



The Cheeky Duo - Back Together Again

By Alana Wadkin

When I found out that Michael and Alfie were releasing another album on 27th October, while attempting a world record to sign the most albums in 24 hours, I thought they would easily achieve this and it would be great publicity for the new album. I started reading all the HMV venues they were going to visit, I was disappointed that they weren't going to Liverpool and never gave it another thought. Then my PA's mentioned I should go to the Manchester signing because I wouldn't get another chance to see them this year.

I thought "Seriously, are you kidding?"

It's a mad idea!" and gave them a strange look. I know how difficult it can be to travel to and from Manchester, arranging wheelchair access etc. They knew how much it would mean to me to see Michael and Alfie, as I'm unable to attend their tour this year. So they kept reminding me of all the reasons I should go that day and after very little persuasion I agreed to go if they planned it all in advance. I knew it would be the maddest journey by train, as we would have to get two trains and walk to the Arndale Centre, but I didn't expect how 'mad' it was going to be!! I booked my

train tickets and planned what station we were travelling to and from. Viv also contacted HMV to inform them that I was in a wheelchair and I was coming with my two PA's to assist me, they said they would put our names down at the door and asked if we could arrive 45 minutes before Michael and Alfie were scheduled to arrive. According to our calculations the train we planned to get would mean we would get there in plenty of time.

The day of the signing, I woke up with a bad feeling that something was going to

go wrong! I was right - our train was cancelled 5 minutes before it was due to leave... I thought "Oh no" as the next train traveling to Manchester was 30 minutes later, meaning we would only arrive in Manchester at 11:10am! Oh BLOODY HELL! This is just my luck, we'd never make it to see Michael in time! After I gathered my thoughts together, I thought I had nothing to lose; I would take the risk and go. It turned out we were travelling on the slowest, coldest and oldest train with no actual wheelchair spaces, so other passengers kept knocking into me. At this point I was feeling a little deflated but we kept ourselves busy and ended up flicking through the Metro. That's when I came across Michael and Alfie's article about their world record attempt - this lifted my spirits and I felt even more determined to get there on time.

When we finally arrived at Manchester Victoria, we literally ran to the Arndale Centre, uphill! We then couldn't find HMV - running around like we had been set a task on *The Apprentice* and I was the team leader! We eventually found an information desk where they told us we'd have to get a lift to the second floor. Luckily we arrived at HMV at 11:30am on the dot! We explained to the security guard at the entrance what had happened, and he took us straight upstairs to where everyone else was waiting. I instantly asked Jen to buy the album, while Viv and I joined the queue. I was feeling hot and flustered after the mad rush, I just about had time to take off my coat before Michael and Alfie arrived.

I heard Michael's voice and I asked Jen to start recording as everybody, including myself started cheering. Michael shouted "Let's get cracking, we've got a world record to do!" When it was my turn - Jen said



"Michael, you have a special visitor!" then I appeared from around the corner with a huge smile on my face. In total shock Michael said "Oh Alana's here!" jumping up and running around the

signing table to give me a massive hug and kiss. I never expected that welcome! He said "How are you treacle? You alright?" - I nodded with a big grin. Then he said "You remember Alfie?" who then came straight over to say hello, I burst out laughing, how could I forget Alfie!

Michael looked gorgeous, really happy and I even didn't mind his beard. Everybody who knows me, including Michael, knows I usually dislike beards. I enjoyed chatting to them for longer than I expected and I was over the moon. I got a chance to give Michael a letter I had written to him entitled SUPER BALL, which he loved. He handed it over to Andrew, his PA, and said he would read it in the car. Michael was so delighted to see me but he said "We can't talk for ages, cos' we've got to set a record!" They both returned to their seats ready to sign my album. As I was turning around, Michael leaned over the table to grab the album from my lap, which I found amusing! I thought

please don't put your back out on camera! Michael continued chatting to me as he signed my album, he even started to sing a line from 'You're The Voice' - knowing this is my favourite song from the new record. As Alfie was signing my album, Michael seized the opportunity to give me another hug and kiss - still chatting away as usual. This moment was captured on Getty Images - I didn't realise they were

taking photographs until I saw them online the next day. After Alfie signed my album, it was time to say goodbye - he waved and gave me a cute smile, followed by Michael waving and saying "hope to see you soon".

I even got an opportunity to talk to Andrew, which was lovely as I hadn't seen him in a while either. Many familiar faces came to say hello - it's always nice to catch up with fellow Ballettes.

After all the chaos of getting to Manchester, it was worth it all - Jen and Viv have never seen me so ecstatic yet relieved before. . . I'm delighted to have been part of their amazing world record and I will cherish this memory forever. I knew Michael and Alfie would be World Record Breakers one day!

Massive CONGRATULATIONS to Michael and Alfie on their Number 1 album! Well-deserved!