

Teeny boppers' Peter Pan

David Cassidy is soaring high

By LEO SELIGSOHN

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NEW YORK — If you don't believe in Peter Pan, then you probably won't understand. But there's a wave of teeny love sweeping the nation today that threatens to replace passions once reserved for Barbie dolls, tap shoes and daddy.

The object of all this mini-madness is a 5-foot, 8-inch, 130-pound child-man named David Cassidy who wears his hair down to his shoulders and sings such songs as "I Think I Love You" (5,000,000 records sold in the U.S., England, Australia and Japan). Cassidy's magic is the kind that gives the prepubescent set its first thoughts of playing hookey to

get a glimpse of their idol and even maybe — dream of dreams — get his autograph!

Like Peter Pan, Cassidy made his first appearance about two years ago by flying in through a window — the electronic window that looks in on millions of American living rooms and dens. One glance at guitar-strumming Cassidy acting and singing the part of 16-year-old Keith Partridge on the TV series "The Partridge Family" (described by one viewer as the story of a sort of rock 'n' rolling Southern California Trapp family) and it was zonk — the future mothers of America were transfixed.

Since then, with the help of

savvy promoters and his own astute business sense, Cassidy has taken off like a sprite in a windstorm. He has sold more than 16,500,000 albums and single records during the past 16 months on the Bell record label. None of the songs is anything like the one Maurice Chevalier made famous: "Thank Heaven For Little Girls . . ." But Cassidy might well be singing those lyrics to himself. Without little girls, he would not have made an estimated \$250,000 last year.

Besides his income from TV and recordings, Cassidy also derives a substantial income for concert tours which fill stadiums with ecstatic "Sesame Street" graduates. At

the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Washington, D.C., last year, the management hired extra matrons for the ladies rooms to take care of the girls who fainted.

Nobody's predicting what may happen March 11 when Cassidy makes his New York debut at Madison Square Garden, but the medical office there, which has had experience treating girls overcome with emotion, is ready. All the Garden knows now, a spokesman said, is that advance sales, which began Saturday, already are in five figures and a sellout seems certain.

The son of actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of Shirley Jones, who plays his mother on "The Partridge Family," young Cassidy is modest but assured as he talks about his career.

Does he think he has arrived? "Oh yes, definitely," he says. But there's a faint note of anxiety in his voice and you know why. It's apparent on his chin, where the stubble of a beard betrays the fact that he can't remain Peter Pan forever. Now 21, his child-man days are numbered. Maybe that's why he's in such a rush to make the most of them.

Within a 24-hour period last week, after he flew into New York from Europe (where he had been touring Italy, France and Switzerland in a camper bus — skiing and thinking, he says), Cassidy met with record company executives, talked with representatives of the music-industry magazine, "Cashbox," sat down for a few interviews and talked to Garden officials about his upcoming show there. The whirlwind visit ended with Cassidy and his personal manager, James Flood, placing some luggage and Cassidy's guitar in the trunk of a chauff-



David Cassidy

four-driven limousine and hurtling through rush-hour traffic to make a 6 p.m. flight out of Kennedy Airport for Los Angeles.

Once in the air, Cassidy may have had a restful flight but it wouldn't have been surprising if the captain, copilot and navigator had taken turns stepping out of the cockpit to get his autograph for their daughters, nieces and perhaps even the granddaughter of the airline president.

As Cassidy churned out the autographs — "All my love to Kelly, David Cassidy," "Happy birthday, Missy, David Cassidy," "Love to Cheryl, David Cassidy" — the young idol was simply making another contribution to the David Cassidy industry, one that rolls out records, posters, pictures, magazines and answers fan mail that Cassidy estimates ranges from 10,000 to 15,000 letters a week.

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