

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's *The Royle Family* star Sue Johnston

The prized possession you value above all others... A silver beetle brooch with a tiny picture of The Beatles on its back. It was given to me by a boyfriend in 1962 when I started going to the Cavern Club in Liverpool. I got to know Paul and Ringo and the brooch reminds me of those wonderful times.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not being with my dad, Fred, when he died from cancer aged 79 in 1996. I'd been by his hospital bed for three days and nights. I went out for ten minutes and that's when he died. Thankfully, my mum, Margaret, and her sister were there so he wasn't alone.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Spending a fortune on clothes and things for the home in The Cross shop in London's Notting Hill. I've been going there for 30 years.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Lazy drivers who hog the middle lane on motorways while doing under 70mph.

Right: Colin Firth and Jennifer Ehle in *Pride And Prejudice*. Above right: St Helens rugby league kit. Far right: Florence



The film you can watch time and time again... Gangster epic *Once Upon A Time In America* – it's very emotional and Robert De Niro is amazing.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Sport. My dad took me to Anfield to watch Liverpool and to St Helens for rugby league from when I was six. I'm still a fan of both.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I must be super confident. I actually have moments of terrible self-doubt.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *Pride And Prejudice*, which I studied when I was 14. I fell in love with Mr Darcy, but it ruined things because I spent the rest of my life looking for my own Mr Darcy and never found him! [Sue's been divorced twice and is currently single.]

The poem that touches your soul... Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad Of Reading Gaol* moves me because of its depth of despair.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Bill Shankly. I'd love to hear his stories about his time as Liverpool manager.



The unending quest that drives you on... To keep acting.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My mother's jewellery, which she left me when she died in 2007 aged 92. Four of her rings and her watch were stolen in a burglary in London in 2012 – I was distraught.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd stand in the centre circle at Anfield when Liverpool play Celtic. The fans of both teams sing *You'll Never Walk Alone*, so to hear it being sung by the entire crowd would be wonderful.

The person who has influenced you most... My English teacher Miss Potter, who inspired me to take up acting when she cast me as the witch in *The Tinderbox* by Hans Christian Andersen when I was 15.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Going to drama school in London in 1965 when I was 21. You can imagine the excitement of being there in the 60s.



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beach in Zanzibar with my dogs Betsy Diamond, a German shepherd, and cocker spaniel Lexi. Later we'd have cocktails at Katerina's Bar on the Greek island of Mykonos, then dinner at El Olivo restaurant in Deia, Majorca. At the end of the day we'd all watch a movie at my home near Manchester.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Apart from the births of Joel and Rory, it was the night in Istanbul in 2005 when Liverpool beat AC Milan to win the Champions League.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of Caroline Aherne from cancer last year at the age of 52 was shattering. I still can't delete her phone number from my mobile. The word 'delete' just seems too final.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To make a Hollywood movie. No part would be too small.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Look for the best in people.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd like to be carried in by Liverpool legends of the past and have Ricky Tomlinson and Craig Cash show outtakes from *The Royle Family*. I'd like my ashes scattered at Anfield.

The way you want to be remembered... With affection – and as a good granny.

The Plug... Sue appears in Pete Jackson's radio comedy drama *Love In Recovery*. Series 1 & 2 are available on BBC Audio CD for £22.50 and on iTunes audiobook for £8. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Matthew McConaughey gets lucky in the Indonesian jungle in Gold – in cinemas from Friday. The new album from Elbow, Little Fictions, is out the same day. And Emilia Fox opens in Sex With Strangers at London's Hampstead Theatre on Thursday



NEXT WEEK

- Emily Watson takes us behind the scenes on racy new drama *Apple Tree Yard*
- Monty Don solves your gardening problems in a Q&A special
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings