alfie. Considering that they had both done an earlier signing in Leeds and been sat in Sheffield for a while signing CDs, they were both extremely friendly and

fun. It must be difficult continuing to smile when you've been doing the same thing over and over. My husband managed to get some great photos including the beaming smile I was treated to when approaching the table. Thank you Ball & Boe for making a very hectic trip worthwhile.

I also went to see the "Michael in conversation" evening in Bradford to promote *The Empire*. I was really unsure what to expect from this sort of evening but it was one of the best things I've ever been to (concerts & musicals aside). It was so lovely to see Michael being completely relaxed talking about the book and lots of other things too. He is so natural and very amusing, I didn't want the questions to end. We all know how hard Michael has been working to promote both the book and the CD, I hope he realises how much we all appreciate it.

Tracy Martin



I have been a fan of Michael's since the early days but never had the chance to meet him.

He recently came to Cheltenham Literacy Festival to promote *The Empire*. I live in Cheltenham so I was so excited that he would be in my hometown! I went along and listened to his very interesting talk. Afterwards he was signing copies of his book. I queued and the closer I got the more nervous I became! My legs went to jelly and I couldn't even remember my name. When my moment came I was so starstruck I couldn't even speak to him and just stared agog as he signed my book. I felt like a silly teenager all over again! Afterwards I was so disappointed that I didn't speak to him but the memory of my first meeting with him will stay with me forever!



Jen Howard said "These photos were taken in Manchester for Michael and Alfie's CD signing. It was so lovely to meet them both!"



I met Michael at Manchester HMV. My dream came true.
Karen Hassell Kildunne



I then booked tickets to see him and Alfie in Birmingham for the record signings. This time I was determined to hold it all together and speak to him. I did just that and relayed my experience at Cheltenham to him. He was so lovely



and said "oh bless you" and touched my arm! I was ecstatic as you can imagine! Not only had I spoke to him he'd touched my arm and spoke back. I will never forget that and will never wash my Ball and Boe top again!!

I now plan to see Michael wherever I can. We've booked to see him in Aspects of Love next year.

Samantha Mason



THE LANCASHIRE LASSES IN LIVERPOOL

It was Halloween which also meant it was the day we made our way to Liverpool HMV for the signing of the new Ball & Boe 'Together In Vegas' CD.

Babs boarded the train in Blackpool followed by myself (Pat) getting the same train further down the line at Leyland. After an hour long journey to Liverpool and a lovely catch up together, plus a lot of excited chatter about Michael, we arrived in Liverpool.

Outside the station we met up with Sue, our third excited Lancashire Lass, who had made her way from Southport. Now we were all ready to head over to the HMV store to see Michael and Alfie, catching a coffee on the way, where lots more chatter about Michael was spoken while we sat there.

On arrival at HMV we happily collected our CDs and wrist bands ready to queue up, and hopefully see Michael to talk to after

over two years, whilst he and Alfie signed our new CDs. Once the staff started to get ready for our superstar's arrival, with an hour to go we started to queue, luckily second in the line up.

As minutes went by it was soon time for the security to lead us to queue nearer to the table where Michael and Alfie would sit. The queue was told no selfies, but we could take photos of the duo. Right on time the boys came in with Michael leading the way. He looked well and seemed happy to see everyone waiting. As they got to the table Alfie started to sit down... OOPS! His chair fell over with Alfie on it! He was somehow stuck on the chair and floor, legs in the air, but Michael came to the rescue and he and a security man helped Alfie up. He was fine, though probably feeling a bit embarrassed. Both then sat (carefully) down ready to start the signing.

Michael looked towards the queue and saw us, he gave a lovely



smile and said "Hello my lovelies!" Two years of not seeing him just rolled away. We made our way to the table and had a lovely unrushed chat with them both whilst they signed our CD covers. We then decided to be a bit naughty and Sue asked Michael if we could have a photo... smiling he said "Yes", if we were quick. Result – three great photos and a comment from security of "I said no photos!". We did thank them though, as we three happy bunnies left. As we turned to leave, Alfie asked us if we wanted our three signed CD covers. We took them and Michael laughed, saying "You dozy mares"... only he could get away with that! What a wonderful time we had, more memories made.

