

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's Sherlock star Rupert Graves

The biggest regret you wish you could The priority activity if you were the Invis**amend...** Not concentrating at school. I left at 15 with a few low-grade CSEs, and I've had to wing it ever since. I've always felt a bit insecure about my education.

The temptation you wish you could **resist...** Showing off. Whether it's telling bad jokes, pulling funny faces or doing silly accents, I can't help myself. I've even broken bones doing mad stuff.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The US detective novel Black Cherry Blues by James Lee Burke. It has beautifully drawn but flawed characters.

The person who has influenced you most.... The theatre director Frank Hauser. He directed me in my second professional play, the comedy Candida by George Bernard Shaw, when I was 23. I hadn't trained as an actor so I felt out of my depth, but he taught me to go on my instinct.

The film you can watch time and time again .... The Philadelphia Story from 1940, with Katharine Hepburn, Cary Grant and James Stewart. It's brilliantly funny.

**Right: Katharine Hepburn** and James Stewart in The Philadelphia Story. Above right: a Gibson guitar like Rupert's. Far right: Nelson Mandela

ible Man for a day... I'm an Arsenal fan, so I'd listen to manager Arsène Wenger talking tactics in the dressing room at half-time.

The prized possession you value above all others... My 1965 Gibson ES-120T electric guitar. I bought it last year for £1,100 and

I love its rich, jazzy sound. The pet hate that makes your

> hackles rise ... My own intolerance to other drivers. I'm probably as guilty of bad driving as them.

> > The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Nelson Mandela. I didn't appreciate just how great he was until I read his obituaries.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Darts. I used to play at the pub, but I can't now because I've got five kids! It's thrilling that the difference between winning and losing is a fraction of a millimetre.



I'd encourage them to trust their own judgement.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again ... Perfect vision in my right eye. I got stabbed in it with a sword in a school play, and I've had tunnel vision on that side ever since.

The unending quest that drives you **On...** To squeeze as much enjoyment out of life as possible.

The poem that touches your soul... The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock by TS Eliot. It's full of sadness and regret.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase ... That writer and poet Robert Graves was my dad, and Olympic diver Tom Daley is my son because he looks like me!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Joining the circus when I was 17. I replied to a YTS offer at my local Jobcentre in Weston-super-Mare and became Tomato the Clown for a while on £25 a week. It was my first chance to perform professionally, and it helped me get my Equity card.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it ... I'd devise a brilliant, Italian Job-style raid on the Bank of England's gold bullion stocks.

The song that means most to you... I'm always uplifted when I play Bob Marley's No Woman, No Cry.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... The day would begin on an island in the Maldives with my wife Susie and our children [Joseph, 11, Ella, ten, Noah, eight, Isaac, six, and Zoe, four]. After tropical fruit and coffee we'd snorkel over the coral reef and swim with turtles. I'd harpoon some fish for a beach barbecue, then go on the best

eight waterpark rides imaginable, which will have been installed on the island just for us. Later, Susie and I would take the bullet train from Tokyo to the Japanese countryside and climb some awesome mountains. After that, I'd look at some ancient ruins in Ethiopia, then airlift some actor friends to our tropical island for a sunset game of beach football. Later, Susie and I would have dinner with friends at the amazing

'I wish I could have perfect vision back in my right eye. I got stabbed in it with a sword in a school play, and I've had tunnel vision in it ever since'

> Noma restaurant in Copenhagen, Denmark. The day would end at Ronnie Scott's jazz club in Soho watching David Bowie doing a super-exclusive gig, during which I'd come on stage and play guitar perfectly. Spectacular!

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Our wedding day in 2001 in a park by Sydney Harbour. I've never felt such happiness and excitement.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my mum Mary died of cancer in 1993 aged just 59. I howled with emotion at the sight of her body.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To play guitar brilliantly like Johnny Marr from The Smiths or King Crimson's Robert Fripp.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Treat life as an adventure and keep your sense of humour.

The order of service at your funeral... I'd have a funeral pyre in a big field, then as it burned people would party around me with some great live music and plenty to drink. My loved ones can throw my ashes to the winds somewhere special to them.

The way you want to be remembered... Fondly by my family and friends.

The Plug... The Stroke Association funds research, campaigns for better prevention and care, and supports survivors. To donate, visit stroke.org.uk/donation or call 0303 3033 100.

As told to Rob McGibbon



**NEXT WEEK** 

 The real story behind the Duke of Wellington's boots and the Waterloo battlefield As BGT reaches the live finals, meet our pick of the contenders 

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*PS*... Bradley Cooper is The Elephant Man at London's Theatre Royal Haymarket from Tuesday. George Clooney stars in sci-fi adventure Tomorrowland, in cinemas from Friday. And Brandon Flowers of The Killers releases a solo album, The Desired Effect, on Monday

86 weekend



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