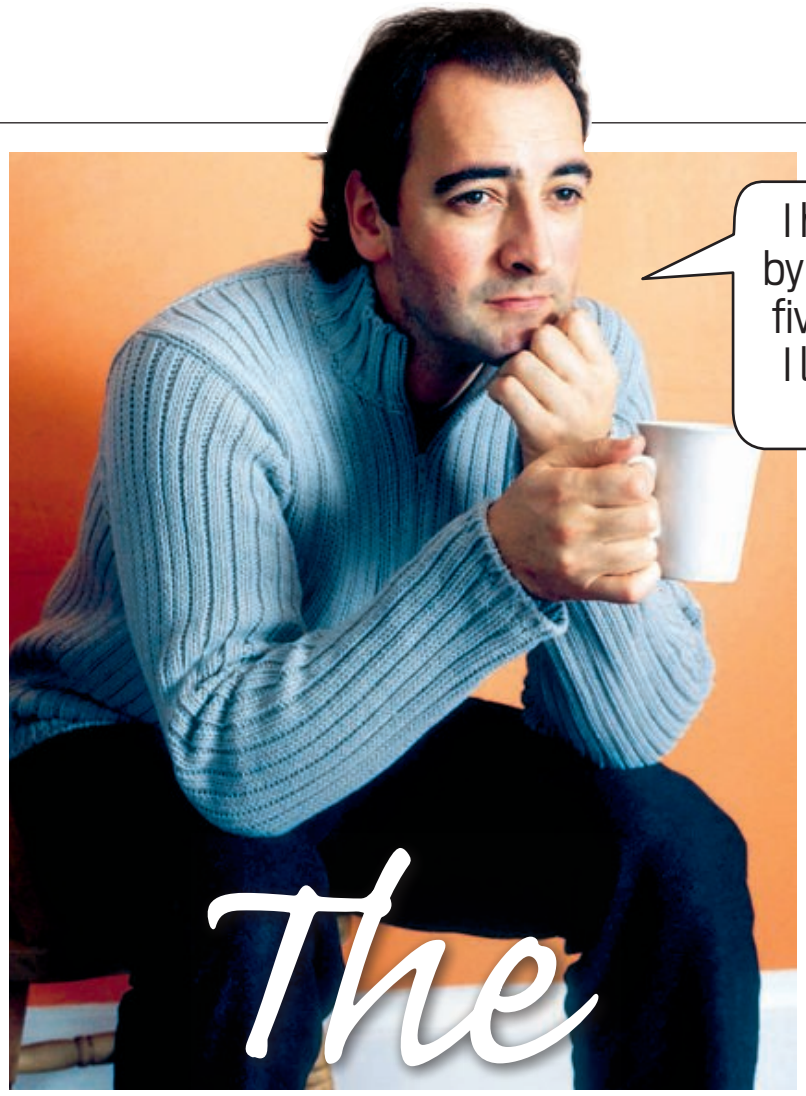
From top: a sleigh bed, 12 Angry Men with Henry Fonda, Rolf Harris, annoying headphones, the poster for Empire Of The Sun, and the perfect tennis backhand



I heard Two Little Boys by Rolf Harris when I was five. It was the first time I listened to words and knew they were sad

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

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

The prized possession you value above all others... I'm not particularly materialistic, but I love my king-size sleigh bed. I am away working a lot and always miss it as it's so comfortable.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... Giving up piano lessons at the age of ten because they clashed with football practice.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... My happiest days are unplanned and full of surprises. We live in a world that 'books in advance' and seem to have forgotten the joy of spontaneity. So, my perfect day would be one that simply unravelled with new experiences, or forgotten old ones. That said, at some point it would involve cheese!

The temptation you wish you could resist... I've a terrible habit of turning round to look at attractive ladies' bottoms. As I've got older, I can wait longer but, eventually, it *must* stop!

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... I read David Nicholls' novel One Day last year and was deeply moved by it. It echoes so much of my own life – relationships, university, and the ups and downs of success. It is the story of my generation growing up.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd cut the headphone wires of those whose music bleeds out and spoils myriad journeys and moments for everyone else.

The way fame and fortune has changed you, for better and worse... I'm much nicer to people because they are nicer to me. Sadly, I laugh less at the telly because I watch comedy analytically.

The film you can watch time and time again... 12 Angry Men with Henry Fonda. I'm always moved to tears each time he gets someone to change their vote in that jury room.

The person who has influenced you most... My father, Mac, who sadly died from a heart attack in 2003. He gave me his love of sport, but also his values. He had a wonderful calmness and a belief you should treat everyone the same. He was a great dad and an honest man who I'm proud to try to emulate.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The French composer Erik Satie, who gave us some of the most beautiful pieces of piano music ever written – and some horrors.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Remember that all adults who aren't your parents prefer it when you are QUIET!

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Snooker. I first played it when I was 15, but I'm still rubbish. My highest break is 27, but I love the ongoing challenge. It's like a language I have yet to learn.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... I had a beautiful film poster of Empire Of The Sun from 1987. When [fellow impressionist] Ronni Ancona and I lived together in the Nineties, she told me film posters were 'studenty' and made me throw it away. I still miss it.

The unending quest that drives you on... I try to never waste time.

The poem that touches your soul... An August Midnight by Thomas Hardy. It's about insects of the night and the last line – 'They know earth secrets that know not I' – is one of the reasons behind my environmentalism. Animals can do so much, yet we think we have a right to this planet above them.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I am Angus Deayton. I'm always being mistaken for him. Once, when Angus was having a tough time in the Press, a taxi driver thought I was him and I couldn't be bothered to correct him. He then let me off the fare as he felt sorry for me!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... I struggled for two years to make sense of drama school, then a visiting director – the late Malcolm Edwardes – simply told me to only speak when I was ready. That unlocked the secret of acting.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd rob the bank accounts of everyone on the Rich List and redistribute their money.

The song that means most to you... Two Little Boys sung by Rolf Harris. I heard it aged five and it was the first time I listened to words and knew they were sad. Even now, it moves me hugely.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... The end of recording the first series of Alistair McGowan's Big Impression in 2000. It was a long-held dream finally realised.

The saddest time that shook your world... The death of my father. On a lighter note, I always feel bereft every year when Wimbledon ends.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To have a consistently good tennis backhand.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself.

The order of service at your funeral... I leave everything to the last minute, so I'm not sure, but it may end with Sing, Sing, Sing by Benny Goodman. It lifts any heart on any occasion.

The way you want to be remembered... For being a good person who made the most of everything.

The Plug... I'll be playing Henry Higgins in Pygmalion at the Garrick Theatre from 15 August. By George! ■

As told to Rob McGibbon

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