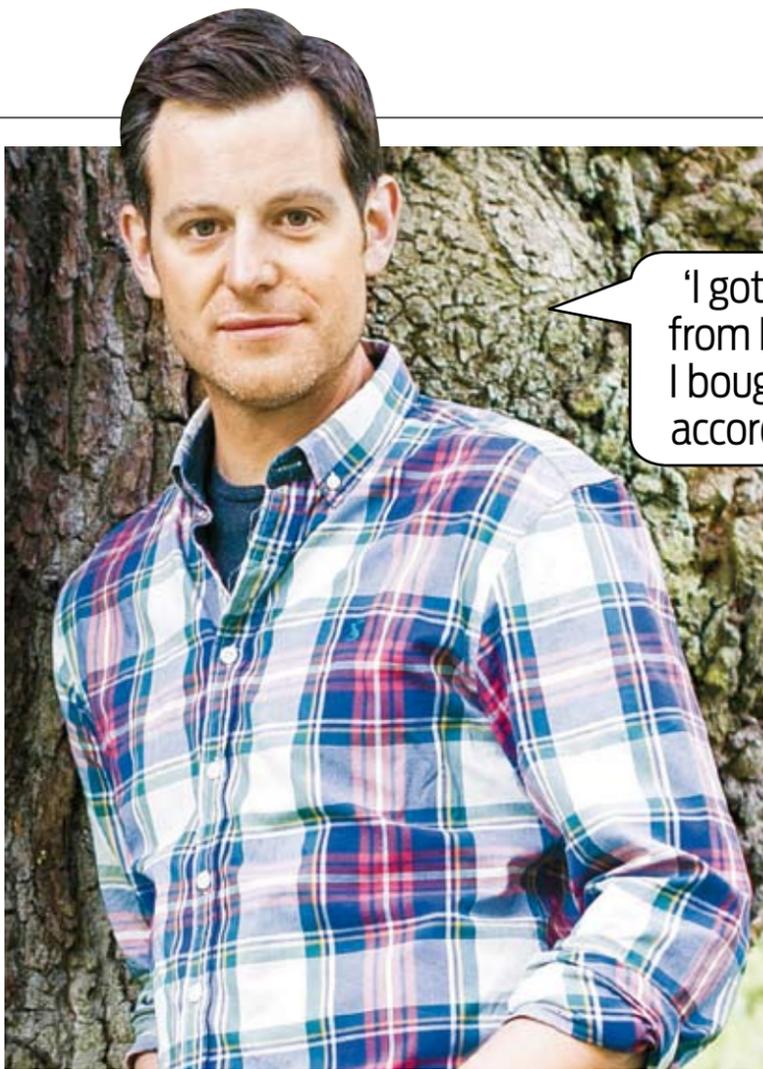


# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's TV presenter Matt Baker's turn



'I got the bug for auctions from Dad – the other week I bought a mother-of-pearl accordion I can't even play'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My wedding ring. It's made from ten links of the chain on my maternal great-grandfather's fob watch.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not finishing a Paratroopers cross-country course on Blue Peter in 2004 [Matt was a presenter until 2006]. I gave up with 150m to go. The sergeant major bawled, 'Baker. You'll regret that for the rest of your life!' And I have.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pint...**

Robin Hood. I'd like to know if he really existed.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Buying things at auctions or on eBay. I got the bug from Dad – he once bought the contents of a school library! The other week I bought a mother-of-pearl accordion I can't even play.

Left: Robin Hood. Above, right: a Tonka Toy tractor. Far right: Love Really Hurts Without You by Billy Ocean

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** The children's book *Old Farm, New Farm* by Felicia Law, which I read when I was seven. It's about a farmer who renovates his farm. It inspired me to do jobs around our family farm in County Durham.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...**

I'd watch spies being briefed at MI6, then follow them to see them carry out their orders.

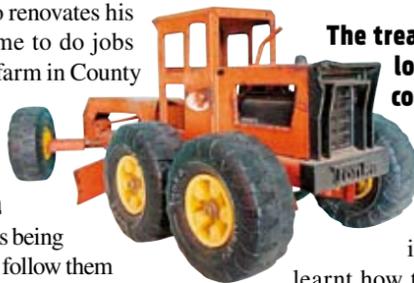
**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Litter. If I see someone dropping it, I ask them to pick it up.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*. It's a great comedy and I was called Ferris at school because I looked like Matthew Broderick in the film.

