

Broadway's Favorite West End Guy

A Chat with Michael Ball



that's a hell of a view too.

InsideCx: You currently star in "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." What did this musical bring to your repertoire? I've never danced. I've never done musical comedy. Duck to water. I loved it.

InsideCx: What's one role you would never take? I don't see me as Cossette. I'll tell you what I would have really big reservations about: Jean Valjean [from *Les Miserables*] because it is so hard and so long.

InsideCx: You wrote some songs on "This Time It's Personal." Why did you wait so long to write? I didn't think I was any good. I don't play an instrument. I don't read music. I don't have access to creating music like that. And when you've worked with the greatest composers, you think, I'll just embarrass myself. I haven't written anything since. They're not the greatest songs in the world, but they're mine. I'm very proud of them. And there will come a time where I write again.

InsideCx: Has anyone ever told you that you couldn't do this? Everybody. When I was in drama school they told me, "Michael, we really don't know if you're in the right profession. You probably won't work until your 40, and then it will only be in small character roles."

InsideCx: Did you ever go back and show them? Oh, I'm on the front of their prospectives. They've got a shrine to Michael Ball. It's extraordinary. But I've never been back. It's not letting the personal crap we get in our lives stop you. You hit those points and go on or give up. I have loads of people who think I'm just rubbish.

InsideCx: Where does the ability to overcome that come from? I have to say a lot of it comes from Kathy, my other half, who is incredibly supportive. Also, I can't do anything else. I've got to keep going. I don't want to do anything else. 🎵

It was June. I was outside London's Palladium Theatre, where *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* plays, waiting to interview its star, Michael Ball. Michael is one of the biggest names in Broadway and West End history. He was late and the word "diva" was floating in the air. All of a sudden the most animated voice came from the other side of the gate: "I'm so sorry. I'm in so much trouble. Oh no! She's going to kill me! I'm so late!" Michael declared apologies as he ran full speed down the ramp and attacked me with a giant hug. This was no diva; this was one of the most charming men in all of London.

As we went to a quiet area to chat, he scrambled around trying to balance interview, show prep, dinner and a cigarette. He took my recorder around with him so that I wouldn't miss a word. As he passed into another room, he lit up a smoke—shocking, considering that his voice is clear and smooth as glass. Seated next to me on a couch, he exclaimed, "Fire away! Probe!" And we were off.

InsideCx: Which do you prefer, New York or London? M.B.: Shopping, New York. Theatre, it's really hard. I think we [London] have nicer theatres. But as far as the community goes, I think I prefer New York. They both have fabulous things to offer. There's nothing more spectacular than being in the middle of Central Park and looking at that vista. Then you go down to the embankment and the Thames and you see the London Eye and the House of Parliament and you think, Well,

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