

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

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

The prized possession you value above all others... Some original match notes written by the rugby commentator Bill McLaren. He was the 'voice of rugby' during the 1960s, 70s and beyond. As a schoolboy, I hero-worshipped the greats of that era. His voice was one of the first impersonations I did.

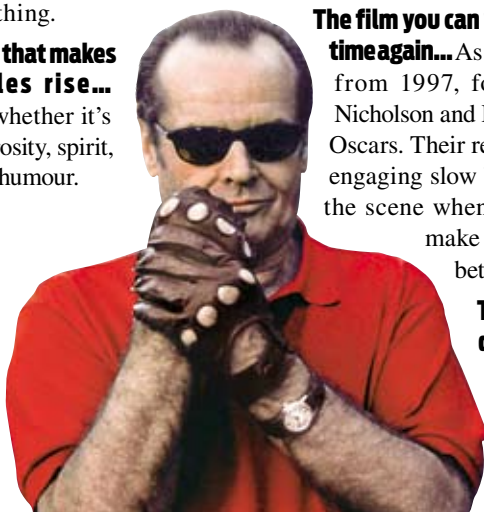
The temptation you wish you could resist... Saying yes to too many requests. I take on too much.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Candide* by Voltaire. It's one of the great works of satire, using humour to demolish hypocrisy and false reasoning. I read it at school and it still inspires me.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd love to be in the Oval Office with Donald Trump and send some Tweets from his phone. The madder, the better. Not that anyone would suspect anything.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Meanness, whether it's lack of generosity, spirit, or a sense of humour.

Right: Jack Nicholson in *As Good As It Gets*. Above right: a piano. Far right: an elephant in Kenya



The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd continued learning the piano. I could read music, but by the age of 11 I started copying the teacher and playing by ear.

The person who has influenced you most... John Bird and the late John Fortune were both great mentors. I learnt a lot about satire and writing from them. One piece of advice from John Bird was, 'Don't get it right, get it written'. It's a great antidote to the fear of the blank page.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Learn stuff, even if it seems pointless. As the teacher says in Alan Bennett's *The History Boys*, 'Learn it now, know it now and you'll understand it... whenever.'

The film you can watch time and time again... *As Good As It Gets* from 1997, for which Jack Nicholson and Helen Hunt won Oscars. Their relationship is an engaging slow burn and I love the scene when he says, 'You make me want to be a better man.'

The unending quest that drives you on... To be a better man. Or at least a more relaxed one.



The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... The confidence and energy I had in my thirties. All in one evening back then, I'd go to a reception, then an opera, before doing a show or an after-dinner speech. I'm 55 now, and these days I'm down to one of those – on a good night!

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Gandhi. Mostly because I'd get to keep the pint – and probably the pie too.

The poem that touches your soul... This *Be The Verse* by Philip Larkin because of all the idiocies I've passed on to my children, Ava, 15, and Lila, 13. It opens with that immortal line, 'They f*** you up, your mum and dad. They may not mean to, but they do.'

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm Paddy Ashdown, or that he is me. Even his wife sometimes wonders.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My divorce when I was 33. I spent five years afterwards finding myself.



'On holidays in Cape Town I'd pretend to be Nelson Mandela when I was trying to book restaurant tables'

listen to some jazz at Le Caveau de la Huchette club in Paris before going to bed at home in the Scottish Borders.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... All our New Year holidays in Cape Town between 1996 and 2001 were always so special and fun. I'd pretend to be Nelson Mandela when I was trying to book restaurant tables.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my best friend Ronnie Armist in 2015. He was 61 and had fought cancer for eight years. I never believed he wouldn't make it and his loss has left a huge gap in my life.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Not performing well enough on *Strictly* in 2011. Erin [Boag] and I were knocked out after four weeks – by Nancy Dell'Olio. That takes some getting over, I can tell you!

The philosophy that underpins your life... Do what you can to make life better in your own sphere of influence, which I got from *Candide*. You won't change the world, but you will make the best of a part of it.

The order of service at your funeral... Forget it. It's not going to happen. Over my dead body.

The way you want to be remembered... In the impressionists' category in pub quizzes.

The Plug... Rory Bremner will be touring his new show *Partly Political* from 7 February. For information visit lakinmccarthy.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Translating operas and plays from French and German. I've done four since 1997 and I've just finished Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... Identity theft. I've made a career out of it, and I haven't been arrested. Yet.

The song that means most to you... Frank Sinatra's *You Make Me Feel So Young*. It always makes me smile.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd start at dawn with a game drive at Lewa wildlife sanctuary in Kenya with Ava, Lila and my wife Tessa to see lions, rhinos and elephants. After that I'd have breakfast at Soho House in New York, followed by shopping and a visit to an art gallery. Lunch would be at Glen Eagles, then I'd have a round of golf before visiting Lord's, where I'd see England skittle out the Aussies. I'd have an alfresco dinner with the family in Italy, then



PS...

Rachel Weisz appears in historical drama Denial, in cinemas from Friday. The soundtrack to series four of BBC1's Sherlock is out on the same day. And the Broadway production of The Glass Menagerie comes to the Duke Of York's Theatre on Thursday



NEXT WEEK

- Frank Bruno invites us into his holiday home
- Sue Johnston on why *Pride And Prejudice* ruined her love life
- Monty Don's tips for overwintering your citrus plants
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings