

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's the turn of actress **Susan Hampshire**

The prized possession you value above all others... Keepsakes from my son Christopher's childhood. I have his first coat, a lock of his hair, his first pairs of shoes. I even have all his first teeth! He's 46 now and my only child, so I can't bear to part with them.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I had the type of brain that could argue intellectually. I'm dyslexic, and with a better brain I could have stood up for myself more.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I'm dreadful for buying things I don't need in sales.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Crime And Punishment by Dostoyevsky. I read it aged 15 and it was a labour, but I loved it.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Laziness. I'll be 80 in May, but I keep busy the whole time.

The film you can watch time and time again... I should say a classic like Casablanca, but it's Pretty Woman.

The crime you'd commit knowing you could get away with it... I'm not one for crime, but if you forced me I'd dig up clumps of lily of the valley from someone's garden and put them in my own.

The person who has influenced you most... My mother June. She was dyslexic too, yet started a school in London while raising four children. She was awe-inspiring. She died from cancer in 1967 aged just 62.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... I'd sit next to Beethoven while he composes. His Pastoral Symphony is special to me, as my husband Eddie gave me a recording of it after our wedding in 1981.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be polite, patient, kind and think of others.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Politics. I wasn't interested for most of my life, but now I watch every political programme possible.



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The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I've never forgiven myself for accidentally taping over my sister Ann's recording of her playing Chopin's Nocturnes when I was practising a Swedish accent for a film in the 60s. She never complained, but I was devastated.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep looking after Eddie. He's 84 and has dementia. I gave up full-time acting eight years ago to look after him and am very happy doing it.

The poem that touches your soul... Golly, I can't think of one because I'm almost illiterate!

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I've been mistaken for most actresses from the 1960s at some stage. Susannah York, Jane Asher... and Julie Christie, which was a bonus. Someone stopped me in M&S to ask if I was Germaine Greer!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Being photographed by Terence Donovan at 24. It got me a role with Charles Aznavour in 1966's Paris Au Mois d'Août and the part of Fleur in The Forsyte Saga.

The song that means most to you... Paris Au Mois d'Août, which Charles sang for our film. It reminds me of the seven years I lived in Paris in the 60s.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... The day would begin somewhere by the coast in Italy, with breakfast on a terrace with Eddie. It would be warm and we'd have a view of the sea. Later we'd be joined by Christopher, his wife, and their children – Rafael, ten, and Fleur, seven – and my sisters Jane and Ann. In the afternoon I'd go to Japan to stay in an inn called a ryokan with a stream flowing through it. They're magical. I'd relax and eat Japanese food. I'd also have sake, but it must be very hot. I'd spend the early evening walking in Kingussie in the Scottish Highlands, where we filmed Monarch Of The Glen – but it would have to be May when there are no midges. Later I'd have a glass of my favourite wine, Le Montrachet Marquis de Laguiche white burgundy, with dinner at home in Chelsea.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd swim with dolphins and really observe how they communicate.



Right: Pretty Woman. Above right: lily of the valley. Far right: dolphins



As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Emma Watson is Belle in Disney's latest reimagining of Beauty And The Beast – in cinemas from Friday. Depeche Mode's new album Spirit is out the same day. And Griff Rhys Jones opens in The Miser at London's Garrick Theatre on Monday



NEXT WEEK

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