

A Celebration of the Life of

Michael Tudor

24th February 1965 – 20th May 2019



**18th June 2019
at 2.30pm**

**Hither Green Crematorium
Verdant Lane
London
SE6 1TP**

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**Humanist
Ceremonies**

Michael died on May 20th 2019 at 9.25 in the evening, surrounded by Diane and those he loved. He had been diagnosed in August 2016 with stage 4 lung cancer, and he underwent many treatments, but continued to live life as fully and enjoyably as he could, teaching when well enough, seeing his friends, going on holidays with Diane, to the Peaks and Berlin, and planning a trip to New York. He was able to spend time with the people he cared about, and reconnect with some he had not had contact with for some years.

However, in February 2019 serious complications started and his condition began to deteriorate.

He knew he was seriously ill and spoke about it openly with Diane and his family, his friends and his students.

He had amazing support from everyone around him – friends, family, colleagues at Sacred Heart, and the pupils too, and Diane is eternally grateful for the love and kindness shown by everyone.

There are certain adjectives that come up time and time again when people talk about Michael, and which you will hear throughout the ceremony today: dedicated, inspiring, nurturing, uncompromising, unforgettable, romantic, funny, authentic, honest, loyal, kind, generous, principled.

He was a maverick, and not always an easy person to be with, but he was always true to himself and, in teaching, found a vocation in working with young adults: seeing the potential in those who perhaps didn't yet recognise it themselves, patiently sowing the seeds of inspiration, and nurturing the talent as it started to show. He understood, from his own experience, that success comes in many ways, at different times, and that everyone can shine with the right encouragement. He made a difference to the lives of hundreds and hundreds of young people – and many have gone on to have careers in the creative industries thanks to him.

When Diane and Michael lived in a flat in Pelham Grove, Lark Lane in Liverpool in the late 80s, they dreamed of having a rocking horse in the attic. They talked about a famous rocking horse they'd seen as children in the basement of Blacklers, the department store in town and, as a young couple, walked by a rocking horse factory near to where Michael lived when growing up, hoping that one might have escaped. Michael was a romantic rebel!

Celebrated Liverpool poet, Brian Patten, one of the Mersey Beat poets, who Michael's dad, Leo, happened to have known in childhood, wrote this fable which is a particular favourite of Michael and Diane's. He's going to read it now: it's called, '*You'd Better Believe Him*'.

Michael was born on February 24th 1965 in Oxford Street Hospital, Liverpool, the middle child of three: sister Tina was older by 20 months; sister Alison younger by four years. He was a very bright, clever lad, with a determined streak, and did well at school, passing his 11+ and getting a place at the grammar school, Champion. His report initially says that he was 'destined to be one of their star pupils' – but it all went

wrong when he lost motivation, stopped working and was more interested in making the rest of the class laugh. His grades dropped so much that he wasn't entered to take any exams. His mum Cathy was appalled, and reminded him how talented he was, but he told her that he couldn't be bothered.

He left home at 16 and did various jobs, including: a YOPS training scheme in drama at the Crawford Centre: at a graphics company that set ads for the Liverpool Echo; and at the famous Armadillo Tea Rooms, where he was a waiter and Pete Wylie and Julian Cope were customers.

Michael's sister, Tina, is going to talk about Michael and the kind of man he was.

Tina speaks:

"19800 days

One of Michael's favourite books was 'Catcher in the Rye' in which the teenage hero loathed all things 'phoney' – something Michael hated too. So given that Michael and me didn't really talk to each other for 20 years, I'm not going to stand here and tell you he was the perfect brother or son. He would hate that, he would recognise it as phoney and walk outside to have a cigarette until I'd finished. So I'll be up front and say yes, Michael wasn't perfect. He could be difficult and stubborn, appearing self-centred and indifferent and at times, even rude.

But that wouldn't be even half the story of the child Michael was and the man he became. A wise friend said, our 'weaknesses' are often our strengths and this is especially true of Michael. As a pupil, he stubbornly refused to go along with what his school wanted and left without any qualifications. But the flip-side of that stubbornness was his dogged determination to make sure that the love of his life didn't slip through his fingers when she moved to London. And so he went back to college and successfully finished his qualifications in record time and was rewarded with a place at the same college as Diane. And the rest, as they say, is history.

This contradiction was always apparent. Michael often wanted to be centre stage. At the age of 3 he convinced our mum that he couldn't walk in order to get her attention away from the new baby sister. He was such a good actor she believed him and was sure he had polio. And around the age of 7 whilst on holiday, and without telling anyone, Michael signed up for the Caravan Site's camp club talent competition. On stage, he announced his intention to be a comedian when he grew up before inflicting a 'Waiter, waiter, there's a fly in my soup' joke on a groaning audience.

But the reality was that when he was centre stage, he tried to avoid it. As a teenager he helped roadie for our dad Leo who was also in a band. If Leo gave him the chance to join in on guitar he would – as long as he could play in the corner. And as a singer and guitarist in his own bands, Michael was known for standing on stage with his back to the audience. At one gig I saw (I think the Dawn Boat) Michael just hid behind the pillar for pretty much the whole set. So he wanted to be centre stage as long as he wasn't centre stage...

He was definitely a conundrum!

But I think that it was Michael's determination to live his life according to his rules that make him less than perfect to the rest of us. He didn't live his life to please others; he wanted to be true to himself. Like Holden Caulfield in 'Catcher in the Rye', he didn't want to be phoney. So he didn't apologise if he didn't think he needed to. Where others would try to smooth things over to keep the peace – Michael wouldn't. Not because he lacked empathy – he didn't. But he believed in being truthful.

But whilst his uncompromising integrity could be difficult for those around him, his rules worked both ways. He was capable of total forgiveness if he was wronged. And he passionately believed that all people were equal and understood the possibilities in everyone - he didn't judge. So if he saw something he didn't like, he would call it out – it didn't matter whom to - family, friends, employers, pupils. He may not have liked being centre stage, but he didn't shy away from speaking his truth.

When Michael and me met again after 20 years, within about 10 seconds it was if we had never been estranged. Our shared childhood experiences bound us together in ways neither of us had realised and felt more powerful precisely because we had been apart so long.

But I want to share with you what he told me that day – just months after his cancer diagnosis. He told me that he loved his life, that he had no regrets and would do it all again. He lived it as he wanted to live it. He told me that he had the best job in the world – that as a teacher he had found his vocation and the motivation to make a difference – and he knew he did. He said that he had the best friends any man could wish for – in Deptford he had found his London family who always had his back and he knew he could turn to.

And that above all, and for which he never stopped to be thankful, he had the great fortune to have found his soulmate. One of the great love stories perhaps? I think so and I know Michael does too.

I want to end by saying the words of a poet close to Michael's and Diane's hearts - Charles Bukowski – which I think capture Michael's approach to life perfectly. He said:

'For those who believe in God, most of the big questions are answered. But for those of us who can't readily accept the God formula, the big answers don't remain stone-written. We adjust to new conditions and discoveries. We are pliable. Love need not be a command nor faith a dictum. I am my own god. We are here to unlearn the teachings of the church, state, and our educational system. We are here to drink beer. We are here to kill war. We are here to laugh at the odds and live our lives so well that Death will tremble to take us.'

And given how long and how many times Michael defied the odds, he certainly made death tremble."

