



From top: Reethi Rah resort in the Maldives, Prada trainers, an iPhone, Malcolm McDowell in *A Clockwork Orange*, Cleopatra, *The Bell Jar*, Selfridges, Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt

The prized possession you value above all others... My iPhone 3. I'm not sentimental about possessions but my phone has all my numbers. I would lose my meaning on Earth if it disappeared.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not having boyfriends earlier in life. I didn't have my first serious relationship until I was 27. I wish I'd been a raver and had lots of flings.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...

I'd have a totally self-indulgent, all-pampering spa day with some girlfriends. I'd begin in the Maldives, then go to Bali, where I'd have ten people massaging me. I guess I should spend time with my husband [TV producer Ed Bye] and our kids [Max, 23, Madeleine, 21, and Marina 18]. I'd meet them in Hawaii for some surfing then I'd go to the Schloss Elmau hotel in the German Alps which has four spas.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Binge spending. Generally I'm careful but then I'll buy something insanely expensive like a pair of leopard-print Prada trainers for £500.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *The Bell Jar* by Sylvia Plath. The main character, Esther Greenwood, is a freak who doesn't fit in. I read it when I was 16 and completely identified with her. Plath was a rebel who went nuts and killed herself. Her story couldn't be more romantic.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'm ashamed to say I'd hang out at Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's house.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... I can't stomach inane girly chat. I have to move away when they start yabbering on about their baby.

The film you can watch time and time again... *A Clockwork Orange*. I saw it 17 times and fell in love with Malcolm McDowell, even though he beat up old people to Beethoven. You can see why I had trouble with men.

The person who has influenced you most... Alan Rickman. We met at the Royal Shakespeare Company when I was 23. He was my mentor and told me to start writing comedy. I wouldn't have a job if it weren't for Alan.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Cleopatra, the most powerful woman ever. I'd like to know the truth behind the legend – and how she did her make-up.



'I'm studying for a masters in Cognitive Therapy at Oxford. It focuses on how the brain works'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: American comedienne Ruby Wax

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... You only have one shot at this life, so try everything and do not be afraid. Life is for a limited run. I always do things that scare the hell out of me.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I'm studying for a masters degree in Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy at Oxford University. It focuses on how the brain works. I was hopeless at school, so no one appreciates how unlikely this is more than me!

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My Davy Crockett hat, which flew out the car window when we were driving in Wisconsin. I was 13 and had loved that hat for years.

The unending quest that drives you... To find ways of helping people understand how to calm the turbulence of their mind so they can have some solace.

The poem that touches your soul... *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* by Dylan Thomas. It's so passionate.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm some screaming American. It's a persona I made up – I'm a real softball.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Getting into the RSC. I didn't have a lot of hope, but I got in and it changed my life.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I would steal *everything* from the designer departments at Selfridges. I love it.

The song that means most to you... *Twist And Shout*. John Lennon's voice made me scream and it reminds me of sticking Beatles posters on my ceiling.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Going to Oxford University for matriculation in September 2010.

I was wearing a bat costume (gown and mortar board) and was so insanely happy that I felt like I'd left my body. Something like that happening was never on the cards for me.

The saddest time that shook your world... Whenever I have depression. The last time was in February 2006 and it lasted for four months. It was like being in a coma but you're awake.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I wish I'd done some serious documentaries. I was asked to interview Yasser Arafat and Gaddafi in the 1990s, but someone at the BBC said: 'You don't do that stuff'. I could have done a good job.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Stay curious. I am very interested in other people, which is good because it stops you from being self-obsessed.

The order of service at your funeral... Maybe I'd have my ashes scattered at the Reethi Rah in the Maldives – one of the world's most expensive resorts. I could have room service for eternity.

The way you want to be remembered... As the most fascinating, mould-breaking woman that ever walked the earth!

The Plug... I have just launched Black Dog Tribe, a website that helps people with mental illnesses meet one another. Visit www.blackdogtribe.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

*Scarlett Johansson's a no-nonsense zoo keeper in **We Bought A Zoo** – in cinemas now. The Susan Boyle musical, **I Dreamed A Dream**, opens on Friday at Newcastle's Theatre Royal. And Paul Weller's new album, **Sonik Kicks**, is out Monday*

NEXT WEEK

● Sir Trevor McDonald on his American adventure – travelling the mighty Mississippi river ● The unmissable final part of Monty Don's spring series ● Terrific recipes for tempting sweet and savoury tarts ● PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings

