

RĀ WHAKATĀ

YOUR WEEKEND

March 12, 2022

BUBBLÉ

BUBBLÉ

IS BACK

and he's here to charm us

BUBBLÉ

PLUS HAIRY STUFF // A DANGEROUS ROMANCE // CORN TWO WAYS

Waikato Times

“ I AM ”

THOUGHT
I'D REMAIN
RELEVANT,

Paul McCartney, Christmas, soul, persistence:
Amberleigh Jack talks to Michael Bublé
about the keys to his success.

INTERVIEW

Michael Bublé is a natural storyteller. He oozes charisma and enthusiasm as we talk. His jokes come easily and his smile freely, like he's chatting to an old mate. He makes it seem there's nothing he'd rather be doing. But he's also starving. He pulls out a little tub of pretzels and starts snacking. "I decorated my prison with plants for you," he laughs between bites, pointing to the "crappy fake" greenery in front of the corner wall where he's sitting.

"Doesn't it look like a prison?"

Even if you're not familiar with this crooner's music, chances are you've heard it. And heard it a lot. Globally, he's sold more than 60 million records. His 2011 album *Christmas* has sold enough copies to reach 12-times platinum in New Zealand. No doubt it's a Christmas favourite of someone you know.

"I'm so sorry," he jokes about his *Christmas* success.

"I'm going to do this new Easter record. [It's] incredible. It's followed by the Halloween [album]," he laughs. "A wonderful thematic record."

Christmas was Bublé's eleventh studio album. Had his record label had their way, however, it probably would have been his second.

The *Home* singer always loved Christmas, but when approached to record the festive album early in his career, he refused. He wanted to cement himself as an artist that was in it for the long haul first.

At the time he wondered if the decision might get him fired. It didn't. Years later the album was released and the unofficial King of Christmas was born. While he says that title was never his intention, he admits to being a bit egotistical about it when he was recording *Christmas*.

He recalls a time when well-known German composer, Chris Walden, told Bublé he'd heard he was making a Christmas album.

"I said, 'no Chris', I'm making *the* Christmas album," he laughs.

"I was probably just being an asshole."

It turns out he was right, though. It's been more than 10 years since *Christmas* was released, and he's still the topic of memes and jokes over the internet. "I was pretty sensitive about it," he admits.

Bublé gets serious for a moment. A rare change from the jokes and laughs so far. "If people think I only come out at winter, guess what..." he starts before shrugging briefly. He pops another pretzel in his mouth and doesn't say anything more on the topic.

If he's looking to prove a point about himself as an artist, though, his new album *Higher* may be the key. It's set for release in late March and during the recording he had what he says, "may be the best moment of my career".

Bublé talks with his hands when he's excited. His eyes widen, and his head moves about. Right now, it seems he can't sit still.

The amazing moment came when he was recording a cover of the Sam Cooke soul hit *Bring it on Home to Me*.

He'd arranged for a choir of what he describes as "the most incredible singers", and was in the studio directing the team of vocalists. He says he was "really intimidated".

Here he was, a "dorky white kid" who planned to take on what he describes as "the greatest soul singer", and put his own twist on the tune. And he'd pulled the best people to do it.

"Each of them have a better voice than I probably will ever have," he says.

And after just a couple of takes, everyone crowded into the studio to listen (masks on, he points out). Bublé's friend Angie was in the studio with him, and she had tears in her eyes. He recalls her telling him, "if this doesn't prove that soul has nothing to do with the colour of your skin, then nothing will."

"I just melted," he says. "I think it was the best thing anyone's ever said to me in my life."

WORKING WITH THE ONE-AND-ONLY PAUL MAC

There's one thing that's clear when talking to the star about *Higher*. He's really proud of this record. "Thank God," he laughs. "After all those crap albums!" His self-deprecation is in jest, but it's clear as huge as Bublé is, there are others' he holds in much higher regard. →

He's in awe when talking about working with singer-songwriter legend Paul McCartney. After sending McCartney a demo of *My Valentine*, Bubl  received an international call a few days later.

"He said, 'hi it's Paul Mac'," he recalls.

"I said, 'Hi it's Mic Boobs,' that's all I could think of to say!"

The pair spoke about the song and Bubl  invited McCartney to produce it.

"I said, 'I don't need you because of what you've done, I need you because of what you can do.'"

Bubl  raves about his time with McCartney. He says "Paul Mac" looked like he floated into the studio, rather than walked. "That dude looks like he's on rollerblades, you know?"

The pair worked on the song and once done, McCartney invited himself to spend the rest of the day hanging out. It was easy to forget he was in the presence of a legend, says Bubl . That is, until Paul McCartney mentioned he was on his way to have dinner with Bruce Springsteen.

"We had a wonderful day, a beautiful day."

(If you have one of the crooner's biggest hit songs stuck in your head right now, you're not the only one.)

The thing Bubl  admired most about McCartney? His ability to be a genius, without having to be arrogant or prove the point to anyone.