As Tina says, Michael's soul mate - the love of his life, his saviour - was Diane, who he met in 1987, when he was 22. She was almost 18, doing her A levels, and was at an August Bank Holiday All-Dayer at MacMillans, off Bold Street. Michael, who was working there as a barman, has spotted Diane the weekend before, impressed at how she was forcefully taking on a bloke who she thought had inappropriately propositioned her, and decided 'she was the woman for him'. He persuaded his sister Alison, who knew Diane from working at British Home Stores, to introduce them. Unusually, Diane wasn't dressed in her usual Rockabilly gear, instead wearing a navy pencil skirt, stripy Tshirt and DMs. Michael was in turned-up jeans and a red checked shirt, and DMs too, of course. She thought he was beautiful and sophisticated, and couldn't believe her luck. She too was gorgeous – and smart, ambitious and talented, with plans for an art foundation and then art school in London. They talked about music, life and art, Bowie and Tolkein and, by the end of the evening, Diane says she was totally and utterly besotted. Head over heels.

They quickly became an item. And Michael realised that he had better get his act together if he wanted to keep her. And he did, passing an 'A' Level in Art and 'O' Levels in English and Art History, as a mature student, very fast, and getting on to an Art and Design BTEC.

They came together to London, Diane going to Camberwell School of Art and Michael to Thames Poly, to study Humanities. After false starts, living in Herne Hill and then Eltham, they arrived in New Cross in 1991, and never again moved more than a short distance away from this corner of South East London.

Michael trawled Deptford High Street, looking for work in the pubs, but there was nothing in any of the 12 he tried. Then he saw the bright lights of the theatre above The Bird's Nest on Deptford Church Street. He went in and spoke to barman Glenn, who said to come back when the manager was there. He and Diane killed time with half a lager each, they were so broke. But it all worked out well: manger Martin Bird gave him a job behind the bar and it was the start of the long relationship with the community at The Bird's Nest which gave Michael and Diane their surrogate London family, their friends, their tribe, their support network.

Micheal's long-standing friend, Cameron Walker, who also later worked with him, and attributes Michael for teaching him to be the teacher that he became, is now going to share some of their memories.

Cameron speaks:

"As you all know - a huge part of Michael's life was his teaching career. You may not know it started way back in the mid 80's when he walked into the Rathbone Arts centre to enquire about a job going as a sandwich maker. He had his Rickenbacker guitar thrown over his shoulder as he was on his way to rehearsal with the band. He started chatting to what he thought was a student about music and later emerged as a Community Music teacher!

In 2001 he got a job as a teaching assistant at the John Evelyn Centre, a PRU in Lewisham, before the year was out his talents were noted and Michael was elevated to the role of course leader for digital arts. When he left John Evelyn in 2011 he missed teaching and started popping into Sacred Heart on Saturdays to help Diane with her GCSE students and soon became

a permanent fixture establishing the 'THIS IS GRAPHICS' ethos on the A corridor.

Mike loved to wind up the young people we worked with at the John Evelyn Centre, who thought they were so knowing and streetwise! I remember one day on break duty in particular, when we all noticed a helicopter flying low and circling around the centre. Convinced that Mike knew everything, students asked him what was going on.

“Oh, Lewisham College are now running helicopter training courses,” he replied casually. The students were now all ears and wanting to know more.

“What? You can learn to fly a helicopter at Lewisham College?!”

“Yes,” said Mike, “ask Cameron!”

“Of course it's true,” I said, trying not to laugh.

“Yes,” he agreed, “but not only that! The best six will have a chance to go on to NASA and train as astronauts!”

Well, that was it: every student in the yard wanted to be on that course and were eagerly demanding details from Mike about how to get there. “Well,” he replied, “First, work really hard from now on. Second, you need to report to Desmond and see if he will consider you for a place. He's the one who will arrange the interviews at Lewisham.”

“Right, sir, thanks, we will!” chorused about ten students, now all hell-bent on doing helicopter training and becoming astronauts! They then rushed off in a body and proceeded to drive Desmond, our poor Deputy Head, crazy with their demands for this course. I don't think he ever got to the bottom of what had gone on!

Notwithstanding his wind-ups, Michael loved his students and they fully returned it. Many went on to be highly successful in their later college and working lives, though none, as far as I know, have become either a helicopter pilot or an astronaut!”

Despite the occasional leg-pulls, Michael was deeply invested in his students, inspiring them, mentoring them, finding potential within them.

