



From top: Spinal Tap, Birds Of Britain And Europe by Roger Tory Peterson, Stanley Matthews in the 1953 FA Cup Final, Prince, After Eight mints, a drum kit, New York's Central Park and gorillas

The prized possession you value above all others... My Victorian house by Hampstead Heath in north London. Every room is full of memories.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... I wish I'd learnt to read music. I can play drums and a bit of guitar, but I can't read music. If I could I'd definitely have made music my career.

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

I'd wake after a perfect eight hours' sleep. I'd begin with birdwatching in Central Park, New York, at 5.30am to see a great 'fall' of migrant American birds, like warblers and thrushes – it's like it's raining birds. I'd then nip into Greenwich Village for a cream cheese and smoked salmon bagel. I'd spend some time searching online for rare CDs, then my wife Laura would join me for lunch on a beach near Cape Town where you can whale-watch. We'd have a siesta in the serenity of the hotel on Bird Island in the Seychelles. In the early evening I'd go to Jim Corbett National Park in northern India for an elephant ride to see some tigers. At some point I'd have a glass of Metaxa brandy, but not too much, nor too late.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Snacks late at night, like crisps, nuts or After Eight mints.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Birds Of Britain And Europe by naturalist Roger Tory Peterson. It came out in the 60s and was the first well-illustrated bird book.

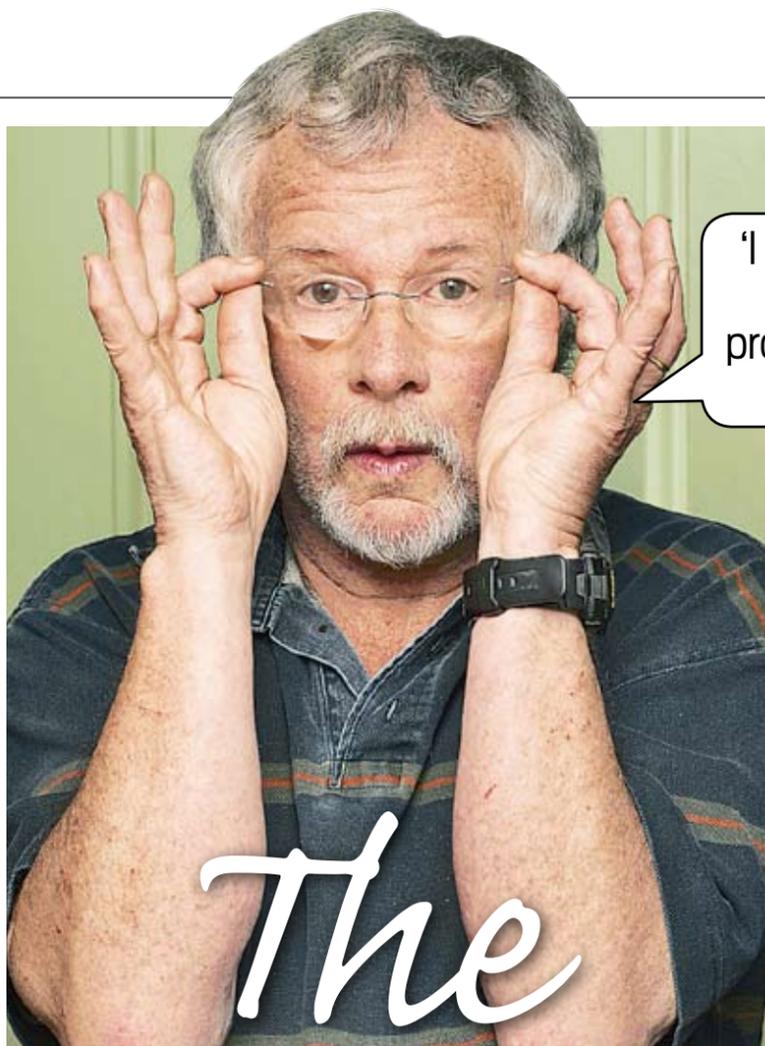
The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd go to central Africa to sit among the gorillas.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... The BBC asking me every year to do Strictly Come Dancing! I hate ballroom dancing with a passion.

The film you can watch time and time again... This Is Spinal Tap is a masterful comedy and beautifully observed. It always cheers me up.

The person who has influenced you most... My dad, Harry. He became both parents when my mum, Lilian, was taken into a psychiatric hospital when I was six. I didn't appreciate at the time what strength he had. He died at 57 from breathing problems.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Sir Peter Scott, Captain Robert Scott's son, who did incredible things for nature conservation. He's a hero of mine.



'I adore music by Prince. He's a rock god and I probably have everything he's ever released'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: presenter and ex-Goodie Bill Oddie

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Just because a person is an adult, it doesn't mean they know best.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... I adore music by Prince. He's a rock god and I probably have everything he's ever released.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... Our local post office because it was the heart of our community. It closed three years ago despite a big campaign to save it.

The unending quest that drives you on... To never become a grumpy old person who whinges about the youth of today. I'm 71 and intend to remain interested in what youngsters do. I love their energy.

The poem that touches your soul... No poem has ever touched my soul but I'm obsessed with lyrics by the likes of Randy Newman, Paul Simon and Joni Mitchell. Joni's song The Magdalene Laundries is beautiful and very moving.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm ill. I was diagnosed as bipolar three years ago. I have been all sorted for the past two years, but there's still this sense that I'm not available for work.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Having a complete breakdown 11 years ago. It was hard having to accept I had an illness.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd jump traffic queues by driving in bus lanes.

The song that means most to you... I Can't Make You Love Me by Bonnie Raitt makes me cry, but I love it.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Being at Wembley Stadium with my dad for the 1953 FA Cup Final when Blackpool beat Bolton 4-3. It became known as 'The Matthews Final' because Stanley Matthews set up the goals for Blackpool to come back from 3-1 down.

The saddest time that shook your world... Re-meeting my mother for the first time since I was 14 when I was in my 40s. I went to her flat in Manchester and she just sat there smoking. It was like meeting a stranger.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To make Inspired By Nature, a series I started working on with the BBC three years ago which got shelved because of cuts. It tells how nature has inspired the arts.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Always tell the truth.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm an atheist, so I will have a humanist funeral. I want to come in to Nothing Compares 2 U by Prince and disappear to Cocktails For Two by Spike Jones. My ashes can be scattered on Hampstead Heath. I love it there.

The way you want to be remembered... As someone who made good television programmes that touched people.

The Plug... I blog on my website www.billoddie.com and I tweet at @billoddie. Please support the great charities that are protecting our environment. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

PS...

Kristen Stewart stars in the big-screen adaptation of Jack Kerouac's Beat Generation novel On The Road, in cinemas now. Penelope Keith's touring the country in Keith Waterhouse's play Good Grief. And Leona Lewis's new album Glassheart is out Monday



NEXT WEEK

● As Call The Midwife returns, the woman behind it reveals the stories and secrets of Britain's best-loved show ● Jamie Oliver makes the most of the apple crop ● PLUS Britain's most detailed TV listings guide