

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's investigative journalist Donal MacIntyre

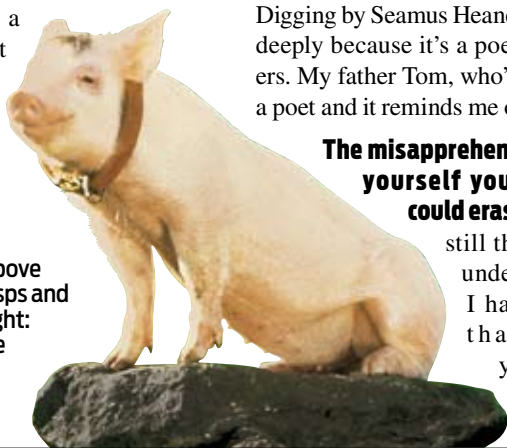
The prized possession you value above all others... My seven-year-old Chihuahua Louie. He's got an amazing personality. I named him after the dancer Louie Spence, who's a friend.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd discovered ski-jumping in my teens. I learnt when I did Channel 4's *The Jump* in 2014 and found my appetite for flying on skis.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Tayto salt and vinegar crisps. When I was an altar boy in Ireland our reward for serving at Mass was a bag of those. If I had to order a last meal, I'd have a giant bag of Tayto and die a happy man.

The priority activity if you were the invisible man for a day... I'd infiltrate and destroy Boko Haram, the most heinous terror group in Africa. Their cruelties are unimaginable.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Babe*. Despite my occupation I don't like movies with violence or horror. I'm a country boy at heart and that movie always makes me smile.



Right: Babe. Above right: Tayto crisps and whiskey. Far right: sunset over the Mississippi in Louisiana

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Umbrellas. They're weapons of war, which should be banned. I'm 5ft 9½in, the perfect height to be poked in the eye.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *The Wind In The Willows* by Kenneth Grahame. I first read it when I was eight, living by the River Liffey. Toad is such a rascal.

The person who has influenced you most... Peter Salmon, the former controller of BBC1. He brought me to the BBC in 1993 and was a wise counsel. It was his vision to send me in undercover.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Grace O'Malley, one of the most powerful women of 16th-century Ireland. She was an infamous pirate who had an extraordinary meeting with Elizabeth I and I'd love to witness it.

The poem that touches your soul... *Digging* by Seamus Heaney resonates deeply because it's a poem for writers. My father Tom, who's 85 now, is a poet and it reminds me of him.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... People still think I work undercover, but I haven't done that for 13 years. I'm typecast!



The piece of wisdom you would pass onto a child... You can do anything you want, all you have to do is unlock your potential.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I have a new-found interest in punctuation. My current obsession is the em dash [–]. It's wonderfully useful – the Swiss Army knife of punctuation.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I'm not materialistic but my memories are precious, so to lose those through illness or dementia would cause me pain.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... When the first film I'd directed, *A Very British Gangster*, was selected for the Sundance Film Festival in 2007. It brought me into the world of cinema and directing and it woke up creative juices I didn't know I possessed.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd hack into the computers of local authorities and cancel all the parking tickets – then re-assign them to the jobsworths who issued them.



'My ambition was to become an Olympic canoeist. I was in two Ireland canoe teams in my 20s, but I failed to make the grade'

while listening to Cajun music and enjoying home-cooked food. My evening would be spent on the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea, staring at the Southern Cross constellation in a clear sky. I'd return home to Ireland to bed and sleep to the purr of the Liffey.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... I always hope my happiest days are ahead of me.

The saddest time that shook your world... I once investigated the trafficking of women for the sex trade in London. Women were offered for sale at £7,000 each – it was shocking.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Never making it as an Olympic canoeist. I was in two Ireland canoe teams in my 20s, but failed to make the grade.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Be brave and never dwell on what can go wrong because it will hold you back. Nervousness is dangerous.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm too much of an optimist to really consider this, but I'd like a quick funeral and a long wake. It would be a simple Catholic service with the hymns *Be Thou My Vision* and *Abide With Me*.

The way you want to be remembered... He lived his own life – and a few others as well.

The Plug... Donal presents various crime programmes on CBS Reality and has two new series beginning this autumn. For details visit cbsreality.tv.

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Blondie's new album *Pollinator* is out on Friday. Timothy Spall appears in Irish peace process drama *The Journey*, in cinemas the same day. And Miriam Margolyes opens in *Madame Rubinstein* at London's Park Theatre on Wednesday



NEXT WEEK

- Heartwarming stories from celebrities in part one of our series on how to adopt a rescue pet
- Dan Toombs serves up a second helping of perfect British curries
- Britain's best TV listings