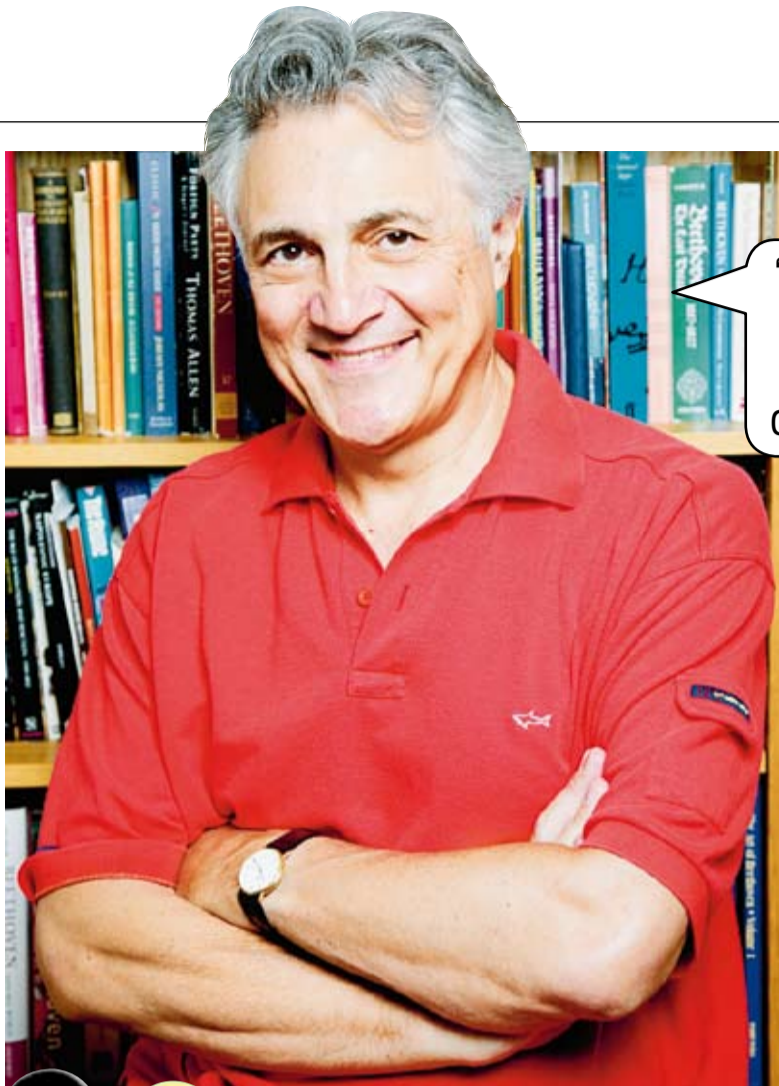


# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*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*



'I would forcibly extract the tonsils of anyone who coughs during a classical music concert!'

**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 tears. I won't give away what she does, but it's a remarkable act of compassion.

Left: Nat King Cole. Above right: snooker balls. Far right: Cinema Paradiso



**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 a child 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 most like to buy a pie and a pint...** 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 piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Blow your own trumpet – because no one else is going to blow it for you.



**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Snooker.

My dad Jack was a gynaecologist who looked after world champion Joe Davis's wife. He gave us a table when I was 14, and I was hooked.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** A volume of short stories about Sherlock Holmes, a present when I was in hospital after knocking myself out at school. One day it just wasn't there any more.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To get just one radio link to come out as I want it to! They're never quite as good as they were in my head.

**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 misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm 'such a nice guy'. Really? You should see me when I get angry!

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** The fall of

Communism. I presented the ITN news from the Brandenburg Gate days after the Berlin Wall came down in 1989; I'd watched it go up when I was still at school in 1961.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd forcibly extract the tonsils of anybody who coughs during a classical music concert.

**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 way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** After a lie-in (my days normally start at 5.30am to present Classic FM) I'd have a two-hour brunch, made by my partner Nula, at our Docklands flat. We'd go to Vienna for lunch at Zum Schwarzen Kameel, where Mozart and Beethoven ate, and then onto our hideaway hotel in the Bavarian Alps for a steam bath and massage. We'd see Beethoven's Fidelio at the Sydney Opera House, followed by dinner in Saint-Paul 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.



As told to Rob McGibbon

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS MCANDREW/CAMERA PRESS; ALAMY; ALLSTAR/REX

## PS...

*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