One of his students, Onyi Enujuba, is now going to share a musical tribute.

Onyi speaks:

“Hi Sir,

Remember when you taught me to play ‘Stairway to Heaven’, and told me that if I played it down in shops in Denmark Street, everyone would be impressed?”

MUSIC: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN – PREFORMED BY ONYI ENUJUBA

*“Thank you for the guitar, Sir...I was only borrowing it...
And now I know that ‘Stairway to Heaven’ is banned in every guitar shop in
the UNIVERSE!!!”*

Michael challenged and provoked his students to think creatively, differently, from a new perspective, like all the best teachers.

Current year 13 student Michael Stepto is going to share with us a poem that is one that Michael used to get them to walk in someone else’s shoes, Charles Causley’s *Timothy Winters*.

Michael Stepto speaks:

“The poem I’m about to read has such significance as Mr. Tudor made it a point to ensure that every year group he taught learned it and designed a piece on it. The poem itself has quite an impact – as it shows the daily life of a boy who has been brought up in what may be regarded as a lower part of society. The reader gains an understanding of the boy’s struggle, but lack of self pity. The poem in my opinion is representative of a lot of what Sir stood for – in that regardless of background, disability, race, sexuality, we’re all equal and this ensure that all of Sir’s students learned the importance to understand and empathise with all.”

Ben Burke, one of the Elders from The Bird’s Nest, and a friend to Michael and Diane for more than 28 years, is going to share the famous chocolate biscuit story, Michael’s message to the students and then lead us together through the ‘This is Graphics’ institution, The Graphics Prayer.

Ben speaks:

“When he was diagnosed with cancer, Michael was very open with his students and let them know how they could best support him. “It isn’t a cure,” he announced, “but I have been told that chocolate biscuits will definitely help someone in my condition... particularly McVitie’s plain chocolate digestives. However, I want you all to clearly understand that receipt of these will in no way inflate your final grade!”

Soon, he was inundated with chocolate biscuits from Years 11, 12 and 13, to the point where he couldn’t close the drawer they were secreted in. His cunning plan somewhat backfired though! Michael suffered from murephobia, and while he now had more chocolate biscuits than he could eat, they didn’t go to waste, as someone, or rather some ones, decided to help him out... Yep, the Graphics room got mice!”

Michael’s message:

“Being diagnosed with incurable cancer is an incredibly scary conversation. It remains to those around you to help make sense of it on your behalf and to help you maintain a reason to continue. If it were not for you, the graphics students, I seriously believe that I wouldn’t be alive today; rather I would have clung to my duvet, a bottle of JD and a Cuban cigar and slipped away months ago. Your ongoing support and encouragement has given me the willpower to get out of bed and to continue with my life and to do so for as long as it sees fit to hang around.”

This is The Graphics Prayer, said at the beginning of ‘A’ Level and GCSE practical exams since 2014:

All speak together:

*We designers, who are in education
Hallowed by thy Studio name (aside - A6)
Thy Exams will come
On time as it is on budget
Give us this day more glorious ideas
(aside - You should have already had them)
And forgive us our inferior ones
As we forgive those who practice bad typography
(over long hours and NO pay)
But deliver us that Black Pencil
For thine is the Studio, the Mac, and Adobe
For ever and ever,
Amen.*

Good friend of Michael and Diane’s, Fiona Morgan, has another perspective of Michael to share.

Fiona speaks:

“Some of you will only have known Michael for a few years, while others will have known him since his Liverpool youth, or since he and Diane first saw the light and moved to ‘Souf’-East London, but however long it has been, I bet he has made an indelible impression on you! I have been close friends with Michael and Diane for over 15 years and, strangely enough, we met in The Birds’ Nest pub! I would therefore like to say this on behalf of all the many friends they made there through all the years since they began working and drinking there in 1991.