**The person who has influenced you most...** Either of my parents – Mike and Janice. I get a love for animals from Mum and my work ethic from Dad.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Luck is a lifetime of preparation for a moment of opportunity.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Painting. I've always loved drawing and recently I started painting as a way to relax. We've converted our spare room into a studio.



**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...**

An orange Tonka Toy tractor with a trailer that went missing 20 years ago. I

learnt how to reverse with a real trailer by playing with it.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To not waste time and always make the best of my abilities.

**The poem that touches your soul...** *Anthem For Doomed Youth* by Wilfred Owen. The way he describes the horror of war is so haunting.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I just turn up in front of the camera on *Countryfile* and say some lines off the top of my head. I spend a lot of time preparing and thinking about what to say.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The day my mum took me to a gymnastics club when I was six. After that gymnastics was my life. I trained hard and became British Junior Champion but I had to give up when I was 14 because I had anaemia.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd love to devise an ingenious bank robbery.

**The song that means most to you...** Billy Ocean's *Love Really Hurts Without You*. I was in a dance group in my teens and we danced to it in clubs. My wife Nicola was in the crowd one night and that's how we met.

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

I'd start at dawn in Wyoming herding cattle on horseback like a cowboy. Then I'd have breakfast on the west coast of Scotland. I love the mountains. I'd have a full Scottish fry-up with haggis and I'd be joined by Nicola and our kids Luke, seven, and Molly, four. Then we'd cram into an Aston Martin DB5 and drive through the English countryside to London where we'd take a private jet to Vietnam for a lunch of fish and chips on the floating communities at Ha Long Bay. I'd go snowboarding in Canada in the afternoon, then meet the family for tea at a watering hole on safari in Tanzania. Nicola and I would have prosecco by the Grand Canal in Venice, then take

the Orient Express back to England. They'd serve roast beef and Yorkshire pudding for dinner with fine wines. I'd end the day at my local pub in Hertfordshire with a pint or two of ale.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When I got a perfect ten for my floor routine in the National Gymnastics Championships when I was 13. It was a dream come true.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** The day my Border collie Meg was put down three years ago. I'll never forget watching her eyes close.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To take my wife and kids to the places I went to when I was presenting the *Blue Peter* Appeals. I saw people in the remotest places who have tough lives. It taught me how to appreciate what you have.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Push yourself to your limit – you have more to offer than you imagine.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'd have a church service, but I'd want it to be uplifting. I'd like my ashes scattered outside our farm in Durham so the wind takes me across the countryside.

**The way you want to be remembered...** As someone who had a go and inspired others to have a go too.

**The Plug...** Matt Baker is presenting the BBC's gymnastics coverage at the Commonwealth Games. ■

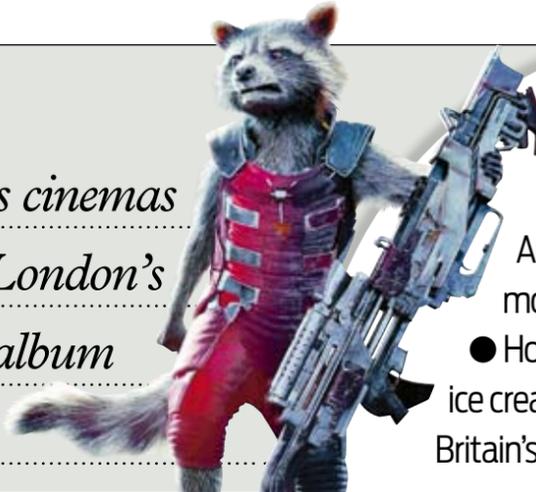
As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOGRAPHS: SEAN MAYLON, REX, GETTY

PS...

Sci-fi summer blockbuster *Guardians Of The Galaxy* hits cinemas from Thursday. Gershwin classic *Porgy And Bess* is at London's Open Air Theatre. And a new Eric Clapton & Friends album *The Breeze (An Appreciation Of JJ Cale)* is out Tuesday



**NEXT WEEK**

- Celebrate ten years of *Who Do You Think You Are?* as we revisit its most moving and shocking stories
- How to make the ultimate ice creams and sorbets
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings guide