

ON THE BALL

Issue 70



Hi Everyone

So here we are at the end of the "Ball and Boe Together" tour 2016 which has been a great success. When we spoke to Michael recently he said he'd loved every minute of it and if you look at the back page you will see dates for next year's "Together Again" tour. The album has done fantastically well and at Hammersmith Apollo Rick Astley came on stage and presented them with Gold discs. We've since heard that it's gone Platinum!

As we have mentioned in our news updates we no longer have our PO Box address for correspondence. If you want to send Michael presents or cards please send them to him Michael Ball, BBC Radio 2, London, W1A 1A. Donations for Shooting Star Chase should be sent to them along with a note saying it's in lieu of a gift for Michael Ball, straight to Karen Sugarman, Shooting Star Chase, Bridge House, Addlestone Road, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 2UE. The best email address to use for contacting us is mbfc@mbfc.co.uk.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed articles and photos for this edition and throughout the year on our Facebook page. We must also send special thanks to Pat Webb, James Gaden, Chris Oakley, Andrew and Sarah from Live Nation. Finally we wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a very Happy, Healthy New Year.

Love

Maureen and Gill

PS Sitting watching Michael performing at the London Palladium took us back a few years to when we went on that very stage and presented him with a cheque for over £11,000 for his charity ROC (Research Into Ovarian Cancer). Here we are shaking in our boots!



'On The Ball' compiled and designed by James Gaden - www.halo-graphic.com

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Dear Everyone,

Well, my lovelies, I'm writing this in the Hotel in Bonnemonth as our Ball + Boe tour starts to near it's end and we can start to reflect on 2016. I don't think any of us would disagree that it has been the most memorable of years, for so many reasons, and none of us can have failed to be affected by some of the seismic changes we have seen throughout.

For me it has been a year of such extreme highs and painful lows but there is no question that we should head into 2017 with the belief that by working together, showing kindness, patience and humanity, whatever the world has to make us cope with, we can do it.

There is no question that the second half of 2016 will be known as the year of Ball + Boe in our house. What an extraordinary time Alfie and I have been having and thank you so much for embracing the project with such positivity and enthusiasm. We have both

been totally blown away by the reaction to the tour and album. Full houses everywhere, one of the highest selling albums of the year and the T.V. special (which, as I write, hasn't aired but I hope you enjoyed it!!!) all exceeding our expectations. Amazing. And Blimey have we had a laugh! It has been a total joy and I BLOODY LOVE ALFIE BOE.....and so do you it would seem.

Our working together is too exciting and too much fun for it to just end now so expect news of more opportunities next year for us to get together and hopefully make great music and laughter. It seems to be what the world is sometimes in short supply of these days.

So as we start 2017, remembering those loved ones that we lost, new members of our family and friends who have joined us and that natural feeling of uncertainty and anticipation that always seems to accompany this time of year, I hope you get time over the Christmas holidays to

spend some time with those you love, have a chance to think about those you miss, laugh a bit, cry a bit and rejoice that we have the freedom to do those things we enjoy.

One of the biggest joys for me throughout the tour is meeting up with fans, wherever possible, who have been there for me and with me all these years. Faces and names I will always remember and be grateful for and make me feel so lucky. You know who you are and, be in no doubt, so do I. You are simply the best. I can't wait till the next time I see you. May it be very soon.

Have a wonderful Christmas and a happy, healthy and safe New Year and I send you all my love.

Take Care + God Bless

Michael Owen
X

WEST END BAKE OFF 2016

Back in July, Michael attended the West End Bake off, where he was one of the judges, alongside last years judges Barbara Windsor and Christopher Biggins. The event was a great success, with over £4,600 raised on the day for Acting For Others, an umbrella organisation that supports 15 theatrical charities. The team behind 'The Secret Garden' were crowned this years winner.



TWO TWITTER TICKETS!

Words and pictures by Margaret Samson

I had no intention going to Cardiff for the start of the tour, however after winning two tickets on Twitter the day before the tour started, I completely changed my mind! My tickets arrived early on the morning of the concert, so it gave me plenty of time to travel and relax before the show started. I had great seats on the side with a perfect view and the venue was completely sold out. The atmosphere was electric waiting for Michael and Alfie to appear.

They opened the show with 'Somewhere', singing quite a few bars before they appeared on stage, which I find very mysterious – I love that way of starting a concert! Michael and Alfie didn't disappoint, or to paraphrase the words of Michael describing Dolly Parton "Oh no they didn't disappoint, they excelled my expectations!" The concert was packed with song after song and plenty of humour. I loved the

different sections – the Elvis theme, the James Bond Themes, as well as several solo songs by Michael and Alfie. They completed the concert with Michael and Alfie singing 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. My verdict after two and half hours? What an amazing, fantastic concert it was! My only complaint is it left me wanting more of Ball and Boe together!

AN ENCHANTED EVENING AT THE HIPPODROME

By Jen Garner. Concert photo by Maureen Wilkinson-Rouse

When we heard Michael was performing at The Hippodrome Casino, Leicester Square in July, Rose and I met up with Barbara and Nan at The Covent Garden Brasserie where we enjoyed a lovely lunch and a good catch up. We were on a tight schedule as we had to check in at our hotel, 'glam up' and get ourselves over to the venue in good time because although we were lucky enough to have secured front row seats, we knew it was first come, first served as to which table we were allocated. Once our places had been confirmed, we relaxed and chatted over a couple of glasses of bubbly in the buzzing and lively atmosphere of The Casino Bar.

Before we knew it we were being ushered into the beautiful auditorium. It holds approximately 180 people and has a small balcony overlooking the stage and stalls. It's so intimate you feel that you can touch Michael and his wonderful orchestra conducted by Callum McLeod.

