

# TV's New Superstar



## Will Success Spoil Young David Cassidy?

About nine months ago I got a letter from publicist Jim Flood, saying, "Just to keep you apprised on David Cassidy, who you don't even know at this point..." He was talking about the 21-year-old son of actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of Shirley Jones Cassidy, with whom David costars in ABC's successful television series "The Partridge Family."

By the time I met David, he had captured from Bobby Sherman the Number-One spot among the bubble-gum set. Typical of the impact made on his youthful audiences were items like the one published in the show-business trade paper "Variety": "David Cassidy of 'The Partridge Family' TV show invaded the concert field with the force of an atomic bomb and emerged from his debut as a new teen-age idol." Los Angeles Times critic Cecil Smith said, "One of the worst television years in history could well have produced a superstar—David Cassidy."

How did David reach such prominence so quickly? And will success spoil him?

To find out more about this extraordinary young man, I visited him in his rented wood-framed and used-brick Hollywood hilltop home. David shares his home with his guitarist-accompanist Steve Ross and a high-school friend named Sam Hyman who manages the merchandising for his personal appearances. The house is also inhabited by two mongrel dogs named Sam and Sheesh. I found that David's attitude is en-

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couragingly down-to-earth. First of all, he knows that the popularity-span of a teen-age idol is about two years, with Elvis Presley and the Beatles being among the rare exceptions. "I know my time is limited, that I am not going to be an idol all my life. No way! But as long as I am a member of 'The Partridge Family,' I am limited as to what I can do. If people would only take time to listen to my records, they would recognize that my music is changing—which means I am changing. 'The Partridge Family' is one kind of sound, my records are another. What's more, my interest isn't restricted to music. I am just as involved in acting. Hopefully, my future will be divided between both."

David has a nice voice, certainly not an exceptional one. The voice on the pilot wasn't even his. Still, his singing has made him far more popular than the show itself. His single, "I Think I Love You," sold three and a half million copies. His second, "Doesn't Somebody Want to Be Wanted" topped the million mark four weeks after being released. His albums have done almost equally well. Yet what really got David his popu-

larity is the gentleness, the clean-cut "I want-you-and-need-you" kind of appeal which has gotten through to the kids.

David, who is quite shy and reserved at times, and fully aware of what is going on around him, gives the major share of credit to his mother, actress Evelyn Ward, because "she persuaded me to wait to get into show business until I'd at least finished high school."

When he was 18, David decided to try his luck in New York, supporting himself as best he could with a job in a textile factory. "I didn't make quite enough to live on, and so my father had to give me about \$50 a month to help out," he recalled.

An agent in New York suggested that he audition for a Broadway show, "Fig Leaves Are Falling." The show lasted only a few days, but David was spotted by a CBS executive, who was so impressed that he sent him to Hollywood to test for a film role. The part subsequently went to Michael Douglas, but David soon found a number of other acting jobs in major television shows like "Marcus Welby, M.D." and "Bonanza."

David knows that once his "idol cycle" runs out, he may be in for a tough time. "If it happens, it won't be my first disappointment. Do you know what my dad said after 'Fig Leaves Are Falling' bombed on Broadway? He said 'Son, in a way I'm glad you were in a flop because you'll never learn from hits.'"

Referring to Bobby Sherman—who is 25—David insists, "We're two totally different human beings, but I think he enjoys being a teen-age idol more than I do. I want more out of life. I want to become a good actor and produce my own records. I enjoy writing songs, and someday I want to make a really good film."

His biggest personal disappointment to date was his parents' divorce. "I was five at the time and felt very let down. I'm quite emotional anyway. I laugh a lot. Sometimes I cry. Not so much for feeling sorry for myself, but if I think I have hurt someone."

He also has a temper. "Sometimes I yell at the top of my lungs. Not at people. Only when I am by myself, like when I learned they released a certain record of mine as a single which I didn't want them

to do. I was in my room alone and yelled a word which I better not repeat. It's not becoming of a teen-age idol."

The divorce colored David's attitude toward marriage. It wasn't helped by the fact that his mother was married a second time, to director Elliott Silverstein and divorced him as well. As a result, David has no plans for getting married in the near future. "I don't even have a steady. I go with several girls."

David sees his mother once a week, his father usually every other week. While he respects his father, he feels closer to his mother. "Mother was never very strict with me. I had certain obligations when I lived at home, like taking care of my room, but I was never terribly responsible. I seldom picked up my clothes and that sort of thing. My father was always a bit more fussy with me. He's such a natty dresser—completely opposite of me."

David's attitude about his stepmother has changed since they've worked together. "I first met Shirley when I was about seven. I was all prepared not to like her, but it was impossible because Shirley was like a fairy godmother to me. And the more we've worked together, the more I respect her. She's so thoroughly professional. We're really good friends. I would feel the same way if she were not married to my father."

In a world where so many young people are confused, David Cassidy knows where he is, where he hopes to go, what he wants to accomplish. He knew he wanted to become an actor since he was three years old. Instead of just dreaming and hoping, he prepared himself. He enrolled in the right acting schools. He took up the guitar because he knew one day he would be called upon to perform. He discussed show business not only with the top professionals he met at his father's and stepmother's house but with technical people as well as those whose views were more practical and more down to earth. As for all the attention he gets, David says, "I don't really take it all that seriously. I simply can't believe all the stuff that is written about me. It's like it's not me—but someone else. If there's anyone as fantastic as I am supposed to be, I'd like to meet him." □

Cover photo courtesy of "Tiger Beat"



Papa Jack Cassidy, Stepmom Shirley Jones, and David: "My father was always a bit more fussy with me."