

NEW IMAGE FOR DAVID CASSIDY

David Cassidy, idol of the pre-teeners (eight to ten-year-olds), is at a turning point in his career. Australia, he promises, is going to see a new David Cassidy when he tours here in March.



ABOVE: David Cassidy, 24-year-old pop idol of eight to ten-year-olds. BELOW: David Cassidy (front left) with the rest of the cast of "The Partridge Family." (Back from left) Jeremy Gelbwaks, Danny Bonaduce, Suzanne Crough, and (front) Shirley Jones (David's real-life stepmother) and Susan Dey.



WHENEVER David Cassidy, 24-year-old television star and fully fledged pop idol, arrives at airports in Europe or the U.S.A., he is greeted by the scream of young lungs, mob euphoria, and the demolition of airport lounges.

It's happened everywhere else. It's bound to happen in Australia when he performs here in March as part of a three-month world tour.

But right now, Cassidy told me in an interview over the telephone from San Francisco, he is at a turning-point in his career — and his plans do not include the screams of the pre-teen boppers who are the bulk of his present audience.

Australia, he promises, is going to see a new David Cassidy.

"Some will still come just to see, but I hope some are coming to listen as well." The change in image, from a glittering white-suited, gyrating sex symbol, is being made for the survival of his own personality.

"I don't like it, because it's not me. It never was. I was confronted with it and just rode it along."

Dropping TV series

David has not renewed his contract for "The Partridge Family" — amid rumors that he was not even going to be round to film the last four episodes of the current contract. He told me he would be finishing them.

The three-month European, Asian and Australian tour immediately follows. This period, said David, "is probably when I will make up my mind about my career."

"I think it will give me a good opportunity to get a

much more objective point of view. I think that is very important for me right now. I'm so totally involved and wrapped up in it, I would like to back off a little. I need to take the time off to find out what it is I really want to do."

Whatever direction his career takes, he is adamant that he play David Cassidy from now on.

"Between us, Ruth (Ruth Aarons, his manager) and I have read hundreds of film scripts. But most of them were terrible. It's so hard to pinpoint."

"I don't have any preconceptions about the

mother's theatre groups for lessons.

While he was still known to the world as just the son of actor Jack Cassidy, David played a feature role in a Broadway musical of 1970 "The Fig Leaves are Falling." After three days the show fell too, but David escaped with some nice mentions from the critics, and returned to Hollywood where he fell straight into "The Partridge Family."

Real-life stepmother

By this time his father had remarried, to actress Shirley Jones, who plays Shirley Partridge, the mother of the Partridge family.

She still gets a kick out of remembering how David got the lead male role in the series.

"I knew they were trying boys for the show, and I knew that David was auditioning, but I didn't say anything."

"It was only when the studio asked if they thought I would like to work with David Cassidy, that I told anyone he was my stepson." That was 1970.

The show was an attempt to be swinging, but although its subjects were a family pop group and the music recorded by the cast sold well, it was basically another slick, family situation comedy.

The show was popular with the six to 11 age groups, but ironically David himself didn't score all that highly in surveys.

Parallel with his screen image, he was building up a big-earning reputation as a solo concert and recording artist (he has seven gold records), and this is where the million-dollar Cassidy phenomenon was born.

Younger looking than his 24 years, he has been a shattering hit with the youngest groupies ever, the

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roles I would like to play, but definitely, they would not be Elvis Presley-type roles, or James Dean-type roles. They have to be David Cassidy-type roles."

At that, he laughed. After three short but concentrated years of stardom, for all his quiet assurance and intelligence, he is just a little amused at this other, famous person — this David Cassidy.

Although he was born in New York in a showbiz family — his father is actor Jack Cassidy, his mother Evelyn Ward, an actress — his parents divorced when he was five and he was brought up by his grandfather (who has just died) in West Orange, New Jersey.

However, his mother took him to Hollywood when he was ten, and there he started on the trail familiar to all fans: when he graduated from a Beverly Hills high school, he joined his