

FAME AND FORTUNE RHOD GILBERT

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'To the day she died my mum would tell me to get a proper job'

The comedian says he learnt frugality from his teacher parents, but still gave up a salary to earn £10 a gig, bought a car too small for shopping and a caravan he can't reverse, he tells *York Membery*

Since being nominated for the Perrier Best Newcomer Award in 2005, Rhod Gilbert has become one of the UK's best-known stand-ups. He appears regularly on panel shows such as *Would I Lie to You*, *QI*, *Taskmaster* and *Mock the Week*, presented *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* in 2014 and hosted *The Apprentice: You're Fired* from 2016-19. Gilbert, 52, lives in Wales and London with his wife Sian Harries, a comedy writer, and their miniature labradoodle, Rosie, nine. His DVD *Rhod Gilbert: The Book of John* is out now. He has recently had treatment for cancer and had to postpone some of his tour dates for later this year.

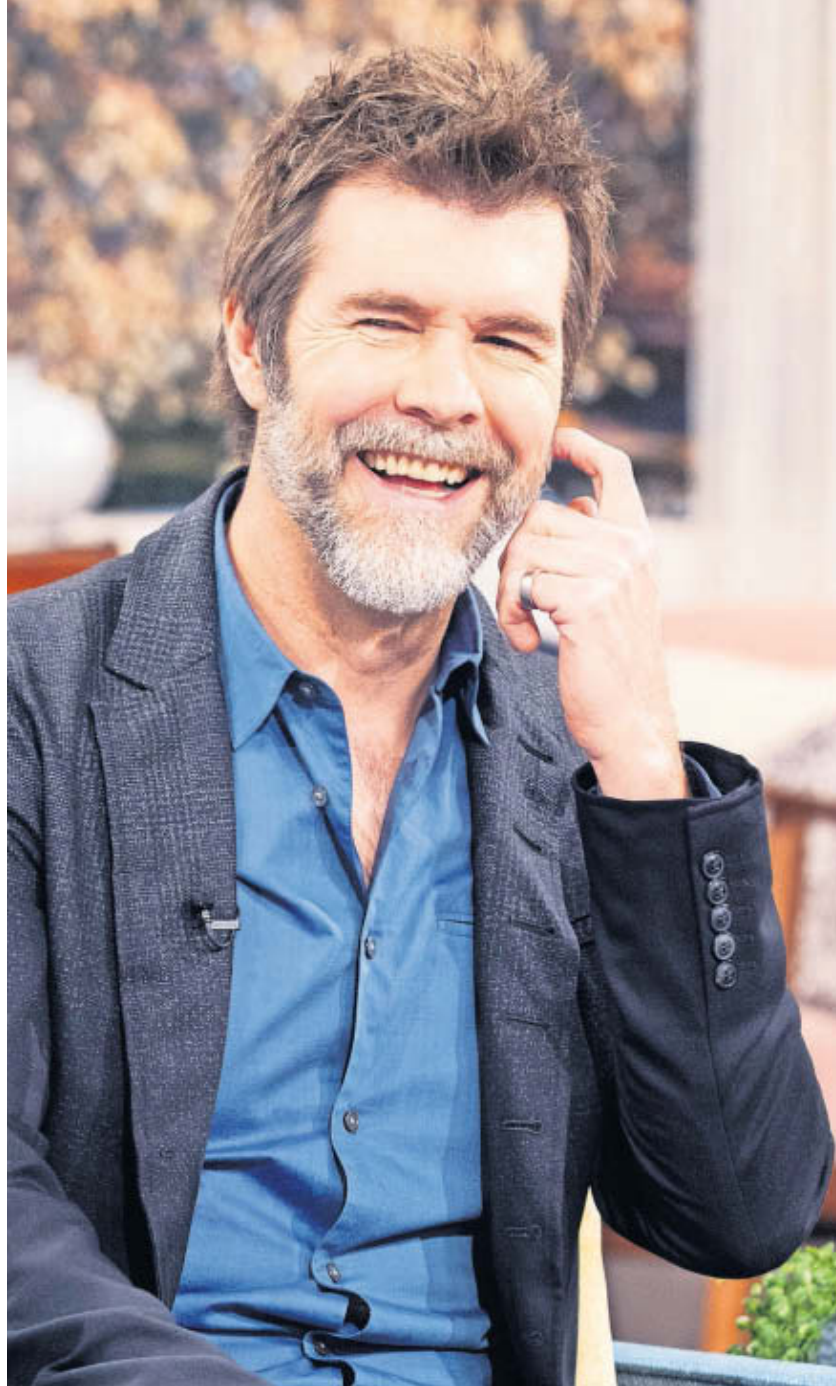
How much money is in your wallet? Nothing. I don't carry cash really any more. My wallet these days is a two-inch-thick leather relic of receipts I don't need and business cards of people I won't call. It's only a problem when it comes to restaurants. I believe in tipping generously, but usually find myself patting down pockets, making excuses and asking someone else to get the tip.

What credit cards do you use? I use credit and debit cards, whichever one I can find in the mess of tissues, dog hair, fluff and facemasks that passes for my pockets these days. I generally pay off the credit card in full each month.

Are you a saver or a spender? A bit of both. My parents were pretty tight – they called it "frugal" – and drummed that into me. "Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves" was one of my mother's favourite catchphrases, and my dad lived on tinned sardines. I have inherited some of that "frugality" from them. My last big-ticket buy was a £12,000 second-hand two-berth caravan that I plan to use as a mobile office to write in while enjoying a nice view. It's a brilliant creative space so it'll pay for itself. That's the theory – the only problem is that I can't reverse it, so it's still sitting on my drive.

Do you own a property? Yes, the first place I bought was a flat in South Ealing, London, for around £80,000 in the late 1990s. Over the years it became a sort of heartbreak

KEN MCKAY/ITV/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK



hotel for every friend or comedian that split up with a partner or just needed a cheap (free) place to crash. I sold it a few years ago for a £50,000 profit after taking into account all the work I did on it. My wife, Sian, and I now own two properties: an old stone farmhouse in rural Pembrokeshire and a semi-detached brick-built job in London, both of which cost a six-figure sum.

Are you better off than your parents? Yes. I grew up in Carmarthen and was the youngest of three. My dad, Malcolm, who passed away in a care home during the pandemic aged 88, taught geography

in a teacher training college, and my mother, Norma, who died aged 83 in 2016, was a French teacher in a comprehensive school. While my family were all pretty frugal, we didn't go without; we were comfortable and had everything we needed.

How much did you earn last year? I have no idea. Honestly. When you're a self-employed touring comedian it varies so much from one year to the next depending on whether you tour or not, and how much other work like TV stuff you get. I had a decent job [running focus groups for a market research company] before I gave it up in 2003 to pursue a life as a stand-up, and it took me several years of doing stand-up, up and down the country before I got back to what I had been earning in my job.

What was your first job? Working as a waiter in a local restaurant when I was about 15, but I got sacked on my first night for dropping peas down someone's frock and smashing a glass on a table. My first proper job was a Saturday job in Currys, Carmarthen, when I was 16 for about £1.30 an hour. But I did at least learn to wire a plug, a skill for life that nobody can take away from me.

When did you first feel wealthy? When I released my first DVD, *Rhod Gilbert & the Award*.

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I lasted one night as a waiter after dropping peas down someone's frock

Winning *Mince Pie* in 2009, and then my tour sold out. Sian and I went on holiday to France to celebrate. But we're both disorganised and have ADHD, and didn't book any accommodation beforehand so ended up staying two weeks in a Frenchman's garage.

Have you ever worried about making ends meet? Not really, and when I have been short of cash, I have just cut my cloth accordingly. Although when I started doing stand-up I'd often do a five-minute spot for nothing. Then I began getting paid the odd £10 or £20, and worked my way up from there. I must have died on stage in every town in the country in those early days.

What has been your most lucrative work? Touring is my main income and from the *Award-Winning Mince Pie* onwards, the tours have been lucrative. Television can be a good earner too, but you have no control over your TV career – you get a job one day and lose it the next. At least with stand-up, if I can keep writing material, I know there's an audience there waiting for me.

How did the pandemic affect you? I'd done 110 dates of my latest tour, *The Book of John*, when the first lockdown happened in 2020. We postponed dozens of gigs, rescheduled them and rescheduled them again, and again. I eventually went back on stage 16 months later in the summer of '21.

Rhod Gilbert with his wife, the writer Sian Harries. Below, a Jaguar XK RS



Meanwhile, I launched a podcast, *The Froth*, with Sian and the comedian Barry Castagnola, and started shaving the dog out of boredom.

Do you invest in shares? Yes. I pay a share person to invest, and pay them again not to tell me about it.

