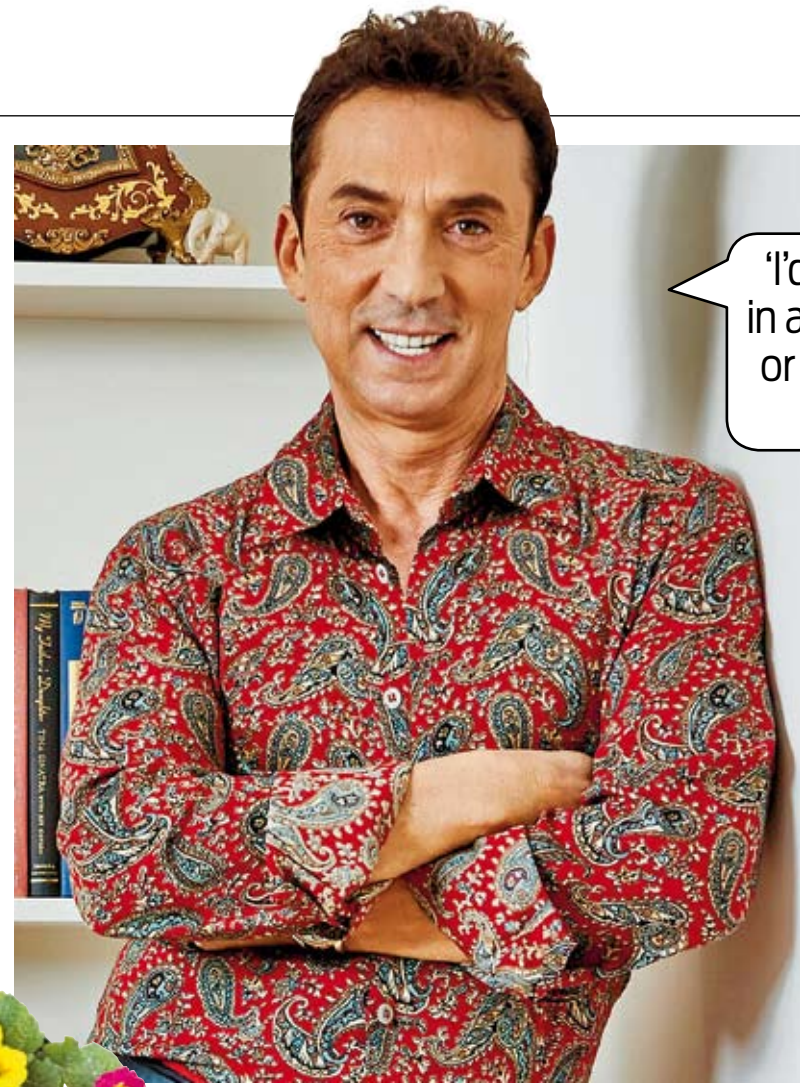
The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's Strictly judge Bruno Tonioli



'I'd love to play a baddie in a movie – an evil genius or a heavy-duty Mafioso or even a vampire!'

The prized possession you value above all others... My mother Fulvia's gold wedding ring and bracelet. She died suddenly from a heart attack in July 1994 when she was 63. It was a great shock, so I have huge emotional attachment to her jewellery and I keep it near me.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... I wish my parents had lived to see me on Strictly. My father Werther died in 2001 when he was 70 after suffering from Alzheimer's.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Smoking. I started when I was 14 and I smoke about ten a day, but sometimes I get through 20. It's my only addiction and I can't control myself.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... One Hundred Years Of Solitude by Gabriel García Márquez blows my mind. It's like you're reading in 3D.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd see the private rooms at Buckingham Palace and find out if the Queen watches Strictly! I hear Camilla does.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People in cinemas with trays of stinking junk food who sit there munching and slurping during the film.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Alexander the Great. He conquered half the world by the time he was 30. I want to know how he did it.

