



'I can't resist Fox's Glacier Mints. They replaced cigarettes when I gave up smoking in 1982 – I'm sure they're doing me some damage'

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's zoologist Desmond Morris*

**The person who has influenced you most...** Ian Hamilton, my school biology teacher. He taught me to seek out unanswered questions.

**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...** Charlie Darwin. His concept of evolution has dominated my thinking since I started studying animals in 1949.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Ignore adults' wisdom!

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Drumming. I played drums when I was 16 and I still have one of my tom-toms from that era.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** A batch of paintings I made when I was 19. I put them on the roof of my car while loading it up then forgot about them and drove off. I often wonder if they were ever discovered and kept by someone.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To visit every country in the world.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Snake by DH Lawrence because it shows a man discovering the wonder of a creature he is supposed to fear.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm always examining people. Because I've studied human body language people think I can't be relaxed and natural.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** My father Harry's death when I was 14. He died at 48 because his lungs were ruined by gas in WWI. It gave me a hatred of war.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd drive at 100mph along a deserted motorway. I used to do a 'ton on the one' when the M1 opened in 1959 with no speed limit.

**The song that means most to you...** Imagine by John Lennon. His lyrics contain a very important message.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When my book *The Naked Ape* became a bestseller in 1967.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** The death of a tame Chinese water deer called Psyche in 1977. She had crippling arthritis and I held her while the vet gave her the injection. Her look haunts me to this day.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To paint one perfect picture and to write one perfect book.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Never stop asking questions.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I won't be there, so I couldn't care less.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He tried to tell the truth about human and animal behaviour. And as an artist.

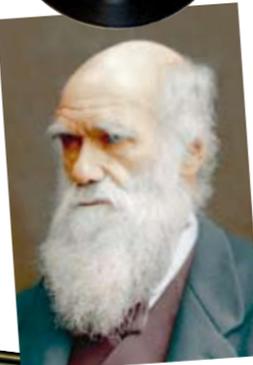
**The Plug...** My new book *The Artistic Ape – Three Million Years Of Art* is published by Red Lemon Press, £30. Visit [www.redlemonpress.com](http://www.redlemonpress.com)

*As told to Rob McGibbon*

PHOTOGRAPHS: EAMONN MCCABE/CAMERA PRESS; CORBIS; ALAMY; MIKE LAMN



From top: Embudu Village in the Maldives, a drum kit, Desmond's great-grandfather's microscope, Imagine by John Lennon and Darwin



Above: Bosch's triptych *The Garden Of Earthly Delights*. Right: Laurel and Hardy



Above: Fox's Glacier Mints

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My great-grandfather's Victorian brass microscope, which I found in the attic when I was ten. It started my fascination with nature.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not being multilingual. I can speak a bit of French and Spanish, but I'm 85 now and I've given up hope of speaking anything else fluently.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** My wife Ramona and I would wake up at a game lodge in Maralal, Kenya, and watch the zebra stallions arguing over their females. I'd have a full English breakfast, then we'd go to the Prado museum in Madrid to enjoy Hieronymus Bosch's triptych *The Garden Of Earthly Delights*. We'd have lunch at Bofinger in Paris: a seafood platter with a glass of white wine, then go snorkelling over the coral reefs off the island of Embudu Village in the Maldives. We'd be joined by our son Jason, his wife Annie, and our four grandchildren, aged nine to 16. In the evening Ramona and I would go to Raffles Hotel in Singapore for a Singapore Sling in the Long Bar before dining on Argentine beef at the Esquina Carlos Gardel Theatre in Buenos Aires while watching an Argentinian tango. At midnight we'd go to a jazz club in New Orleans.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Fox's Glacier mints. They have replaced cigarettes for me. I smoked for 30 years but gave up in 1982. I'm sure the mints are doing me some damage but at my age I don't care.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** *The Disasters Of War* by the painter Francisco Goya. I found these horrific images of torture and death in the school library when I was 16. It confirmed my youthful suspicion that humans were, as I wrote in a school essay, 'monkeys with diseased brains'.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd enjoy not being able to see my ageing body.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Action movies with levels of violence that numb the brain.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Laurel And Hardy's *The Music Box* from 1932. I used to laugh myself sick at it when I was a child.

PS...

*The Hunger Games' Jennifer Lawrence plays a conman's moll in American Hustle – in cinemas from Friday. Iain Glen stars in Fortune's Fool at the Old Vic theatre. And The Christmas Album from BGT brothers Richard & Adam is out now*



**NEXT WEEK**

**Don't miss your BUMPER Christmas TV issue**  
All the essential festive viewing right through to the New Year