The excitement had mounted and the atmosphere was electric. At eight o'clock Michael emerged from the side of the curtains that ran along the back of the stage. He instantly received a noisy, enthusiastic and welcoming reception. He greeted us with his usual cheery smile and in his inimitable and endearing way said "How are you all?" He commented that we were wearing less clothes than last time as it was so hot! My

friend replied to this and made him giggle!

I'll not list every song but I can tell you they were all delivered magnificently. Among his repertoire Michael sang 'Stuck On You', 'Won't Let Go', 'The Dance' (which I love), 'Life On Mars' (we were all blown away by this one) and 'Bad Things' when he sat on the edge of the stage directly in front of our table! Phew, breathe! He took us all completely by surprise and I don't think any of us could move, we just sat there rigid. We must have looked quite funny!

Michael included a song written by Victoria Wood. I didn't know the song, only that it was really lovely and I'm hoping he will sing it again sometime, maybe on tour. A favourite medley of mine is 'I Won't Send Roses' and 'The Rose' so I was thrilled to hear these again.



As I recall the second half of the concert was mostly given to songs from Musicals, although he came back on stage to 'Something Inside So Strong'. I was also thrilled he chose to sing 'Easy Terms' and 'Tell Me It's Not True' from the amazing *Blood Brothers* and of course 'Empty Chairs' and a rendition of 'Love Changes Everything' when the whole audience joined in.

Frank Sinatra's 'One For My Baby' and 'It Was a Very Good Year' were appropriate choices for such a venue. At this point Michael paid tribute to Callum who has worked with him for thirty years. He joked that they were both getting quite old.

'Stars' just blew the roof off and had everybody on their feet in awe of this fantastic performer! I'm sure someone will fill in any songs I may not have mentioned but I do know Michael finished

with 'The Wonder of You' and then 'The Impossible Dream'. He said he had achieved his dream by performing in such a beautiful and prestigious venue and hoped that they would have him back again. I'm sure they will be thrilled to, as they have already tweeted that he is one of their 'faves'.

For a few of his songs Michael sat on a chair not far away from us and well... I'll leave you to imagine how we felt... 'died and gone to heaven' springs to mind! There was a very special atmosphere at this concert. It was so lovely to see Michael's Dad there, looking very well and extremely proud and rightly so!

Michael had teased and wooed us as only he knows how and we floated out of The Hippodrome Casino and round the corner to the Stage Door. Here we met Donna celebrating her birthday. The photo of us all was taken by a formidable but very likeable lady bouncer using Donna's phone.

Not long before midnight both Michael and his lovely Dad appeared and we were all rewarded for our patience with hugs and kisses.

They waved from the car windows as they drove away after which, we hobbled home in our 'posh shoes', very happy and content.

A big 'Thank You' yet again Michael – just for being you!



Super BALL & Super BOE

By Alana Wadkin

When I heard Michael was going on tour with Alfie Boe – I was ecstatic! Being a fan of both of them, I booked my tickets as soon as they went on pre-sale. I got excellent wheelchair tickets for Liverpool and Manchester; both venues have so many memories of when I first ever met Michael. To my delight my Mum and Dad bought me a VIP Meet and Greet at the Liverpool Echo Arena as an early birthday/Christmas present. In the months leading up to the Meet and Greet, I never stopped talking to my Personal Assistants about Michael and all our special moments shared – I thought they would not believe me so I decided to bring them along with me to see for themselves how wonderful Michael is and the special bond that we share. Jen and Sara, my Personal Assistants were so excited to be accompanying me at the Meet and Greet as well as seeing the concert.

I heard that Michael had been looking on Twitter and came across a tweet that I had sent to the Overtones regarding a T-shirt I was making for Lachie – apparently Michael was a bit jealous and wanted one making for himself. So I decided to make Michael a T-shirt, because what's good enough for the Overtones is good enough for Michael! Plus he had seen my own Michael T-shirts and said he loved the designs. I designed and made him a unique 'Super Ball' T-shirt – it took a lot of patience and countless hours to complete.

On the actual day of the concert I couldn't contain my excitement; we arrived early at the Echo Arena for the VIP registration. I was surprised to see the Representative of Live Nation was the same person from Michael's previous tour, who recognized me and told us to wait until everybody else had signed in. Once we were

escorted to the Meet and Greet room, we waited for Michael and Alfie to arrive – the atmosphere was apprehensive and silent apart from me laughing and organising my Personal Assistants to prepare a couple of things, get Michael's present ready and clarify what questions I wanted to ask. As soon as Michael and Alfie walked in, Michael spotted me and gave a cheeky smile "Alright Alana! Wait there – I'll be with you soon..." Jen and Sara looked astonished and seemed taken aback at this. It was so lovely to see Andrew again too. As we waited for our turn, I watched the other fans meet Michael and Alfie and found their reactions and Michael's responses highly amusing – to the point where I burst out laughing. Michael heard me laughing and turned around with this comment "You are loving this! Your turn will be soon." I thought Michael was in a mischievous mood – this will be good. I was the last person to meet Michael and Alfie – as I got pushed up; Michael said "Come on Alana, lets introduce Alfie to you!" I got lots of hugs and kisses from Alfie and Michael, which I absolutely loved. I then asked Jen to hand over the present to Michael – he looked really surprised, I asked him to open it.

