

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: comedian and author David Baddiel

The prized possession you value above all others... My ginger cat Ron. He's a polydactyl with seven toes on each foot, which makes him a bit special.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not realising how ill my mother, Sarah, was when she told me she had a chest infection in December 2014. That was on a Wednesday. She said she'd be fine and would 'dose up' on medicine, but by the Saturday it was pneumonia and her lungs were overcome with liquid. After four hours in hospital she died, aged 75.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I find it impossible not to have a pudding or chocolates after a meal.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... John Updike's Rabbit quartet of books. He's the best writer of prose ever.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd shrink and go inside our guinea pig Bjorn's hutch. He hides in there all day, so I'd like to know what he does.

Right: Jim Carrey in *Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind*. Above right: puddings. Far right: David's seven-toed cat Ron (also in main image)



The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People being reflexively outraged on social media.

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

Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind with Jim Carrey and Kate Winslet is an amazing and beautiful film.

The person who has influenced you most... My brother Ivor, who's 18 months older. He parented me a lot because my mum and dad did their own thing. Ivor played me Peter Cook and Dudley Moore tapes when I was 13, which opened my ears to comedy.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Jane Austen. I'd find out how she had the leap of imagination to invent the modern novel.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

I've been fascinated by quantum physics for two years now – but I still don't really understand it.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Wearing a hat will make your face look fatter!



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

My first touch at football. I play in a seven-a-side team, but my control is definitely getting worse.

The unending quest that drives you on... I'm consumed by anxiety to complete my writing ideas before someone else has the same idea and beats me to it.

The poem that touches your soul... Philip Larkin's *The Trees*. It's a beautiful example of turning a visual image into something human and emotional.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm Ben Elton. I was talking to Ronan Keating and he said he loved my work, especially *Blackadder*. I told him I was *not* Ben Elton and he walked off looking cross!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Having children [Dolly, 14, and Ezra, 11] made me think differently about the world and gave me more empathy for people.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd discover

a great lost novel by F Scott Fitzgerald which would become a sensation. Then I'd reveal that I'd written it – and everyone would praise me for being a genius.

The song that means most to you... *When You Grow by Bernard Butler*. It was on *both* my playlists for the delivery room when my wife Morwenna was giving birth to our kids.

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

I'd begin with a big breakfast at the Westway Diner in New York with Morwenna, Dolly and Ezra. I'd have eggs, bacon and pancakes with maple syrup and coffee. After that I'd go scuba diving in Zanzibar then have lunch in Xi'an, China – noodles with chilli and hunks of grilled lamb, which would cost about £1! I'd have a massage on the beach in Kerala before going to Berlin to play in a football match for England against Germany. I'd be up front with Bobby Charlton and score the winner. In the evening I'd take the family to the world premiere of the film of my novel *The Parent Agency*. We'd coolly skip the after-party to go home to north London for a take-away curry from my local, Dar's.

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The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When the crowd at Wembley started singing *Three Lions* [the footballing anthem he wrote with Frank Skinner] after we beat Scotland in the European Championships in 1996.

The saddest time that shook your world... My mum dying. I couldn't say goodbye because I was being pushed out of the way by people trying to save her life. It was confusing and shocking.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To direct a film. I have a few in development, so hopefully that will happen.

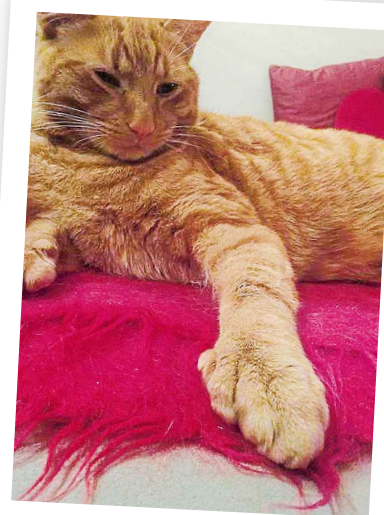
The philosophy that underpins your life... The truth is always complex and never assume otherwise.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a choir sing *Three Lions*, readings of Larkin and John Donne, stand-up comedy and Dolly singing Bowie's *Lady Stardust*. My body can be floated on a raft on Hampstead Heath ponds.

The way you want to be remembered... The best footballer of his generation.

The Plug... David Baddiel performs *My Family: Not The Sitcom* at London's Menier Chocolate Factory until 25 June, davidbaddiel.com ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: SARAH LEE/EVEMINE, GETTY IMAGES, ALAMY, ALLSTAR

PS...

Johnny Depp returns as the Mad Hatter in Alice Through The Looking Glass, in cinemas Friday. Cinderella's Lily James and Richard Madden open in Romeo And Juliet at London's Garrick Theatre on Wednesday. And Bruce Springsteen's UK tour begins in Manchester the same day



NEXT WEEK

- Part one of Matthew Jukes's essential pull-out guide to the 200 best-value summer wines
- The prestigious Daily Mail National Garden Competition is back
- Britain's best TV listings