

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's musical theatre star Michael Ball's turn

**The prized possession you value above all others...**

An oil painting of our Tibetan terriers, Ollie and Freddie, which was a Christmas present from my partner Cathy McGowan in 2014. She commissioned the artist Kim Sears – Andy Murray's wife – to photograph and paint the dogs in secret.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...**

Second helpings of cheese, wine and bread and butter pudding.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...**

Watership Down by Richard Adams, which I first read when I was 15. It's not just about rabbits – it's about friendship and finding a community in the face of injustice.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...**

Not learning to tap dance like Fred Astaire. At drama school I made up a back problem and a heart condition to avoid lessons because they began at 9am.

**The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day...**

I've been buying Range Rover cars for 18 years, so I'd sneak into their offices to peek at their secret prototypes.



Right: Fred Astaire. Above right: Lady Penelope and her manservant Parker with the Fab 1 Rolls-Royce in Thunderbirds. Far right: the Vatican

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...**

Waking up on Christmas morning when I was eight. Our garden on Dartmoor was covered in snow and Santa had given me the toy I wanted, Lady Penelope's Fab 1 Rolls-Royce from Thunderbirds. It was magical.



**The film you can watch time and time again...**

Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway*, in which a struggling writer gets a gangster to finance his play. It's stunningly funny and accurate.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...**

Bad audience etiquette in the theatre, especially mobile phones.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...**

That I'm always happy. In a professional setting I make every effort to spread happiness, but I have really black periods too and I can be a miserable sod.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...**

This too shall pass. Some events in life can feel overwhelming, but don't worry, you'll deal with it.



'At drama school I made up a back problem and a heart condition to avoid tap dancing lessons at 9am!'

**The person who has influenced you most...**

Cathy. We've been together since 1991 and she's my soulmate.

**The saddest time that shook your world...**

I was really shaken when the Twin Towers were attacked. It brought home to me how fragile the world is.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...**

I'd create a computer program that would rebate tax to people like me who pay up in full – then really hit tax evaders.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...**

Having a No 2 hit in 1989 with *Love Changes Everything* from the show *Aspects Of Love*. It opened up opportunities that I never thought could happen to me.

**The poem that touches your soul...**

Joni Mitchell's song *Both Sides Now* is as beautiful as any poem. It's like an articulate essay on life and love.

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

I'd sail into Cape Town at sunrise with Cathy on a yacht. We'd step off it and into a

Triumph TR6 sports car to drive the Twelve Apostles coastal road. After that we'd have coffee in a café in Rome before a tour of the art treasures at the Vatican. Lunch would be pasta and langoustines at the Hotel Splendido in Portofino, then during a walk on Dartmoor we'd have tea at the Two Bridges pub. Later, we'd go to the island of Eleuthera in the Bahamas with Cathy's daughter Emma, her husband Dean and their children Connor, 18, and Grace, 15. We'd swim and I'd cook a big barbecue. Later Cathy and I would go back to the 1960s to see Barbra Streisand in *Funny Girl* on Broadway, then have cocktails with friends at the Don't Tell Mama piano bar, but this would be in 1990 when it was cool. The day would end at home in London watching a box set with Cathy.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...**

To be able to get back into the wedding costume I wore as Marius in *Les Misérables* in 1985.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...**

You can't please all the people all of the time – but you can try.

**The order of service at your funeral...**

I'd like something grand and over the top, with thousands of people wailing in the street as I'm taken to Westminster Abbey in a horse-drawn carriage.

**The way you want to be remembered...**

He was just a turn, but a top turn.

**The Plug...**

Michael Ball and Alfie Boe's new album *Together* is out now. Book tickets for their *Together Again* tours at [livenation.co.uk](http://livenation.co.uk). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

Scarlett Johansson's a human-cyborg hybrid in sci-fi drama *Ghost In The Shell* – in cinemas from Friday. Tinie Tempah's new album *Youth is out on the same day*. And David Tennant opens in *Don Juan In Soho* at London's Wyndham's Theatre on Tuesday



## NEXT WEEK

- Meet the winners in our annual wildlife photography competition
- The most delicious Easter bakes from Royal Wedding cake maker Fiona Cairns
- Britain's best TV guide