Throughout the afternoon we met up with quite a few old friends and fans we'd not seen in a while, so we had a lot of good catching up with others. It was great to see Jen, Sue, Ros, Mel and others, plus it was lovely speaking to a few of Alfie's fans.

All too soon, after a good pub lunch and a couple of hours shopping, it was time to leave for home... back to the train stations.

What a day!

The Lancashire Lasses:
Pat Collier, Sue Gellett & Babs.
Photos by Pat and Sue



MY MICHAEL SCRAPBOOK

BY CAROL COX

I've been a Michael Ball fan since about 1996. I joined the Fan Club in 2004. I have been saving photos, ticket stubs, magazine articles, programmes and just about anything related to Michael.

I love making scrapbooks so I decided to make a scrapbook for myself full of my favourite Michael photos and memorabilia. I have boxes upon boxes, shelves and drawers full of photos of Michael so I started just randomly putting my favourites into a scrapbook. Many photos are from the Fan Club and several are pictures that I took myself on my numerous trips to the UK to see Michael in person.

Little did I know that 72 double sided pages later, I'd *still* be adding photos as I dig through my archives. These are just a sample of 20 years of collecting and taking photos of Michael.



TOGETHER FOR THE FIFTH TIME

With the release of 'Together In Vegas', Michael Ball and Alfie Boe have now issued five top selling albums as a duo. Music journalist James Gaden walks you through them.

TOGETHER (2016)

After spending time working together on the show *Kismet*, Michael formed a bromance (or is that Boe-mance?) with fellow vocalist Alfie Boe. The duo recorded this album together and while many fans prefer hearing Michael singing alone and not sharing the vocals, it cannot be disputed that this pairing raised the profile of both artists. Predictably, the two play safe and stay very much in the Musical Theatre genre, with 'You'll Never Walk Alone', 'Anthem', 'Music Of The Night' and a spectacular *Les Misérables* suite. They do include something a little more contemporary, covering 'A Thousand Years' from the *Twilight* saga which is one of the album's highlights. The record would hit number one and go platinum, leading to a nationwide tour and paving the way for future collaborations between the singers that would remain highly successful.

TOGETHER AGAIN (2017)

If something is successful, then you make a sequel and that rule applied to the Ball & Boe collaboration. For their second album, the pair once again plundered the Musical Theatre catalogue, kicking things off with a *West Side Story* medley, and delivering an excellent rendition of 'As If We Never Said Goodbye' from *Sunset Boulevard*. However the duo had a bit more variety in mind to fill out the rest of the album. There's a version of 'New York, New York', a cover of John Farnham's hit 'You're The Voice', 'He Lives In You' from *The Lion King*, 'Evermore' from *Beauty And The Beast* and even a nod to Morecambe And Wise with 'Bring Me Sunshine'. 'Stranger In Paradise/And This Is My Beloved' from *Kismet*, which Michael originally recorded on 'Past & Present', also appear here as a duet. The album went to number one and the pair toured stadiums to promote it.

BACK TOGETHER (2019)

The third Ball & Boe effort saw the duo look even further afield for inspiration and the result is excellent. It's really an album with something for everyone, with 'Sunrise, Sunset' from *Fiddler On The Roof* nestling alongside the *Phantom Of The Opera* track 'Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again'. These tunes are juxtaposed with a particularly impressive medley of Queen hits and a couple of Frank Sinatra standards in the form of 'My Way' and 'Come Fly With Me'. *The Lion King* is revisited with 'The Circle Of Life' which features guest vocalist Shaun Escoffrey and 'The Greatest Show' from *The Greatest Showman* is a real highlight. There's also an original track called 'Army' penned by Ben Earle, and a pleasing, if somewhat unexpected, cover of the Dire Straits hit 'Brothers In Arms'. The album peaked at number 2 in the UK charts.

