

SHRINK RAP

Inside the head of...

Richard E Grant

What is your earliest memory?

Collecting tadpoles with Jonathan Cullen, a childhood friend, and putting them in jam jars at Drew's Dam in Mbabane, Swaziland, where I grew up. The excitement of doing this, without grown-ups, made it feel clandestine.

What sort of child were you?

Hyper-curious, especially about sniffing everything in sight, and always being told: 'You ask too many questions – it will get you into trouble one of these days!'

What's the worst pain you've experienced?

The death of our first daughter, who only lived for half an hour as she was born prematurely at 27 weeks and her lungs were too weak to survive. I don't believe you ever get over a death.

Which living person do you dislike the most?

Robert Mugabe, for having converted what was the 'bread basket of Africa' [Zimbabwe] into the 'basket case' it is now. Human rights violations, squandering his country's resources, spending millions on his birthday parties while his people suffer... However, since there are no oil reserves for the West to scabble after, he carries on, unhindered.

Describe the best night of your life

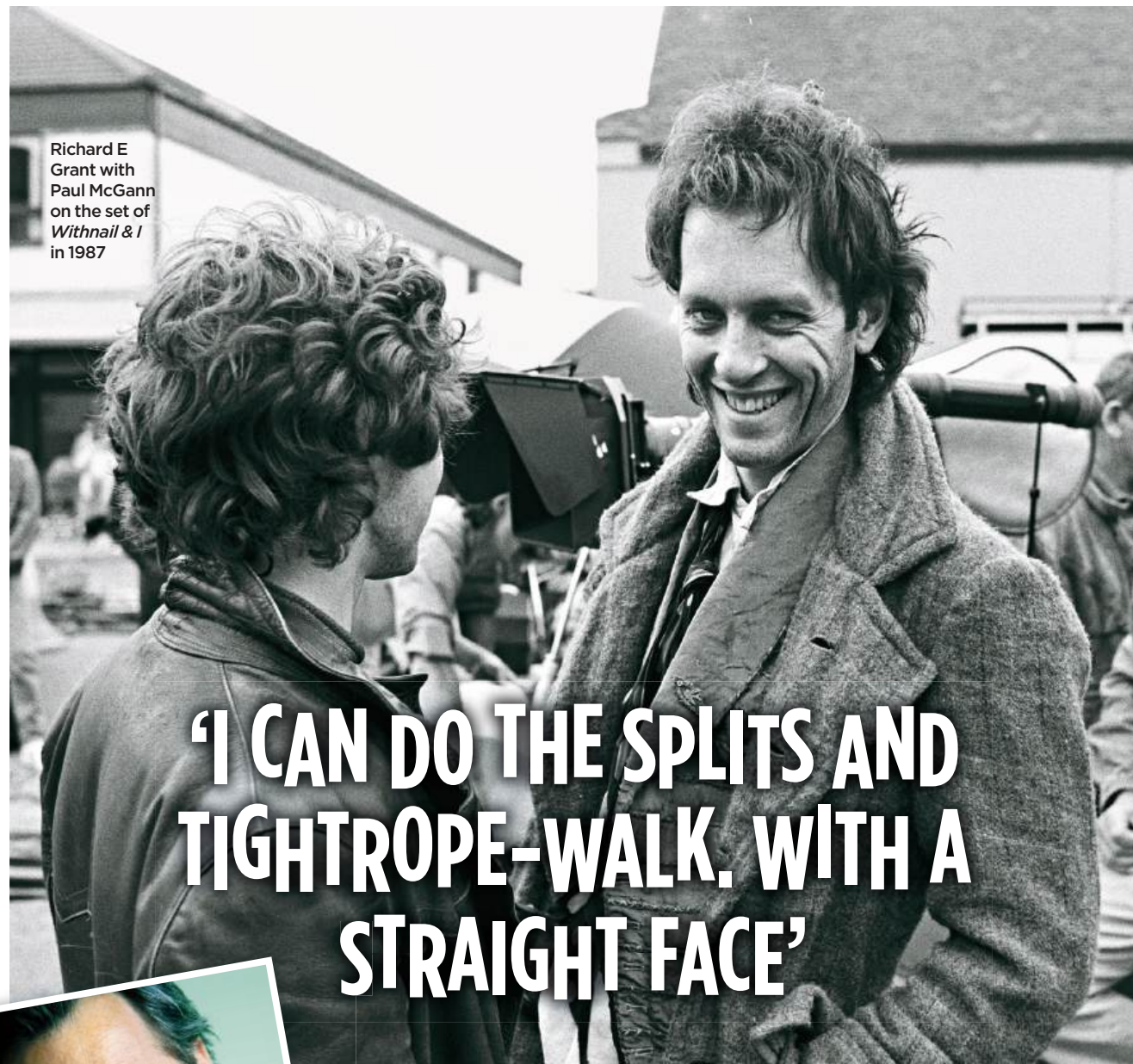
Meeting Barbra Streisand at a party in Los Angeles in 1991 during the making of *The Player*. I had a 21-minute conversation, which I can recall verbatim. I'd been a fan of hers since I was a teenager and had written her a letter inviting her to come and stay in Swaziland. She was everything I'd hoped she would be.

What do you most dislike about your appearance?

I'd prefer to have more hair and less acreage of forehead, but the latter is winning the race.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?

Eating Christmas pudding once a month, though I have long since given up on the guilt.



Richard E Grant with Paul McGann on the set of *Withnail & I* in 1987

'I CAN DO THE SPLITS AND TIGHTROPE-WALK, WITH A STRAIGHT FACE'



to carrying a small jar of it wherever I go.

What's the one thing every man should know about women?

Don't waste your time trying to second guess what women will do. That is their mystery and endless attraction. Surrender yourself willingly.

What is the worst job you've done?

Working at a hotel during my university holidays, and having to confront guests about stealing items from their rooms.

If you could go back in time, where would you go?

London in 1969. I visited it that very year when I was 12

and will never forget it: the sensory overload of Patchouli oil emanating from the hippies crowded around Eros, seeing *Hair* at the Shaftesbury Theatre with full-frontal nudity.

What's the skill every man or woman should have?

Compassion, kindness and good manners.

Have you had a nickname?

Julie Walters called me Reg, because of my initials, when we worked together on *Killing Dad* in 1988. She has called me that ever since.

What song do you want at your funeral?

When I Fall In Love sung by Nat King Cole, because it's so unashamedly romantic.

What are you scared of?

I used to fear that other people would see me the way I see them, but since having a child, that self-consciousness flew out of the window.

Interview by York Mernbery
Richard E Grant's *Jack Piccadilly* '69 fragrance launches at Liberty in September.
jackperfume.co.uk

Who would be your dream dinner date?

Julie Walters and film composer Patrick Doyle. I worked with both of them on my autobiographical film *Wah-Wah*. Their sense of humour is second to none.

Tell us a secret about yourself

I'm double-jointed and can do the splits and tightrope-walk. With a straight face.

What one law would you change if you could?

Eliminate every religious edict that's ever provoked an atrocity or war.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

'Do you have any Dijon mustard?' Though I have taken

LAST FILM YOU SAW?

The latest *Jason Bourne*. Five epic chase sequences across continents, with bits of dialogue in between. Diverting for two hours...

LAST BOOK YOU READ?

Christopher Isherwood's diaries of the Sixties found in a second-hand bookshop in Santa Fe.

LAST TV SHOW YOU LOVED?

Baz Luhrmann's hip-hop series *The Get Down*. Luhrmann 'signature' is dancing all over it.