

MY SPLENDID ISOLATION

JOOLS HOLLAND

Pianist and presenter

The stalwart of the BBC's 'Later...' programme is recreating his weekly night at the pub and reading Maigret novels

What I'm watching

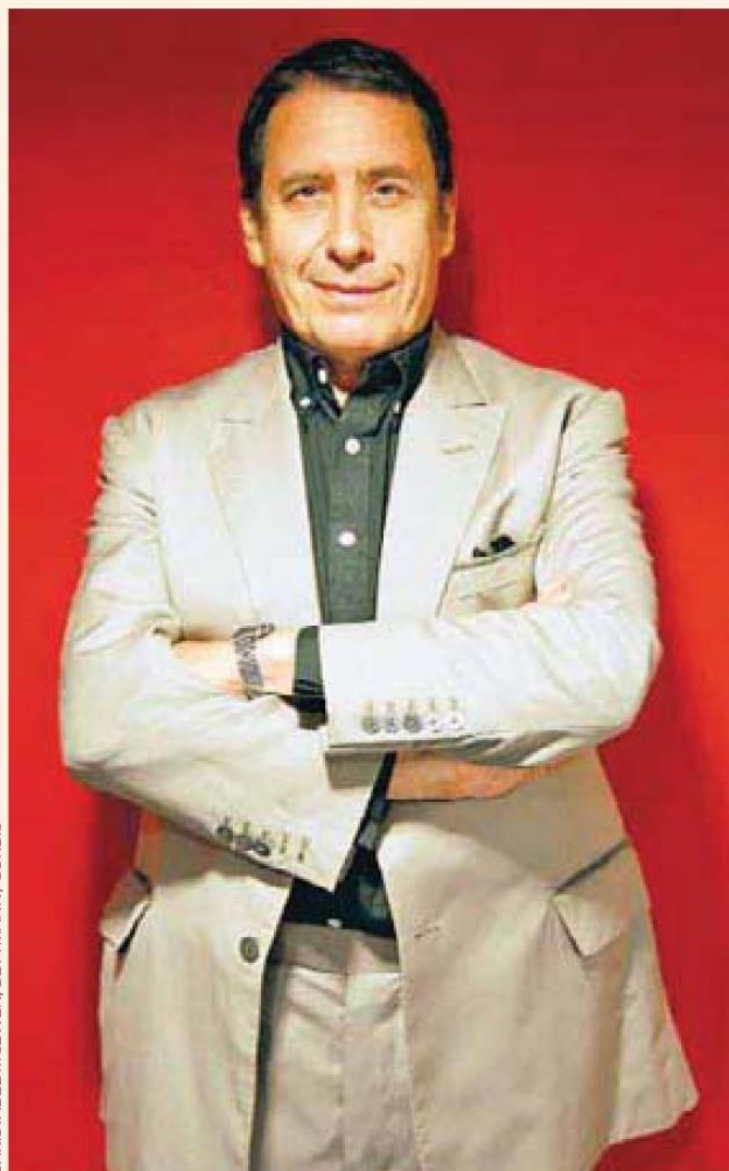
I limit my viewing to a couple of hours in the evening. I've been watching a bit of Edgar Lustgarten on DVD. He was a crime writer who presented short films in the Fifties. He stands in front of his desk introducing tales from the files of Scotland Yard. It seems as remote as the Elizabethan age to the modern viewer. It makes a change from the news.

What I'm listening to

I think if you ask any musician, the true answer is that they listen to a lot of themselves. I've been at the piano, listening to the sounds it makes when my fingers crash on the keys. I'm used to doing shows all the time and unless I keep playing, I won't be match fit. I tend to listen to classical music of an evening. And I do enjoy Michael Berkeley's *Private Passions* on BBC Radio 3 on a Sunday.

What I'm reading

I've been reading Maigret in a new translation. I have always liked Georges Simenon's books, because with two or three sentences you are completely present in a room in a squatty suburb of Paris or a rainy, decrepit mansion in Normandy. He wrote more than 400 novels and claimed to have had 10,000 lovers. I



CHRISTABEL MCEWEN; BETTMANN/CORBIS

Prolific: Jools is revisiting the Maigret series by the libidinous Georges Simenon, below



was once told that he had to have sex every day with a different person before he could write anything, so I am not sure how he would have coped with lockdown.

The hobby I've taken up recently

I'm frightened to take anything new up, because I'm a bit obsessive. Once I start, I have to have all the right accessories. If I took up golf, I'd have an enormous pair of plus fours and a hat before I'd even taken a putt. Anyway, I think I've got enough interests to keep me afloat. Music takes up most of my time. I do a

little bit of sketching at the end of an afternoon. And I've got a nice model railway, but I reserve that for weekends. I'm also still working. We've recorded programmes for *Later... With Jools Holland* in my studio in Greenwich, with just me and a guest down the line picking performances by artists who've inspired them. We've been going 28 years, so our archive is enormous.

The thing that made me laugh this week

On a Monday night, for many years, I have gone to the pub with some old friends. Now that's been curtailed we've continued via Zoom instead. It's not quite the same, because I like a pint of nice foaming bitter that's been pumped up from the chalk-lined cellar of an 18th-century pub and pulled by a man from Rada. So you can't do any of that, but you can have a glass of beer and talk nonsense. It looked a bit s--- just Zooming in from our front rooms so it was suggested we make our own backgrounds. So this week, somebody had the Rovers Return, somebody else had The Queen Vic and one person had a picture of the outside of a pub, so they could have a cigarette. I thought that was quite funny. And then someone's wife comes around at 11 o'clock ringing a bell and we all have to go.

What I can't wait to do once all this is over

A gig. I think all musicians would say that.

Later... with Jools Holland is broadcast tomorrow at 10pm on BBC Two. Jools Holland also returns to BBC Radio 2 this Saturday at 8pm