

he volunteers – but happily it never came to pass. Between 1974 and 1985, he refused to sing any of his hits, even though he could certainly have used the exposure. ‘I said, “I won’t do that ‘cos I don’t want you to think that I’m still there. I’m not there. I don’t want to stay there just to make you feel good.” Once I moved on, I could do the hits because then I have a present, otherwise I’m just a relic. And I’ll never be a relic.’

There is an awkward silence, our first. I try to break it. ‘When I meet you now after all this time...’

A guffaw. ‘I’m just some 50-year-old guy. You don’t give a shit, right?’

Actually, I do give a shit. Yes, I can laugh now at the cheesiness of the Partridge Family, at the humiliating infatuation, at the longing for a man I didn’t know, who, it turns out, didn’t even know himself; but I can’t disown that 13-year-old girl whose only fault was to idealise love too much. Isn’t there something heartbreaking about the people who mark time for us, against whom we measure our mortality? Can we think about the beginning of our adult feelings without glancing forward to a time when they will end? David Cassidy is looking at me expectantly, so I try to put it into words: ‘One day, many years from now, I’ll be doing something in the kitchen and I’ll turn on the radio and they’ll say that David Cassidy, the 70s teen idol, has died and that will be an incredibly poignant moment for me, and for millions of other women.’

‘A small part of you will die?’ he asks, curious, not certain.

‘Yes, I think that’s it.’

‘That’s why I’ve never taken it lightly,’ he says. As we’re at the place now where sad things

can be broached, I ask if it’s harder for him getting older because of the memories people have of him?

‘Yup, I think it is harder. It’s not like “poor me” because what I have – my family – and what I get to do, that’s all great.’ He starts twiddling on the guitar. ‘Yeah, it is hard. They say, “How come you don’t grow your hair back? Have you ever thought of getting your hair back?”’ A bitter laugh. ‘People see those recent pictures of Farrah Fawcett, icon of a generation. Oh, it’s so sad, they say. That’s the problem. It’s so sad. I can’t stand the idea of that being said about me. Hey, people get older. Fifty happens. Sixty happens.’

‘I started dyeing my hair when I was 27. I let it grow out for three months once. It’s white. I look so old’

Do people ever seem disappointed when they meet you?

‘Yup. “Why don’t you look like I remember you at 19?”’ More laughter. ‘Well, I *tryyyy*. I’ve got fans with pictures of me meeting them back in the 70s, these sweet little innocent girls, 25 years have gone by and they don’t look anything like that. NOTHING like that. Can we ever look like we did when we were 20 when we’re 50?’

Cassidy himself is looking so well preserved, I wonder if he’s had work on his face. ‘No, nothing done. Well, other than the dye. But I started dyeing my hair when I was 27.’

I tell him that I think he’d look nice with grey hair (the brown dye is the same unfortunate maroon as my platform shoes). ‘No, I look very

old. I let it grow out for three months once and a bit of grey is not what it is. It’s white. I look so old.’

We are interrupted by a piping younger voice. Beau Cassidy has popped into the kitchen to say goodbye to his dad before going out to play table tennis. Solemnly, he comes across to shake the lady from England’s hand. A gangly 12-year-old, all limbs and enthusiasm, Beau has a sweetness of nature which would touch the heart of all former subscribers to *Jackie*.

When Beau has gone, I say how adorable he is, and David Cassidy says, ‘He’s me without the scarring.’

Next morning, I am having breakfast in the hotel when the waitress asks me if I had a nice evening. I look at her and see a big woman, flustered but friendly, with a mottled face. Maybe she’s my age, but if so, she’s had a much harder life. I tell her that I got to meet my teen idol after all these years. ‘David Cassidy.’

‘Oh, mine too.’ She wipes her hands on her apron and says, ‘Tell me he wasn’t a creep. If he was a creep, don’t tell me, OK?’

‘No, he was...’ She’s looking at me, waiting. ‘He was lovely. Really. Lovely.’

