



“ I FEEL VERY FORTUNATE TO HAVE THE LIFE I DO, THE SUCCESS I HAVE HAD AND CONTINUE TO HAVE, FOR MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS. THE YEARS HAVE TAUGHT ME HOW TO APPRECIATE THOSE THINGS THAT REALLY MATTER. ”

Photo by: Henry Diltz

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mail, forwarded through his publicist. That's as close as I'm going to be allowed to get to my first-ever crush, David Cassidy.

I can't really blame the one-time mega star for being over the whole interview thing, and all of the duties of celebrity. David Cassidy's been at this game for more than two-thirds of his life, has had people trying to break down doors to get to him. But I also can't lie and say I'm not a bit disappointed about not being able to fulfill my childhood fantasy of sitting down for a nice chat with him — over a glass of Hi-C perhaps, and maybe a bowl of Count Chocula.

David Cassidy is the first celebrity I was ever aware of. When I was a child, he was the first person outside my sphere of direct contact

whom I knew by real name, by character name, and by career. In short, he's been a part of my consciousness for almost as long as I've had a consciousness.

David's television alter ego, Keith Partridge, always seemed more of a real person than his sister Laurie, with the impossibly straight hair, and comic relief brother Danny, with the impossibly red hair. Tall and lean in his blousy seventies-era shirts, with flowing locks and flowing bellbottoms, I had a crush on him before I even knew what a crush was. The Mondrian-inspired school bus, the partridge silhouette, the blonde singing mom were all just a visual background — simply intended to set off David.

In the eighties, his co-star Danny Bonaduce, who'd become Hollywood's most pathetic "Where Are They Now?" story, once groused about David Cassidy "still looking skinny and perfect." Well, of course he did. David never fell victim to the career pitfalls that seem to

happen to some actors who begin their careers young — aside from perhaps a bit of typecasting. But that, David doesn't mind. "Although I was stereotyped as a 'teen idol' — to which I'm still often referred almost 40 years later — I have had some great acting challenges, including the only time I ever acted with my brother in the stage production *Blood Brothers*," he says.

David also doesn't mind letting his past follow him into his present. Thinking back on our teen years, filled with acne and ineptitude, most of us are grateful for the opportunity to reinvent ourselves as adults, but when your teen years are spent being worshipped as a golden god, such revision is unnecessary. "I would never reinvent myself because I wouldn't be who I am today without the experiences I had previously. Of course, there are difficulties inherent in having fame, but it's a good price to pay."

Those difficulties include a battle with alcoholism, a lengthy period of fame-induced virtual house arrest at the height of his powers, which he has said in interviews left him "emotionally stunted," and perhaps worst, the death of one of his fans. In 1974, a 14-year-old girl named Bernadette Whelan was crushed to death at one of David's concerts and hundreds of others were injured in the surging crowd. Deeply affected by the tragedy, David announced his retirement soon after the incident and spent several years out of the limelight. David resurfaced again in 1978 for the TV series *David Cassidy: Man Undercover*, which was cancelled in just one season, but found greater comeback success in 1983 on Broadway as Joseph in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

Recently, David once again became part of another teen-idol-making machine: Disney Studios. In the series *Ruby & The Rockits*, he played the role of the goofball dad

who's — surprise, surprise — a former teen idol. The series featured a Partridge Family reunion of sorts: Shirley Jones guest stars as David's mother. The short-lived show was also a Cassidy family reunion; "Shaun was the executive producer and head writer, Patrick and I co-starred as brothers, and our youngest brother Ryan was the head set dresser. None of us has ever had more fun! What a blast!" When asked if there was ever any sibling rivalry between David and his famous brothers, he says, "On the contrary. We were always there to support each other."

That support may explain how David was able to avoid the Gary Coleman route out of young stardom, as well as having a rich life outside of Hollywood. David is a horse breeder and races thoroughbreds, so causes that protect horses are important to him; he is also a big supporter of children's charities.

David grew up in the West Valley — his brothers and stepmother still live here — so most of his pre- and post-Partridge youth was spent in these parts, and he still visits family here frequently. "I like to frequent the restaurants in the SFV. Stanley's (on Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks) has the best Chinese chicken salad and roasted chicken!"

Throughout our interview, David reaffirmed his sense of gratitude for his life. There's no trace of resentment over the typecasting, the cancelled shows, the "pop-lightweight" label of his music, the now-absurd "teen idol" brand that has stuck to him even in middle age. There's only an appreciation for what he has and what he has achieved. He says his time with the Partridge Family was "definitely a blessing," and that he was very fortunate for that opportunity because "It laid the foundation for the rest of my life professionally."

"I don't think I'm different than anyone else," David says. "We each, based on our personal experiences, hopefully learn something every day and incorporate it into our lives. That's what I've done and what I continue to do... I feel very fortunate to have the life I do, the success I have had and continue to have, for my family and friends. The years have taught me how to appreciate those things that really matter." ♦

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