TOGETHER AT CHRISTMAS (2020)

A Ball & Boe Christmas album can be viewed one of two ways, either a natural thing for a popular pairing to want to do, or a ploy to grab a slice of an already over-saturated market. Regardless which side of the fence you sit, there is no denying Michael and Alfie are having fun here. The obvious inclusions like 'Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas', 'It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like Christmas', 'White Christmas' and 'The Christmas Song' (which features Gregory Porter) are all delivered with style, but it's the original 'My Christmas Will Be Better Than Yours' which provides the most levity. Whether you need a version of 'O Holy Night' and 'Silent Night' as a duet with Alfie is personal preference, considering these already appear on Michael's own Christmas CD. It's a nice record but easily the least important of the Ball & Boe collaborations to date.

TOGETHER IN VEGAS (2022)

The Ball & Boe partnership has been very popular and carefully managed. Originally their song choices stayed very much in the realms of Musical Theatre, of which Michael is a master and Alfie is no stranger to. Song selections were safe, sticking to *Les Mis*, *Chess*, *Phantom Of The Opera* etc and Michael had already recorded many of their earlier songs himself, so whether the addition of Alfie was a plus depends on your taste. As the duo have evolved though, they have been casting the net for material much wider, including Pop and Rock hits, covering everything from Status Quo to Wham to *Grease* in their sell out concerts. On 'Together In Vegas' the up-tempo theme remains with a rapid fire 'Viva Las Vegas'. The album also has some real swing with 'Sway' and 'Luck Be A Lady'. While medleys are not that common on studio albums, the Frankie Valli medley and Tom Jones medley both work really well and you can see these as being groundwork for possible concert inclusions in the future. Their take on 'Just A Gigolo' stays more true to the original but lacks the glee of David Lee Roth's version. However Engelbert Humperdinck's 'A Man Without Love', currently enjoying a resurgence thanks to it's use in Marvel's 'MoonKnight', is very well delivered by the pair. 'Together In Vegas' is easily the most fun release the duo have issued to date, proving you don't have to always tread the same old Musical Theatre path. Both of them are singers and entertainers who can offer a diverse selection of material and they ably demonstrate that here.





JANUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



FEBRUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				



MARCH 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	



APRIL 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						



MAY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



JUNE 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	



JULY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



AUGUST 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		



SEPTEMBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



OCTOBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



NOVEMBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



DECEMBER 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

THE BEST DAY EVER

by Janet Reck



This is my all time best year ever! They say you shouldn't meet your idols – well, I was so very lucky to have the opportunity to meet two of my all-time favourite icons but WOW – your brain goes to mush!

I wanted to tell both Michael and Alfie how much they are loved by all their fans for taking this time out to meet and have a chat with us. As I stood and waited in line to meet them my heart was beating out of my chest, my legs turned to jelly and I was a nervous wreck. Then the lovely security guy asked for my phone and passed it to the lady who was going to capture my photo – oh wow, I've never had a photo with either of them. This was my dream come true, I couldn't believe my luck.

I approached the table Michael and Alfie looked up and all I could say was "Wow I can't believe I'm here, but I have a little gift for each of you." Then being fingers and thumbs I passed a Red Nosed Reindeer Tree and a "big hug" decoration which I made the

week before with a message attached to it. I also had the 'Together In Vegas' CD sleeve to sign.

Then my brain started coming back into gear, so I asked Michael if I could show him my cross-stitched canvas. I had stitched the whole of his song 'Is That All Folks' which Michael had written and dedicated to his friend Victoria Wood. Both guys were blown away and asked how long did it take to do - I replied six months.

I then did something which, even now writing this, I cannot imagine I did! I asked if I could go around the table and give Michael a hug - which I did. I was on cloud nine. I'm still smiling now.



