

My dad David Cassidy doesn't want me to be a Pop Idol

Is the former teen sensation trying to protect his daughter – or is it all about ego?

With his glossy hair, flawless tan, gleaming smile and romantic pop songs, David Cassidy was the heart-throb of a generation of teenagers.

The star of hit TV series *The Partridge Family*, he sold 25 million records to a fan base bigger than Elvis and the Beatles combined – all before his 24th birthday. But plagued by depression and unable to reconcile his abusive relationship with his alcoholic father, the pop idol eventually turned to drink and drugs.

Today, at 53, he has regained some of his former glory. He can still pull a crowd – albeit a rather more mature assembly of women in their forties who've kept the faith – and last year he released a successful "Best Of" album.

But life is not all sweet. For, in a bitter irony, the man adored by legions of teenagers cannot win the affections of his own daughter, 17-year-old Katie. Her good looks mark her out as David's flesh and blood but her ambitions to be a pop star – which she hoped might unite her with her father – have, she says, caused a bitter rift. Indeed, Katie has not spoken to her father for 18 months.

She wants to follow his success with her own version of his hit *I Think I Love You*. But, Katie says, her father is unhappy about sharing the limelight.

She says, "I have never had what you would call a normal relationship with him. When I told him I wanted to be a singer, he told me he wanted nothing to do with it. He cut me out of his life completely and I haven't heard from him since.

"He tried to make out it was for my own good because he wanted to protect me but he was the same age as I am when he started out so I don't get it. It hurts because he's my father and all fathers should support what their child does. He should know my mum would never let me do something that's going to hurt me."

Katie's mother, Sherry Benedon, a 50-year-old ex-model and bit-part actress, is the typical Hollywood mum. She started an



on-off relationship with David when she auditioned for *The Partridge Family* – and the affair continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, even though he married twice.

When Sherry fell pregnant with Katie, she says David took the news "with some difficulty". Katie considers her stepfather, physician Richard Benedon, her "real dad".

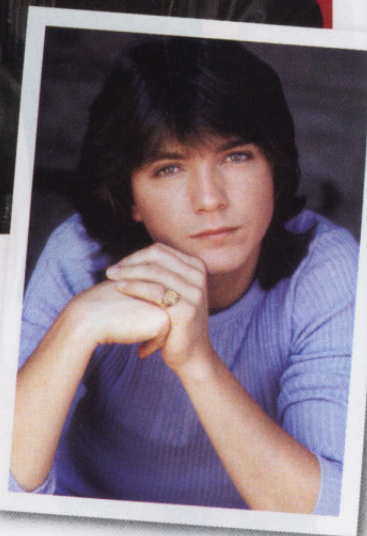
"I always knew who my father was," says Katie. "If he doesn't want a relationship with me, it'll hurt but I have a stepfather who's basically my father.

"Hopefully, I'll be successful but I'll do it my way. I want to have a voice to say what I think."

Katie has also signed up to a model agency. But Sherry rebuts any idea she is exploiting the Cassidy name and a painful family rift to launch Katie's career. She says, "This is not about trying to cash in. David supported Katie financially. That's what makes his actions now seem so hateful."

For his part, David does not want his daughter to endure the fame that nearly destroyed him and says that pushing children

Above: Katie (17) shares her father's good looks Right: Shots like this one set teen hearts pounding in the 1970s



into showbusiness is "like sticking a needle in their arm".

Poignantly, given his break with his daughter, David has accused his late father, alcoholic actor Jack Cassidy, of being the cause of his own problems.

David says, "All I ever wanted was for him to put his arms around me and say, 'I love you, I'm so proud of you.' And he couldn't. The more successful I became, the more it pushed him away from me."

It seems Katie and her father are tragically united in one thing – their unrequited desire for a father's love.

Caroline Graham

PICTURES: ONF