

Teen Idol Back As Cop



DAVID CASSIDY

More than three years ago, David Cassidy was an international pop singing phenomenon and costar of a popular television series who used to pack concert halls and stadiums with tens of thousands of shrieking, hysterical teen-age girls.

Suddenly, he decided to chuck the frenzied lifestyle at the pinnacle of his career for the tranquility of his Hawaiian estate and Santa Barbara ranch.

Cassidy then fell in love, married actress Kay Lenz, and now takes out the trash like the rest of his domesticated neighbors.

He decided to return to serious acting by starring in "A Chance to Live," a two-hour "Police Story" on NBC-TV's "The Big Event," 9 to 11 p.m. Sunday on Channel 3.

Cassidy is now 28. His "Police Story" role marks his first appearance on a television series since the cancellation of "The Partridge Family."

"Poeple think I was just sitting around watching game shows all that time and saying to myself, 'What am I going to do today?'" said Cassidy, almost self-mocking. "Well, okay, I did catch a few game shows, but I had to stop performing because I was overworked. I was putting in 18 hours a day, seven days a week, and the point comes when you ask yourself, 'How much is enough?' I finally said 'Enough!'"

Cassidy, who is cutting another album, maintains that although he is considering starring in a second television series, he would never let his work consume him again.

In the Sunday drama, Cassidy portrays an undercover cop who infiltrates a suburban high school and befriends many of the students while probing for the campus narcotics source. During the filming at a high school outside Los Angeles, barricades had to be erected to keep out curious students, most of whom were probably card-carrying members of Cassidy's fan clubs during his reign.

He admits that some hardcore fans can still manage a squeal when they see him.

"If you run, they chase," he said, shrugging. "If you stand there, they don't and you can just talk to them."

His half-brother, Shaun, is often compared to David because of his recent success as a teen-age heartthrob. If nothing else, David is proud that Shaun seeks his advice in avoiding the pitfalls that usually await overnight sensations.

"Shaun says to me, 'You're the only one — the only one — who knows what I'm going through.'"