

Cassidy had had a bellyful

By Charles Witbeck

HOLLYWOOD — "I'll never go back on the road again," vows David Cassidy, the former teen-age idol of TV's *The Partridge Family*.

Memories of frenzied fans in jam-packed arenas, screaming teenyboppers closing in whenever the kid so much as stuck his nose out the door, remain nightmares in the Cassidy brain.

"If you only knew" was David's favorite expression in those wild and woolly days.

When *The Partridge Family* finally shut down four years ago, one very relieved, confused performer by the name of Cassidy simply quit the business. He had had a bellyful.

Now 27, Cassidy is playing a sweet-faced cop on NBC's *David Cassidy — Man Undercover* (9 p.m. Thursdays on Cable 8 in Winnipeg). Last spring, he decided to prove he could be an actor by portraying an undercover character on *Police Story*. The show pulled in the biggest ratings ever for *Police Story*, besides earning David an Emmy nomination.

Fred Silverman had this piece of information tucked away in his head when he took over NBC last June. Meetings followed last summer with *Police Story* producer David Gerber about a series with young Cassidy as the undercover man. Thus *Police Story* would finally have a central character, and a new youthful look.

It sounded promising, but final arrangements didn't fall into place until September, meaning the usual, hurried, last-minute push to get a show on the air. Writers didn't know the characters of course, and those signed weren't exactly tuned into the thinking of a kid cop full of integrity with a wife at home. The hero may have long hair, something that's supposed to make most police higher-ups see red, but he was still a hero, a man who liked to be on the street, mingling with the crowd.

While young Cassidy was never



David Cassidy — Man Undercover on Thursdays

able to take an interest in the silly plottings of *The Partridge Family*, he cares about *Man Undercover*. David acknowledges the first episode about supermarket thieves and cars, telecast in early November, wasn't up to the mark, but claims the show is changing each week as writers get to know the characters.

"We're becoming more personal, much more personal," he said after spending the morning chasing a youthful prescription doctor on a cold, windy day amidst the skyscrapers of Century City. "Character is going to become more important than the action. I'm getting the humanness in; and I have to play it, it can't be written. I've also written the theme song, and I'm proud of that."

More importantly, *Man Undercover* has changed David's outlook on life. "I like myself now," he said. "I had become a paranoid recluse because my career had taken such a bizarre turn on *The Partridge Family*. I never wanted to be a professional rock singer. I wasn't prepared for all the notoriety and commotion.

It all happened so fast. It was so big, I didn't know how to handle it. So I left the business, and that was a blessing in disguise. I had no desire to work."

Cassidy went underground. He read, played with musicians, wrote a little, fell in love with Kay Lenz, a talented actress.

Marrried a year, David believes getting married turned his life around. Kay would get up and go to work, and David would say "What a nice day," and fiddle around.

Soon he realized he would like to go back to work as an actor, not a singer.

The wounds have healed, the paranoia is slipping away, and the Irish blood of his dashing father, the late Jack Cassidy, who once appeared at a David Cassidy rock concert wearing a Donny Osmond button, tells him it's time to get on with it.

The rock idol has grown up, ready to face the world again. As David put it, with pride in his eyes, "I'm holding my father's guns."

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