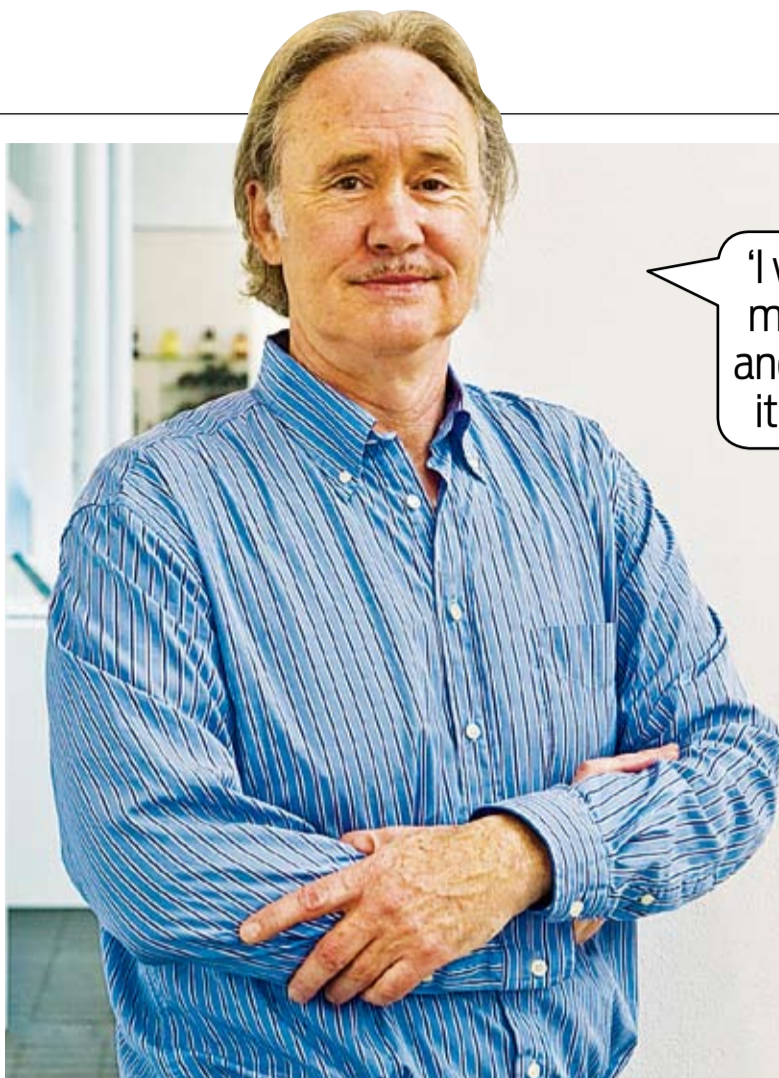


# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's actor and writer Nigel Planer



'I wish I hadn't wasted so much time getting drunk and partying in my 20s. All it leads to is a hangover'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A dark green Silverline metal filing cabinet. For the past 40 years all my notes, ideas and drafts have been a total mess. A few months ago my wife, Roberta, suggested a filing cabinet and it's absorbed the lot. Miraculous!

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Wasting time getting drunk and partying in my 20s and 30s. All it leads to is a hangover. I'm 61 now and the ticking clock has really hit me.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd hang out in Naomi Campbell's dressing room at a fashion show, either to see her changing or throwing a tantrum. Either would be entertaining, both would be perfect!



Left: Naomi Campbell. Above right: David Hockney's paintings done on an iPad. Far right: Monsoon Wedding

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal the landscape paintings David Hockney did on an iPad. The colours in them are so vibrant they bring you alive.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Freedom At Midnight by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre about the Indian independence movement in 1947. I love India and I'm fascinated by this period. A million people died.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** That things are never built for tall people. I'm 6ft 3in and I'm always banging into doorways.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My dad George, who was a scientist. He's 94 now and he's always been the voice of reason in my life.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** A pink linen shirt from Boden. I bought it six years ago and it gave me the confidence to wear colour, but it disappeared.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Mini Magnum ice creams. I've been known to eat three at once.



**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** The author Robert Louis Stevenson captivates me, not only for his novels but also his travel writing. I'd love to hear about his journeys.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** See the funny side of life.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Learning Hindi. I've done a year of evening classes already.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To write better. I've written TV scripts, plays and novels, but it's always incredibly difficult.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Lewis Carroll's The Walrus And The Carpenter because it's about double acts, which have been a feature of my career.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** I'm always being asked if I'm 3rd Rock From The Sun actor John Lithgow.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** A journey I did overland to India when I was 20. I saw the world for what it really is.

**The song that means most to you...** Queen's These Are The Days Of Our Lives. I sang it every night to 2,000 people in the musical We Will Rock You while I was divorcing my second wife. It's such a beautiful, resonant song it saved me during those dark times.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To be in a long-running comedy TV series.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Monsoon Wedding. It's funny and moving and the first Indian film that Westerners really got.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** I'd watch the sunrise in Umbria, Italy, while eyeing birds of prey through my binoculars. I'd read and write for two hours before meeting Roberta and my sons – Stanley, 25, and Harvey, 14 [from two previous marriages] – in Kochi in India for breakfast. I'd have idli [Indian doughnuts], with English marmalade, that Roberta will have

brought. Then we'd all go on a drive in Yosemite National Park, California, and have a picnic. Later, we'd visit the Museo dell'Opera in Florence, then have tea by the Duomo. I'd watch the sunset over the Hooghly River in India, then go for dinner with Roberta on the island of Moorea in the South Pacific. We'd sleep on a houseboat by Tower Bridge, London's most iconic monument.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** My wedding to Roberta in 2013. We were together for eight years from when I was 25, then got back together in 2003. Things feel right now.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** Sunday nights during the divorce from my first wife, Anna, when I had to hand Stanley back to her.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Never wear light socks with dark shoes, it makes you look untrustworthy.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd like to be cremated at Golders Green Crematorium in North London. I'd have a reading by the actor Roger Allam and I'd like my ashes scattered beneath Tower Bridge.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He was good at making friends.

**The Plug...** Nigel plays Grandpa Joe in Charlie And The Chocolate Factory until 17 May. The show is booking until 2015. Visit [www.charlieandthechocolatefactory.com](http://www.charlieandthechocolatefactory.com). ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: CAMERA PRESS, REX

## PS...

Kiefer Sutherland's a Roman villain in disaster movie *Pompeii* – in cinemas from Friday. Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up The Bodies* take to the stage at London's Aldwych Theatre. And Damon Albarn's first solo album, *Everyday Robots*, is out Monday



## NEXT WEEK

- Fascinating tales from the grand country houses requisitioned during WWII
- The essential recipes every home cook should have
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide