

DAVID CASSIDY ★ ½

"Didn't you used to be . . ." Scotti Bros.

The reality behind the title's sardonic reference is jolting even in contemplation. *To Be David Cassidy* is to have been David Cassidy. Barring the most extreme of circumstances, Cassidy will always be remembered as having been the ultimate pop-culture pinup, the "Partridge Family" icon men recall having despised as kids and women remember as the crush that, in retrospect, shows the cluelessness of their youth.

Maybe you missed Cassidy's last comeback, a 1990 release unveiling the mature David — everybody else missed it. And with good reason: It was an undistinguished mess, all production and no songs. Weirder still, you had to dig in earnest to find David's thin and tinny presence buried deep beneath the mix. So let's just treat this as our introduction to the "real" David, because whatever else one may say, Cassidy and his immediately, frighteningly familiar and breathy croon are front and center this time around.

There is one great song here, "For All the Lonely." It's got a smooth, supple beat and creates a genuinely resonant atmosphere — Cassidy's vocals are even kind of soulful. That's the album's little revelation: Cassidy, once the crown prince of bubblegum pop, has (or, that is, really, really wants to have) soul. Nearly all the songs here — "Treat Me Like You Used To," "Tell Me True" — are funk-soul constructs, an emphasis that ranges from the explicitness of "Soul Kiss" to the church-choir culmination of the album's closer, "One True Love." Both to credit Cassidy and to damn him with faint praise, he pulls it off in a fashion that isn't nearly as embarrassing as it should have been.

— Tom Maurstad
Dallas Morning News