



From top: The Taj Lake Palace hotel, The Phantom Of The Opera, tea at The Dorchester, da Vinci, The Hitch Hiker's Guide To The Galaxy, an Opel Vectra, Dow's port, David with Ian Botham after winning the Ashes in 1985 and Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid

The prized possession you value above all others... A David Shepherd oil painting called Rhino In The Kaokoveld. I bought it about 20 years ago for £20,000. It marries my two loves – David's work and wildlife, which stems from my childhood in East Africa.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Selling Mum's house and contents too quickly after she died in 1986 of heart failure. She was in her mid-60s and I was so sad I just cleared the decks. I wish I'd kept a few things.

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

I'd have breakfast in the crater at the Ngorongoro conservation area in Tanzania with my wife Thorunn and our daughters Alex, 19, and Sammi, 17. We'd go on safari then switch to the Maldives for scuba diving. After that, we'd wander around the market in St Tropez, then arrive at my cousin Richard's Vondeling winery in South Africa and drink some of his best wines. The afternoon would be spent bodysurfing at Crane beach in Barbados, then I'd pop back to London for afternoon tea at The Dorchester. Thorunn and I would have dinner at an old cafe on the Left Bank in Paris before heading to Broadway for a musical like Phantom Of The Opera. We'd end the day in a suite at the Taj Lake Palace hotel in Udaipur, India.

The temptation you wish you could resist... The second bottle of Dow's port after dinner.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I love The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy. Douglas Adams's imagination is brilliant.

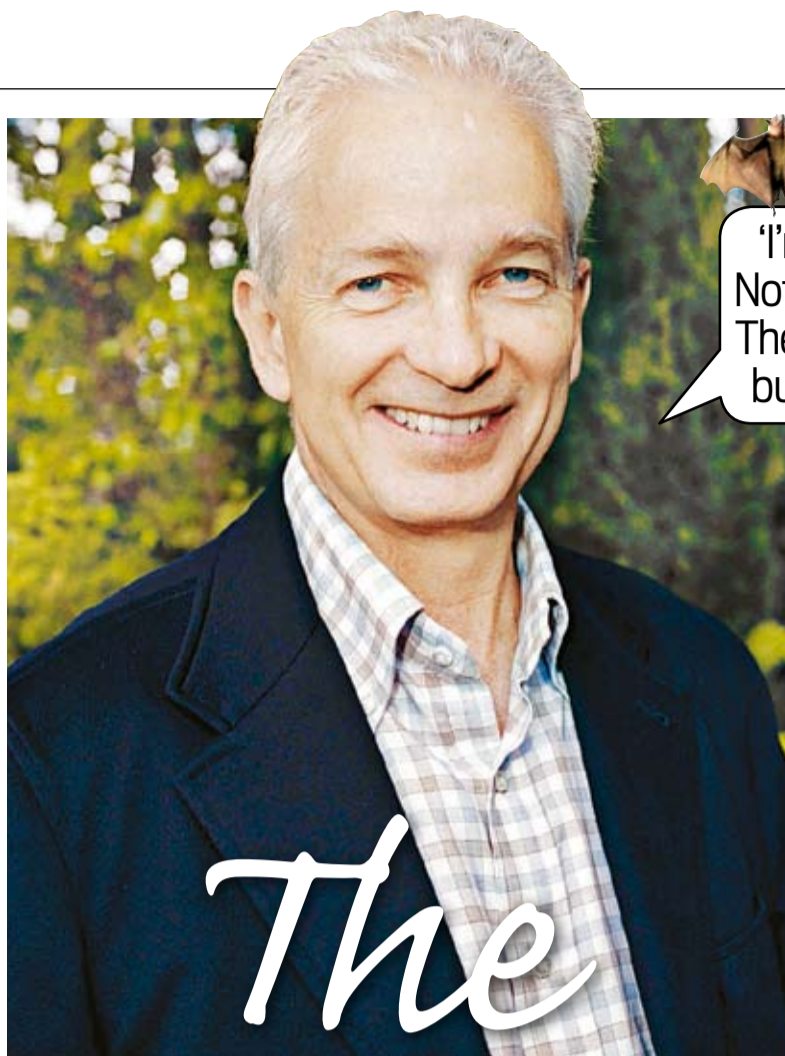
The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd kill some time at a branch of designer lingerie store Agent Provocateur!

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

The film you can watch time and time again... Butch Cassidy And The Sundance Kid. Paul Newman and Robert Redford are the coolest film stars ever.

The person who has influenced you most... Ray Illingworth, who was my captain at Leicestershire. In just three years, he turned me from a gifted 18-year-old who had never played first-class cricket into an England player.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Leonardo da Vinci. I'd ask how on earth he envisaged the helicopter 500 years ago.



'I'm obsessed with bats. Not cricket bats – real bats. They're clever and adorable but they get a bad press'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's former cricketer David Gower

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Smile – because it confuses people! My kids introduced me to this phrase recently and I love it.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Bats. Not cricket bats – real bats! I've been on bat walks in the country and they're wonderful creatures. They're clever and adorable, but they get a bad press, which largely stems from Count Dracula. I would like this to change.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A maroon Opel Vectra I hired in 1991. I was driving on the frozen lake in St Moritz and ended up on thinner, grey ice. Everyone in the car escaped before it went to the depths, but I ended up being fined around £15,000.

The unending quest that drives you on... To achieve Zen-like serenity. Life has ups and downs, but I'm learning how to get through crises calmly.

The poem that touches your soul... Casabazonka by Spike Milligan, which goes: 'The boy stood on the burning deck, Whence all but he had fled – The twit!' It's so Spike and never ceases to amuse me.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm always laid back. It was a self-defence mechanism I developed in my playing days as a way of calming nerves. But, like anyone, I have a temper.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The summer of 1985 when we won the Ashes. It was also the year I met my wife.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal the contents of the cellars at Bollinger and Chateau Lynch-Bages.

The song that means most to you... Peter Gabriel's Biko [about Steve Biko, the anti-apartheid activist who died after interrogation by South African police in 1977]. It has such deep feeling and was so important politically.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Lifting the Ashes in '85. It was when my dreams came true.

The saddest time that shook your world... My father Richard's death when I was 16. He had motor neurone disease and cancer. He'd been a superb all-round sportsman – to see him reduced to a shell was awful.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To ride a horse at full speed on a beach without falling off.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Always look on the bright side.

The order of service at your funeral... I'll have a service in our local church in Hampshire with some great hymns, like I Vow To Thee My Country. Then everyone can go to the pub.

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

The Plug... In his role as ambassador for Laithwaite's Wine, David has created The Gower Selection, a case of 12 wines chosen to complement the cricket. www.laithwaites.co.uk ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Kim Cattrall's back on stage in Tennessee Williams' Sweet Bird Of Youth at London's Old Vic Theatre. Michael Douglas dazzles as Liberace in Behind The Candelabra – in cinemas from Friday. And Rod Stewart kicks off a UK tour tonight in Nottingham



NEXT WEEK

- Celebrities and their teddy bears herald the imminent Royal baby
- Jamie Oliver goes Greek
- Give your garden a grand makeover with Monty Don's guide to making a formal pond
- Britain's best TV listings