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THE FEARLESS INTERVIEWER

The sharp wit behind unforgettable celebrity conversations

BREAKING THE SILENCE

How candid conversations changed the mental-health debate

COMEDY WITH A PURPOSE

From television fame to a powerful public voice



FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

A career shaped by performance, writing and fearless honesty

RUBY WAX

THE MIND, THE MIC AND THE MISSION

CELEBRITY CULTURE • SPECIAL PROFILE



Who Is Ruby Wax? The Story Behind the Sharp Wit

A profile of the American-born British entertainer whose comedy, interviews and candid advocacy helped bring mental health into mainstream conversation.

A childhood shaped by migration

Ruby Wax was born Ruby Wachs on 19 April 1953 in Evanston, Illinois, near Chicago. Her parents, Edward and Berthe Wachs, were Austrian Jewish immigrants who left Vienna in 1938 as Nazi persecution intensified. Her father worked in the food business, and the family later used the shorter surname Wax. Her upbringing in the United States helped shape the direct comic sensibility that became part of her public identity.

From California to Scotland

Wax studied psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, before leaving after about a year. In the 1970s she moved to Britain and trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. She began as a stage actress, developing a feel for character, timing and performance before becoming known for comedy and television.

A distinctive public voice

Rather than presenting herself as a distant celebrity interviewer, Wax leaned into awkwardness, provocation and comic confrontation. Her style made interviews feel unpredictable. Over time, the same blunt honesty became a strength in her work on depression, mindfulness and emotional wellbeing.

QUICK BIO | Ruby Wachs • Born 19 April 1953 • Evanston, Illinois, USA • American-British • Comedian, actor, writer, presenter and mental-health campaigner



Stage Roots, Alan Rickman and the Road to Television

Before becoming a familiar face on British television, Wax built her craft in theatre and formed a lasting creative partnership with actor and director Alan Rickman.

Theatre came first

After arriving in Britain, Wax worked as an actress and joined the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1978. Her stage credits included Shakespeare and contemporary plays. Theatre gave her a rigorous foundation in character and performance, and taught her how to hold an audience through rhythm, physicality and precise delivery.

A creative friendship

Wax developed a close friendship and professional partnership with Alan Rickman, who directed several of her stage comedy shows. Rickman's measured approach complemented Wax's energetic stage persona. She has described wanting to make him laugh as a major motivation in her early comedy work.

Writing and performing

Wax moved into television writing and comedy, collaborating with performers including Dawn French, Jennifer Saunders and Tracey Ullman. She co-wrote and starred in the ITV sitcom Girls on Top (1985–1986), then developed programmes that put her own name and point of view at the centre. Her writing helped give her shows a clear comic voice.

CAREER NOTE | Early stage training and writing shaped the direct, theatrical energy of Wax's television persona.



Ruby Wax Meets: The Interviews That Made Her Famous

Wax became a recognisable television personality by making celebrity interviews funny, tense and sometimes gloriously uncomfortable.

The interview as performance

Programmes such as The Full Wax, Ruby Wax Meets…, Ruby and The Ruby Wax Show made her known for asking questions other interviewers might avoid. She used comic exaggeration, sharp follow-ups and a deliberately bold persona to unsettle guests and reveal unexpected sides of public figures.

A long BBC relationship

Wax worked with the BBC for many years, presenting and contributing to programmes that blended comedy, interviews and social observation. She also served as script editor on all series of Absolutely Fabulous, created by Jennifer Saunders, and appeared in the show. This behind-the-scenes role demonstrated that her talents extended beyond interviewing.

Why the style endured

Her interviews were not conventional soft-focus profiles. Wax often made herself part of the joke, allowing awkwardness to become the scene. Her later stage work drew on the same candour, increasingly pairing humour with personal reflection and discussions of mental health.

ON SCREEN | The Full Wax • Ruby Wax Meets… • Ruby • The Ruby Wax Show • Girls on Top • Absolutely Fabulous



Mental Health, Family and Ruby Wax’s Lasting Legacy

Wax’s public conversation changed when she spoke openly about depression, studied the mind and used humour to make mental health easier to discuss.

Turning private experience into public conversation

Wax has spoken openly about living with depression and bipolar disorder. Her candour challenged the idea that mental illness should be hidden behind professional success or a comic persona. Her stage show Losing It explored her experiences and helped audiences find honest language around mental health.

A return to study

Wax completed postgraduate study in psychotherapy and counselling at Regent’s College and earned a master’s degree in mindfulness-based cognitive therapy from Kellogg College, University of Oxford, in 2013. She uses humour and clear explanations to discuss how thoughts, emotions and the brain interact.

Books, charity and recognition

Her books include Sane New World: Taming the Mind, A Mindfulness Guide for the Frazzled and How to Be Human: The Manual. Wax founded Frazzled, a peer-support initiative, and was appointed an OBE in 2015 for services to mental health. She has also held an honorary visiting professorship in mental health nursing at the University of Surrey.

Family and recent work

Wax married television producer and director Ed Bye in 1988; they have three children, Max, Madeleine and Marina. Her 2023 book I’m Not As Well As I Thought I Was recounts a difficult period and her experience of psychiatric treatment, presenting recovery as complicated rather than a simple success story.

What she represents

Her career spans theatre, sitcoms, interview shows, writing, education and advocacy. The through-line is her willingness to say what others might leave unsaid. Wax has helped make mental-health conversations more public without abandoning comedy. References to health here are included because she has discussed them publicly and are not medical advice.

LEGACY | A comic performer who used candour, education and humour to bring mental health into everyday conversation.

SOURCE & EDITORIAL NOTE

This magazine profile was prepared using the public biographical information available in the Wikipedia entry for Ruby Wax.

OPEN RUBY WAX ON WIKIPEDIA

Photographs supplied for this edition are each used once.

The cover uses the first photo; the other four appear on separate article pages.

No separate logo image was attached, so the masthead is typeset as text.