

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's broadcaster Adrian Chiles's turn



'I have a lucky stone, which I picked off a beach in Wales aged 12 and have carried in my pocket ever since. I won't leave the house without it'

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...**

A leather key ring with a key to my motorbike on it. It was a gift from a very good friend but it vanished recently. I've been all over Europe on my bike and I always felt reassured whenever I saw it flapping in the wind.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...**

All the time I've spent worrying. I want it back, but I'll never get it, which in itself makes me anxious and angry.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...**

Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. I read it before I became Catholic in 2007 but even then it fascinated me because all the key figures in a British Catholic's life are there: the devotee, the atheist, the mad priest and the penitent.

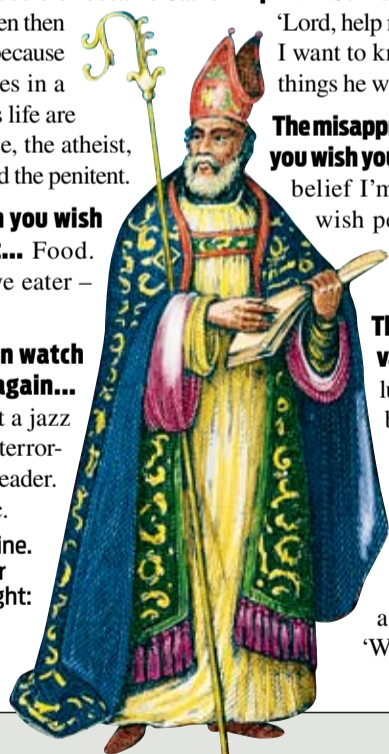
**The temptation you wish you could resist...**

Food. I'm a compulsive eater – It's disgusting.

**The film you can watch time and time again...**

Whiplash, about a jazz drummer who's terrorised by his bandleader. I love jazz music.

Right: St Augustine. Above right: beer and crisps. Far right: Rhossili Bay in South Wales



**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...**

At a West Brom match I'd trip the opposition, move the ball if they got a penalty and even tickle the ref!

**The person who has influenced you most...**

My brother Nev. I was tentative and would overthink things, but he taught me to act impulsively and worry about the consequences later.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...**

St Augustine. He said, 'Lord, help me to be pure, but not yet.' I want to know exactly what impure things he wanted to get up to!

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...**

There's a belief I'm not much to look at. I wish people would realise I'm actually devastatingly handsome!

**The prized possession you value above all others...**

A lucky stone I picked off a beach in Wales aged 12 and have carried in my pocket ever since. I won't leave the house without it.

**The unending quest that drives you on...**

To answer the big question, 'What am I doing here?'



**The poem that touches your soul...**

Philip Larkin's *Church Going*. He writes, 'Hatless, I take off/My cycle-clips in awkward reverence'.

Awkward reverence describes my emotional state in any place of worship.

**The song that means most to you...**

'Well, Well' Said The Rocking Chair by Dean Friedman. It's the title song of the first album I bought. He's a brilliant songwriter and I just don't get why he isn't more successful.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...**

Religion. My immediate family are atheists and were baffled when I became a Catholic, but I've never regretted it. I think religion does less harm than good, which isn't a fashionable opinion just now.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...**

Breaking my leg playing football in 1990. A few months later I was due to go to Zagreb, my mum's hometown in Croatia, to teach English. But I couldn't walk for a year and I ended up applying for a journalism course – and that was that.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...**

I'd steal millions of pounds, then drop the notes over a small town and see what came to pass as they fluttered to the ground.

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

I'd have a black Americano in a cafe near my home in west London, then I'd make tomatoes on toast with chilli for breakfast. I'd go for a long walk on the Clent Hills in Worcestershire, near where I was brought up in the West Midlands. I'd pop in and see my mum and dad before going on another walk, on the beach at Rhossili Bay in South Wales. I'd have a pint of Gower Gold with salt and vinegar crisps at the Worm's Head pub. Later I'd eat a pie while watching West Brom win at Manchester City. Then I'd pick up my girls – Evie, 16, and Sian, 13 – from school and take them to an island in Croatia where my mum has a place. After a swim we'd eat at a local restaurant run by a nice man called Deni. I'd have sheep's cheese

and ham, fried squid and Swiss chard with red wine, and I'd get plied with fierce fig brandy by Deni. Later I'd visit my friend Melissa in St Petersburg, Florida. I love baseball, so I'd watch the Tampa Bay Rays play and end the day with a beer at a diner called The Casual Clam.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...**

It happened on 13 April 2002. I won't bore you with the details, but Igor Balis had to score a penalty for West Brom at Bradford City. He did.

**The saddest time that shook your world...**

When my Croatian grandmother died. I was 14 and I'd heard about death before, but only then did I realise that it actually happened.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...**

To write a novel, if only to prove that I should never have tried!

**The philosophy that underpins your life...**

If everything's going well, it probably soon won't be.

**The order of service at your funeral...**

I want a full Catholic Mass and a Croatian male voice choir singing *The Lord Is My Shepherd*. For some reason West Brom fans sing that when we score.

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

Fondly by my family and friends.

**The Plug...**

My Mediterranean With Adrian Chiles, tomorrow, 9pm, BBC2, and at the same time next Sunday. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: REX, ALAMY, GETTY

PS...

Samuel L Jackson and Kurt Russell star in Quentin Tarantino's new Western *The Hateful Eight* – in cinemas from Friday. David Tennant is *Richard II* at London's Barbican from Thursday. And David Bowie's new album *Blackstar* is released on Friday



**NEXT WEEK**

- Part one of our brilliant Good Dog Diet with easy doggie dinners you can cook at home
- Start growing salad leaves now, says Monty Don
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide