

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's the comedian **Bill Bailey**



I've driven at least a dozen tanks and I'm fascinated by guns, jets, missiles and warships – though I know they cause carnage'

the back streets of Rome watching the enter tainers, followed by pasta and red wine for dinner. The day would end with the sunset at Avebury Stone Circle in Wiltshire, a pint of local ale, and bed at home in west London.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The last day of my six-day, 87-mile walk on The Ridgeway Trail to Avebury last summer. I did it with family and friends for my 50th birthday and to raise money for Cancer Research.

The saddest time that shook your world... My mum, Madryn, passing away in 2005 from bowel cancer. Mum was such a character. I was with her when she died and it was surreal.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To write a musical. I have a story and six songs already written.

The philosophy that underpins your life... To never give up.

The order of service at your funeral... It will be in a chapel by the sea and begin with Once In A Lifetime, followed by a reading of WB Yeats' The Indian To His Love. Then I want Jerusalem and Adlestrop before ending with Song To The Siren by This Mortal Coil. I wouldn't mind my body being set out to sea in a Viking longship and burnt!

The way you want to be remembered... With a smile will do.

The Plug... Bill Bailey's Limboland is touring from 2 May. For tickets visit billbailey.co.uk. ■

The prized possession you value above all others... A leather documents case my father Christopher gave me when I was six. I kept my piano music in it and it stayed with me. My son Dax, 12, uses it.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not pursuing academia further. After my A-levels I was in too much of a hurry to get out in the world.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Beer. I've tried to give up, but there are too many great new breweries.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Vineland, Thomas Pynchon's novel about US radicals from the 1960s.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd stand on stage at a Rolling Stones concert and watch Mick Jagger strut his stuff.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People who stare at me in restaurants.

Right: Suleiman the Magnificent. Above right: a tank. Far right: Seram Island in Indonesia



The film you can watch time and time again... The Night Of The Hunter, with Robert Mitchum. It's terrifying and brilliant.

The person who has influenced you most... My music teacher Lynda Phipps. She was no-nonsense and full of life. She taught me far more than music – she gave me belief in myself. Sadly, she died 10 years ago.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Suleiman the Magnificent. He ruled the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century and kept order in the Islamic world. I'd show him the chaos today and ask his advice.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Enjoy the moment and don't worry about the future.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Tanks! I've driven at least a dozen. I'm fascinated by guns, jets, missiles and warships – though I appreciate that they cause carnage.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A pair of black leather boots with metal heels I



wore doing stand-up in the mid-1990s. One of the heels fell off, so I abandoned them in a dressing room in Edinburgh. They'd be a nice memento.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep improving at stand-up.

The poem that touches your soul... Adlestrop by Edward Thomas. He writes of an English rural paradise before WWI. I carry a book of his poems when walking in the country.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That because I support the Labour Party, I'm a deluded, vegetarian, romantic Communist who wants to give money to Putin. I'm a meat-eating realist who likes tanks!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Playing Mozart's Coronation Concerto on piano with a full orchestra in Bath at 17. Miss Phipps talked me into doing it.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd drive a Chieftain tank through the offices of

Amazon for not paying enough tax. **The song that means most to you...** Once In A Lifetime by Talking Heads. I first heard it at 15 and it became the party song for me and my mates.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd begin the day watching the sun come up at Stonehenge and feeling the stones. I'd have breakfast on the back of a truck driving through Namibia. Just a flask of coffee and a Croix de Savoie [a brioche-like pastry]. Then I'd have a walk along the Skeleton Coast and sit on the beach taking photos of the lions. I'd meet my wife Kristin and Dax on the island of Seram in Indonesia where we'd sit on

a platform 120ft above the jungle and watch the wildlife. For lunch, I'd have rujak – a spicy fruit dish – with iced coconut water. After that we'd visit the ruins of the Lost City in Colombia, then I'd take my paddleboard up the Thames at Streatley, Berkshire. The evening would begin with a stroll in



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PS...

Katherine Jenkins' latest album, *Celebration*, is released on Friday. Idris Elba's new action film, *Bastille Day*, is in cinemas the same day. And Zoe Wanamaker stars in *Elegy at the Donmar Warehouse in London*, in previews from Thursday



NEXT WEEK

- Richard Branson at home on Necker Island
- Tom Kerridge serves up a lip-smacking lamb lunch
- Monty Don on the beauty of spring blossom
- PLUS Britain's biggest and best TV listings guide