



SONNY ROLLINS

Before reaching 21, Sonny Rollins played with Thelonious Monk—a sign of the saxophone colossus he would become. For more than 50 years, the jazzman has enriched the world of music with his progressive improvisational style. This month, he turns 77 and performs at the 50th anniversaries of the Monterey Jazz Festival and his first concert at Carnegie Hall. Here, Rollins reflects on his plumber, good food, and inner consciousness

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Perfect happiness is something which doesn't exist in this life. The goal is to never be too happy or never be too sad.

What is your greatest fear?

Not getting close enough to my aspirations.

Which living person do you most admire?

I'm afraid that I don't admire people that much. Maybe my plumber.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

Not always being resolute enough.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

Slovenly personal traits.

What is your greatest extravagance?

Overindulgence in good food.

What do you consider the most overrated virtue?

Probably thriftiness.

On what occasion do you lie?

When I'm absolutely forced to by one of life's stupid entanglements.

Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

Probably "You dig?"

What is your greatest regret?

Not saying some things to departed associates.

What or who is the greatest love of your life?

Of course my late wife, Lucille.

Which talent would you most like to have?

The one that I have.

What is your current state of mind?

Peaceful but active.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Listening to my inner consciousness and summoning the strength and determination to act on it.

If you could choose what to come back as, what would it be?

A more evolved, intelligent being.

What is your most treasured possession?

When I lost so many prized possessions on 9/11, I learned a lesson: possessions are not "where it's at."

What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Being in the belly of the beast in a straitjacket.

Where would you like to live?

Wherever I can be left alone.

What is your favorite occupation?

Music, or whatever contributes to the edification of others.

What is the quality you most like in a man?

Listening more than talking.

What do you most value in your friends?

Loyalty.

Who are your heroes in real life?

Anyone whose life is lived giving more than taking.

What is your motto?

"Do unto others," and, secondly, one I made up about watching TV: "Images and lies, and bad for your eyes."