The person who has influenced you most... The theatre director Frantz Salieri. I was 18 and an amateur dancer, but he gave me the lead in the hit show La Grande Eugène, which went to Paris and London and started me on my path.

The piece of wisdom you'd pass on to a child... Never lose your curiosity – you never know when a piece of knowledge will be useful.

The film you can watch time and time again... Singin' In The Rain. It makes you want to be in showbusiness and the dance numbers are brilliant.

The unending quest that drives you on... To be open to opportunities and ready for the next adventure.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Gardening. I've never been taught, but I can plant anything – even a twig – and it grows. My ancestors were farmers and I garden by instinct.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A gold chain my grandmother Ines gave me when I was 18. It was stolen in a burglary in London a few years later. I never told her.

The poem that touches your soul... John Lennon's Imagine has universal value. Even without music, its words speak for themselves.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm an exuberant, larger-than-life character. That's a performance I create to entertain people. Away from TV I'm quiet, low-key and private. I'm happy cooking, gardening and being with friends.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... My mother's death, because it made me grow up. It's like a constant stabbing in the heart. Nothing takes away the pain.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal one of Chris Evans' Ferraris, just to see his face when he realises it's gone. I've never owned a Ferrari, so his collection makes me green with envy.

The song that means most to you... The aria Casta Diva from Bellini's opera Norma. I once saw Montserrat Caballé sing it and I sobbed uncontrollably right from the introduction.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'm single, so I'd meet gangs of friends in different locations. Breakfast would be at the Grand Hotel Timeo, in Sicily, which has breathtaking views of Mount Etna. I'd have a cappuccino and Sicilian pastries. After that I'd snorkel over the coral reef of an island in the Maldives and feed tropical fish. Lunch would be fried baby calamari in the bay at Positano, Italy. I don't drink much, but I'll have a glass of rosé, then stroll around Rome. I'd have a coffee in a cafe, then do some shopping. I'd watch the sunset over cocktails on the island of Santorini in Greece, then go for dinner at The River Cafe in west London. A group of us would sit outside on a hot summer's night, sipping some Gavi white wine and eating whatever the chef recommends. After that I'd see a show on Broadway and end the day in my own bed at my flat in Maida Vale, London.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When I took my parents to the Royal Opera House in the 1980s after I'd found some success as a choreographer. They'd never seen an opera and they were so startled they could hardly speak. It was a precious time and I thank God I took them.

The saddest time that shook your world... Any bereavement is sad. Each one brings back the pain of the others.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play a baddie in a movie. I've choreographed about ten films and appeared in two, but it would be great fun to play an evil genius or a heavy-duty Mafioso or even a vampire!

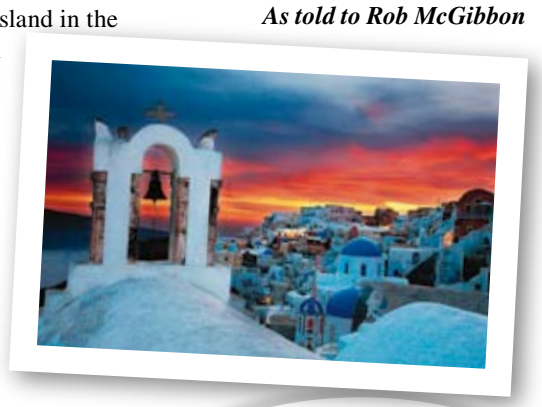
The philosophy that underpins your life... Keep believing in your dreams.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a couple of big opera arias for dramatic effect, then a party. I'd like my ashes scattered under a tree in a beautiful garden in London.

The way you want to be remembered... He did the best he could.

The Plug... Fight For Life is a charity that helps children with cancer. Please support it by visiting fightforlife.org. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



Right: Debbie Reynolds and Gene Kelly in Singin' In The Rain. Above right: Gardening. Far right: Sunset on Santorini

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