Michael's face was a picture, when he saw his t-shirt, he said "WOW THAT'S FANTASTIC ALANA!" over and over then Michael showed everybody his T-shirt (I got a round of applause, I was delighted). The next thing I knew Michael threw his jacket off and put the T-shirt on – "I don't know about Captain America but SUPER BALL will do just fine! Don't worry, I'm not going to show you any flesh" then Michael whispered "hope it's extra large..." I just nodded, to my relief the T-shirt fitted and it looked really good on Michael. To my and Alfie's amusement, Michael started posing and trying to act macho,

as my superhero. I gave him a look that he knew all too well, he knew exactly what I meant, and then I went into hysterics. It made everybody else giggle. It was time for the photographs to be taken, Alfie and Michael positioned my wheelchair in the middle of them both, knelt down either side of me and we posed for our pictures. I enjoyed chatting with them both, Alfie was so lovely, it was an absolute pleasure meeting him for the first time and I hope to meet him again in the future. As for Michael, it was like seeing a dear friend – he is still as cheeky and charming as ever! The time went by too quickly and before we knew it we were heading to the main arena ready for the concert.

I was lucky enough to go to Liverpool as well as the Manchester concert. Both venues had amazing atmospheres but the Manchester concert was phenomenal with Michael and Alfie at their very best. The concert was based on Michael and Alfie's new album 'Together' with a few surprises thrown in. At Manchester, the wheelchair section was at the front to my delight, the wheelchair users could actually see everything. We were sat next to Wendy and Celia; it was nice to catch up with them. As the lights dimmed, the musicians and backing singers (Izzy, Tor and Lauren) walked on stage they played the overture which led on to 'Somewhere' from *West Side Story* with only hearing Michael's and Alfie's voices off stage. They sung this unaccompanied and *a capella*, which showed the quality of their vocals. I focused on the stairs at the back of the stage as Michael and Alfie appeared (with beaming smiles) at the top of the stairs to enormous applause, cheers and screams. They continued with a stunning version of 'Tonight', I liked how the song was arranged to compliment Alfie's and Michael's harmonies.

You could see that there's a mutual respect between them and they share a close friendship. Throughout the concert there was cheeky/humorous banter which had the audience laughing, especially when they spotted a man in the audience leave his seat to go to the toilet mid concert – they jumped off stage and sat in his seat but they couldn't get back on stage again; it was absolutely hysterical. The Stevie Wonder classic 'For Once In My Life' was next to be given the Ball and Boe treatment – they performed this with great energy and made me dance from the start. An old favourite of mine 'Music Of The Night' from the *Phantom Of The Opera* left me stunned by Alfie's powerful voice and Michael's theatrical presence and vocal range. A fairly new song to me is 'Speak Softly Love' from *The Godfather* – this was sung next full of intent and beautiful notes. I absolutely loved Michael's and Alfie's rendition of 'A Thousand Years' from *Twilight*, it was definitely a highlight – just breathtaking and it gave me goose bumps, it was sung with such emotion and feeling. At both concerts, 'Tell Me It's Not True' from *Blood Brothers* was a firm favourite – just fantastic and was very powerful! I liked their pairing of 'What A Wonderful World/Somewhere Over The Rainbow' – a different interpretation but it really suited both voices. 'Incurably Romantic' was sung next, they delivered a great performance - I personally think the song is far better live than listening to it on the album.

Michael and Alfie then performed a wonderful Elvis Presley section that included solo versions of 'That's Alright Mama' and 'I Just Can't Help Believing', both songs showed off each of their vocal ability and range superbly. They finished the first half with a lively performance of 'Suspicious Minds', which had the audience clapping along. Of course I was dancing and singing along, much to the amusement of my Personal Assistants and everyone else around me! Both Michael and Alfie kept acknowledging me and smiling throughout the concert, which made me feel so special.

In the interval, it was nice to catch up with many other fans and friends. My Personal Assistants kept saying that they haven't seen me absolutely enjoying a concert as much – my whole persona changes. I become alive when I watch Michael

perform and my face lights up... They now know why I love Michael's concerts so much – the best medicine that you could have! I think Michael and Alfie will both have some new fans now.

The second half began with a comical duet of 'Me and My Shadow, which Michael and Alfie seem to enjoy. Move over Morecambe and Wise, forget about Ant and Dec – Ball and Boe are here to stay! Michael with a twinkle his eye said "Alfie and I have something in common, we both love to swing, are there any more swingers in here?" I shouted out, which made them both giggle. Alfie had to compose himself for 'Ain't That A Kick In The Head', Michael didn't help matters - he was still laughing. Michael then belted out 'Mack The Knife', a firm favourite with the audience. I thoroughly enjoyed their rendition of 'Stairway to Paradise', complete with some choreography – it's one of my favourite songs from their album.



Up next was the biggest surprise of the concert, a James Bond medley – both Michael and Alfie gave stunning performances, which left me completely dumbfounded. The medley consisted of 'On Her Majesty's Secret Service' (overture), 'Live And Let Die' (duet), 'Goldfinger' (Michael), 'From Russia With Love' (Alfie), 'Skyfall' (Michael), 'Diamonds are Forever' (Michael), 'Thunderball' (Alfie) and 'Nobody Does It Better' (Michael). They should definitely record these songs – their voices were absolutely incredible. It was time for Alfie to take centre stage as he asked for lots of audience participation to join in on the chorus of 'Keep Me In Your Heart' from his album 'Trust'. Alfie delivered a powerful performance of 'Love Reign O'er Me' from *Classic Quadrophenia* and received a well-deserved standing ovation. Then it was Michael's turn to wow the audience – another

highlight of the concert was watching him sing a breathtaking version of 'Gethsemane', it was completely outstanding, I had goose bumps throughout! The atmosphere was that intense, you could have heard a pin drop. Michael sung it with so much emotion and passion using all of his acting skills; it got another well-deserved standing ovation.

Michael encouraged the audience to sway and sing along with him to his signature song 'Love Changes Everything', I absolutely adore this song – Michael noticed that Jen and I were the first to join in at Manchester; he winked and smiled at us. Alfie returned to the stage to sing with Michael a very moving *Les Misérables* medley, consisting of 'Bring Him Home', 'Empty Chairs at Empty Tables' and 'I Dreamed A Dream' – I never experienced anything like it before, the lyrics really resonated with me. The audience went to rapturous applause, which touched Michael and Alfie so much and made them quite emotional, as you could see it across their faces. They took their bows, said their thank yous and goodbyes (Michael gave me the most gorgeous smile ever and waved) then walked off the stage. The applause and screams were deafening, we definitely wanted more!

Michael and Alfie returned to the stage for the encore, a stunning version of 'You'll Never Walk Alone' from *Carousel*, both of them sung it with such emotion and power. I was pushed near the stage because I couldn't see a thing (I felt so sorry for the rest in wheelchairs and very guilty that I eventually could see); a crowd of people came rushing to the front blocking everybody's view. Jen and I held our arms up and started swaying in time with the music. Michael again kept looking over and smiling. Alfie then came over and grabbed our hands, which totally shocked us – I was delighted! At Liverpool Michael and Alfie paid tribute to the Hillsborough 96 with this song – a perfect way to end the concert! As Michael and Alfie took their final bows, they both waved and smiled over at me before they left the stage.

It was the best concert I have been to for a very long time – I will treasure many wonderful moments of this phenomenal experience forever!

A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER!

There has always been a special bond between us U.S. fans that have met through the Fan Club – especially when we live close enough to visit. It kind of makes up for the lack of “Michael time” we have here in the states, being that we cannot watch him on the television or hear him on radio live during normal hours of the day. And so it was on a Sunday afternoon in August.

Ria lives in Rhinebeck, NY which is about a two hour train ride from New York City. I live across the Hudson River on the New Jersey side which is only minutes away from NYC. The love of the city draws us in and we enjoy meeting up here to spend our time together. We also share a birthday month. My birthday is August 20th and Ria is August 30th. A Leo and a Virgo, but still very much alike. We both love the Michael Ball voice and the person behind it. So on this Sunday between our birthdays, Ria decided to come down to NYC to celebrate together! We met up at Penn Station and walked towards Times Square. Our plan was to catch a Broadway matinee but as we approached the area, it was just crazy. If one can imagine a native New Yorker saying so, it was crazier than ever! Ria loves walking through the city so we decided to bypass the matinee and head downtown where there may not be the same crazy mayhem going on. We took a subway ride to the west village and enjoyed walking around on a beautiful summer afternoon. Yes, the humidity made it steamy hot but it was still a great day. Ria even picked out a beautiful brownstone for herself for when she wins the lottery! We then decided to walk towards the Oculus. Oculus is the rebuilt World Trade Center site. The memorials and garden have been open for a few years but the rebuilt shopping area, now named the Oculus, had just opened that

by Nancy Garcia.



week. We were heading east towards Broadway to make our way south to the Oculus. As you head downtown Broadway is also full of trendy shops. We were cutting through the side streets and while walking through one of the side streets I mentioned to Ria that Michael and Alfie were in this neighbourhood during the last week taping the new album. I mentioned that based on the pictures that they posted on Twitter with the cobblestone streets and 1 World Trade Center behind them, they must have been in one of the many buildings in this area. Alfie had posted the night before that they were finished with the album so we assumed they were on their way home. We were both so glad that their communication through Twitter allowed us to be part of their album in a way and showed us just how much they enjoyed the NYC experience together. So we continued walking when I realized that we never communicated with two



other fans we were supposed to meet up with. We were no longer in the Times Square area and were waiting for Cira and Ana to contact us via text to tell them where to meet. I then went on to do what I hate to watch people do.... I was texting and walking! I was trying to find out where they were so we could find each other! I then felt a nudge on my side from Ria and I looked up to see what was wrong. Actually nothing was wrong! She had spotted someone walking towards us on the sidewalk! So

I looked at the direction she was staring at and I was greeted with the biggest “HEY!”

It was Michael! Full of shopping bags and walking down the street towards us! Talk about divine intervention! What was the chance of walking down the street at that precise moment that Michael was as well!

He seemed genuinely glad to see us, put his bags down on the ground and gave us each the biggest of wet (sweaty wet) hugs! He started talking about the album immediately and said they were almost done and like a little boy was oh so excited about it. He teased us with “I could play a track for you...but I won’t.” He went on to tell us about the video they were going to shoot in the next few days around the city. His eyes just twinkled with excitement as he talked about it all. I then said that I wanted proof of this encounter and needed a picture of it. Michael took the phone from me and said “Okay, everyone get in the picture” and started taking goofy pictures (and some good ones too.) I then told him that my birthday had been the day before and that Ria’s was next week and that running in to him had made our birthdays extra special this year. Well, that called for another wet birthday hug and a kiss to go along for each of us!

In no time at all, the encounter was over and we were each on our way. Ria and I continued our walk around NYC but no longer had the desire to get to the Oculus. The highlight of the day had just occurred. We decided to walk all the way back to midtown where we met up with Cira and Ana and yes, we talked about the meet up with Michael for the rest of the day...and then some more.

Thank you, Michael for making two American fans quite happy on their birthday week!



JANUARY 2017

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Photo by Caroyln Bell

FEBRUARY 2017

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Photo by Chris Tietjen

MARCH 2017

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Photo by Chris Tietjen

APRIL 2017

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10	11	12	13	14 Good Friday	15	16
17 Easter Monday	18	19	20	21	22	23
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MAY 2017

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29 Spring Bank Holiday	30	31				



Photo by Carolyn Bell

JUNE 2017

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JULY 2017

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Photo by Sharon Scarrott

AUGUST 2017

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28 Summer Bank Holiday	29	30	31			



Photo by Caroyln Bell

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Photo by Frances Ellis

OCTOBER 2017

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Photo by Pat Collier

NOVEMBER 2017

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DECEMBER 2017

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B AND B ON THE TV



As well as doing many radio and TV interviews, Michael and Alfie have recorded several musical performances for television. Most notable was their very own special commissioned by ITV. Two lucky fans, Susan Rogers and Celia Summers, were able to get tickets for the recording and these are their recollections of the day in question...

I was so excited to find out about a special TV recording that Michael and Alfie were going to do. Instructions were to apply at SRO Audiences for tickets. I filled out the application not forgetting to include our special password for inclusion in the Fan Club allocation, and that was it, no more could be done. I didn't dare hope that I'd ever get tickets. I was staying at my son's and nonchalantly checked my emails to find one from SRO saying "This is your ticket!" On my drive back from my son's I was frantically planning arrangements in my head... I'd need a train, a hotel, something to wear and I was a little nervous.... but I was going!

The day arrived, the train was good with no delays, I checked in at the hotel, met my friend and we set off for the studio. We arrived quite early, even though we'd got priority tickets and were guaranteed to get in to the studio, but I was still feeling so lucky to actually be there. As the afternoon wore on I met friends who'd also got tickets, it was great to see familiar faces and of course this time, unlike Michael only events, Alfie's fans were meeting up too. It was great to meet his fans and chat about their experiences with Alfie, and ours with Michael. Security appeared, bags were checked and we were inside the studio gates

where we kept lovely and warm as they had heaters on the wall. It was quite crowded in there as they were also recording an episode of *The Graham Norton Show* too. Officials appeared, names were checked on the list and wristbands given out, I had blue priority number 44, this was really happening!

Another wait and we were finally ushered into the studio. Walking through the corridors we could see sets and storage boxes but suddenly Michael & Alfie's set was there. By the time you read this it will have been aired so you'll know what I mean - the set looked stunning. We were shown to our seats, on the flat, centre block, three rows from the front. This day couldn't get any better! Andy Collins, the warm up man, appeared and he's always so much fun. We had to practice cheering and clapping, although I don't think we'd need much persuasion in that department! Then he said those words we'd waited four hours to hear "Welcome to the stage Michael Ball and Alfie Boe!" They both looked so handsome in their tux's and they were so close to us. The show was amazing, there were some lovely songs with two amazing voices. A couple of special guests appeared who were brilliant with Michael and Alfie. As you know TV shows are done in segments and so there was a lot of stopping and starting

while technical stuff was sorted out, but I didn't mind that at all, more time to watch Michael! They both looked as though they are having a great time together, lots of banter and laughter between takes. Of course there were mistakes made by the two of them and so re-takes had to be done, usually starting with audience applause – my poor hands!

All too soon Andy announced it was the final segment, which included songs from *Les Misérables*. Alfie was standing right in front of us, dry ice swirling around our legs and he started to sing 'Bring Him Home'. Michael continued with 'Empty Chairs...' and this was just a perfect moment, one that will stay with me for a long time. The show ended to rapturous applause and a standing ovation, and it was all over.... wait a minute, a technician came on stage.... "could we do the final segment again please?" Oh, go on then, if you have too!

Seeing Michael and Alfie having such a great time together as they embark on this new venture, all I can say is bring on the tour, and I'm one very lucky lady to have been able to experience Michael Ball and Alfie Boe... One Night Only!

Sue Rogers

I was lucky enough to go to the filming of Michael and Alfie's TV special and it was a really wonderful and fun evening. After queuing outside the main gates, being ticked off the list and given a wristband, queuing again outside the studio and spotting a few familiar faces, we were led inside, down various corridors, past Graham Norton's big red chair in an alcove off the corridor and into the studio. The programme will already have been shown by the time this is published and, if so, most people reading this will know what was filmed, and will have seen the lovely set with a low stage, the band behind, a staircase to a raised walkway at the back, chandeliers, a big gold BB logo at the side and a bar area with stools at the right side.

We were entertained and given various instructions by the 'warm up guy', Andy Collins, who had also been warm up for Michael's own TV series a few years ago. He's a naturally funny man with the 'gift of the gab' and has a quick comment for every occasion. He told us what to expect during the filming process with cameras moving around the studio and overhead, and said it was likely that we would appear on screen so if anyone was with someone they shouldn't be with then they should leave before filming started! We had to do some 'Oooh'-ing, 'Aaaah'-ing, laughing and cheering which I think was recorded in case it was needed for the editing process. We were told to do these whenever appropriate in the show and especially to laugh when "purple crayon" and "toilet paper" was mentioned. Andy had everyone on their feet waving arms, doing jazz hands and playing air guitar, piano, drums and tambourine. None of these were needed during the filming but it was fun and got us ready for action. He said "Sit up, chests out, bums in and enjoy yourselves" each time before filming began.

Michael and Alfie appeared from the left side of the studio where we were sitting and looked over as they came out. They looked fabulous and very smart in their dinner jackets. The show was a great mix of music and chat with a lot of banter and humour, both on and off camera. Michael said that he and Alfie call themselves MAlfie and that it was either that or BoeBall!

They opened the show with a few lines from 'Somewhere' and 'Tonight' and the other songs they performed during the evening included 'A Thousand Years', 'Stairway to Paradise', 'Tell Me It's Not True' and the finale was a wonderful *Les Mis* medley. Naturally, they sang them all beautifully with their voices blending perfectly. They each sang a few lines

alone and some together as we'd already seen with 'Somewhere' and 'Anthem' in previous TV appearances. We were treated to a repeat performance of the finale but it was the only number that was performed twice – I'm sure most of us would happily have sat through it all many times but MAlfie were just too good. The orchestra was excellent, conducted by Dave Arch who also conducts on *Strictly Come Dancing*.

We'd heard that Eddie Redmayne (who played Marius in the *Les Mis* film) was a guest on the *The Graham Norton Show* which was being recorded in the next studio and we wondered if he might also have been a guest on Michael and Alfie's show and taken part in the medley. Sadly not, though Michael mentioned that he'd bumped into Eddie in the corridor and later tweeted a lovely picture of them together.



