



David Cassidy as *Johnny Jones*

An ex-teen idol keeps the spirit

Chicago Tribune

In this day of recession, world angst, cynicism and, let's face it, generally low morale, running into a little of that good old corny showbiz "game trouper" spirit is an encouraging thing.

David Cassidy gives the impression of a game trouper right away. He took a critical roasting last year when he brought George M. Cohan's *Little Johnny Jones* to stage. His *Man Undercover* TV series — the vehicle that was supposed to eradicate his *Partridge Family* teen-idol image after David's three-year, self-imposed work exile — came and went within a few weeks in 1978. His 1976 attempt to form a new rock band with artists who'd worked with David Bowie and The Beach Boys went nowhere.

But he's diving in again. And he keeps saying things like, "When people tell me I can't do something, I grit my teeth and say, 'I can.'" Sitting in a Sunset Strip office in Hollywood, he presents quite a different image than he did in his early '70s heyday, when story after story depicted cuddlesome cutie David as pompous, or worse. He looks older and rounder than he did during his TV incarnations. He comes off as down-to-earth, friendly — and slightly nervous.

DAVID IS firing up on several work fronts. First, he's about to go to Nashville where famed record producer Larry Butler is going to guide him through the making of his first album in five years. It'll have a country-pop sound and include a mix of David's and others' songs.

"I'm going to let Larry produce me," he says of the man who has several of Kenny Rogers' hits to his credit, "which is something I've always found difficult — giving up that much control. But I completely trust his judgment and I think it's necessary for me to come back and start recording again."

He's also planning another musical theater project (about which he'll only say, "It's a classic") that would team him with his half brothers Shaun and Patrick.

And soon David will play twins for British TV's *Tales of the Unexpected*, an eerie mystery show of *The Twilight Zone* school, set to be shown in this country next fall.

LAST YEAR, when *Little Johnny Jones* was about to open in Los Angeles, David talked about possibly moving to New York City, "and I'm still toying with the idea.

"I have some good friends there. I was born and raised near New York (New Jersey) and I feel as much a part of it — or more — as I do Los Angeles."

Is his change of attitude attributable to his status as a newly separated husband? "I suppose . . . I don't know, really. I like traveling. I like feeling like a gypsy. It suits me. It would be nice to have three or four different places where I could hang my hat."