

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's singing legend Engelbert Humperdinck

The prized possession you value above all others... My voice. It's a gift that's enabled me to provide for my family and see places I'd only dreamed of.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Worrying. It creates bad energy – but it helps me get things done.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... My *This Is Your Life* book presented to me by Michael Aspel in 1988. It's like a movie of my life.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd watch talents like Adele and Bruno Mars working their gifts in the recording studio.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd kept a diary so I could read about the little joys that were overshadowed by the neon lights. And if I'd recorded my mistakes I'd have learned my lessons faster.

The film you can watch time and time again... *Caddyshack* with Chevy Chase from 1980. We played it on the tour bus for years and knew it so well my band and I would turn the sound down and say the lines with impressions of the characters. We'd always crack up laughing.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play James Bond! I'm a thespian of song, so there hasn't been time to act.

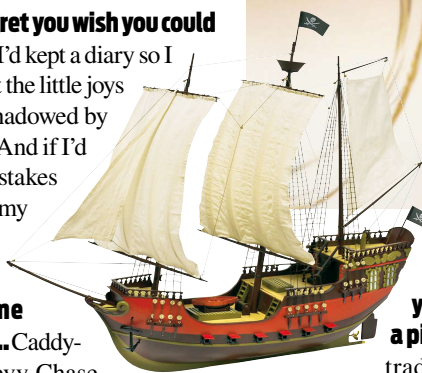
The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... Conversation with my wife Patricia. She's got Alzheimer's and can no longer talk. We've been married since 1964 and I miss her voice more than anything.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Meditation intrigues me. I wish I could do it, but my brain is too overloaded to switch off.

Left: singers Adele and Bruno Mars. Above: a pirate ship. Far right: Nostradamus



'I've been mistaken for an Engelbert Humperdinck impersonator in the past!'



The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Nostradamus. His predictions were astounding, so I'd ask how he did it and what else he foresees.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Incompetence, especially if someone isn't living up to their potential.

The person who has influenced you most... Winston Churchill. He was a great leader at a most desperate time, and his speeches have helped me find the resolve to keep trying.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Never give up and never stop learning. Living life is better than any video game.

The unending quest that drives you on... Paying God back for a blessed life and the gift of my voice. I thank him for making me as strong as an ox. I'm proud to still sing for my supper and I never finish a day without a prayer.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm just a singer. I've created countless musical arrangements. I'm also sometimes mistaken for an Engelbert impersonator!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... When I got a last-minute slot on Sunday Night At The London Palladium in 1967. I sang *Release Me*, which went to No. 1 and kept The Beatles off the top. My life changed and I became a star.

The poem that touches your soul... The hymn *How Great Thou Art* never fails to move me.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal a hit song written for another singer.

The song that means most to you... When I Fall In Love by Nat King Cole was the first record I bought for Patricia. It brings back happy memories of our early years.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... The day would begin at our house in Leicester with a cuppa. I'd finish that day's crossword easily for once, then Patricia and I would walk in the beautiful gardens she's created. Later a magic carpet would take us and our four children

and eight grandchildren – aged seven to 28 – to trace my roots in Madras. I lived there until I was ten, when we moved to Leicester. Then we'd arrive in Barbados aboard a pirate ship. I'd drink island rum, water-ski and climb a tree for a coconut – I used to do all those things! We'd sit on the beach to see the famous green flash as the sun goes down, then a sleigh would take us to see in New Year with schnapps at Hopfgarten in the Austrian Alps. Finally, Patricia and I would drift off to sleep with a hot-water bottle back in Leicester.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When *Release Me* started selling 80,000 copies a day and I knew my family would be OK after all those hungry years.

The saddest time that shook your world... Not returning from the US in time to say goodbye to my mum, Olive, when she died in 1988. I felt robbed.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Never rest on your laurels.

The order of service at your funeral... That's one set list I'm not comfortable putting together, but I hope the choices will come naturally to my family.

The way you want to be remembered... For making music that helped people escape or healed their hearts.

The Plug... Engelbert Humperdinck's latest album *The Man I Want To Be* is out now on OK! Good Records. Visit engelbert.com ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

Colin Firth and Rachel Weisz star in the true story of a doomed yachtsman in The Mercy – in cinemas Friday. The Fifty Shades Freed soundtrack is out the same day. And Natasha Little opens in Again at London's Trafalgar Studios on Tuesday



NEXT WEEK

- We visit the set of gripping new BBC thriller *Collateral*, starring Carey Mulligan
- Monty Don on coping with a waterlogged garden
- PLUS Britain's biggest and best TV guide