

TV To Go: A little bit of Easter magic with the amazing Dynamo



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HE'S walked on water across the Thames and levitated in front of the Christ The Redeemer statue in Rio. Yet Dynamo's most remarkable piece of magic was the moment he taught himself to hold a deck of playing cards again after two years of crippling illness.

In the summer of 2017, the Bradford-born magician suffered an extreme case of food poisoning that aggravated the Crohn's disease he has managed since the age of 14 and caused reactive arthritis in his joints.

'I was in a bad way,' he says. 'All my joints were in agony. My body was shutting down.'

But Dynamo being Dynamo, he has now transformed that misfortune into the miraculous. Beyond Belief, his new three-part series for Sky One, is astonishing as much for showing his powers of recovery as for the jaw-dropping tricks — try driving a car backwards through Moscow traffic while blindfolded.

'In hospital I was trying to deal with the arthritis in my hands — they were so sensitive I couldn't even hold a pack of cards,' he says. 'Slowly, I was able to put one card in my hands, then two. It was uncomfortable but I started to get a feel for it to the point where I could tell how many cards were in my hand just from the sensitivity.'

In the first episode, Dynamo blows the minds of a group of American footballers by doing just that — and a whole lot more.

'I've been able to take that disability and turn it into a superpower,' he explains.

The transformative powers of magic played a significant part in Dynamo's early life. At school, when he was being bullied as ordinary Steven Frayne, a trick taught him by his late grandfather that made his body feel too heavy to lift saved him from being dumped in a wheelie bin by his tormentors.

Turning negatives into positives is a Dynamo core belief. He dreamed up 90 per cent of the magic in Beyond Belief while he was still hospitalised, scribbling away and recording his thoughts in a video diary. He says the illness has changed him and taught him to savour the smaller moments in life, something that's not lost on him now while he's on lockdown with his wife and two dogs in his Hampstead home, having tested positive for coronavirus.

'Not a bad place to be locked down,' he says. 'Being in hospital for a couple of years kind of prepared me for what we're having to go through. I'm a lockdown veteran.'

Dynamo describes the new series as a thank you to the fans who supported him when paparazzi shots revealed how ill he was, as well as to the NHS doctors and physios who helped his recovery.

'The NHS did such an incredible job getting me back on my feet,' he says.

For fans of his grand-scale magic Dynamo promises that the show's finale is 'the riskiest thing I have ever attempted'. Typically, he's also trying to find ways to flip the predicament of the pandemic.

'It's forcing me to come up with new magic ideas,' he says. 'I'm not able to go out but I'm still able to learn. We have TVs and phones that give us unlimited information. Our minds can come out of this improved if we use our time wisely.'

■ Dynamo: Beyond Belief airs tomorrow on Sky One. All episodes available on Now TV