What's best for retirement – property or pension? People say property is a great investment, but I've never made much money from it after taking into account solicitors' fees, stamp duty and the mortgage interest. But I'm not thinking about retiring anyway – if anything, my recent enforced break with cancer has made me realise how much I miss and love what I do. I'm recovering well from my treatment and can't wait to get back to work this year, but on doctor's advice, I'll have to wait a little longer, so have had to postpone the remaining seven shows for now.

What has been your best business decision? Pursuing a life in comedy. I took a gamble in 2003 when I gave up my "proper" job and decided to go for it in stand-up. I initially took a big hit financially, and it was a bloody disaster in that sense. My parents never stopped worrying, and right to the day she died, my mother would tell me to get a proper job. But parents aren't always right.

And your best investment? A device to help me put my socks on. It cost about £4.99, and on days when my back is playing up, it pays for itself twice over literally.

What about your worst investment? A Jaguar XK sports car which cost about £45,000. I'd go shopping and it was so cramped I had to drive home with my arm out the window holding the shopping bag. I was probably having an early mid-life crisis, and sold it at a massive loss a few months later.

What's your money weakness? I try to deny myself things I can afford – I think it goes back to my parents' frugality. As a kid, I desperately wanted a digital watch with red numbers and ever since then I've coveted one. In the end a TV producer friend bought me one because she was so sick of my banging on about it. I like real ale though and will usually sample a local one or two on tour.

What was your most extravagant purchase? The bloody sports car.

What's your financial priority in the years ahead? In this order: to try to look after me and my wife, my family, my friends and donate and fundraise for the charities I support.

What would you do if you won the lottery jackpot? I haven't done the lottery since the week it started, so there is not much chance of my winning. But I work closely with the Velindre Cancer Centre in Cardiff where I am currently being treated, so I'd donate money to it and to the Alzheimer's Society – my mother had the disease.

What is the most important lesson you've learnt about money? That it is unfairly distributed; nobody should have money worries in this country in 2023. rhodgilbertcomedian.com

£14.7bn

The amount homebuyers paid in stamp duty from January to December 2022

£15bn tax bill on your profits

David Brenchley

A record £15.3 billion was paid in capital gains tax (CGT) in the 12 months to November, up 27 per cent on the previous 12 months, according to the private equity investment firm Growthdeck.

The UK's CGT bill has almost doubled over the past five years, with only £8 billion paid in the 12 months to November 2018.

CGT is the tax you have to pay on the profits when you sell an asset that has increased in value. You pay CGT on company shares (unless you hold them in a

stocks and shares Isa, which is tax-free), property that is not your main home, and business assets. You get an annual CGT tax-free allowance of £12,300, but this will be cut to £6,000 from April and then again to £3,000 from April 2024.

The rise in CGT receipts has primarily been driven by the sales of businesses by

entrepreneurs, as well as larger numbers of buy-to-let investors selling their properties to take advantage of soaring house prices, said Ian Zant-Boer, the chief executive of Growthdeck.

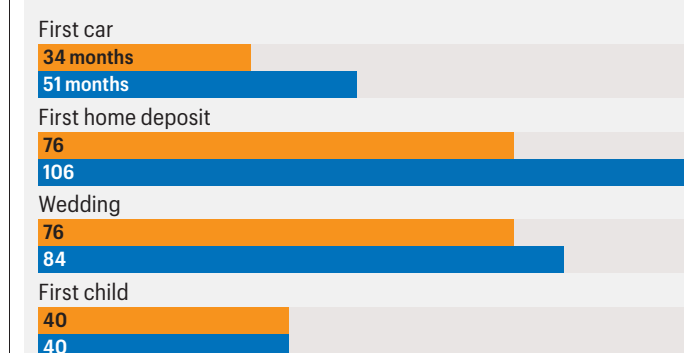
The government slashed the Business Asset Disposal relief allowance from £10 million to £1 million in 2020, meaning that business owners now face higher tax liabilities if they sell their company. Zant-Boer said that lower CGT for entrepreneurs "would reward them for having taken a high degree of personal risk to benefit the economy by creating wealth and jobs".

£12,300

The annual capital gains allowance until April

CHART OF THE WEEK HOW LONG TO SAVE FOR...

Estimated number of months it takes to save for:
◆ 2012 ◆ 2022



It takes longer than it did ten years ago to save for most of life's milestones. The cost of a new Ford Fiesta, the UK's most popular car, has almost doubled to £19,330 and would take 51 months to save for, based on saving 20 per cent of the average take-home pay, up from 34 months in 2012. The average first-home deposit (£40,424) will now take 106 months to save for, up from 76.

Source: Money.co.uk

71%

are more cautious with their money as costs continue to climb

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