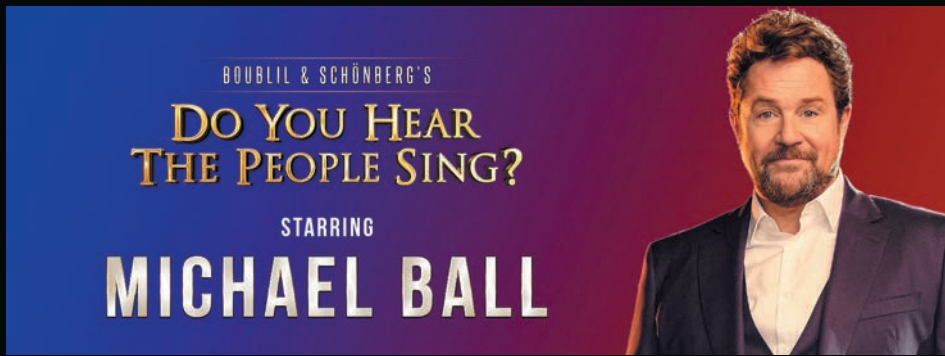
I also asked if Michael liked his 60th birthday cushion that I made for him, I saw his eyes light up and he said he did. I thanked him.

I didn't want Alfie to feel left out so I went over and gave him a hug too. Two wonderful gentlemen in every sense of the word. My phone was passed back to me and the next lucky

lady approached the table. I picked up my belongings and went towards the door to leave and realised I had not picked up my signed CD sleeve. I rushed back over and the lovely security guy had it ready in his hand phew. What did I say about brain mush!

This is a memory I will treasure forever.





I was so pleased when it was announced that Michael was coming back to Melbourne with *Do You Hear the People Sing?*

I booked tickets for the Tuesday night first, for my husband Gary and I. My two daughters are both Musical Theatre fans. I decided they should not miss out, so I booked Wednesday night tickets. We had decided to stay up in the city for the two nights because we live on the Mornington Peninsula. I decided I might as well book a matinée for myself too.

The Tuesday evening show was fantastic. Gary and I had great seats in Row A of the stalls. I was surprised when Michael opened the show with 'Bui Doi'. The programme listed John Owen Jones as singing it. Michael had swapped songs and JOJ performed 'Why God Why' which Michael had been listed to perform.

Act One featured ten songs from *Miss Saigon*. All were performed superbly with a very sleazy 'American Dream' by Bobby

Fox and the rousing 'This Is The Hour' performed by the whole company.

Mare Zamora, Sooha Kim, Rachel Tucker and Suzie Mathers performed a glorious version of 'I Dreamed a Dream' which was a hint of what was to come in Act 2.

The second act was even better. It was interesting to hear music from *The Pirate Queen* which is a musical I knew nothing about. I am definitely a Rachel Tucker fan and another highlight was Bobby Fox's Irish dancing.

Then we came to *Les Mis*! It was amazing, the highlight of the concert. I never, ever thought I would hear Michael sing 'In My Life/A Heart Full of Love' live. It took my breath away and nearly reduced me to tears. I was lucky enough to talk to Michael at the stage door before the Wednesday matinée. I told him I nearly cried and he said "I did too". I was able to reassure him that he didn't come across as

The company in full voice



"the creepy uncle"! His acting is so good, the years seemed to fall away when he was singing with the (sorry, Michael) much younger Suzie and Sooha. I would have liked them to include 'A Little Fall Of Rain' but you can't have everything.

The staging of the concert was amazing, with the large orchestra and the very talented featured vocalists. The eight main singers couldn't be better. It was interesting to hear familiar songs sung in French by Marie Zamora. Marie was a delight at the stage door on Tuesday night, especially when I reminded her that they had a matinée on Wednesday after she said their call time was approximately 5PM.



Suzie Mathers, Rachel Tucker, Marie Zamora, Sooha Kim





It was lovely to chat with Bev, Hilary, Kim, Louise and others at the stage door discussing the performances and what Michael might do next. He had hinted that an announcement was not far away but of course no details. My daughters both enjoyed the concert and a highlight for my husband was getting a *Les Misérables* sweat shirt signed by Alain Boubil, Claude Michel Schonberg, Michael Ball, John Owen Jones, Bobby Fox and Rachel Tucker.

The three shows went so quickly and it was time to say goodbye to Michael again. Thanks for coming and I hope to see you in again, perhaps in 2023!

Megan Walters



David Harris and John Owen Jones with Michael.



