

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: Wimbledon commentator Andrew Castle



'People think that because I played tennis I must be posh. My dad ran a chippie and I'm proud of my working-class background'

The prized possession you value above all others... A 1912 baby grand piano. It's been in the family for 15 years and we've had many fun get-togethers around it.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not staying in America when I was 22 after I finished studying there and became a tennis player. I'd have become a better player, but I was homesick.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Chocolate espresso beans. They perk you up and make you fat in one go!

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Story Of Doctor Dolittle by Hugh Lofting. My mum started reading it to me when I was four and it enabled me to disappear into my imagination.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Godfather has such attention to detail that I can watch it over and over again and always see something new.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Noise pollution from house extensions. Our neighbours in Balham, south London, have been building for the past three years.

Right: John McEnroe. Above right: A Lynyrd Skynyrd live album. Far right: Tanjung beach, Malaysia

The person who has influenced you most... My wife Sophia.

Without her I wouldn't be as gentle or listen as much. We've been married for 24 years and we're undyingly loyal.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Writing poetry. It's a valve to let my emotions out. But my poems will never see daylight!

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Annie Besant, the 19th-century women's rights activist and my great-great-grandmother. I'd ask how she survived an abusive marriage to become matriarch of the women's movement.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd hang out on a nuclear submarine on manoeuvres. I'd love to see what it's like down there.

The unending quest that drives you on... To provide for my family. I experienced poverty when I was young, so I'm determined to keep us comfortable.



The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... If you give, you get.

The song that means most to you... Lynyrd Skynyrd's Free Bird live. It came on at the end of every party when I was aged 15-17 and reminds me of happy times.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A medal for winning the British Under-12s Championship when I was 11. Winning changed my life and I cherished that medal for years, but I have no idea where it went.

The poem that touches your soul... Wilfred Owen's Dulce Et Decorum Est. It makes you question whether it really is sweet and glorious to fight and die for your country.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That because I played tennis I'm posh. My dad, Frank, ran a chippie. When I was 14, the business went bust and my parents' marriage broke down. We moved to a council house, but I'm proud of my working-class background.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Playing tennis all day with a friend on a public court near my home in Taunton when I was nine. After that I was hooked.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd devise a computer programme that added a few noughts to my bank account.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd wake up in my own bed, then have breakfast with Sophia and our daughters Georgie, 22, and Claudia, 20, at the Emelisse Hotel in Kefalonia, Greece. I'd have Greek yoghurt, fruit, nuts and honey, and at least two cups of coffee. After that, we'd play doubles at the Kooyong Tennis Club in Melbourne.

The girls would then go shopping while I played John McEnroe – I still love playing him, though he always beats me. All the family would spend the afternoon at the Curtain Bluff resort in Antigua. We'd have a buffet lunch and I'd probably have a couple of

Wadadli beers. Then we'd have a game of bowls. Later I'd sail a small catamaran then nap on the beach. We'd have cocktails at the Tanjung Rhu Resort in Malaysia – gin and tonic for me, champagne for Sophia and a foul-coloured mix of fruit juices for the girls! I'd have lobster for dinner, followed by a mid-night walk on the beach. I'm 51 now, so I'd happily snuggle up in bed at home.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When my mum, Lyn, saw me win my first match at Wimbledon in 1986. It was total vindication for years of effort and belief on her part.

The saddest time that shook your world... When Dad died of a heart attack. I was only 19 and hadn't seen him much for three years because I was in the US. I never really knew him as an adult.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To win Wimbledon.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Do the best you can.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a reading of Brian Patten's In The Dying Of Anything, which helped me when Mum died in 2004, but I'd leave the rest to my daughters.

The way you want to be remembered... He did the best for his family.

The Plug... Andrew is on Smooth Radio 97-108FM weekdays, 6am, and is the lead BBC Wimbledon commentator. He's encouraging people to have free hearing tests, speccsavers.co.uk/hearing. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



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PS...

Michelle Dockery hits the big screen in sci-fi thriller *Selfless* – in cinemas Friday. Classic musical *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* is at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre from Thursday. And Noel Gallagher headlines at Latitude Festival, which starts on Thursday in Southwold, Suffolk



NEXT WEEK

● David Walliams and Jessica Raine on their new detective drama ● Dinner at Audrey's – favourite dishes from the Hepburn household ● Britain's best TV listings guide