Michael was a great friend: loyal, kind and generous. If you were in trouble, he would be there for you, as I know from personal experience. However – as Tina has indicated – he could be hard work at times! It was part of his bi-polar nature that if he thought you were wrong, or being stupid, he would say so in no uncertain terms; he loved an argument and playing Devil’s advocate, so whatever opinion you expressed, he was pretty certain to disagree with it! I

once said to him 'Thank god for Google: we don't have to listen any more to two men arguing half the night about when decimal coinage came in!'. Michael immediately replied: 'I really miss all that!'

His bi-polar nature not only got him not just into a lot of rows over the years, but into a lot of actual fist-fights! I assisted in pulling him apart from someone else more than once and I don't know how many times Diane did it! On at least one occasion though, it was nearly both of them fighting! A group of Hells' Angel-type bikers had turned up at the Nest and one of them was wearing Nazi insignia: so Michael took him to task and they retreated outside. When Diane arrived, Michael persuaded her to go out to look and she asked the man why he had on such paraphernalia. He made the mistake of making a racist comment to justify them, to which Diane retorted: "Get on your fucking bike and go back to darkest Kent! You're not welcome in Deptford!" The biker then wanted to fight Diane, but was held back by members of his 'chapter', while a number of regulars had to restrain Michael. Finally, the whole gang got back on their bikes and roared off, never to be seen in the Nest again!

On a gentler note, Michael's bi-polar nature is also the reason why he had such sympathy for anyone he perceived as vulnerable or is some way the underdog, both as a teacher and in his personal life. This led him into some strange friendships and situations at times! Another manifestation of it was that Michael was a huge fan of the 'Jeremy Kyle Show': he claimed watching it made him feel 'relatively normal' and he would have been gutted if he had learned it has now been axed!

Many things were important to Michael, but two things were really central to his life. One of them was of course his teaching. He was probably the only teacher in the UK – if not the world! – who would sit in the pub in the middle of the summer holidays and declare he couldn't wait to get back to work – while Diane and I groaned in unison! He missed his 'kids' and didn't like to sit around getting bored, which was again part of his bi-polar nature.

Cameron has given us one great story about Michael's wicked sense of humour and how he loved seeing how much he could get his students to swallow! Here's another: a number of people walking around this area, probably up to and into their thirties, are still convinced that police dogs in Liverpool are cross-bred from a poodle and a dachshund. The curly poodle coat protects them from the icy winds off the Mersey, Michael would solemnly explain, and the short legs help them to sniff out the drugs!

The other thing that was even more central to his life was of course his love for Diane. He didn't always make very wise decisions about his health or how to deal with his cancer, but the wisest decision he ever made was who he wanted to spend his life with. When he was in and out of different hospitals earlier this year, it was incredibly moving to hear his worries about the strain this was putting on Diane, while hers were about what he was going through.

Not many of us get to experience that kind of life-long love, and I know who lucky each felt in having the other, even though that shared life has been cruelly cut short by his cancer.

Michael would also have felt incredibly proud of the legacy of love and respect Diane has received on his behalf from colleagues, students and ex-students, so many of whom are here today to testify to that. He would also be seriously angry to be missing out on all this! If you're up there, Michael, I bet you're gnashing your teeth!

As I began by saying, Michael is someone who is unforgettable and, however we knew him, however long we knew him, we are all here all here today to celebrate his life because of the effect he had on our own.

That is his memorial and through it he lives on!"

We all know that music was an essential part of Michael's life, both as a musician and as a fan.

As you came in today, you heard Elbow's *One Day Like This*, which is a song both Michael and Diane loved, and, as Diane says, they were very lucky to have had their own fair share of 'One Day Like This'. After 30 years together, they finally got married on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 2017. Diane is quick to point out that it was a coincidence – that it was in half term, and the cheapest day at the register office - but I suspect that that the romantic in Michael was quietly pleased.

