



with Tom Wilkinson

His widely acclaimed performances in hit films including In the Bedroom, Shakespeare in Love and The Full Monty have earned the Yorkshire-born actor a well-deserved place in the nation's heart. Here the 60-year old reveals what he has learned about matters financial...

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Are you a saver or a spender?

I'm a saver.

Have you ever been hard-up?

I was pretty hard-up when I first started working. But I was in my twenties and money wasn't very important to me. As long as I had enough money to buy an Italian meal and a packet of cigarettes, then I was OK.

How did you cope?

I didn't care, I used to sleep on people's floors. I didn't have a place of my own until I was 30.

Acting is a notoriously badly paid profession. How much was your first pay cheque?

I was working at the old Half Moon theatre, in London, and I think the first pay cheque was something like £6 a week, with Thursday mornings off to sign on.

To what extent did money influence your career choice?

Not at all. For anybody who wants to take the show business option, money should be the last thing they consider, because it's very unusual to do this job and make money out of it.

Has success changed the way that you think about money?

No, not really. I don't have a great interest in it. Of course, with the current financial upheaval you worry, but money doesn't generally feature in the way I think – except, I suppose, regarding security.

What's the most expensive luxury you have ever bought?

I don't think I've ever bought one. I'm not a luxury guy. I'm bad at that. I should indulge myself more than I do.

What don't you like spending money on?

New cars, I never do! You can get a perfectly decent second-hand car that's two weeks old for much less.

How do you get away from it all?

I don't really get away from it all. One of the things about our family is that the children are very happy to come on holiday with us. So I just take it all with me.

What's the best piece of financial advice you've ever received?

It was from Judi Dench [who worked with Wilkinson on *Shakespeare in Love*].



Stealing the show: His Bafta-winning performance in *The Full Monty* (above, far right) heralded a breakthrough to the big screen and Hollywood, where his roles have included *In the Bedroom*, which garnered an Oscar nomination. Right: In the 1998 comedy hit *Shakespeare in Love*, playing loan shark-turned-impresario Hugh Fennyman



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they didn't listen to me. That's what I would say to most young people: make a budget and stick to it.

What can't money buy?

Do you mean the usual things, like love or good luck? There's that wonderful remark made by Ernest Hemingway when he was talking to F Scott Fitzgerald about money. I think Fitzgerald said something along the lines of "money doesn't buy you happiness" and Hemingway replied, "I've been rich and I've been poor and I'll tell you something – rich is better".

You find a Canaletto in the attic – do you hang it or sell it?

You could sell it and put all the money on a horse. Even if you lost, it's money you didn't know you had anyway. But that's not what I'd do. I'd hang it for a bit, knowing that I could sell it if I wanted. I'm really conservative about that kind of thing.

She said: "Half of what you earn doesn't belong to you". It's good advice that's kept me out of lots of trouble.

What money advice have you passed on to your children?

I don't advise them – and even if I did they wouldn't take any notice at all. I tried to get them to work with a budget, but

Interview by Ruth Stokes