UPDATED: Val Kilmer on His Throat Cancer: “I Feel a Lot Better Than I Sound”

After his cancer diagnosis five years ago, Kilmer has a tracheostomy. But he’s found a new voice in his memoir—and in a new movie.

August 19, 2020 By Alicia Green

Updated 8/19/2020: Val Kilmer has returned to the movies. He reprises his Top Gun role as Iceman is the new film Paydirt, released on August 7th. He recently opened up to Good Morning America about acting again after his tracheostomy. “It’s just like any other language or dialect,” he said. “You have to figure out a way to communicate that’s no different than any other acting challenge but it’s just a very unique set of circumstances.” He stars with his daughter Mercedes, 28, who said, “Playing his daughter was so trippy and perfect.” Working with her dad on the film gave her new respect for people who overcome disabilities, adding, “I’m so proud to have been in this film.”

This article was originally published on April 24, 2020.

Since the 1980s, Val Kilmer has brought charisma and excitement to the big screen in films such as Real Genius, Top Gun and Tombstone. But now Kilmer is sharing his story of overcoming throat cancer in his new memoir, I’m Your Huckleberry.

Kilmer discussed his diagnosis and how it’s affected his speaking in a recent interview with Good Morning America.

“I feel a lot better than I sound, but I feel wonderful,” said Kilmer, age 60, who was diagnosed with the disease in 2015 and now breathes with the help of a tracheostomy.



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I'd like to thank Chris Connelly and wonderful folks at Good Morning America for the opportunity to chat and share a few moments of my life and career. Going through my filmography, my first reaction is that these films have nothing to do with my life. My second reaction is that they have everything to do with my life. I am none of the characters I have portrayed, and I am all of the characters. I have no choice but to continue the difficult task of locating the nexus where my life and my art meet. And books have always sustained me, especially when the blues blow through like a hurricane. I hope you'll read along and join me through the journey. Stay safe and stay strong, everyone.

A post shared by Val Kilmer (@valkilmerofficial) on Apr 22, 2020 at 10:22am PDT

Although Kilmer misses his voice and doesn't like laughing like a pirate, he has found a new voice in writing. I'm Your Huckleberry— the title comes from a line his character Doc Holliday utters in Tombstone—delves into some of Kilmer's most iconic roles as well as his high-profile relationships, including his romance with music icon Cher, who helped him through his diagnosis and treatment.

According to People, Cher invited Kilmer to stay in her guest house when his health was deteriorating. She was there for him during some of his most terrifying moments. Luckily, she kept him laughing amid the chaos.

> One Of Funniest Men Ever. Didn’t Read book While he Wrote it.I told him I trusted him????????.Its hard to write books about ppl we love,When They’re Famous,It’s Double Edged????. We Were Beautiful,Funny, Eccentric,Kick Ass Couple,Who ????’d Gr8 In Clothes,&Drove Eachother????Sometimes.
>
> — Cher (@cher) April 5, 2020

In addition to a tracheostomy, Kilmer also underwent chemotherapy and radiation. He turned to his faith and prayed for healing. He’s been cancer-free for over four years now.

“The fact that my impeded speech could spell the end of my career only served to motivate me,” Kilmer writes.

Kilmer is set to reprise his role as Lieutenant Tom “Iceman” Kazansky opposite Tom Cruise in the upcoming Top Gun: Maverick, a sequel to the original film. It was originally slated for release on June 24 but has been rescheduled for December 23.

For related coverage, read “Experts Refute Eddie Van Halen’s Claim That Guitar Pick Caused His Throat Cancer” and “Actress Marcia Cross Reveals Anal Cancer Was Linked to HPV and Husband’s Throat Cancer.”

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