

ask if his picture could come off the covers for a while because things were getting out of control. 'He went, "Ha, ha, that's good. That's funny. Sit down, kid. Ya see we don't work that way. We paid money for the rights to your name. You can either co-operate with us and we'll make it fun and enjoyable, or you can not co-operate with us and we'll do what we want to anyway."' The magazines got 25,000 letters a week addressed to David Cassidy and destroyed them, though not before noting down the infatuated girls' addresses for their mail-order offers. So we were both exploited: him and us.

All right, so now we come to the big question, the question I'm almost afraid to ask, the thing I've wondered about for half a lifetime: 'David, was your favourite colour ever brown?'

'Brownwwwnn?' He looks puzzled. 'My favourite colour? No, never. Do I look like someone whose favourite colour was brown?'

'For two years I wore nothing but brown.'

'No kidding! That's hilarious. No, sorry, Allison. That's terrible. I'm sorry. God, I'm really sorry. It was all made up.'

I think back to my precious archive under the bed. 'It was all made up?'

'Pretty much,' he shrugs. 'At the beginning of a year, they're going to write 10,000 stories that are all contrived for their audience of young teenagers, so they'd come in and they'd ask me a bunch of questions that were so silly. What's your favourite drink? What's your favourite colour? After a few hours, you start making stuff up. What do you eat for breakfast? Ketchup and ice-cream.'

'And there I am 5,000 miles away taking it as God's own truth.' We are both laughing now, at

the lunacy of it all. He shakes his head: 'Brown? Are you sure? Why didn't they make my favourite colour purple or something?'

'Purple was Donny Osmond's favourite colour.' Why do I wish that I don't know this?

Cassidy clearly doesn't like the Osmond comparison. It's the only time I glimpse a chink in the charm. He quickly points out that only in the UK is he bracketed with Donny. 'I find it so amusing,' he says unsmiling. 'We were nothing alike. He was truly the character I played on TV, that was his family for real. I was a bad boy. *Puppy Love*, that was the song he chose to sing. Mine would have been Hendrix's *Voodoo Chile*.'

'I had a choice of saying no more. It's a sad, empty, lonely, self-absorbed, narcissistic existence'

Understandably, he much prefers to be linked to Elvis and the Beatles, and although the phenomenon of David Cassidy as an idol bears comparison, the musical legacy doesn't. In a way, he found himself in a very female predicament: Cassidy was like the beautiful blonde who wanted to show what she could do, but the money-men just wanted her to go on wiggling her darling behind and singing the songs that made those young girls cry.

It's Cassidy who brings up the sad case of another of his contemporaries. 'Michael Jackson. See what a talent has been destroyed and wasted there. Michael simply didn't have a perspective internally to make the choice to quit. I pressed the ejector button. I had a choice of saying no

more, I don't want to buy this dream because it's a miserable dream. It's a sad, empty, lonely, shallow, self-absorbed, narcissistic existence. Look at Michael Jackson's face – if that isn't the height of narcissism, trying to look like Diana Ross. He's like an anorexic who wants to stay a kid for ever.'

He says he saw the choice quite clearly between 'being God or being happy'. I knew the only way for me to survive and be a human being again was not to live like that. I lived in a vacuum like Elvis, like John, Paul, George and Ringo. I did that for five years.'

Cassidy tells me a lovely story about a New Year's Eve that he spent with Lennon. Both very drunk, the men began comparing notes on the surreal life of the teen idol. One would start a sentence and the other would finish it. 'What about when you have to pull the sheets off your bed...'

'...because they're gonna sell them?'

Cassidy, an ardent Beatles fan, had gone out and bought a guitar at the age of 13 when he saw them on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. Now, as they reminisced, David started playing *Anytime At All* and then *It Won't Be Long*. 'John hadn't played those songs in 10 years or more and he couldn't remember them and he was drunk, so I'm reteaching him the songs, which was really, really cool. You probably know my lyrics better than me, Allison.'

Does he remember *I Am a Clown*?

'Actually, I get confused, they're so similar.'

Prodigious early success condemned David Cassidy to a singular purgatory: he was getting ready for his future just as everyone else was consigning him to the past. There was a perfect, unhappy solution – 'I should have died young.'



WHEN WE GO TO MARKET, WE REALLY GO TO TOWN. IT'S IN OUR NATURE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FARMERS MARKETS AND SPRING BREAKS

GO TO www.southwestengland.co.uk OR CALL FOR A BROCHURE 0870 442 0880.

South West
England