"To have that real – not the fake humility or confidence to just know the truth," he says. "And the truth is Paul McCartney is a bad mother...er."

"I think that's a pretty good lesson for all of us," he says.

He may not be ready to declare himself a genius, yet, but it's clear *Higher* is something Bubl  is stoked with. He's not the only one. He explains his publicist called him shortly after the album was recorded – with both good and bad news.

The good news? She suggested Bubl  had made his "tapestry". But the bad news?

"She said, 'well the bad news is you may never do it better again, so enjoy it.'"

That's what he's doing. Although the 46-year old father of three (he recently announced another is on the way) says he never imagined he'd have the career he has.

"I never thought I'd remain relevant," he says.

"It was so hard to get here, but I knew it was going to be so much harder to stay."

HIS HAWKE'S BAY INDIANA JONES MOMENT

And he's taking it all in. His last New Zealand show was in February 2020 at Mission Estate winery, and his



ABOVE Bubl  in Rome in 2001 at the very beginning of his professional career; and performing in Sydney in 2020.

recollection of that show is still fresh. "Hawke's Bay it was called, right?"

The most memorable part? The food, for starters.

"I couldn't believe there were so many good restaurants in such a small place," he says.

"I remember eating dim sum and thinking if I [kept] eating I wouldn't fit into my suit."

He loved the crowd, called the venue "gorgeous" and it was right at the time of the year when everything changed.

"It was literally [an] Indiana Jones, door falling, jump through the gate, grab your hat [moment]," he laughs.

He says as soon as he got home the borders shut. "I could never have imagined it would be the last time I'd see so many of my guys," he says, referencing the fact that he and his crew couldn't tour for "almost two years".

It's been a hell of a time for many in the music industry, but Bubl  admits he enjoyed his enforced timeout. "I don't want to say I was loving life, but I was loving life," he says.

He smiles as he talks about the time spent at home during the pandemic. He had a new baby girl at the time, and was able to spend time being a "papi". He and his wife Luisana Lopilato are currently expecting their fourth child, and they announced the news via the music video for his new song *I'll Never Not Love You*.

He was also the designated home school teacher during lockdown. "I realised we need to pay teachers more," he laughs. "I'm a terrible teacher, but I tried."

He recalls one particularly embarrassing day when his first grade son was at home with a test. The question about a rhombus stumped Bubl , and after several attempts to answer online, only to be met with a frustrating buzz as he got the answer wrong, he was questioning his own intelligence.

"Honest to s..., I didn't know what it was," he laughs. "I was like, 'am I that stupid?' They were giving me grade one curriculum and I can't do it."

His primary school maths knowledge may be lacking, but luckily Bubl  has his music to fall back on. Although there's one thing he'd love to achieve, but it's off the cards, and that's have a James Bond theme song. "I'm Canadian, they won't allow me," he says, joking that you have to be British to get a Bond theme on your resume.

"But while I've not been asked to do the James Bond theme, I'm quite sure I'm the first runner-up to be doing the new Mr Bean," he jokes.

DANCING WITH THE STARS OR JUST A STAR DANCING?

In February, 2022, Bubl  posted a vague tweet implying he'd been dancing for something special. It spurred a frenzy of followers guessing he was getting ready to perform on *Dancing With the Stars*.

"I'm never going to do *Dancing With The Stars*, are you kidding me?" he laughs.

"IT WAS LITERALLY [AN] INDIANA JONES, DOOR FALLING, JUMP THROUGH THE GATE, GRAB YOUR HAT [MOMENT]."

BELOW Michael Bubl 's February 2020 concert at Mission Estate winery in Hawke's Bay.



THE INTERVIEW



LEFT Bublé filming his 2015 Christmas TV special in a dashing gold jacket; and with his wife Luisana Lopilato.

BELOW Bublé, Lopilato and their three children during a 2020 Christmas singalong TV special.

“IT WAS SO HARD TO GET HERE, BUT I KNEW IT WAS GOING TO BE SO MUCH HARDER TO STAY.”



The cryptic tweet was actually about a music video that Bublé has filmed for the title song from the new album. Apparently he's not supposed to really talk about, and definitely not supposed to show clips of, the video.

“I know I'm going to get in trouble. I have no filter, and I'm sorry,” he says before explaining he'd wanted to do a music video where he can showcase his dancing.

The problem? “I'm a s...ty dancer, just so you know. I'm like Zoolander. My right hand, oh man,” he says, moving his hand about to demonstrate its impressive dancing ability.

“But the second I have to turn left, all bets are off.”

But he's incredibly proud of learning things he never thought possible and making the video. He learned plenty, executed lifts and had a blast. “I did what I was afraid of I did it,” he says.

Although he was still paying for it almost a week later. “It's been five days since I shot that video and I still can't lift my arm,” he laughs, explaining he's been laying on a baseball every chance he gets to try and loosen his muscles.

But he's happy. And it's all part of his master plan this year for how he wants to approach life.

“You know what, I'm loving life, my kids are healthy. Let's f...ing dance,” he says. “Let's do it.” **YW**

