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Paralysed Harry Potter Stunt Double Designs a Green Des Res



He was Daniel Radcliffe's double in the first six Harry Potter movies until a flying stunt left him paralysed from the chest down and in need of 24/7 care, but now David Holmes has found a magical way of living alone. By Karen Pasquali Jones

David Holmes has the need for speed. When he's not drift racing at 155mph, rushing around Thailand or planning his next holiday to party island Ibiza, he's getting ready to host a dinner party or go to a cricket match with his celebrity friends.

'I get bored if I'm not constantly doing something,' David, laughs. 'I am what you might call a bit of an adrenaline addict.'

It's hardly surprising given that he was a gymnast competing at national level at the age of 14 and a stuntman who was actor Daniel Radcliffe's double in the Harry Potter series of films, tackling terrifying and dangerous routines daily.

But what's even more incredible is that David still lives life in the fast lane – racing cars and travelling the world alone – after being paralysed at the age of 25 when a stunt went horribly wrong during filming.

'I can't let that ruin my life,' David, 34, says.

I had the best job ever and it was dangerous, but I accepted the risks and I loved it. Now I have a different life and I want to live it fully. I'm not going to let my injury define me or take away my freedom. I'm still the same guy I was before

While many others may have felt that their life shrank once they were in a wheelchair, and dependent on carers or medical staff, David has managed to be independent – thanks largely to a 'green' house he has designed and built.

The five-bedroom home has a therapy pool, 'man cave', and every conceivable mod-con run on a Crestron specially adapted dashboard that David can control by hitting a touchscreen with his knuckles.

Through the company's award-winning Design software, David can 'wake up' up a room before he wants to use it and sensors detect when he leaves and powers back down the energy-consuming devices.

The green and sustainability efforts are all state-of-the-art and invisible to David's friends and family who are all impressed with the house's wow factor. 'It's quite a place – everyone loves it,' David laughs.



David's state of the art home is fully energy efficient with his lift in full view. 'I'm not ashamed of it,' he says. Image: supplied

Seeing Double

David, now 34, was cast as the Harry Potter star's double when he was just 17 as he looked similar to Daniel and was the right height. 'Suddenly I was at the Warner Bros studio, sitting on a broomstick attached to a pole fixed to the back of a truck going at 70mph. I loved it.'

The stuntman was in all of the films, based on the novels by J K Rowling - the first of which *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was published 20 years ago.

'I liked Daniel even though he was only 11, much younger than me, but he was a good boy, and we became friends,' David says. 'He did some stunts but I'd do the dangerous stuff, and would come home with bumps and bruises, and often more than that. I broke nine bones during those films. I didn't mind.'

'Whenever I wore those Harry Potter glasses I couldn't believe I was being paid to do what I loved. It was the greatest job ever.'

David was rehearsing a pivotal scene for *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1*, when a stunt - recognised as one of the most dangerous in the industry - went tragically wrong. 'It's the scene when Lord Voldemort was trying to kill Harry and I was being pulled backwards on a wire, simulating being thrown backwards by an explosion,' he explains.

David hit a wall, instantly breaking his neck. 'I knew it was serious straight away,' he says. 'My stunt co-ordinator rushed over and asked me to squeeze his fingers. I could move my arm but I couldn't squeeze. I looked into his eyes and I knew then it was major. My immediate reaction was to tell him not to call my mum and dad as I didn't want to worry them, but of course they had to be told.'

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After being rushed to hospital, doctors told David his neck injury meant he was paralysed from the chest down. 'I'm a C7 tetraplegic,' David explains. 'I have some arm movement but I can't move my fingers, there's no dexterity.'

'Of course, there was a sense of tragedy at first and then there was sheer determination to beat it. I knew I could live independently and wanted my freedom back. I wasn't going to mope.'

And so, while he spent six months in the Royal National Orthopedic Hospital building up the muscles that had almost wasted away following the accident, David started thinking of the house he wanted to build to make sure he could live alone.

'I had a lot of time to think,' he says. 'I didn't want anything that looked disabled. I wanted a beautiful home where I could feel like me again.'



In hospital recovering, David knew he had to build his dream home that would give back the former Harry Potter stuntman his independence. Image: supplied

That's why he didn't just stop at a ramp, and a modified bathroom. David, who was visited in hospital by Daniel Radcliffe and Tom Felton, who played Draco Malfoy in the movie franchise, knew he wanted a des res with a therapy pool, lift, and space to move in his wheelchair.

He needed carers to help him when he left hospital and initially lived in an unmodified bungalow in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, UK. 'It was so cramped and I couldn't wait for my house to be built,' he says.

A magical home

David and his architects, BGA, worked on every aspect of his new home – even making the lift in the middle of the house, fashioned out of glass and with its mirrored surfaces at roof level letting in natural light.

'Did I want a lift stuck in a corner behind a cupboard that I'm ashamed of?' David says. 'No, I made it into an architectural feature.' The same could be said of his 'man cave' basement with a home cinema, a bar and star-lit ceiling.

'I didn't want the house to look like it was for a disabled person, and I didn't want grab handles and that usual disabled 'medical' look, so I designed it so that it didn't have any of this stuff.'

He then worked with a company, Custom, Sight & Sound and Crestron who created an app on his iPad which controls the TV, doors, and security. Every door throughout the 6,300 sq foot home is sliding, with special access for David's adapted Mercedes-AMG car.

'Now I only need carers to get me up and put me to bed,' he says. 'This house has given me my freedom and independence.'

He has five bedrooms, five bathrooms, three kitchens with five dishwashers, and five ovens. 'I entertain a lot and have 15 - 20 people round for dinner so I need all that,' he smiles. 'I do the cooking. Everything in my house is designed to let me be me.'

He feels safe in the house too. 'I can check my cameras and if I hear a noise I can turn on a light and see what's happening.' He is now installing Alexa into the system so the voice control can transform life at home even more. 'I'll be able to say: "Alexa open the blinds" and other instructions,' he explains.

His house has every conceivable mod-con, and an energy management system to conserve and track consumption. The app allows him to monitor the power grid and renewable energy sources and automatically drew from the most cost-effective and greenest energy source.



Cost effective, energy efficient and rather nice. Image: supplied

'Why should someone who is disabled have a second-class product?' David says. 'We like to think we've thought of everything with this house as it's my home for life.' It's the same drive that means he has travelled the extensively and still goes out racing. Right now, he is getting ready for a charity match where Daniel Radcliffe and other celebrities will play.

All of the money raised from it goes to the RNOH where is he an ambassador. He has raised £100,000 so far and works to support newly injured patients who are adapting to their disability. He and two friends, who are also wheelchair bound, have also created a production company, [Ripple \(http://www.rippleproductions.co.uk\)](http://www.rippleproductions.co.uk) Productions to help inspire disabled people. 'I want to help others, and to tell them there is a life after disability,' he says.



David remains close to Harry Potter star Daniel Radcliffe. Image: Shutterstock

Daniel Radcliffe is still close to David. 'I've got a relationship that goes back many, many years with Dave,' he's told media. 'And I would hate for people to just see me and Dave and go, "oh, there's Daniel Radcliffe with a person in a wheelchair" - because I would never, even for a moment, want them to assume that Dave was anything except for an incredibly important person in my life.'

To donate to the Royal National Orthopedic Hospital visit [rnohcharity.org](http://www.rnohcharity.org)
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To watch David talking about his house and life watch [here \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAxQviomM8I\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAxQviomM8I) and you can see David and Daniel Radcliffe on set together [here \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6b_OSLnFWw\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6b_OSLnFWw)