Michael and Alfie read out a few tweets from people in the audience that had been sent before the show including one from 'Hayley' who had said that she would rather stick pins in her eyes than be there. This seemed a very odd thing for someone to tweet and even more odd that it would be read out! Later in the show MAlfie were having a contest to see who could hold the final note of 'Bring Him Home' for the longest and said that they needed a judge who liked them both – or disliked them both. They picked Hayley and asked her to join them on stage and said that she should also take part in the contest. They gave her a microphone and all three sang the note. Michael and Alfie faded out much sooner than we knew they should and Hayley continued the note. She was obviously a plant and we assumed that she was a professional singer but there was no introduction or explanation of who she really was. We wondered if she might be one of the backing singers for the tour and this 'contest' might appear in the concerts. It seemed a bit too contrived, especially as we

knew that both Michael and Alfie could have held the note much longer than they did. I was interested to see if it made it into the final televised show.

Alfie told his story of having written to Michael for advice when he was a student at the Royal Academy of Music. He said he knew where Michael lived and had put a letter through the door but Michael hadn't replied – Michael said that he didn't reply to letters written in purple crayon on toilet paper! Yes, we all laughed!

There was a very entertaining section where Michael and Alfie sat on stools in the bar area and chatted about their careers and some of the shows they've been in, and sang short pieces (much too short!) from some of their best known numbers. Alfie teased Michael about only coming second in Eurovision and also about only coming second in the charts, missing out to Jason Donovan. He teased Michael again later in the show when chatting to guest Maria Friedman – he asked Maria how many Oliviers she's won and, when she replied, "Four", he said "That's more than two isn't it?" to which Michael replied "Yes, it's two more" and showed two fingers towards Maria and Alfie!

The first guest was Rick Astley who sang 'Keep Singing' (thank you Susan Rogers for reminding me of the title). When Michael and Alfie chatted to him, they suggested their own alternative styles of singing Rick's hit 'Never Gonna Give You Up'. Michael's version was a more dramatic, theatrical take on it and Alfie's was more operatic with a comedic Italian accent. It was all done with great humour and both would probably have worked to an extent but I'm not sure that Rick was convinced and went on to do it in his own way!

Maria Friedman was the second guest and MAlfie had wanted her to sing 'Chitty Chitty Bang Bang' with them. Instead she sang 'Being Alive' but with MAlfie singing 'Chitty' and fooling about behind her. Maria carried on regardless and held it together very well considering what was going on around her. At one point Michael and Alfie each took one of her arms and pulled her to the back of the stage - they reminded me of Morecambe and Wise more than once during the evening! A 'normal' guest appearance it was not, but a friend saw Maria afterwards and said that she had enjoyed herself.

Some fans have said they felt that Michael was "drowned out" by Alfie in some of the earlier TV appearances – I



Michael and Alfie tormenting Maria Friedman with their antics during her rendition of 'Being Alive'

didn't find that at all and could always hear Michael's beautiful lower tones perfectly clearly. I think their voices blend extremely well together with Alfie's tenor naturally taking the higher line and Michael's baritone taking the lower. Some have said that they would prefer Michael to have been touring alone again, but we know that he is always looking to do something different and for new challenges. If this TV special is anything to go by, the concerts will be wonderful, as Michael's concerts always are, and hopefully those who were unsure about him touring with someone else won't feel that they were seeing less of Michael but were seeing him having a great time and performing wonderful music with a very good friend.

I can't remember all of the comical moments in the breaks between filming but here are a few. Before they started Michael held his stomach in and said "Oooh, I've got to suck it in for the next two hours!" At one point he said "I love you Alfie" and Alfie replied with "I love you too Michael" – hilarious and sooo cute! Michael burped during one break and said he was exercising his soft palette. During another he said he thought Alfie would make a good James Bond and did a Bond impression pretending to hold a gun with both hands. There were a few minor re-takes - one funny one was when Michael fluffed a word but carried on talking fluent gibberish and then said that it was for the foreign language version!

Andy Collins kept us entertained during the breaks in filming. There was a contest between the left and right sides of the audience to see which side could sing various musical songs the best and/or loudest. He chose four men from the audience to go on to the stage and mime various actions as if they were in a film, such as climbing, riding a horse and swimming and we voted for the best by cheering. He spoke to someone from Croydon and then picked on people from Croydon generally during the evening asking if they had their tags on, what time they had to be home and warning everyone else to watch their bags. He also picked on me - he asked my name and where I live, and said that my clapping had been out of tune! I'm not sure how it's possible to clap out of tune but it gave everyone a good laugh. He picked up on it a few times during the evening, said that Rick Astley had looked my way to see what was going on and made comments like "no clapping Celia", "sit on your hands", "not you Celia" and gave me a wink or pat on the shoulder each time he went past.

The whole evening was thoroughly enjoyable. Michael and Alfie obviously get on very well and have a great rapport – it's a real 'bromance'. Two lovely guys with wonderful, contrasting and complementary voices singing great songs, chatting to each other and their guests and having lots of fun. MAlfie BoeBall were just fabulous! Roll on the concerts!

Celia Summers
(with thanks to Gill Tee for a few details).

As well as the 'One Night Only' show on ITV, Michael and Alfie also appeared on the BBC for a fun interview on The One Show and gracing the popular programme Strictly Come Dancing with a live performance of 'Somewhere'.



MEETING & GREETING

Many fans had chance to meet both Michael and Alfie thanks to the Meet And Greet option offered at the concerts, or by patiently waiting at the stage doors. Here's a selection of some lucky fans together with Ball & Boe...



