



News-Press photo by Doug Pensinger

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"You'll spend more money in gas just driving around looking for a horse like this," the auctioneer told bidders at Santa Barbara's first-ever yearling thoroughbred auction Monday night at Earl Warren Showgrounds.

With that, horse number 16, an untested 1-year-old frisky colt, born in California, was sold to a Georgia horse breeder for a cool \$77,000.

Breeding, training, buying and selling race horses is a "disease," says singer-actor David Cassidy, who raises thoroughbreds at his Santa Ynez Valley ranch. Cassidy, who just got back from recording an album in London, said he attended Monday's sale to "get a feel for the market."

"I guess it's safe to say it's like I've got a disease," said Cassidy of his passion for the breed of horse raised for speed and endurance. Cassidy and his wife Meryl have raised thoroughbreds as a business since the mid-1970s, he said.

"It's a great high, it's a great fix to win," he said. "I love it, I enjoy all aspects of it. There's nothing like the experience of who you're going to breed a mare to and going through all the aches and pains.

"And when they get out on the race track for the first time, it's a great thrill," said the star of the "Partridge Family," the television series that made him a teen idol in the 1970s.

The same thrill is felt by people who don't have Cassidy's financial resources.