

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's artist and caricaturist Gerald Scarfe

The prized possession you value above all others... A Walter Sickert print called Ennui. The writer Stephen Spender gave it to me in 1964 in exchange for a drawing I'd done from life of Igor Stravinsky. It hangs at my home in Chelsea.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... When a film of The Tempest I was working on as a designer fell apart in 1967 after backers withdrew. That's showbusiness.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Apologising unnecessarily.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift. I first read it aged ten but now admire it as brilliant satire.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd sit in the Oval Office with Donald Trump to discover how he makes those awful decisions. He's a vain, ambitious, misogynist bully – but he's great material for a cartoonist.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The misuse of power. But it fuels my work – the likes of Mugabe and Assad keep me fired up.

The film you can watch time and time again... Dr Strangelove. The way Peter Sellers plays three roles is outstanding.

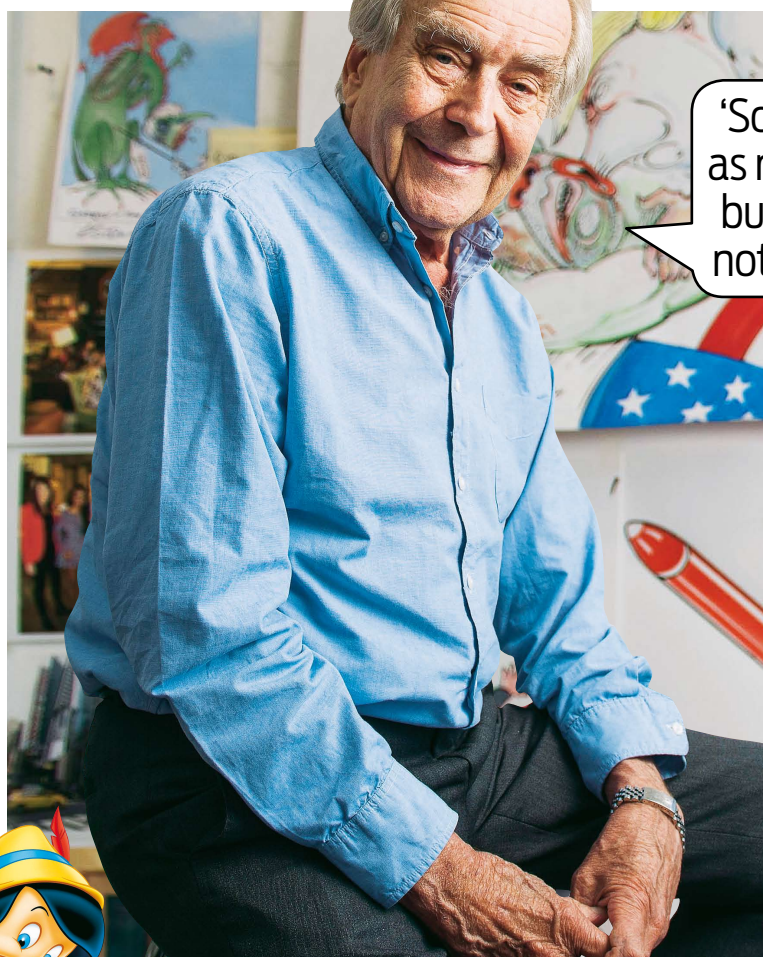
The person who has influenced you most... Pablo Picasso is my hero. His ability to disassemble a face then reconstruct it... he's a cartoonist in oils.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Alexander The Great. I'd ask, 'So Alex, what's with you and power?'

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... If at first you don't succeed, try and try again. It still may not happen, but it definitely won't if you don't try.

The unending quest that drives you on... To draw better.

Left: Pablo Picasso.
Above: Pinocchio.
Right: Machu Picchu



'Some people think I'll be as nasty as my drawings – but I tell them an artist is not necessarily like his art'



The song that means most to you... When You Wish Upon A Star from Pinocchio brings back great memories of the delight of seeing the film as a child.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Making films. I spent years at the BBC writing, directing and appearing in films on diverse subjects such as sex, art and religion.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal valuable paintings from private houses and return them to public collections for all to enjoy.

The poem that touches your soul... The musical poetry of Mozart's Magic Flute. I designed a production of it for the Los Angeles Opera in 1993.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I must be as nasty as my drawings. I tell people an artist is not necessarily like his art.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Meeting my wife Jane [actress and cake expert Jane Asher] on the Brighton Belle train in 1971. We married in 1981.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A box I left in a house in Kilburn when I moved out around 1960. It held childhood treasures and many of my early drawings. If someone found it, please let me know!

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... After watching the sunrise at the Sun Gate in Machu Picchu, Peru, I'd have coffee and a croissant at Les Deux Magots café in Paris, before going to the Petit Palais museum to see the Gauguin paintings. I'm 81 now and no longer ski but I can still lunch, so I'd have that with a bottle of Puligny-Montrachet on top of a mountain in Méribel. I'd spend the afternoon on safari in Luangwa National Park, Zambia. I especially love rhinos. Then I'd play a few frames of snooker at The Chelsea Arts Club – and lose, as usual. I'd have a gin and tonic at Scarfes Bar, which is named after me, in the Rosewood Hotel, London, before going to El Bulli in Spain for dinner. Then I'd fall

asleep to the sound of the waves of the Pacific Ocean crashing against the coastline at Big Sur, California.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The first night of Disney's Hercules in New York in 1997. I was the production designer and working on that film was one of the best times of my life. The opening night was the nearest I'll ever get to being Tom Cruise.

The saddest time that shook your world... Meeting lost 19-year-old soldiers during the Vietnam War in 1966. They were students, sent there to kill. I was there for the Daily Mail. On seeing the dead young Americans in the mortuary, my pen failed me.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I wish I'd continued at the Royal College of Art when I was 21. I left after three weeks because I was earning a good living already with my illustrations. I wonder what sort of artist I could've become.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Keep on trucking. Got to pay the rent.

The order of service at your funeral... It should be jolly, not gloomy.

The way you want to be remembered... As an artist. That'll do.

The Plug... Signed books, limited edition prints and original work are available via Gerald's website at geraldscarfe.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PS...

James Corden voices Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit in a new film in cinemas Friday. Kylie Minogue launches her tour in London on Tuesday. And Kiri's Sharon D Clarke opens in Caroline, Or Change at the Hampstead Theatre on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- An inside tour of the Cotswolds' most beautiful homes
- Brilliant bakes with just three ingredients
- Monty Don on the charms of chard
- Britain's best TV guide