Margaret Samson



Wendy Thomas



Graham and Jackie Last



Lynn Baker



Emma Lunt



Julie Vidler



TOGETHER 2016
by Jo Blagbrough

When I met Rachel Betts more than 25 years ago I could never have believed we were destined to go through life together, sharing work, kids, laughter and sorrow, becoming the strongest of friends.

I liked her from the off but she had this weird obsession with a fresh-faced, curly-haired and dimply young fella: very strange I thought but there's no accounting for taste!

Over the years, I confess I enjoyed mercilessly teasing Rachel and her sister Lis as they stalked MB literally all over the world. Eventually they could take no more and suggested, nay, insisted I go to "just one show" before making judgement. Resistance was futile and so it was I found myself in Liverpool with a not particularly open mind. You see, it was 'Love Changes Everything' that I dreaded most... sorry, but it just didn't cut it for me, but I'll remember 'Life On Mars' to my dying day – it was fab-u-lous!! Obviously I couldn't tell Rach and Lis that,

so please keep it to yourselves! Thus began a grudging relationship with me and Mr Ball, growing in admiration and respect, not least when he rang Lis from the stagedoor prior to a performance of *Hairspray*; Lis had been admitted to hospital and was forced to miss the show - what a lovely thing to do! Then there was the time I stuttered and babbled at him stating "Oh no! I'm not a fan, I'm only here with my friends." Sorry Michael!

The years passed, saddened by the loss of of Lis and my beloved Dad, but brightened by a certain Mr Alfie Boe (my dad would have loved his rich tones) and oh, how I have come to understand Rachel and Lis and what it means to be a fan. So when I got that text from Rachel saying there was a rumour the boys were getting 'Together', it was a lightbulb moment – why hadn't they done it before? We hardly dared hope, but yes!! It was confirmed and Rachel had a very busy (and stressful!) day acquiring tickets.



This picture with Michael and Alfie was taken at the Bristol concert. I booked my tickets the day they were released. I then had a huge drop in confidence - I couldn't meet my idol of 25 years being this size! 16 stone 6 and a half pounds (size 20/22). I started dieting, but it was extremely hard! Some days I felt like giving in - but the thought of meeting Michael kept me going!

The day of the concert came round so quick! Before I got ready I stood on the scales and had to take a second look! 11 stone 6 pounds – a total loss of 5 stone 1/2 a pound!! I knew I had lost weight, but had been going by my clothes size not actual weight! I am so pleased and am feeling much better in myself now. This is just the beginning – thank you Michael!

Helen Pascoe



I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and chatting to Alfie and again to Michael. The concert was amazing and I have not laughed so much at a musical event before. As usual all the meet and greet people were so friendly. A truly wonderful evening.

Jane Harding



I managed to meet Michael and Alfie at the stage door after their concert at the Palladium. We stood there until midnight and they finally appeared! It was totally worth every minute.

Clare Lewis



Roll on November – oh how we suffered through the Summer of 2016: though nothing compared to trying to avoid Facebook posts and photos of our beloved pair as the tour began.

Sunday Night at the London Palladium took on a whole new meaning for Rach and I. As we took our seats I was hyperventilating and the excitement grew as my second favourite man, Murray Gould walked onto the stage, accompanied by what turned out to be a phenomenal orchestra!

Suddenly the sound of those two wonderful voices filled the theatre and I was transfixed – it was finally happening! I spent the rest of the first half twixt laughter and tears and cannot truly give you a stand out memory from that night: it was totally awesome. Except... listening to a song I have never even heard before, I became a fully paid up devotee of Michael Ball as I watched him don the persona of Jesus for

'Gethsemane' and deliver the most moving performance of any song I have ever seen. (Sorry Murray, you've dropped to third!)

I'm not a great fan of arena gigs, but Rach had to "endure" Liverpool with not a dry eye in the house during 'You'll Never Walk Alone', including Alfie I'm told. Rach nearly cracked at Leeds after driving round for ages looking for the arena. She thought about giving up and going home – and the 70 minute wait to get out of the car park afterward nearly did her head in!

And so to the 3 B's...Ball and Boe in Blackpool, although for me it was all about the 4 P's...the Pizazz of the Swing section, The breathtaking Power of 'Love Reign O'er Me', the Passion of 'Gethsemane' and the Pointing... Yes MB mid-song pointed directly at me on the end of the second row. Convinced they'd finally spotted me, I shimmied alluringly the short distance to the front... obviously not as alluringly as I

thought, Alfie ran off! Oh boys... you build me up, you knock me down!

Blackpool was meant to be my penultimate show – but wait... our heroes announced a final extra night in Blackpool. Well you couldn't see me for dust as I headed for the Box Office at the interval... two seats, second row – that'll do nicely thank you!!

My favourite part of the show? Well, as a lifelong Elvis fan, that was one box ticked. Bond? - Mr Ball and Mr Boe were OH SO SEXY. Les Mis medley - Alfie's emotional performance of 'Bring Him Home' in Blackpool was on another level. And Mr Ball?? What a kind and generously spirited man to insist on his pal taking the final bow alone on his home stage.

But the very best bit? Sharing the experience of a lifetime 'Together' with my best friend and our heroes Mr Ball and Mr Boe. Thank you to both of you!

'TOGETHER' TOUR MEMORIES

We were absolutely inundated with great pictures from fans from throughout the tour, so here is a collection of some fabulous shots which will hopefully bring back lovely memories of a memorable tour!



Photo by Sharon Scarrott



Photo by Rachel Betts



Photo by Margaret Samson

Photo by Carolyn Bell



Photo by Sharon Scarrott



Photo by Margaret Samson



Photo by Carolyn Bell



Photo by Julie Vidler



Photo by Sharon Scarrott



Photo by Carolyn Bell



Photo by Julie Vidler



Photo by Margaret Samson



Photo by Carolyn Bell



And Then There Were Three - Saturday Night At The London Palladium

Words and pictures by Chris Tietjen

The best laid plans and all of that... I had tickets bought on first day, travel sorted, then... the trains from our part of Essex would not be running to London over the weekend, so had to make alternative arrangements, involving driving 20 miles further out of London to get the Circle Line in to London! And then a late start was announced for the show, due to Michael and Alfie taking part in the Remembrance show at the Royal Albert Hall. Talk about make it tricky for us getting home! I did look at prices to stay overnight, but as we aren't millionaires, at such late notice it was far too expensive!

