



From top: Positano, an 8mm film reel, Chet Baker, the Virgin Mary, Graham Greene's *The End of the Affair* and Alfred Hitchcock

The prized possession you value above all others... My wife [fashion designer Nicole Farhi] sculpted our gold wedding rings. Each has two hares, which form a circle around the finger as they run in pursuit of each other for ever.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Not reading medicine. Doctor-writers are the best – Anton Chekhov being the pre-eminent example. The moment I arrived at Cambridge University to read English, I envied the medics, who on the first day went straight into dissection.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... Alfred Hitchcock will be found to have made another film. After a day on an Italian beach, my family will host the first screening of this hitherto unseen masterpiece. As sunset comes, we will stroll out on to the terrace at the San Pietro Hotel in Positano and sit down to spaghetti alla vongole. Over dinner, we will discuss the film.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I get to airports ridiculously early. It's an uncontrollable urge.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... *The End of the Affair* by Graham Greene. It's the ideal for any author to be both good and popular.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd walk the woods near Crawford, Texas, in April 2002 to find out what on earth Tony Blair said to George Bush when, alone, they cooked up the catastrophic Iraq invasion of the following year.

The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... Life's taught me good taste, which I was better off without. When I was young, I wrote without worrying whether it was any good or not. Often, it was bad but bold. Nowadays, the danger is being good but mild.

The film you can watch time and time again... Federico Fellini's *8½* from 1963. It's about a director who knows he will never be able to catch the impossible richness of his memories on film. I always cry throughout.

The person who has influenced you most... My university tutor Raymond Williams. By example, he taught me culture is not the property of the few but of the many, and important changes in culture always come from below.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a



The most unlikely thing about me? I love to make jam. Plum is best.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... I wrote a play called *Knuckle* in 1974, which opened to hostile reviews during the three-day week. The critics were outraged by an anti-capitalist play in the commercial theatre and the fight to keep it afloat for four months marked me as adversarial for a long time to come, which was probably not good for my character or for my peace of mind.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd put a pillow over David Cameron's sleeping head. He seems to be exactly the kind of glib, shallow PR man that Conservatives are traditionally meant to disapprove of. Why he is the leader of their party, I have no idea.

The song that means most to you... This week it's *I Fall In Love Too Easily* by Chet Baker.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... I took Nicole out to dinner for the first time on 19 October, 1991. After that, everything changed.

The saddest time that shook your world... My father's death coincided with my production of *The Secret Rapture* flopping on Broadway. Nothing but bad flowed from both events.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I stopped directing movies in the late Eighties because I believed I couldn't be a playwright and a filmmaker. I am haunted by the films I never made.

The philosophy that underpins your life... People need justice.

The order of service at your funeral... The passage from Chekhov's short story, *The Lady With The Little Dog*, where the lovers sit on the bench above the sea, followed by the piece where a separated couple are reunited by the foreknowledge of death from Jonathan Franzen's novel, *Freedom*.

The way you want to be remembered... It will be great if the plays stay funny.
The Plug... *Page Eight* – the new film I've written and the first I've directed in 20 years – is on BBC2, tomorrow, at 9pm.

As told to Rob McGibbon

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of playwright Sir David Hare

pint... The Virgin Mary would make an interesting interviewee.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Ask your parents questions straight away, or you'll never know.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I love making jam. Plum is best.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My dad cleared out the attic and for no reason got rid of the 8mm film of my childhood.

The unending quest that drives you on... I would like to write a play which doesn't disappoint me 20 years later.

The poem that touches your soul... *War Has Been Given A Bad Name* by Bertolt Brecht, which knocks every stupid opinion about war on the head in 16 lines.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That because I've written about politics, I've never written about anything else.

PS...

Meet the Caped Crusader and his evil adversaries at *Batman Live* at London's O2 Arena all week. Antonio Banderas stars in Pedro Almodóvar's latest film *The Skin I Live In*, out now. And Dolly Parton's new album *Better Day* is out on Monday.



NEXT WEEK

- Ant & Dec's pulse-racing new £1 million gameshow
- William and Kate's wedding cake maker Fiona Cairns shares her recipes
- Plan ahead for a spectacular spring flower display
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide