

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's pop legend Tom Jones's turn



'People think I love being a knickers magnet. I'd prefer that it stopped but I wouldn't want to upset the fans'

steak au poivre with a bottle of Chateau Lafite '82. Then we'd take a boat down the Nile to see the Pyramids. Later I'd listen to jazz and blues in a backstreet club in New Orleans, then I'd eat paella while watching flamenco dancers in Madrid. I'd end the day in Havana listening to fantastic street music, drinking brandy and smoking a fat cigar.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... When I was knighted by the Queen in 2006. The Queen said, 'You have given so many people so much pleasure,' and I replied, 'I've got a lot of pleasure from it myself.' She smiled and her whole face lit up.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my Labrador Blackie got run over in 1974. I cried buckets. He was a beautiful dog and I loved him.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... I wish I'd made a film when I was young.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Do the best you can with what you've got.

The order of service at your funeral... As long as they get the Treorchy Male Voice Choir to sing The Old Rugged Cross I'll be happy.

The way you want to be remembered... As one hell of a singer.

The Plug... Tom's new album Long Lost Suitcase is on Virgin/EMI and his autobiography Over The Top And Back is published by Michael Joseph/Penguin, £20. tomjones.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



PHOTOS: DAN GUNDSMITH/SCOPREATURES.COM; ALAMY; CORBIS; REX SHUTTERSTOCK

The prized possession you value above all others... An old red telephone box. It was at the end of my street in Treforest, South Wales, when I was growing up. I got it for free when they were being updated in the 70s and it's now by my pool in LA.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not meeting John Wayne. He was my hero. I used to rent his boat Wild Goose [a WWII mine sweeper Wayne converted into a yacht] and whenever we spoke on the phone we'd say we should get together, but it never happened.

The temptation you wish you could resist... I'm a chocoholic and love chocolate cake, but it piles the pounds on.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Jerry Lee Lewis's biography His Own Story. We've been friends for years. He's a hell of a character, larger than life.

The film you can watch time and time again... Red River, a Western with John Wayne and Montgomery Clift from 1948. I was ten when my dad Thomas took me to see it. I must have watched it 50 times.

Right: Lord Nelson. Above right: a Spitfire. Far right: the Pyramids

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day... I'd listen to what people really say about me.

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... Bullying. It's disgusting.

The person who has influenced you most... It was an old guy called Bill who I worked with at the paper mill when I was 17. He'd heard I could sing and said, 'If you've got talent you need to die trying to make it.' By the time I was 21 I'd left.

The figure from history for whom you'd like to buy a pie and a pint... Lord Nelson. I'd warn him, 'Don't wear that coat with all those medals – it'll make you a sitting duck!'

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... My healthy right knee. I used to love running six to eight miles a day but I started having knee trouble in my fifties. Now I'm 75, running is a no-no.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Speak your mind, but do it with respect for your elders.



The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...

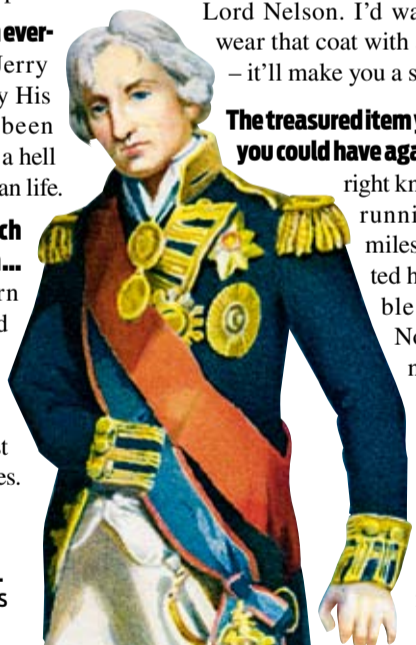
I'm fascinated by British history, particularly the Victorian industrialists. I don't know how they could feel good about making so much money when their workers were on starvation wages.

The unending quest that drives you on... To keep singing until the end. I know in my heart my voice is a gift from God, and without it I don't know what would have become of me.

The poem that touches your soul... Kipling's If... I love the line, 'If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs and blaming it on you...' I'm always calm as I love what I do and I don't feel I've actually 'worked' since 1962.

The song that means most to you... My Mother's Eyes, sung by George Jessel. My mum Freda used to sing it so it always reminds me of her. I cry every time.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I love being a knickers magnet! I'd prefer that it stopped, but I wouldn't want to upset the fans. The first time it happened was very sexy, but then it lost its meaning.



PS...

*Sienna Miller and Bradley Cooper cook up a storm in culinary comedy-drama **Burnt** – in cinemas from Friday. Ellie Goulding's new album **Delirium** is released on the same day. And Judi Dench opens in **The Winter's Tale** at the Garrick Theatre next Saturday*



NEXT WEEK

- Nicola Walker takes us behind the scenes on spooky detective drama **River**
- Monty Don on his new TV show about the secret history of British gardens
- Sensational sweet and savoury apple recipes
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide