

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's comedy legend Sir Ken Dodd's turn

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My book collection. I have about 50,000 including countless editions on comedy, comedians, clowns and showbusiness.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** I wish I'd learnt more about the use of the English language, so I could write coherently like Charles Dickens or Mark Twain.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Sweets, especially Fruit Pastilles. I always have a family-size packet on the go. I love ice cream too.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The Coral Island by RM Ballantyne which I read when I was six. It's about three boys shipwrecked on an island and it took me to another world. I craved adventure and wanted to be heroic like those boys.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd go to the Office for National Statistics to see how they work things out. One day they're saying something's bad for you, then three weeks later they say it's fine.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Bullying driving on motorways. I do about 30,000 miles a year and I see some terrible reckless driving.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** The Producers from 1968 with Gene Wilder and directed by Mel Brooks always makes me laugh. Brooks is a giant of comedy.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My dad Arthur was very funny. He'd repeat songs and jokes from variety shows and make me and my brother and sister laugh so much. My mum Sarah was also very special. She'd say, 'I don't care what you get up to, as long as you wear a clean shirt.' I've never forgotten that – and I always have a clean shirt.

Left: Gene Wilder and Zero Mostel in *The Producers*. Above right: Fruit Pastilles and ice cream. Right: the Bodleian Library



'My ambition is to live until I'm 120 – and then be shot by a jealous husband!'

probably somewhere in Yorkshire. I'd have pea or oxtail soup for lunch, then spend a few hours looking through some rare books in Oxford's Bodleian Library. My life is ruled by my giggling diary and I'm happy with that, so then I'd get ready for a show. My favourite venue is always the one I'm performing at that night. I feel blessed because I spend my life around happy people who are out to have fun. I'm completely in love with showbusiness, so I'll enjoy myself playing a gig.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Being knighted this year was a huge moment. Now I'm being measured up for some armour and I'm getting a horse.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Losing my parents was hard. They gave me a fantastic childhood and so much good advice and support. It was a lonely time but my faith in God helped me through.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** I want to live until I'm 120 and get shot by a jealous husband.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Never be afraid of making mistakes, because that's how you learn.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'm too busy living to think of that.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He gave us happiness and laughter.

**The Plug...** The Ken Dodd Happiness Show continues to tour all this year. For tickets visit [kendoddshows.com](http://kendoddshows.com). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...**

William Shakespeare.

His plays give a wonderful insight into the human spirit. I'd ask him if he really wrote them all.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Follow your dream.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Philosophy. Recently I've been reading the great philosophers, trying to understand the meaning of life.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** The ability to swim with confidence. I was terrified of water as a kid. I got over it with lessons but now the fear's come back.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To stay alive! I'm 89 now and I want to keep spreading happiness. I have no intention of slowing down.

**The poem that touches your soul...** I enjoy going to church every week and I love the quote, 'However black the clouds may be/In time they'll pass away/Have faith and trust and you will see/God's light make bright your day.'

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** I don't know of any. I'm grateful that the British people treat me well.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Seeing a variety show in Liverpool aged seven or eight. I sat there wide-eyed and I knew I wanted to be a performer.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** At my age, no crime appeals. I might steal a kiss from a pretty girl, but that's about it.

**The song that means most to you...** My song Happiness has become my signature tune. I sing it at every show.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I've travelled all over the world but now I prefer to be in Britain. I'd be happiest having a quiet morning at home. I'd have a few cups of tea for breakfast with Shredded Wheat, then read the Daily Mail and try to find something funny to put into my show that night. Later I'd take my black poodle Rufus for a walk,



PS...

James Norton stars in romcom *Hampstead* – in cinemas Friday. A

deluxe edition of Prince's *Purple Rain* is released the same day.

And Audra McDonald plays Billie Holiday in *Lady Day At*

Emerson's Bar & Grill at Wyndham's Theatre from today



## NEXT WEEK

- Sean Bean takes us behind the scenes on his compelling religious drama *Broken*
- Four delicious pages of the most fabulous fish recipes
- PLUS Britain's most detailed TV guide