



Apart from fast horses, I love fast cars. I've had four Ferraris. I'm free of all worries when I'm driving one



The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's champion jockey Frankie Dettori

and I'm thinking about buying a new convertible. My mind is free of all worries when I'm driving a fast car. **The prized possession you value above all others...** My father's white-gold Piaget watch from the 1960s. He only wore it on very special occasions and when I was ten he said he'd give it to me if I won the Epsom Derby. When I won in 2007, he got it engraved and gave it to me. But I've never worn it. It's strange, but that watch was so big

in my life that I'm scared to wear it. **The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** Getting caught with cocaine in 1993. I was on all the front pages and put my family through hell. I was cocky and had too much too soon. It made me grow up. **The poem that touches your soul...** I don't read poetry. I don't understand it! **The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** People think I'm carefree because I'm always

smiling, but underneath it all I lead a very organised, disciplined life. **The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The plane crash on 1 June 2000 when I came so close to death. [The light aircraft carrying Frankie crashed on take-off at Newmarket Racecourse, and pilot Patrick Mackey died.] It was so traumatic that I wasn't right for two years. In some ways it made me emotionally harder. I don't get upset about little things and I surround myself with positive people. **The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal Sheikh Mohammed's superyacht, called Dubai. It's more than 500ft long and cost about £200m. I haven't been on it, but I've seen it and it's a monster. **The song that means most to you...** Time After Time by Cyndi Lauper. It was playing when I had my first kiss, with a Swedish girl I met at the disco at Butlins in Bognor Regis. I was 12 and on holiday with 20 other Italian kids. I thought I was in love. It was lust! **The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** My wedding in 1997. There's nothing better than a huge party with the woman you love and all your family and friends. Ronnie Wood played Amazing Grace on a guitar. It was so unbelievable I was in tears. **The saddest time that shook your world...** The plane crash. Patrick Mackey was a very good friend, a lovely man. **The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** I've been trying to win the Melbourne Cup, Australia's greatest race, for 15 years. **The philosophy that underpins your life...** To always stay positive and to have peace of mind. **The order of service at your funeral...** A good party; that's what my life's been. **The way you want to be remembered...** Fun, honest and a lover of life. **The Plug...** Frankie rides in the Investec Derby at Epsom on 4 June (www.epsoptions.co.uk). For details about the Qipco British Champions Series visit www.britishchampionsseries.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The three gold whips I got for my three Dubai World Cup wins. They were stolen, with other trophies and my MBE, in a burglary at my house near Newmarket in 2006.

The unending quest that drives you on... Winning the next race. You can never get enough of winning.

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

Wake at home with my wife Catherine and our five kids. A seafood platter lunch at Deauville in Normandy. The afternoon on the beach at Dubai's Burj Al Arab hotel, relaxing with just my wife. In the evening, I'd meet all the family and some friends in beautiful, unspoilt Sant'Anna Arresi in Sardinia. **The temptation you wish you could resist...** Chocolate, which is bad for my weight – ideally 8st 4lb for racing. With five kids, it's everywhere and I can't resist a Kinder egg.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Life And Times Of Fred Archer. Fred was the best English jockey of the late 19th century. He won 2,748 races but shot himself when he was 29, apparently because of his constant battle with his weight.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd sit on a deckchair on Copacabana Beach in Rio. There are more beautiful women there than anywhere else in the world.

The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... I've a much better lifestyle, but I'm more spoilt.

The film you can watch time and time again... Gladiator. Every time I watch it with my 11-year-old son, Leo, we both cry. I'm quite soft and always cry when people win at sport.

The person who has influenced you most... My father Gianfranco. He was the guv'nor jockey of Italian racing when I was growing up in Milan and an incredible example. He had the strength to send me to England alone when I was just 14 to become a jockey.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Julius Caesar. I'd want to know what drove him to be so power-mad.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be honest and stick to what you're good at and you'll go far.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Apart from fast horses, I love fast cars. I've had four Ferraris



From top: Frankie is a fan of Sheikh Mohammed's mega-yacht, the island of Sardinia, the Burj Al Arab hotel in Dubai, Victorian jockey Fred Archer, Kinder eggs, Julius Caesar and Ronnie Wood

PS...

Lady Gaga's new album Born This Way is out on Monday. The Hangover II hits cinemas Thursday. And see Doctor Who stars David Tennant and Catherine Tate team up again in Much Ado About Nothing at the Wyndham's Theatre in London



NEXT WEEK

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- Our guide to the best hotels with stunning gardens
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