

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's actor Richard E Grant's turn

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I'm haunted by the moment a doctor told my father, Henrik, that he only had months to live after he was diagnosed with brain cancer. To witness his absolute loss of hope was devastating.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Eating Christmas puddings once a month throughout the year. I stockpile them in the January sales.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Alice In Wonderland, which I've returned to time and time again since I was a boy. It's a perfect guide to the British sensibility with sublime imaginative leaps and droll wit.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd fly around releasing fragrances that would prompt people to live their dreams. *Nothing* beats olfactory nirvana!

Right: Neil Armstrong. Above right: Pelham Puppets. Far right: A balloon ride over the Masai Mara



The prized possession you value above all others... My Pelham Puppets. I had a marionette theatre in my parents' garage in Swaziland, where I grew up. I have 40 now and keep buying more.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Casual racism.

The film you can watch time and time again... Woody Allen's *Bullets Over Broadway* never ceases to make me laugh with its skewering of actors' egos.

The person who has influenced you most... My wife Joan Washington. We began a conversation in 1982 and we haven't stopped talking since. Her kindness and compassion never cease to surprise and amaze me.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Neil Armstrong. I was

12 when he stepped onto the moon in 1969 and hearing his voice from space on the radio made me want to be an astronaut. I'd love to hear every detail of his trip.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Everyone was your age once. Even if they appear crinkly, inside they're not.



'Like everyone with a long face, my features suggest I've just heard bad news. But it doesn't mean I'm not laughing inside'



The poem that touches your soul... The *Hollow Men* by TS Eliot. It's deeply moving.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Smelling things! I love putting my nose to flowers, food,

fabric or the necks of people I like. Last year I fulfilled a dream and brought out my own fragrance, Jack.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... In 1986 our first daughter was born at 27 weeks and only lived for half an hour. You never get over the loss of a child, you learn to navigate your way around it.

The unending quest that drives you on... My father instilled in me that heaven and hell are to be found here on earth and that you only get one crack at it, so grab it while you can.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... Like everyone with a long face, my features suggest I've just heard bad news but it doesn't mean I'm not laughing inside.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting the part of Withnail in *Withnail And I* in 1986. If Daniel Day-Lewis had accepted it when offered, I wouldn't be answering these questions now!

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd round up despots, starting with Mugabe, lock them in a room, each armed to the teeth, and let them sort themselves out.

The song that means most to you... When I was a waiter in Covent Garden in 1982, The Eurythmics' *Sweet Dreams* played endlessly. It inspired me to believe that I'd make it as an actor.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd spend all day with Joan and our daughter Olivia, 24, beginning at dawn with breakfast on the terrace of The Gritti Palace hotel in Venice – fruit salad, croissants and orange juice. This would be followed by swimming on Macaroni beach in Mustique and lunch at La Petite Maison in Nice – truffle macaroni, tuna with their special sauce and mashed

potatoes, then mango sorbet. I'd have an hour's kip in a hammock at Steve Martin's house in Beverly Hills, then a bike ride along Venice Beach with Steve giving a commentary on everyone we pass. Dinner would be with James Brolin and Barbra Streisand at their house in Malibu. Later I'd dance at the House On Fire club in Swaziland, then sleep in a tent at the Mkhaya game reserve. The next day would begin at 5am in a hot-air balloon over the Masai Mara in Kenya to view game.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The final day of filming my autobiographical film *Wah-Wah* in the Mkhaya game reserve in 2004 when a family of elephants appeared. It happened just as the film ran out.

The saddest time that shook your world... My father's death at the age of 52 when I was 24. Although he was an alcoholic I remember his charm and provocative sense of humour most.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I'd like to write and direct another film.

The philosophy that underpins your life... The here and now is *everything*. Make the most of it while you can.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm not ready to go yet!

The way you want to be remembered... He was here and had the ride of his life.

The Plug... Richard E Grant's *7 Deadly Sins* is on Fridays, 9pm, Discovery Channel. Discover his fragrance at jackperfume.co.uk. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS FLOYD/CAMERA PRESS, REX, GETTY

PS...

*Naomi Watts and Ben Stiller star in comedy **While We're Young**, in cinemas from Friday. Emma Thompson returns to her role as Mrs Lovett in **Sweeney Todd** at The London Coliseum from Monday. And Olly Murs starts his UK tour in Sheffield on Tuesday*



NEXT WEEK

- The four Britain's Got Talent judges tell us why the new series will be more bonkers than ever
- Tom Kerridge serves up the perfect Easter feast
- PLUS Britain's biggest and best TV listings guide