



pettiness of the female with other females: the businesslike way in which millions of pubescents went about the pursuit of their Cassidy fantasy would make a FTSE 100 chairman blench. At my school, if you were unlucky during break-time, Deanna, the prettiest and most powerful girl, who had curling tongs before everyone else and smelt lightly of burning hair, would allocate you one of the more lumpen Osmond brothers.

'You can have Merrill.'

'I don't want Merrill.'

'All right, have Wayne then.'

Deanna always claimed David Cassidy for herself. But she couldn't have him. He was mine.

By 1973, practically every female in the United Kingdom between the ages of eight and 14 was either a Donny Osmond or a David Cassidy girl. We Cassidyites considered ourselves wildly superior to Donny followers. For a start, we didn't have to sport velvet peaked caps in emulation of our toothsome hero, or pretend to get the point of Mormonism, a religion which, if fan-mag precis could be trusted, was founded by a man who discovered its sacred texts in a biscuit tin on the top of a mountain in Utah.

Donny came fully supported by a band of brothers. David was made of rougher stuff: the only child of actor parents who divorced when he was three. His father, the silver-haired and silver-tongued Jack Cassidy, was a Broadway

Top row, from left the Partridge Family (*above*, Suzanne Crough, Jeremy Gelbwaks, Danny Bonaduce; *below*, David Cassidy, Shirley Jones, Susan Dey); in London, 1972; as he appeared on the cover of 'Rolling Stone' magazine in 1972; fans at the 1974 White City concert, during which one 14-year-old girl died. **Bottom row** on stage in 1974; three pictures that would have adorned every teenybopper's bedroom shrine, feather-cut, medallion and furry boots notwithstanding

'I never thought of myself as being sexy. I was skinny, my hair was fluffy, I looked kind of feminine'



performer and serial philanderer whose main role in his son's life was to be an aching absence. At the age of five, and now living with his mother at his grandparents' small house, the undersized boy with the wonky eyes (he later had corrective surgery) was taunted by kids in the street about his parents' divorce. This was news to David: 'They're not divorced. Maybe in a play they are, but not in real life.' Jack Cassidy had already moved on to a new family: David ended up with three stepbrothers who were much younger and lived far away. To me this half-orphan always seemed a far more lovable figure than Donny Osmond, perhaps because he was so promisingly wounded. The only fly in the marshmallow was Susan Dey, the insultingly pretty young actress who played David's sister in *The Partridge Family* and thereby enjoyed grossly unfair access to him. Cassidy fans were so jealous of Dey that even now mention of her name can elicit a nostalgic 'Bitch!'

Was it sex? That's what I ask myself, looking back at my bewitched 13-year-old self, most assured where she was most deluded. If David