Now we are going to listen to *Stay Free* by The Clash - in memory of all the bands that Michael ever roadied for, ever went to see, ever played in: from Chameleon Zoo; The Dawn Boat; Genghis Pack, who famously packed out the World Downstairs under The Royal Court in 1987; A Band Called Alice; Western Promise (Wessie P), playing the Rock Garden in 1990; THC; and, latterly, Prozac Jack and the Funkin' Whorehouse. Michael played guitar all his life, right until the late stages of his illness and neuropathy prevented him.

As we listen, I ask you to remember Michael in your own way, as you knew him. If you are religious, you might want to take this time for a silent prayer.

We're now going to sing together a song that is filled with great memories for Diane and Michael, and kind of became their song: remembering happy days in the late 80s, drinking in the Hague, the Liverpool Poly student bar, putting this on the juke box over and over; And in London too – it was a favourite of everyone singing in The Bird's Nest, at the tops of their voices. Filled with romance and lyricism, this is for Michael: *The Whole of The Moon* by The Waterboys. Sing with gusto, and a smile in your voice and joy in your heart that you knew Michael.

The final pieces of music are two more that meant a great deal to Michael and Diane: *Sweet Gene Vincent* by Ian Dury and The Blockheads, and *What a Way to End it All*

by legendary Liverpool band Deaf School. Michael saw them again in 2017 – it was the last big gig he went to – and Bette Bright gave him her handkerchief. It's in the coffin with him, along side lots of other mementos, including:

- All the teeth he ever lost – including a couple of Diane's wisdom teeth also
- His pillow, so that it's as if he's asleep, as he asked
- A patchwork quilt Diane made him for their first Christmas – mum Cathy knew then she was the girl for him to marry! It just took a long while!
- Susie, the abandoned teddy he found and rescued from the street
- A copy of one of Brian Patten's poetry books, *Notes to the Hurrying Man*
- A pack of 20 Lucky Strike cigs, in a branded pack, kindly brought yesterday from Geneva by Tim
- A braided lock of Diane's hair, which she gave him in the 90s
- A small guitar
- And all the many, many messages and letters people have written, including the messages many of you wrote on tags, and which originally were going to dress Michael's coffin. Diane was reminded in a dream of the 'This is Graphics' design mantra, 'Less is More', and thought that Michael might resent being decorated like a Christmas tree.

He's wearing his wedding suit and, of course, a hat and his DMs.

Before the music, Seanpaul Crossin, who works at Sacred Heart with Michael and Diane, is going to share a letter he wrote to Diane when Michael died.

Seanpaul speaks:

*"Hi D
I just wanted you to know something
I remember the first time I saw Mic
He was walking down the corridor towards graphics
I thought SHIT here's a cool cat
Every school has THE cool kid
But, this is a TEACHER
It's something I don't call you and Mic
Teachers put thoughts into kids' heads
You and Mic showed how the kids could get their thoughts out
You give them the tools and let them decide what their vision is
I call you two Mental to Vision Advisors (MVA's)...*

*Anyway
When I first saw Mic he was walking towards Graphics
Jacket on, cuffs turned up, lumber shirt on – opened
Some T-shirt that had some funky shit on it
Levi 501's with turn-ups
DM boots on – strolling on
Some people try and walk cool – Mic just did
I swear if he ever got caught in a fire alarm
He would hook his jacket round his shoulder (Just in case it got too warm)
And would carry on walking
Anyway Madam (I know you hate that – Scouser!
Even though I prefer the Blue side of the Mersey)*

*Please take comfort in knowing
That wherever Mic's spirit, energy, atoms – WHATEVER is
He's with the other chilled out cats
'Chilling with Dylan'
'Hanging with Harrison'
'Lighting up with Lennon'
'Jamming with Bob'
'Duelling with Hendrix'
'Bopping with Joplin'
And probably asking Warhol
WHAT THE FUCK
Is it with the Soup and Brillo pads?*

*I admired Mic because when he had the news he stuck his fingers up to
death
And in a proper Scouse fashion told it to go and fuck itself
Sorry I couldn't have a pint with you mate
But I'll have a few tonight for you
Love Seanpaul."*

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