

David Cassidy in the present

Night after night, thousands of teen-agers scream through your concerts. You meet John Lennon, who's been there before you, and he tells you, "I don't care how big we got later, it never got intense as it was at Shea Stadium." You're barely 20 years old and you're America's reigning teen idol — a TV/pop star.

Then, after four years, you call a halt. Stop the television show, can the teen-idol bit, you try to become both semi-anonymous and human. Walk away. Live a little.

"I felt very misunderstood," says David Cassidy, about the period immediately following his days with the Partridge Family, a made-for-television pop group which became the Monkees of the early '70s.

"People thought I was the guy I was on television (Keith Partridge) and I wasn't. I wanted to make music that my peers really liked. I was a lot older, more sophisticated, more mature, and I had a lot of problems people didn't really want to know about.

"Like everybody else, I had real flaws, fears, anxieties and insecurities, and what I really wanted to do was wake up every morning and be David Cassidy without a past. I wanted to start writing and playing and having some fun with friends of mine, exploring what it was like to be a person in his middle-20s."

Cassidy is now 41 and on a comeback tour that stops at Avalon tonight. He says there was an upside to his flickering flame of fame, but there were also periods of personal crises and self-imposed isolation and 3½ years of artistic indecision and inertia.

But he did re-emerge, albeit on a lesser level — acting on stage and television, making pop music that scored to a degree in England. Last year, Cassidy notched a Top 20 hit single in the United States with "Lying to Myself," but his record company, Enigma, folded shortly after its release, in effect killing any shot at a substantial comeback.

"That was pretty devastating," Cassidy says. "I'd spent about a year-and-a-half writing and working and producing. I was really angry because I felt there was no chance to win... But 'Lying to Myself' brought me to the forefront."



Sound: David Cassidy

"For the first time, people started looking at me as a real, serious, creditable artist."

Cassidy is on the road now for the first time in 15 years, playing with a band and serving up a 50-50 mix of the new and of the old — "I'll Meet You Halfway," "I Think I Love You" etc. Do his concerts reflect a split personality? "No," Cassidy says, "it melds into one. It's pop-rock, blues, torch elements. Influences from the theater, Cole Porter and all that stuff.

"Some of the old songs I won't do because they simply don't work. But some of them really work well because there's an innocence in the pureness of it. I can't quite explain it. It sort of hops and bops and it's fun. It rocks, too."

Has Cassidy made peace with his past?

"I'm not embarrassed by it. They were good songs. Some of the arrangements are dated and I could never do them like that. But it's like finding an old suit and saying, 'This would be fun to wear again.'"

"But I live, breathe and think in the present. So, although fans might be preoccupied with me in relationship to that period of time, I live today and I think today and I create today. And it's great having a musical presence now that I can indulge myself in and that people like. And, also, go back and embrace the past, laugh at it, and say, 'Wasn't this cool?'"