

YOUR HEALTH

I had to learn to play the guitar again after my fall

Rock legend Suzi Quatro recalls the day she broke her knee and wrist while boarding a plane in the Ukraine in 2012. Her troubles didn't end there and she endured months of pain and anguish.

Now 66, the singer - who's married to German concert promoter Rainer Haas - divides her time between homes in Essex and Hamburg.

I'll never forget that horrendous flight back from Kiev nursing a broken right knee and left wrist - it was agony. I was returning to the UK from a gig in the Ukraine. While boarding the plane, my roller bag hit a step and over I went.

My hand was stuck underneath the handle and had to endure not only my body weight but what my on-flight case weighed - and that's a lot.

I carry every item I wouldn't want to lose in it because once I lost everything and had to perform in my street clothes.

I vowed never to let that happen again.

As well as breaking my left wrist, I smashed my right knee.

I was sprawled on the ground when an abrupt airport official asked if I wanted to catch the flight or go to hospital?

Every instinct in me said, 'Get home'. As I couldn't get up, I was transported

on to the plane in a wheelchair. During the flight, the adrenaline from the earlier concert wore off and the pain became excruciating. To help relieve the pressure on the knee and wrist, I asked a steward to cut off my trouser leg above the knee and my shirt sleeve.

I knew I'd seriously injured myself because during the flight I tried touching the ground with the tips of my toes and couldn't. It was a nightmare.

After arriving at Heathrow, my driver rushed me to the hospital emergency unit where my broken wrist and knee were confirmed. My husband was in Hamburg, awaiting a prostate operation. I was planning to fly out the following day to be with him but sadly couldn't make it.

At the hospital, my knee and wrist were put in casts. Unfortunately, the cast on my knee was set wrong. Apparently the knee should have been slightly bent but wasn't, which meant it started healing wrongly.

Two weeks later, when the cast was removed, I felt pain like I'd never experienced. I've got a high pain threshold but this was awful. I stayed in hospital



“He wanted to cut my leg open and re-break the bone. I nearly died

BROKEN BONES: THE FACTS

Mr William David Goodier, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon at BMI The London Independent Hospital, says:

Healing time depends on which bone is broken. Wrist fractures commonly heal in five or six weeks, but the tibia (shin bone) takes four months or more in plaster. This is one reason why weight-bearing bones in the leg are usually fixed surgically.

Fractures into joints are a particular problem. If the joint surface isn't relocated perfectly, arthritis is inevitable. In Suzi's case, the bones hadn't stayed in a good position. The wrist had moved and started to heal in that position. Surgery might have threatened the nerves and tendons to

her hand so we decided to let it heal in that position, then see how she got on. Suzi's determination made sure she didn't let it affect her playing.

Regarding her knee, she had sheared off most of one side of the joint, and this had also lost position in the cast. I had to open up the fracture site to make sure it was perfectly aligned in the joint, then fix it with cannulated screws. Once the fracture has matured (usually at least a year later) the screws can be removed.

I did think Suzi's ambitions were wildly over-optimistic (playing bass at eight weeks and jumping around on stage a few months after surgery), but she proved me wrong.

overnight and then was told the doctor wasn't happy to carry out the operation needed. So, having BUPA cover, I went to a private hospital in London where a great surgeon, William Goodier, told me

the bad news. He said he'd have to cut the leg open, re-break the bone and start again. I nearly died. When Mr Goodier told me he wanted to operate on my wrist but that it might affect how

I can play my bass guitar, I told him not to touch it. So he agreed to keep an eye on it instead.

I had a general anaesthetic for the knee op, which left a three-inch scar. But Mr Goodier did an excellent job and thankfully the operation was successful.

I was in hospital for two weeks and when the casts were removed, I had to learn not only how to play the guitar again but to walk as well.

It was a long, painful process, but throughout that period, I never worried about not playing guitar again. I'm a determined person and it takes lots to keep me down.

Five months' recuperation started after the op. I spent the first two on the couch in the lounge. Initially I couldn't get up without someone helping me but eventually I was able to move around using a walking frame. During this period, I had regular hour-long physio



STILL CANNING THE CAN In 2016

sessions - and, wow, they were painful.

Initially, I took painkillers after the accident but don't believe in them so I stopped after a few days. I found a sip of brandy numbed the pain if it got too bad. The accident happened in March and my first gig was scheduled for August. A month before the concert, I was using crutches and, finally, perfected my walk again.

I wasn't nervous about returning to the stage because I knew I could do it. Yes, I was in a little pain but that was expected. Afterwards though, I could barely drag myself off. The adrenaline carried me through but to be honest I probably did more than I should have.

But now I'm fine. The only thing I feel occasionally is a little heaviness in the knee. I like to jog, visit the gym and do yoga so I'm a very fit 66-year-old. When I'm touring, gigs are sufficient exercise - they're like an intense aerobic workout. Carrying a bass guitar weighing nearly as much as me, wearing extremely hot leather, being under spotlights and jogging across stage for two hours is enough exercise for anyone.

AS TOLD TO RICHARD WEBBER
■ Legends Live Tour 2017 with Suzi Quatro, David Essex, The Osmonds and Hot Chocolate runs October 13-22. For tickets, visit legendslive.org