

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week: musician and presenter *Jools Holland*

The prized possession you value above all others... The gift of music and my sense of humour. Without them, I don't think I'd survive.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not putting air conditioning in my recording studio at home when I had it built. I spent ten years sweltering before I finally had it installed.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Thinking I'm right. Most of us have the propensity for wrongly thinking this. Other people have a view that can also be valid.

A book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Faerie Queene by Edmund Spenser. My dad, Derek, had an old edition he read to me when I was six. It made me appreciate books aesthetically and I still have it.

The song that means most to you... I listened to Louis Armstrong's In The Gloaming last night and I think it's the best thing I've ever heard.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd make petri dishes float mysteriously while scientists work in their laboratories. It would make them stop and think that they might not always be right about everything.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Novelty-shaped plates in restaurants. I don't like ones shaped like a fish simply because you are eating fish. I like a normal, round plate.

The film you can watch time and time again... The Blue Lamp starring Jack Warner. It's set in London in 1949 and depicts a world that is gone, architecturally and in terms of attitude.

The person who has influenced you most... Duke Ellington. I read about him in my 20s and he taught me to believe in my sound.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My 78 rpm record of Sister Rosetta Tharpe singing Up Above My Head. Someone sat on it 30 years ago. I'm still getting over it.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... People's eyes glaze over when I tell them that I love medieval Flemish history. I'm fascinated by the art and the buildings when I'm in Belgium or Holland.

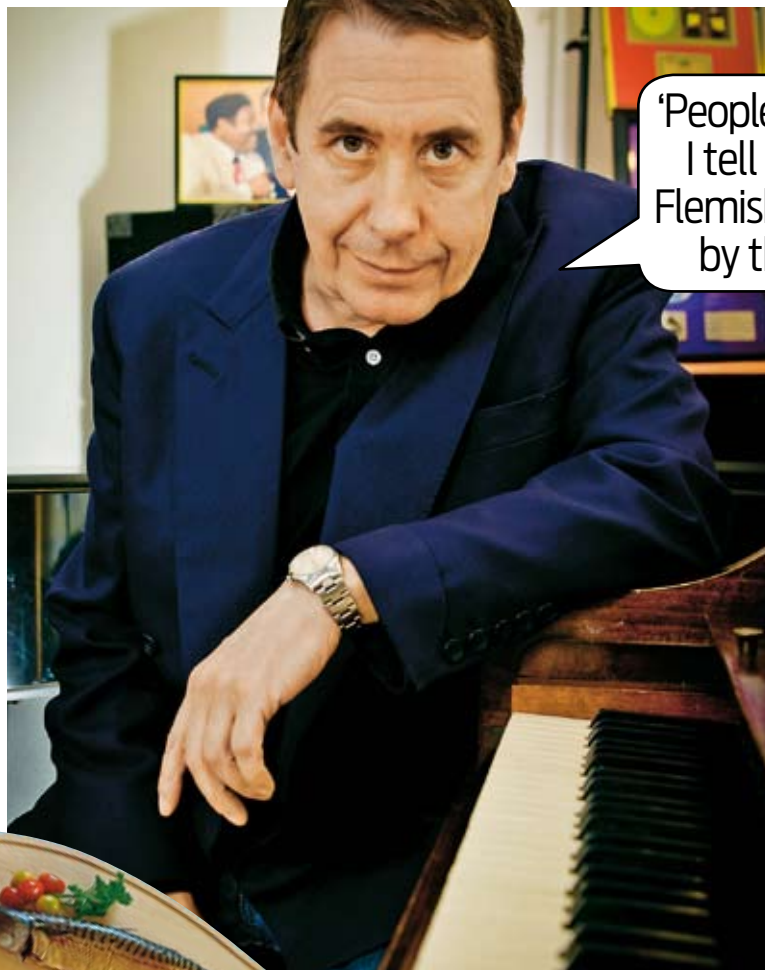
The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... My great-grandmother Britannia. She was born in a workhouse and still managed to make life good for her family. I'd love to see how she did it. She gave my grandmother a piano for her wedding, which is the one I learnt on aged eight. I'd like to thank her for that.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Don't rush into things but don't prevaricate for years and ruin it.

The unending quest that drives you on... Writing, or finding the next piece of music that excites me.

The poem that touches your soul... I like poetry but, for me at least, words can't quite express what music does.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That it was me driving when a speed camera photographs my car hurtling past.



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The event that altered the course of your life and character... Discovering that I could play the piano. My uncle Dave showed me how to play a boogie-woogie piece of music [a fast blues style]. I was very excited when I realised that I could copy him.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a Rembrandt self-portrait from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd be up very early to have breakfast in 1940s Chicago listening to blues musicians Albert Ammons and Tampa Red. After that I'd whizz off to 14th-century Bruges to have my portrait painted by Jan van Eyck. Then to 18th-century Leipzig to meet Bach for lunch of chicken pie and Chateau Petrus 2010 (I'd bring it with me). We'd play the piano together and then I'd meet the 16th-century painter Pieter Bruegel at a peasant wedding. He liked to paint such scenes. Later, I'd wander around Dickensian London and the day would end in a 1930s music hall in the East End listening to the great singer Leslie Sarony.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Learning what chords were when I was 13. Knowing that there was a theory to music meant I could suddenly play lots of things.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my dad died in 2007. Anyone who's lost a parent they like will know that it is not an easy time.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... That I never met the great jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams. I was living in New York when she was there and if I'd known, I would have tried to see her.

The philosophy that underpins your life... It's simple – love one another.

The order of service at your funeral... I expect it to be at Westminster Abbey with huge outpourings of grief from strangers. I want Louis Armstrong's St James Infirmary Blues and Get Away Jordan by Dorothy Love Coates. My ashes should be put into key rings and sold as mini shrines.

The way you want to be remembered... As a kindly old gentleman who died at the age of 257 while doing boogie-woogie dancing.

The Plug... Jools Holland will perform on 16 June at Hampton Court Palace Festival (7-24 June). Visit hamptoncourtpalacefestival.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



Left: Louis Armstrong. Above: a novelty dinner plate. Right: a Rembrandt self-portrait from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum

PS...

Jessica Chastain stars in political drama *Miss Sloane* – in cinemas Friday. Harry Styles's self-titled solo album is out the same day. And Anthony Head opens in *Love In Idleness* at London's Apollo Theatre on Thursday



NEXT WEEK

- All you need to know about adopting a cat in part two of our heart-warming series
- Monty Don's top tips for growing the tastiest tomatoes
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings