

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: Blur bassist turned cheesemaker Alex James

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A Neolithic tool called a celt, which was given to me by my best friend. His mum found it in the woods in Oregon when she was little. It's a piece of smooth granite that probably doubled as a weapon. It's great for pounding spices.

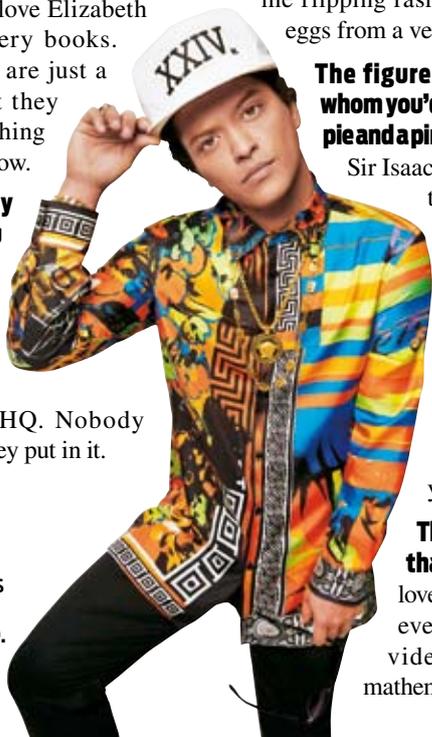
**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** I genuinely have no regrets. I've made every mistake in the book, but you always learn something.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Cheese on toast in bed.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** I love Elizabeth David's cookery books. Some recipes are just a few lines, but they tell you everything you need to know.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd love to poke around Coca-Cola's HQ. Nobody knows what they put in it.

Right: Bruno Mars. Above right: children's toothbrushes and toothpaste. Far right: Antarctica



**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Spurious exclamation marks. I never reply to emails that have more than one.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Kind Hearts And Coronets, with Sir Alec Guinness. It's funny, but deals with the morals of greed over love.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My granddad, John Emrys James, was a chef and had a hotel in Bournemouth. He had me flipping rashers and whisking eggs from a very young age.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** I'd love to meet Sir Isaac Newton. He was a tricky customer but he'd be fascinating company.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** With five kids, my mantra seems to be, 'Clean your teeth!'

**The unlikely interest that engages you...** I love number theory – I even watch YouTube videos about higher mathematics to fall asleep.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** A small iceberg I pulled out of the sea in Greenland where

Blur played a gig in 1998. I tried to ship it home in an insulated box, but it got lost. I still think about it.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To be creative. Creativity is just messing around until suddenly there's something that didn't exist before.

**The poem that touches your soul...** My son Artemas, who's 11, recently learnt If by Rudyard Kipling. Hearing him say the end – 'And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!' – actually made me cry.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** I'm sure there are plenty, but if you stick to what you believe in, all misapprehensions eventually evaporate.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Meeting Blur's Graham Coxon in London in 1988. He said, 'Come and meet Damon Albarn and have a jam.' I did and the connection was immediate.



'I love number theory, I even watch YouTube videos about higher mathematics to fall asleep'

the realisation of a dream. I also get to hang out with Claire and our children Geronimo, 13, twins Artemas and Galileo, Sable, eight, and Beatrix, seven, and all my best mates.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When Geronimo took over DJing from me at Festival last year. He was brilliant and seeing him enjoy himself was tremendous.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** I try never to dwell on sadness, although I get a bit upset at the sight of over-cooked steak.

**The unfulfilled ambition that haunts you...** I'd love to go to Antarctica.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** As Churchill said, keep b\*\*\*\*\*g on. And treat people as you would wish to be treated.

**The order of service at your funeral...** It would have to be a full state funeral at St Paul's Cathedral with Carlos Kleiber conducting the Berlin Philharmonic and Chorus in the Dies Irae from Verdi's Requiem. The eulogy will be read by my great-great grandchild and I'll be buried on the farm.

**The way you want to be remembered...** You don't get to choose. Hogarth spent his life painting, but is now thought of as a clogged-up roundabout in west London.

**The Plug...** The Big Feastival runs at the Churchill Heath Farm, Kingham, Oxfordshire from 25-27 August. For tickets visit [uk/thebigfeastival.com](http://uk/thebigfeastival.com). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

Idris Elba is a gunslinger in *The Dark Tower*, in cinemas

Friday. Broadway hit *13 The Musical* opens at London's

Ambassadors Theatre on Wednesday. And Van Morrison

launches his world tour in Newcastle, Co Down, on Sunday



## NEXT WEEK

- The practical joke cake from Diana that made birthday boy William blush in part four of our series
- Quick, tasty and nourishing one-bowl recipes
- Britain's best TV listings guide