

DAVID CASSIDY

A British View Of 'Super Puppy'

By DAVID WIGG

London Express

HE HAS become a prisoner of his own success — leading a most unnatural life for any healthy 22-year-old.

He is over-protected by two bodyguards, rarely leaving his hotel suite and often spending hours alone.

One night he was even locked in his hotel room while everyone else went out to dinner in Hamburg.

Girls are kept away from him. Not even the musicians' wives are allowed backstage during the second-house concerts.

David Cassidy — nicknamed "Super Puppy" by his entourage — is a great worrier.

He worries about his spots, and won't be photographed without them covered up with make-up.

He's also something of a hypochondriac; ensures he gets at least eight hours sleep each night and has a fear of being trapped by overpowering fans.

"He knows they like him so much they all want to touch him," said his personal assistant-cum-valet Larry Kraines, a 24-year-old American law student.

After a Hamburg concert, his dressing room window was smashed by a brick thrown by impatient fans waiting for autographs outside the theater.

They didn't get any. He was smuggled out of another door.

For this reason, getting Cassidy in or out of an airport is treated like a highly planned army exercise — with the young star running through the barriers like a frightened deer whether the waiting crowd is large or small.

He usually finds it necessary to lie on the floor of the car as it drives him away.

"He's been conditioned to this," explained 22-year-old management assistant

Terrie Gekler. "He knows from experience in America that one over-enthusiastic fan can be just as dangerous as hundreds."

For five days I observed the young pop star flying from one concert to another on his first European tour, opening in Germany.

And I wouldn't change places with young Cassidy for anything — even though his place as America's biggest teen idol has turned him into a dollar multi-millionaire.

The immense pressures, lack of freedom and privacy are a hard price for such transitory fame.

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What effect does it have on him?

"I think he's rather insecure," Larry said. "Perhaps because his rise was so fast."

He's had to move homes four times in three years, change his telephone number six times a month, and last year there was a conspiracy to kidnap him from his Los Angeles home.

"That was real scary and the first time I considered leaving the business," said David, amiable enough, once you penetrate his clique of pampering protectors.

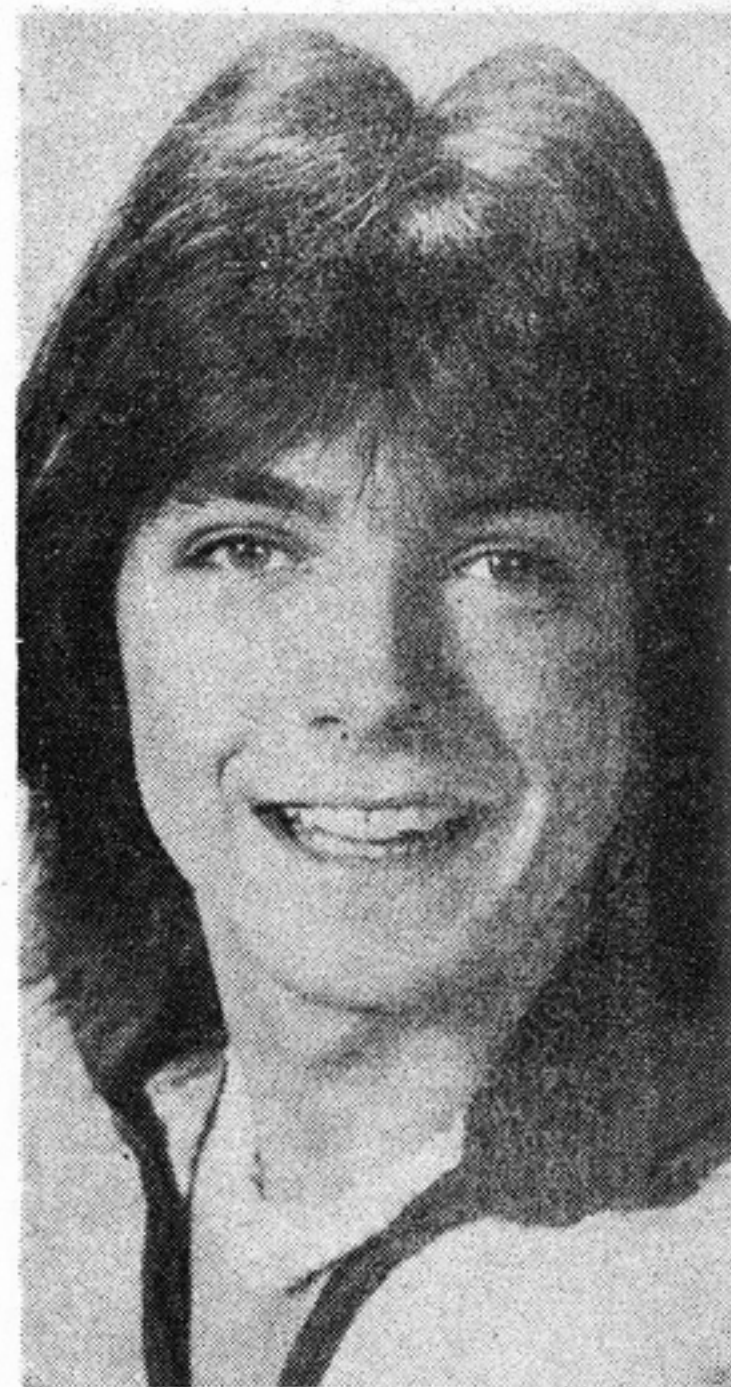
He values the friends he had before his fame and is cautious about making new ones.

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He has broken off three friendships with girls in America because he decided they were just opportunists.

Adjusting from the nightly contrast of a screaming concert hall of adulating fans, to the silence and solitude of hotel rooms can create a lot of tension. A strapping German masseuse was called in to give David a body massage. Judging from the screams coming from his room she was obviously making her presence felt.

"That helps him relax a little bit," said Larry.

Otherwise he meditates for 20 minutes each day, having stopped seeing a



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psychiatrist because he never gets time to keep regular appointments.

"Lots of times I just can't cope. It was really getting me down for a while. I sometimes feel so confined — like I'm in a fish bowl."

One morning I suggested to him: "You should get out more. Take a car somewhere, and get some fresh air." Back came his serious reply: "Maybe I'll open a window."

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Larry described his job with this son of American actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of actress-singer Shirley Jones: "I get his clothes ready each day — just being a friend I take care of him.

"Get him his breakfast and make sure he has what he wants. I also check out the security at concerts."

David Cassidy's personal assistant added: "There are uncertainties in his life. I think he realizes that no matter who you are, things may change."

And if the adulation were suddenly no longer there?

"I would miss it," David decided. "It's an experience. It's something I wish everyone could experience."

Speaking for myself, David, you can keep it.