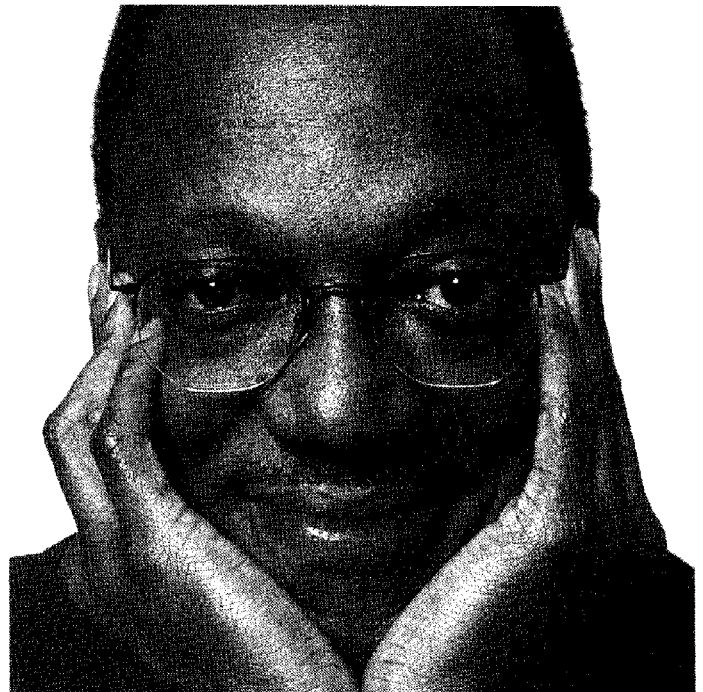


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SO WHO IS ALVIN HALL?



Money maker: Alvin Hall

The host of BBC2's investment series talks to Richard Willsher about his common sense approach to managing money.

"I smell money," beams Alvin Hall, in the first of his Guide to Successful Investing programmes as his helicopter circles over the City of London's skyscrapers. Since he's an inspiring presenter, by the end of the show you might have been seriously tempted to rush out and start buying stocks and shares. Yet Hall's feet are firmly on the ground.

For 14 years Hall has taught Wall Street brokers and investment bankers how to invest money, but he was born the youngest of seven kids from the wrong side of the tracks in South Florida. Hall is enthusiastic about what old-fashioned American capitalism has brought him in the way of wealth and fame but is cautious and risk averse.

"Being raised poor there is

always the fear of going back to that and it's true I do. That fear became a motivation in me." Life is easier these days with his books selling like hot cakes, a successful business in New York and gains from his own investments. He admits he has learned by his mistakes but has had his share of luck on along the way.

"I bought Microsoft (stock) in the late '80s. And Intel was a classic small investor story for me because I didn't have a lot of money. I bought 10 shares at a time. I had my first computer and it ran off an Intel chip and I knew they were making other chips which were faster. So if I had \$300 left over I would buy Intel. My friends would say, 'Don't you think you should diversify?' and I would say, 'I don't have enough money to

diversify.'"

This fresh, lively, uninhibited approach to investing makes Alvin Hall so appealing. Definitely not of the stuffy, pin-striped school of money management.

"In America the culture is one of making your own way. There's serendipity in hard work. You must prepare yourself to take advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself. I think Americans are more willing sometimes to walk on ice before the ice is solidly frozen beneath their feet."

Hall teaches some very basic rules. "A lot of successful investing," he says, "depends on three key characteristics — time, patience and the ability to adjust."

And for the man who

announces with glee "Isn't capitalism a wonderful thing!" he puts it all in perspective in a way that we might do well to learn from.

"Making money is a serious venture; investing involves serious considerations. Your financial well being, the education of your children, providing health care, providing for your life for the future. But at the same time it should not be something which overwhelms your entire existence. Make it a part of the fun of your life, make it a part of the interest of your life but don't let it eat you alive."

It's this philosophy which makes Hall so accessible and goes some way to explaining why a black American that no one's ever heard of has proved so popular with British viewers and investors. ■