

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: Countdown brainbox Rachel Riley



'I'm learning Russian now. It's a mathematical language so it's fairly easy once you've cracked the rules. I want to be fluent'

The prized possession you value above all others... My Pinarello Dogma road bike. I'm embarrassed to say how much it cost but it's my pride and joy and I use it to get around and for charity bike rides.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not spending more time with my grandad Gerry. He died in 2013 after a stroke when he was 84. He used to take me on childhood trips and was a real eccentric. You think someone will be around forever, then they're gone.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Gluten-free vegan cupcakes from Ms Cupcake in Brixton, south London. I'm not vegan but I usually don't eat eggs, dairy or wheat.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Now We Are Six by AA Milne. It fills me with a sense of happy nostalgia.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd sit in Manchester United's dressing room – not to look at the players, to hear the manager's team talk. I've been a United fan all my life.

Right: Will Ferrell in Elf. Above right: vegan cupcakes. Far right: cherry blossom in Japan

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Drivers beeping cyclists for no reason. It's really intimidating and unnecessary.

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

I'd have maths and science questions, but I'd also ask him how he'd solve the Middle East crisis. He was offered the presidency of Israel in 1952 so he'd have an interesting view.

The film you can watch time and time again... Elf. I'm a big fan of Will Ferrell and it's a comedy classic.

The person who has influenced you most... My mum Celia, who's amazing. As a charity fundraiser she's always shaking a bucket or organising some event.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Follow your own path and don't worry about what other people think.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I've been learning Russian since March and I love it. It's a mathematical language, so it's fairly easy once you've cracked the grammatical rules.



The treasured item that you lost and wish you could have again... I've lost one of the diamond earrings in the shape of a heart that my boyfriend Pasha gave me last Valentine's Day [she met Russian dancer Pasha Kovalev on Strictly Come Dancing in 2013]. I keep hoping it's going to turn up.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd sneak into Anfield, Liverpool's home ground, and change all the Liver Bird logos into the Red Devils of Manchester United!

The song that means most to you... Sherry by Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons. My dad's a huge fan and he always sang it to me when I was young.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start the day skiing with Pasha in Switzerland. I went skiing for the first time last year – to Aspen – and loved it.

After that we'd have brunch at a cafe near my flat in Notting Hill. I'd have tea and pancakes with maple syrup. Then we'd go to Bali and visit its bird park and a monkey sanctuary. I'd fly to Malaysia and watch Manchester United play on one of their Asia tours. After that I'd take friends and my family to New York to see the Radio City Christmas Spectacular with The Rockettes, an amazing team of dancers. The day would end with Pasha in New Orleans during Mardi Gras. I'd have Hurricane cocktails and prawns cooked in a local style. Pasha and I would listen to some jazz and then go dancing long into the night.

The unending quest that drives you on... I'm not the type to plan in advance or have specific ambitions, but that said I'd like to be fluent in Russian.

The poem that touches your soul... Funeral Blues by WH Auden. I came across it in Four Weddings And A Funeral. You get such a sense of loss.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... I hear that people think I'm stand-offish and I'm not sure where that comes from. Maybe it's because I'm shy, but I'm quite nice when you meet me. Honest!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... The death of a very dear family friend a few years ago when he was in his early 30s. It hit everyone very badly.



PHOTOGRAPHS: GETTY IMAGES; ALAMY; ALLSTAR

PS...

Leonardo DiCaprio stars in adventure-thriller *The Revenant* – in cinemas from Friday. Got the January blues? Then catch Bill Bailey's *Limboland* tour at London's Vaudeville Theatre. And book now for Ellie Goulding's UK tour, which starts in March



NEXT WEEK

- Discover doggy superfoods in part two of our Good Dog Diet
- Warming winter dishes from Tom Kerridge
- The nation's most amazing mazes
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide