The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it’s broadcaster John Suchet’s turn.

The prized possession you value above all others... My trombone. My mum Joan bought it for me when I formed a school jazz band aged 17. I still play it – badly.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Turning down the chance of a posting to Congo by Reuters when I was 26. My then wife, Moya, was pregnant and I needed to stay in London.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Brazil nut chocolate. As a kid I saw my dad eating some, pleaded for a piece, and it changed my life! No meal seems complete without it.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The Grapes Of Wrath by John Steinbeck. What Rose of Sharon does on the last page still moves me to resonance…

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I’d fix every faulty London Underground signal and train so there’s no disruption for a day.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Smoking. Not just for what it does to the smoker, but for what it does to me if I get anywhere near them. My voice is my livelihood and smoking destroys it.

The film you can watch time and time again... Cinema Paradiso. The scene where the little boy, now a famous film director, returns to his hometown and looks towards the cinema where he befriended the projectionist brought tears down my cheeks.

The person who has influenced you most... My grandad, James Jarché, a press photographer. I listened enthralled as he talked of his adventures. I’m sure that’s where I first got the urge to travel to far-flung places.

The figure from history for whom you’d love to have a steam bath and massage... Beethoven. I’d ask, ‘Who was the woman we call the Immortal Beloved, the only woman who ever returned your love?’ It’s the greatest mystery of his life.

The poem that touches your soul... I’ve never got poetry. Kipling’s If is probably the closest I’ve come to liking a poem, but I’d still probably prune a few lines.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... A volume of short stories about Sherlock Holmes, a woman who ever returned your love? I’d ask, ‘Who was the woman that the immortal Beethoven ate, and then onto our hideaway hotel in the Bavarian Alps for a steam bath and massage. We’d see Beethoven’s Fijiatlo at the Sydney Opera House, followed by dinner in Saint-Paule de Vence, with views of the French Alps and the Med. We’d end the day watching the sun go down on the Kerala coast in India.

The song that means most to you... Unforgettable by Nat King Cole. I was playing it in my room as a teenager when Mum came in with tears in her eyes and told me her great secret. It stays a secret.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... As told to Rob McGibbon

Brit-flick Pride, starring Bill Nighy and Imelda Staunton, is in cinemas Friday. Cillian Murphy is at the National Theatre in Ballyturk. Previewing from Thursday. And Smokey Robinson’s album Smokey & Friends, featuring Elton John, is out Monday.

NEXT WEEK

■ Discover charming new CBeebies series The Furchester Hotel, a British cross between Sesame Street and Fawlty Towers
■ Janet Street-Porter offers up her taste of Britain ■ PLUS Britain’s best TV listings guide

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