

**C**an a 41-year-old ex-teen idol from the '70s be hip in the '90s?

David Cassidy hopes so.

The former heartthrob — who starred in the hit TV series "The Partridge Family" nearly 20 years ago — is trying to rebuild his musical career after more than 15 years out of the spotlight.

The road back hasn't been smooth. Cassidy, who spent most of the '80s working in theater, returned to the music business last year. His comeback album, the 1990 release "David Cassidy," was a mainstream-aimed pop effort that spawned a Top-20 hit,

"Lyn' to Myself." But the record faded when Cassidy's label, Enigma, went bankrupt.

The release wasn't the blockbuster Cassidy had hoped for, but its limited success inspired him to tour. He'll perform new material and old "Partridge Family" favorites at the WZLX "Lost 45s" 10th anniversary party Oct. 10 at Avalon. Cassidy's "Partridge Family" brother, comedian Danny Bonaduce, will open the show.

Cassidy, who still looks remarkably fit and boyish despite a few gray hairs, said the experience with Enigma didn't leave him bitter toward the music industry.

"The advertising budget Enigma allotted for my record in the U.S. was \$6,000," he said. "CBS spends that amount of money for Mariah Carey at the Tower Records store on Sunset Boulevard alone.

"Given those circumstances, I was thrilled with the response. I had a hit record. I had to realize that I was in a war and the other guys were using tanks and I was using a pea shooter. That really inspired me — I had all that success with nothing.

"When your career is tied

to a company that's bankrupt, it's difficult to be optimistic. I thought I can either wallow in this or I can look at it and say I created something really positive. I know there are a lot of people out there who really want to see me, so I'm going to do it."

Cassidy said he also wants to help TV brother Bonaduce straighten out his life. The 31-year-old redhead — who's battled drug problems in the past — garnered headlines earlier this year after he was arrested for assaulting a transvestite prostitute.

Cassidy said he wants audiences to know Bonaduce isn't an out-of-control bad boy.

"I guess I just wanted to convince everybody that I was right," he said. "Danny is a great guy who's gone through some very public growing pains. He's had some problems that have been blown out of proportion.

"I thought this would be a chance for him to prove himself and I think it's worked. He's a terrific opening act for me — he's very funny and the audiences love him. I'm really proud of him."

Cassidy said he maintains ties with all the "Partridge Family" alumni.

"I have good feelings about all of them. There's a big misconception about me resenting Keith Partridge and the songs we did. I loved that role and the opportunities it gave me."

Cassidy said he also loved sifting through all the old songs and reworking the arrangements.

"I totally rearranged some of the old stuff. I haven't played these songs for years so I'm not sick of them, but I wanted to integrate them with my new stuff."

In between rehearsals and tour preparations, Cassidy has been writing songs with his wife, songwriter Sue Shifrin, for a new album.

"When I get a major-label deal — which is just about in place for me; I'm within two or three weeks of signing a contract — I'm going into the studio to record for three or four months, then I'm going out on the road again with the first single."

The only drawback to being on the road, he said, is the long separation from his family. He and Shifrin have an 8-month-old son, Beau Devin. Cassidy sounds more than a little homesick when talking about his only child.

"I miss him," he said. "I have my photos of him and I talk to him on the phone every day. I hear his voice and that makes it better.

"If I wasn't loving what I was doing and really committed to it, I couldn't hack it. But everything's going great so far. People are coming to see me, they love my music and that makes it all worthwhile."