

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's magician Paul Daniels

The prized possession you value above all others... Two steel bowls that the British magician Robert Harbin used in a trick back in the 1940s. They were a gift, and they're incredibly rare.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Checking Twitter and Facebook every morning when I should be getting on with work. It's a big distraction, but I enjoy the interaction with people.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... John Northern Hilliard's *Greater Magic*. It covers tricks, but also the meaning of life and how magic fits into it.

The film you can watch time and time again... *The Wizard Of Oz*. My dad Hughie was the projectionist at our local cinema [in South Bank, near Middlesbrough]. I was nine when I watched the film there and was amazed by it.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... The magician Mac King is a friend who does a skit in his Vegas show when he pretends to be invisible. I'd freak him out by being a real invisible man during that.

The song that means most to you... Handel's *Zadok The Priest*. It was played at the end of my wedding to Debbie McGee in 1988.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Read as much as you can, and be sure to question everything you read.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend...

Buying flash cars in the 80s and 90s. I had a Citroën Maserati, then a Ferrari and a couple of Bentleys. I threw away hundreds of thousands of pounds on what I call a Clarkson Syndrome.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... My own untidiness. Every day I promise to put things in the right place, but I don't. So Debbie puts things away, which I struggle to find.

The person who has influenced you most... My father. He could do everything from mending cars to electrics. He inspired me to want to know more about things.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To appear in a movie.

Left: Judy Garland in *The Wizard Of Oz*. Above: A Citroën Maserati. Right: Joseph Stalin



The unending quest that drives you on... The pursuit of knowledge.

But nobody likes a know-all, that's why Debbie will never watch *Eggheads* with me.

The poem that touches your soul... I'm tickled by Ogden Nash's work because of its silliness.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... The human memory. I've studied it and now coach people how to remember things.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The tip of my left ring finger, which I accidentally cut off with a saw in 2012. Nerve damage means everything I touch with that finger feels like it has a hole in it.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I perform the same on stage as I did on TV. My live performances are way funnier.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Reading about the age prediction card trick when I was 11. I found a Victorian book with instructions on how to do the trick and it opened up the world of magic to me.



'I wasted hundreds of thousands of pounds on flash cars in the 80s. I call it Clarkson Syndrome'

then go and see O by Cirque du Soleil and Mac King's magic show. We'd then relax at La Chevre d'Or hotel in Eze, in the South of France. I'd have a glass of sancerre on the terrace and watch the lights of the boats on the Mediterranean.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Pulling off a tough gig in the 90s. The audience were bankers and aristocracy – people not known for laughing. But not long into the gig people were crying with laughter.

The saddest time that shook your world... The day my father died 20 years ago when he was 73. I miss him, but I talk to him all the time. I'll be making something and I'll say, 'Come on Dad, how do I do this?' And he'll help me.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like a service at the Prince of Wales Theatre in the West End, with friends telling lies about how much they loved me. I'd like my ashes to explode over the Thames in a firework.

The way you want to be remembered... As the only man who lived to see the end of the DFS Sale!

The Plug... My new UK tour *Back Despite Popular Demand* is now on. Visit www.pauldaniels.co.uk. Twitter @thepauldaniels. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The philosophy that underpins your life... Keep it simple, stupid, and think it through.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd wipe out the people who decided *not* to dredge our rivers. Our house in Berkshire was flooded because of them.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Stalin. I'd simply ask him why he murdered all those people.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd spend the day with my family including my three sons Gary, Paul and Martin, and my grandchildren – Martin's kids Lewis, 15, and Camilla, 12. We'd have breakfast at the Magic Castle Hotel in Hollywood, then head to Disneyland followed by Knott's Berry Farm, a theme park in California. Lunch would be in a Red Lobster restaurant in LA, then we'd head to Universal Studios stopping off at the Bates mansion from *Psycho*. I'd pop back to London for double egg and chips with white bread and butter at the Windows Restaurant at the Hilton Hotel on Park Lane. In the evening, Debbie and I would check into The Venetian hotel in Las Vegas



PHOTOGRAPHS: PAUL LEWIS, ALAMY, ALL STAR, GETTY

PS...

Emma Thompson wrote and stars in historical drama Effie Gray, in cinemas on Friday. Jane Horrocks appears in the comedy East Is East at London's Trafalgar Studios from today. And Stevie Nicks' new album 24 Karat Gold is out on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Behind the scenes on television's hottest new drama – *The Great Fire*
- Brilliant recipes from James Martin's *Saturday Kitchen*
- David Attenborough's amazing new wildlife series
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings