

FAME AND FORTUNE RUBY TURNER

'I just splashed out on an olive tree. I'm hardcore rock'n'roll'

The R&B singer, brought up as one of six by a Jamaican single mum in Birmingham, went from selling cushions and curtains to playing Madison Square Garden with Boy George, she tells *York Membery*

Ruby Turner is a Jamaican-born Brummie who had UK hits with *If You're Ready (Come Go with Me)* and *I'd Rather Go Blind* in the 1980s and topped the US R&B chart with *It's Gonna Be Alright* in 1990. She has worked with Bryan Ferry, Mick Jagger and Culture Club and has toured with Jools Holland's Rhythm & Blues Orchestra for 29 years.

How much money is in your wallet?
I normally carry about £40 because I like to give my nephews and nieces a little pocket money when I see them at the weekend. I haven't got any children so I regard them as my children.

What credit cards do you use?
I mainly use my credit card for business, and my debit card for shopping.

Are you a saver or a spender?
A bit of both. I started saving up when I was 17 after an insurance salesman encouraged me to start paying 50p a week into a private pension. I like to spend too, and occasionally stop off at a garden centre to buy a Greco-Roman flowerpot or a plant for myself or a friend. I've just splashed out on an olive tree for a friend and they don't come cheap. My garden brought me so much solace during the pandemic.

Do you own a property?
I bought my first house – a lovely little terraced house in Kings Heath, Birmingham, with a south-facing garden



Ruby Turner at the Royal Albert Hall

– for £22,000 in 1985 when I was 27. I stayed there for 21 years, adding a conservatory. In 2007 I sold it for £145,000 which enabled me to put a big downpayment on my current house, a modern three-bedroom semi-detached in a quiet cul-de-sac on the south side of Birmingham which cost over £200,000, though it's worth a fair bit more now.

Are you better off than your parents?

I am. I'm the eldest of six children – three boys and three girls – and moved to England from Jamaica with my mother Vi, who's 82 this month, when I was nine. My father, Jocelyn, who worked as a telephone engineer and stayed in Jamaica, died two years ago. Mum was part of the Windrush generation and times were tough but she got a job as a cook in a nursery school, bought a terraced house in Handsworth, Birmingham, and raised us six kids alone. How she did it I'll never know.

How much did you earn last year?

Next to nothing because I was sitting at home and couldn't work – most of the gigs I had lined up were cancelled or postponed due to Covid. Thank God for the royalties man, because they at least were still coming in...

What was your first job?

I left school at 17 on a Friday and started work on the Monday as an office clerk at a local family firm selling soft furnishings: curtains, cushions and bedspreads. The pay was £17 a week. I soon progressed to customer liaison officer because I had a good telephone

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Playing with Jools Holland was my best decision. Our relationship is longer than most marriages

JOHN STILLWELL/WPA POOL/GETTY IMAGES



Turner was appointed MBE in the Queen's 2016 birthday honours list

voice, and had to soothe the irate husbands who called up, grumbling: 'My wife's not very happy about...'. But I sang at local pubs and clubs in the evening – the music scene in Birmingham was buzzing at the time. I got paid next to nothing, the odd fiver here or there, but it got my name around and Culture Club's then backing singer recommended me after seeing me perform. The next thing I knew Boy George hired me and I was playing Madison Square Garden.

When did you first feel wealthy?

I felt comfortable when I got my first home – the money I made from singing with Culture Club on tour paid for the deposit – and could go out for a few glasses of wine with my friends. For me, that's wealth.

Have you ever worried about making ends meet?

Money was always tight when I was growing up but Mum somehow made it work. It helped that she was a dab hand with a sewing machine. I wore the dresses she made me in my school's beauty contest. I was also strapped for cash when my Jive Records deal ended in 1993 and I found myself without a deal.

What has been your most lucrative work?

Working with Jools Holland over the last 29 years. A lot of my other work is seasonal and doesn't pay the mortgage, so joining his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra has served me well, while allowing me to still do my own thing.

How has the pandemic affected you?

The same as everyone else in the music business, which was hit so hard. Most of

my shows were cancelled and I'm still playing catch-up, doing gigs that should have happened in 2020 or 2021. I never got the chance to properly promote my 2020 album, *Love Was Here*, and it's too late to relaunch it. You've just got to get on with things.

Do you invest in shares?

Yes, but only through my pension.

What's best for retirement – property or pension?

As I mentioned, I've been paying into a private pension since I was 17, though I'm naturally paying substantially more into it now, so that should provide a comfortable financial cushion when I retire. But I think owning more than one home can be a bit of a hassle.

Your best business decision?

Accepting an invitation to perform with Jools in the early 1990s because I've been touring with him ever since. Our relationship has lasted longer than most marriages! Secondly, setting up my own record label, RTR Productions, in 2005. It's a cottage industry-sized label but it's been so liberating being in control of my music, and not having an A&R man telling me he doesn't like such and such a song.

And your best investment?

Owning my home because it's afforded me independence and sanity.

What about your worst investment?

Trusting in a promoter who declared himself bankrupt at the end of a tour in the 1980s, leaving me £20,000 out of pocket, before promptly setting up in business again under another name.

What's your money weakness?

I'm a woman of a certain size – I'm curvaceous and I don't want to hide that – so I usually opt for something comfortable because I'm hardcore rock'n'roll and need to move on stage. But I recently spent £300 on a lovely evening gown which I'll be wearing when I perform at an engagement party this summer.

Your most extravagant purchase?

My Daytona-grey Audi Q3, which I bought pre-pandemic for about £36,000. But I cover a lot of miles when I'm touring so I wanted a car that was comfy and would get me from A to B whatever the weather. You need the tools to do the job!

What's your financial priority for the years ahead?

To cover the cost of the ever bigger bills that are landing on the doormat.

What would you do if you won the lottery?

I'd buy a converted barn in the countryside so I had more greenery around me. I'd also donate a sizeable amount to the charities I support such as Crisis, the NSPCC and RSPCA. We've got to take care of each other if we can.

What is the most important lesson you've learnt about money?

That it doesn't make you happy but it can alleviate some problems. And like they say: if you look after the pennies, the pounds look after themselves.

Ruby Turner plays the Cornbury Festival with the Jools Holland R&B Orchestra on Sunday July 10. rubyturner.com



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Halifax lends a hand on new builds

Sasha Nugara

Halifax, the UK's largest lender, lowered the deposit needed for a mortgage on new-build homes from 10 per cent to 5 per cent on Friday.

The average UK property costs £289,099 according to Halifax's latest house price survey. You could now get a new-build at that price with a deposit of £14,455.

The bank will also let you buy a shared ownership home with a 4 per cent deposit instead of 10 per cent.

Halifax's best rates at 95 per cent loan-to-value (LTV) on a new-build are 3.94 per cent for a two-year

fix and 4.26 per cent for a five-year fix, both with a £999 fee. It also has a 4.06 per cent two-year fix and a 4.34 per cent five-year fix, both without fees.

The best deal on the market is a 3.15 per cent two-year fix from Loughborough Building Society. It is also offering a

3.54%

The best 95% LTV first-time buyer mortgage rate

five year fix at 3.39 per cent – both have a £499 fee and are available at 95 per cent LTV.

The government's Help To Buy scheme, which lends between 5 per cent and 20 per cent of the cost of a newly built home to first-time buyers with as little as a 5 per cent deposit, is due to end in March. Halifax reduction in deposits needed may offer first-time buyers an alternative step on to the property ladder.

Lenders do not typically offer mortgages at high LTVs on new builds because they fear that the property's value may fall rapidly in the first few years.

CHART OF THE WEEK WHERE IS YOUR PENSION INVESTED?

◆ Breakdown of overseas equities held by UK workplace pensions

United States	£78.56bn
Japan	£9.56bn
France	£6.17bn
Switzerland	£4.98bn
Germany	£4.78bn
Taiwan	£3.84bn
Netherlands	£3.55bn
Mainland China	£3.47bn
Hong Kong	£3.22bn
Other	£28.08bn

UK workplace pension schemes invest more than £6.5 billion in companies listed in China and Hong Kong, according to the Office for National Statistics. Direct investments in the shares of overseas companies from all occupational pension schemes amount to £146 billion, most of which is in US firms (£78.6 billion). Japanese equities are a distant second at £9.6 billion.

Source: ONS

Data is correct to 31 December 2021

10%

The fall in the value of the pound against the dollar this year. Among leading currencies, only the Japanese yen, the Swedish krona and the Norwegian krone have fared worse