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 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 feels 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 re-construct 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

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 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 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.

As told to Rob McGibbon

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

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.

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