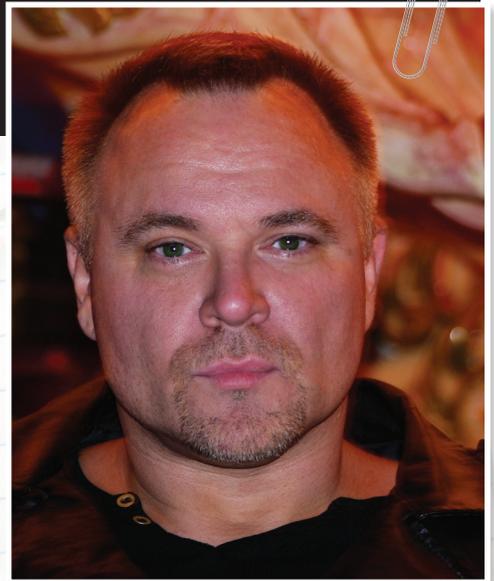


# Columnist

Mik Scarlet

## What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger!



Recently I found myself most unwell and ended up back in the hands of the medical profession. While my illness was not really connected to my disability, and could have struck anyone whether they have an impairment or not, all the doctors and nurses that saw me acted as if my disability was the root cause of my being so poorly. This led to them misdiagnosing me at first, and to my condition getting worse. So by the middle of March I found myself so ill that everyone started getting quite worried. Luckily I got the right treatment and just two weeks later I was up and about and on the road to recovery.

The whole experience reminded me that when most members of society think about disability they associate it with ill health and weakness, even those who should have the knowledge on the subject. But it also reminded me that this impression is the opposite of what our experience really is. From the moment I was born I have battled with various illnesses, from cancer to spinal injury and I won each battle. I'm still here, writing this to prove it. I am sure that many of you reading this also have stories of what the mainstream press would call 'overcoming adversity'.

The aforementioned adversity, whether you were born with a disability or acquired it later in life, tends to be a mixture of beating an illness or the outcome of an accident and then going on to create a new life while being disabled. Sure these are all battles in themselves, as we all know, but society focuses on how amazing it is that we have succeeded as we are all obviously weaker than non-disabled people. But I feel that my disability says something totally different, not only about me, but all of humankind.

### AS WELL AS PROOF OF HOW IRREPRESSIBLE THE HUMAN BODY IS, WE ALSO SHOW HOW WONDERFUL THE HUMAN SPIRIT AND IMAGINATION IS

To me the disabled community should be seen as living proof of just how strong and amazing the human body actually is. As disabled people we all live our lives inside bodies that demonstrate how well our biology adapts to changes in function and our very existence should be seen as something to rejoice about. Whatever life has thrown at our bodies, we have kept on going and we are evidence to every-

one that so could theirs. We are all like my namesake Captain Scarlet, who was indestructible; we might not bounce back as we were before, but we're still pretty tough.

As well as proof of how irrepressible the human body is, we also show how wonderful the human spirit and imagination is too. Sure, we do all of that 'overcoming' malarkey ourselves, but just think of all the creativity that has gone into our lives. If we consider the medical treatments and the aids and adaptations alone, the huge advancements that I have seen in my lifetime prove if humans put their mind to something there is nothing they cannot do.

So as I sat in a GP's surgery in my wheelchair specially designed to be able to manage all types of terrain while letting me sit comfortably, reading the long list of what does and doesn't work on my body and how many serious illnesses I have beaten, I felt proud of what it said about all of us. We prove that humankind can survive pretty much anything and can come out the other side triumphant. We are the embodiment of the phrase 'what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger'. ■