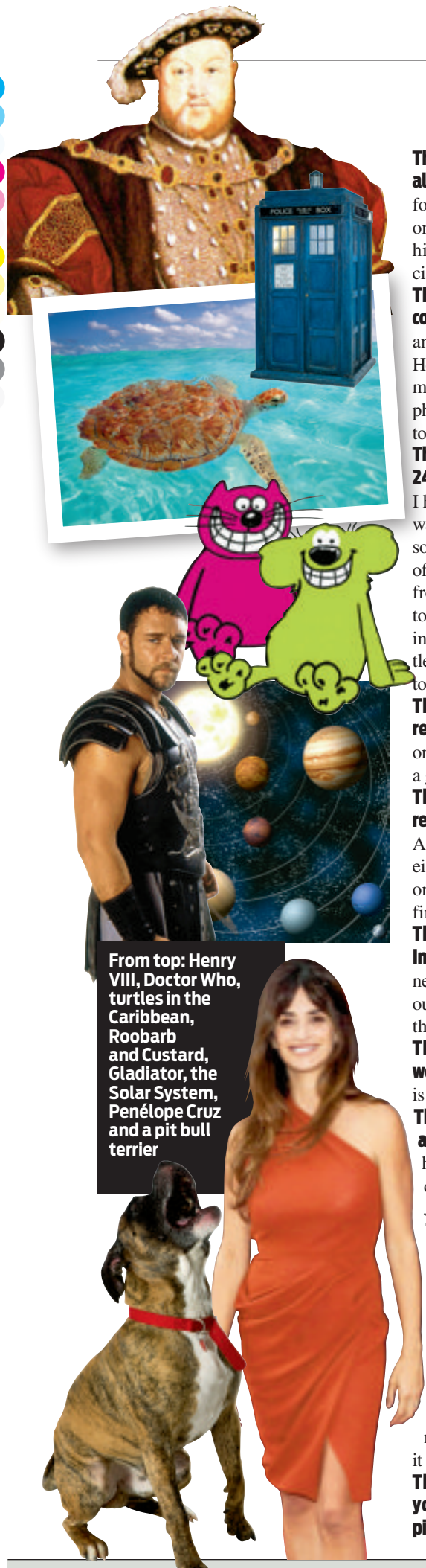

From top: Henry VIII, Doctor Who, turtles in the Caribbean, Roobarb and Custard, Gladiator, the Solar System, Penélope Cruz and a pit bull terrier

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's TV impressionist Jon Culshaw

The prized possession you value above all others... A beautiful gold Victorian fob watch, which my father gave me on my 21st birthday. It was given to him on his 21st, so it was a very special thing to give me.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I am not big on regrets and pride myself on being an optimist. However, I rue the day I parked one of my classic cars on my lawn to take a photo. The tyres sunk into the turf and totally wrecked the grass!

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I have been mad on astronomy since I was a boy, so I would zoom around the solar system. I'd love to see an eclipse of Earth from the moon and the sunset from the Gusev crater on Mars. Closer to home, I'd have dinner at The Cliff in Barbados, where you can watch turtles come up the beach. Then I'd head to Antarctica to see the midnight sun.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Takeaway chips with gravy on the way back from the pub is never a good decision for my waistline.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Observer's Book Of Astronomy, which I got when I was eight. I used to watch Patrick Moore on The Sky At Night and he was the first impression I tried to do.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I would stand next to a stage psychic and freak them out by whispering stuff to them when they tried to contact the dead.

The life of another with whom you would gladly trade places... Whoever is going out with Penélope Cruz!

The film you can watch time and time again... Gladiator. I love the sweep of heroism and how the villain gets his comeuppance. Russell Crowe and Joaquin Phoenix are brilliant.

The person who has influenced you most... A tutor called Eric Seal at my college near Wigan when I was 17. Until him, every teacher had scoffed at me when I said I wanted to be an entertainer. But Mr Seal said, 'If you want to do that and believe you can, then you *will* make it happen.' It was a watershed moment and he made me believe that it wasn't such a silly dream.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Henry VIII. I'd say, 'Now look, you. Calm down and stop beheading everyone who disagrees with you!'

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Never think something is impossible. Having belief is the first step to making ambitions come true.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I have a passion for 1970s classic cars and have four Mark III Cortinas, four Mark I Granadas and a Granada Coupe. They were once everywhere, but are now quite rare.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A photo of me when I was ten singing That's All Right Mama in a school competition. I gave it to a producer on Sky TV's Star Search talent show in 1991 and he lost it.

The unending quest that drives you on... To stay at the top of my game.

The poem that touches your soul... It's one I wrote after my mum died last year of cancer. Her name was Theresa and she was 84. It is a short rhyme that says how much I preferred the world with her in it, but that I am staying positive and doing my best to get on.

> I have a passion for 1970s classic cars, and have four Mark III Cortinas and four Mark I Granadas

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That because I do impressions I must have some deep-rooted sadness and a need to hide. I simply do them for a laugh. That may be boring, but it's the truth.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... I was working as a DJ on Radio Viking in Hull in 1990 and did snippets of impressions between records. One day a receptionist said, 'You should do impressions as a job.' Within a year, that *was* my job.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal those 'status' dogs, like pit bull terriers and mastiffs, that young lads swagger round with, and give them to people who know how to care for them.

The song that means most to you... Saturday Sun by Nick Drake. It gives me a nice sense of contentment.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Coming off stage after my first performance at the Royal Variety show in 2001. I had done pretty well and I got a huge sense of euphoria.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my mother. She was the kindest person you could meet.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... Straight acting; the role I'd love would be Doctor Who.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Do not waste energy worrying. Stressing about something that might not even happen in the future robs you of your strength for today.

The order of service at your funeral... I would insist on something really daft – like the coffin being carried out to the music of Roobarb And Custard!

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who made people smile, but also as an understanding friend who always gave reassurance.

The Plug... The Impressions Show With Culshaw And Stephenson begins next Wednesday on BBC1 at 8.30pm. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PHOTOGRAPHS: XXXX