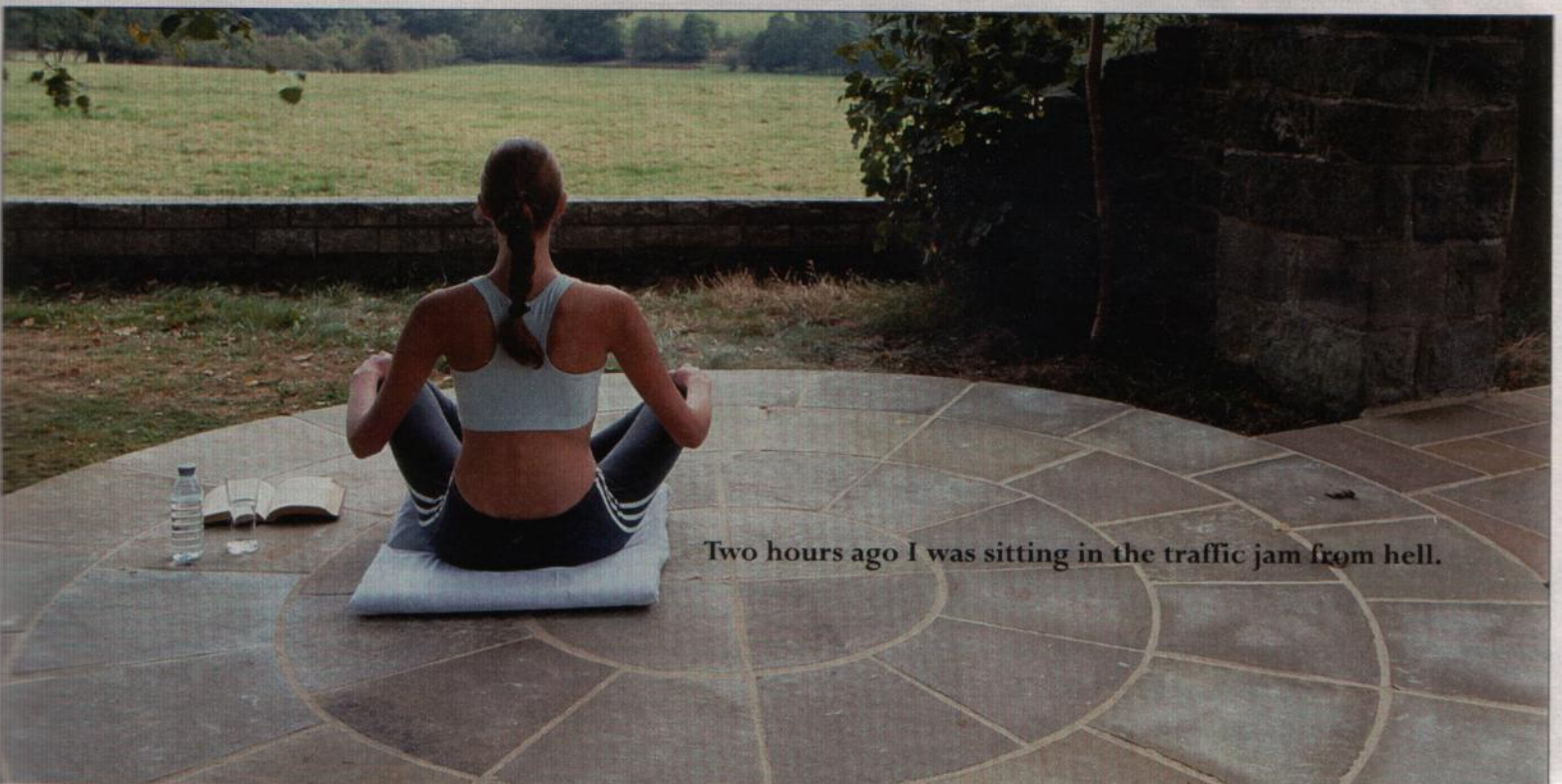
Relief. Her relief that one thing in this world remains good and true. Mine that I didn’t have to lie, though I know that I would have lied to spare her.

She grins, a smile that transforms her face so you can see what she looked like when we were both young. ‘Lovely? Right, well we knew that, didn’t we?’

Yes, we did. He was ours.

Actually, he was mine.

David Cassidy’s UK tour starts on Thursday



Two hours ago I was sitting in the traffic jam from hell.

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