Bobby Fox



THE EMPIRE

MICHAEL ADDED ANOTHER STRING TO HIS BOW EARLIER THIS YEAR BY RELEASING HIS FIRST EVER NOVEL, ENTITLED THE EMPIRE. HIS DELIGHT AND PRIDE IN THE BOOK WERE OBVIOUS TO ANYONE WHO ATTENDED THE Q&A SESSIONS HE GAVE. HERE SOME OF THE FAN CLUB MEMBERS OFFER THEIR THOUGHTS ON MICHAEL'S FIRST FORAY INTO THE LITRARY WORLD.

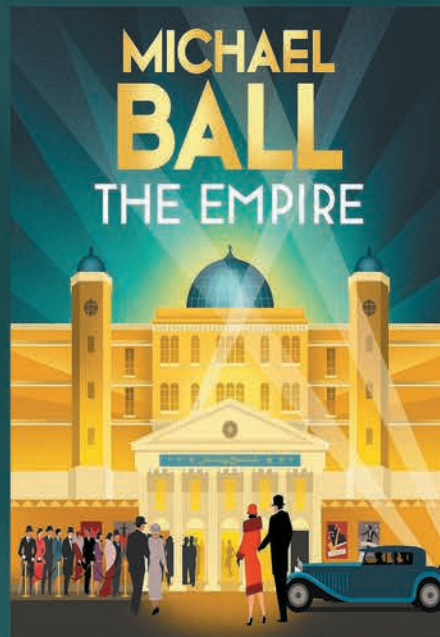


'A GOLDEN DEBUT – CHARMING, FUNNY AND ROMANTIC'

CAMERON MACKINTOSH

'A FANTASTIC BOOK. BRILLIANT'

DON BLACK



Well where to start – *The Empire* was so enthralling I couldn't even put it down. I kept reading the next chapter just to see what happened next, actually reading till the early hours of the morning. It only took me three days to read the full book.

It was so interesting in so many different ways. You felt for certain characters, others you started to dislike – but boy did my opinion change by the end!

I can honestly say I have never enjoyed reading a book so much. Thanks Michael, I loved it!

Helen Murphy



Where do I start with my review of *The Empire*? I think there is only one word to sum it up; perfection. Michael has definitely excelled himself.

The Empire is a fantastic read from start to finish. For anyone who loves the theatre, it's the perfect book. Full of glitz and glamour of the 1920's, it's a great insight into the theatrical world.

I found reading it that I was totally absorbed in the drama, excitement and suspense of the story that I couldn't put it down (a rarity for me as, I find it difficult to keep my concentration on books!)

The characterisation is brilliant and Michael brings the people and story alive with his vivid descriptions. You feel that you are in the story as the settings/characters feel so real.

The Empire is a warm, captivating, charming read. I think it's worthy of being turned into a TV dramatisation as it's highly entertaining and keeps you hooked with all the twists and turns.

Congratulations Michael on your debut. Can't wait for book two!

Julie Vidler

Ines Hanke

What an incredible journey for both Michael and all of us that have been to *The Empire* evenings & book signings. It was wonderful to hear him talk so proudly & enthusiastically about the book and to meet him in person at the signings.

I was lucky enough to have been given a copy of the first two chapters prior to publication (thank you Patricia Moscatini). Even after reading these - 'The Overture & Beginners' and the first chapter of Act 1 - (the main book also has Act 2 & The Finale) - I could not wait for the main book itself!

In those two chapters we meet Jack Treadwell, the main character - full of resilience, positivity & the realisation that the theatre was where he belonged. There's Grace Hawkins, assistant theatre manager - who Michael confirmed was based on his granddaughter and Ollie the lovely little terrier dog, who was such a loveable character the whole way through the book.

From the very start it felt like you were stepping into the theatre & into that world. The cover is iconic - I'm sure there's a Michael and Edna hidden there. The book spine is a touch of genius - this is your ticket - "Admit one - The Empire".

Prior to the start of the story is the character list, albeit quite a long list & very useful to refer back to - but never too

many - the further you get into the book the more they interlink. And then there's the lovely dedication to Cathy - no spoilers there for anyone who hasn't read the book.