However, make it we did, in the pouring rain. I have never seen Oxford Street so full of people (and their umbrellas poking your eye out!). Surely not all of these people were here to see Messer's B & B? Oh no, wait – it was also Lord Mayor of London's Procession day, and getting near Christmas, and all the Christmas lights up, so even more people than usual on the tube and streets! We had to walk for ages to find somewhere to eat, as it was so busy, but eat we finally did, and we made it back to the Palladium in plenty of time.

With teeth gritted, I paid for an expensive programme (the prices keep rising, but I have every other programme for Michael shows I have been to, so I just had to!) and we took our seats. I had been disappointed that the seats available on booking day in the stalls had been too expensive for me and I booked seats four rows back in the Royal circle, centre stage – and the seats were brilliant! We had a wonderful view of the stage and the lads!

And what can I say about the show that hasn't already been said? There was a Donald Trump supporter who heckled and walked out when Michael dedicated 'Tell Me It's Not True' to the USA Election – apparently the next night, after the same song, Alfie pretended to count the audience to see if anyone had walked out! A mention of "Robbie's dad" who Alfie made sing with him after Michael said "Curse you Robbie Williams" for beating them to the number one album spot and the guy shouted something in Robbie's



favour! It was all handled beautifully by the lads on stage. Michael dedicated 'A Thousand Years' to Gracie, his step-grand daughter, which was lovely! Alfie asked her to stand up, but I'm not too sure if she did, as we couldn't see from up top! It is obvious that Michael and Alfie are the best of mates, their camaraderie is brilliant! Each one treats the other with as good as they get, which can only happen with genuine pals. I loved their "dancing" – *Strictly Come Dancing*, watch out next series, here they come! I also loved Alfie leaping about on

the steps, much to Michael's chagrin! Their 'Me And My Shadow' dancing' made me think of Laurel and Hardy! And in the Bond Themes segment, Michael made a mean, moody and magnificent James Bond, too!

Just when you think the show couldn't get any better, Michael said he had a "special guest" for us. Well, after all the joking about, I think most of us thought he was messing around again – I half expected a cardboard cut out of Donald Trump to appear! But, no, not this time - Rick Astley appears at the top of the stairs, much to everyone's surprise! There were big cheers, and all three boys sang Rick's new single 'Keep Singing' beautifully, to great applause. A really nice happening. Rick had been sitting in the audience, so I'm not sure how well planned it actually was. Michael said it was "unrehearsed", but it was sounded spot on!

The two solo spots were brilliant, although am not a fan of The Who's *Quadrophenia* so Alfie's version of 'Love Reign O'er Me' left me rather nonplussed. He did, however, give it his all. And Michael's 'Gethsemane' was, as usual, amazing. "A big old song" as he quite rightly said. And it earned him a fully justified standing ovation.

As usual, all too soon the show was over, with the *Les Mis* medley at the end, and 'You'll Never Walk Alone' as the encore. I am sure that both Michael and Alfie have gained new fans, and rightly so. A fabulous show. Would I want them to collaborate again? Probably not. But did I enjoy the evening? You bet I did!

STUNNING STITCHING!

by Lesley Webb

This is the cross stitch of Michael that my mum, Shirley Bulleyment, spent hours creating and personally handed it to Michael on Sunday 20 November before the Nottingham show.



TRIBUTE to HEATHER KENDALL

By Helen Czekaj, Karan Lane and Alison O'Hanlon



We are very sorry to let you know that our dear friend, Heather Kendall, died from cancer a few months ago. She was only 59. Heather was an early member of the Fan Club, having joined in June 1992.

Heather, Karan and Helen met each other on the first Fan Club trip to Jersey in August 1995. Alison joined our group shortly afterwards and we all became close friends. As well as travelling together all over the country to Michael's concerts for the next 20 years, we would often meet up at each other's houses for "non-Michael" occasions. It's fair to say that we have Michael to thank for our much valued friendship.

All her friends and fellow fans miss her greatly.

THE MICHAEL BALL FAN CLUB ONLINE

www.mbfanclub.co.uk

Log on to the Fan Club website where you can access information about Michael.

Sign up for FREE to be a member of the Fan Club and you will receive regular email updates – every time there is some confirmed news about Michael, it will come straight to your inbox! The website also has a Members Only area where you can download past issues of On The Ball, see video messages from Michael and listen to previous Infoline messages. The password to access the Members Only area is: **MBFC24**



PENPALS

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 and she lives at 97 Five Acres, London Colney, St Albans, Herts AL2 1HY

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 and they will be printed in the next issue of On The Ball.

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&

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20 JUN SHREWSBURY WALCOT HALL
21 JUN CHICHESTER STANSTEAD PARK
24 JUN THETFORD EUSTON HALL
25 JUN LINCOLN CASTLE
28 JUN SCARBOROUGH OPEN AIR THEATRE

WINTER 2017

30 NOV CARDIFF MOTORPOINT ARENA
02 DEC BRIGHTON CENTRE
03 DEC BOURNEMOUTH INTERNATIONAL CENTRE
05 DEC BIRMINGHAM GENTING ARENA
07 DEC MANCHESTER ARENA
08 DEC LEEDS FIRST DIRECT ARENA
10 DEC GLASGOW THE SSE HYDRO
11 DEC ABERDEEN GE OIL & GAS ARENA
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