When you start to read it you may think that the chapters and story jump about a little bit but once used to it, you realise that each chapter leads you to a cliffhanger, making you eager to see what happens next. As you become more absorbed you come to realise how this helps to weave the characters & events together - soooooo good!

As for the characters & storyline - again no spoilers, but a few surprises, both in the story & how the characters develop. One character in particular who to all intents & purposes seems an absolute rogue and who I was totally convinced would be a real Mr. Nasty, turned out in fact to have a really good heart (and I must say he's one of my favourites).

As for the Finale - it leaves you wanting more - so roll on the next book. This book is such a joy & I absolutely loved it. It's also such a lot of fun guessing who you think various characters are based on.

So if you've not read or listened to it yet - in whatever format you choose - please do. From beginning to end you'll feel Michael in the room with you.

Val Self



The Empire is not my usual genre of book. So I was sceptical as to whether I would read the whole book, much less enjoy it... it was a cracking read! I found it kept a good pace, had interesting characters and a great story. I was amused, saddened and frustrated with the characters, and just had to keep reading to see the outcome. And what an ending! I need more now! No pressure Mr Ball! It seems our man can tell a great yarn. Can't wait for the next one. Thank you Michael.

Love from an Aussie fan
Jane Watkinson

Set in 1922 *The Empire* follows the fortunes of Jack Treadwell as he steps for the first time into the theatrical world. Rocking up at The Empire theatre after an unfocussed post-war period, he is quickly swept up in the excitement and enthusiasm of the cast and crew as they set about performing their latest show. Trials and tribulations await him and his new-found friends as they struggle to ensure the survival of the beloved theatre. The story takes some unexpected twists and turns along the way.

Michael's debut novel is an accomplished work of fiction which draws successfully on his own personal experience of the theatre. While Musicals naturally feature, Michael also incorporates elements of Shakespeare and variety acts to demonstrate the versatility of the early 20th Century entertainment business.

The novel's layout is unique in that it follows the format of a play without reading like stage directions. The Overture and Beginners opening chapter introduces the extensive cast of characters, making it easier to place them as they later enter the main story. The book ends with a Finale which doesn't disappoint.

Michael has an evident love and appreciation for the people that are so intrinsic to the theatre and the performances, admitting himself that the novel is a love letter to the theatres of old. He has successfully created a wealth of characters from the actors and stagehands to the investors, all of whom I suspect are waiting in the wings to take centre stage in a sequel.

I'm a huge fan of historical fiction and thoroughly enjoyed Michael's debut novel which I awarded the maximum 5 stars on GoodReads. I can't help feeling particularly delighted that there is a character with my surname and I shall watch with interest to see whether he makes a reappearance in the next instalment!

Kate Potter

BALL & BOE AT PRYZM

To celebrate the release of their new album titled 'Together In Vegas', Alfie Boe and Michael Ball visited the Pryzm venue in Kingston Upon Thames for a Q&A and short performance. Fiona Gardiner was there, stating “They were both on top form and it was really good to hear some of the album tracks live. I was so glad they sang my personal favourite from the album – A Man Without Love.”





An Evening With Michael Ball

Helen Grenville said she “was lucky to be able to go to the Cambridge theatre to see An Evening With Michael Ball. I managed to get a few photos of a great evening and wondered if they are any good for the next On The Ball.” They certainly are!



VIVA BALL AND BOE!

As well as the Pryzm appearance, Michael and Alfie also performed and conducted a Q&A at Viva Blackpool. Jennifer Woodward captured these great images.



PENPALS

The fans below would love to hear from other fans of Michael:

PAT ALEXANDER

email: alexanderpatricia20@yahoo.com

LINDA STROUDE

email: lindastroude4@gmail.com

KATHRYN HORNER

Interested to know if anyone wants to meet up once a month in Wigan?

email: kathrynhorner47@gmail.com

Sandra Rhead

email: sandra.rhead@outlook.com

Sandra would love to hear from anyone living in the Dorset area.

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: **MBFC30**



