

Getting back to basics

After years in the Las Vegas spotlight, David Cassidy is putting the focus on his own music once again.

By **MARTY FRANZEN**
THE INTELLIGENCER

In 1970, "The Partridge Family" sang "C'mon Get Happy" on TV, but today, no one has to tell former Partridge lead singer David Cassidy to keep his spirits up.

Thanks to the popular family situation comedy, Cassidy has extended his acting and singing careers through five decades, while adding writing, directing and producing credits to his resume.

"I feel really blessed," says Cas-

sidy, speaking in a telephone interview from his Florida home. "Every day someone stops me to say they were inspired by the work I've done. For me, (these concerts) are a celebration. It's exciting so many people grew up loving what I do."

What Cassidy is doing now is embarking on his first big tour in a few years, one which has two stops in New Jersey — tonight at the Commerce Bank Arts Centre in Sewell, Gloucester County, and Saturday at the Count Basie Theatre in Red Bank, Monmouth County.

"It feels good coming to New Jersey," he says. "I was born in New York, but moved to New Jersey when I was young. I remember going to the shore a lot. I haven't been back there in a while to perform. I have a new CD coming out with Partridge Family and David Cassidy hits re-cut in a very different way. I also have a fantastic band. We never do the same set twice. We're digging out some of the great jewels of my early career."

Cassidy got his start as an actor, not a singer.

"I did six auditions and a screen test for 'The Partridge Family,'" he says. "I had already done episodes of 'Marcus Welby, M.D.,' 'Bonanza,' 'Mod Squad' and 'Medical Center' and I became the hot young actor (on TV)."

But like most boys in the 1960s, Cassidy was impressed with The Beatles.

"I bought my first guitar in 1963 and when I saw The Beatles on 'Ed Sullivan,' I learned their songs," he recalls.

In his teen years, he "went to school with Jim Densmore (brother of Doors drummer John Densmore), saw B.B. King play and saw Jimi Hendrix (perform) six times. The Buffalo Springfield played at my high school," says Cassidy.

So even though he had a music background, he was chosen as Keith Partridge because of his acting chops. It was only later on that the TV show decided to capitalize on his music skills.

Asked if he had a best memory from the hit TV series, Cassidy says, "The whole experience was a great memory. I was working with people I loved. I still see Shirley (Jones, his stepmother) and Dave Madden (who played manager Reuben Kincaid). He's retired now, but he's still the funniest guy. For me, it's all about the work, not the money, not the fame."

But Cassidy sure had his share of fame. The first Partridge Family single "I Think I Love You" sold nearly 6 million copies, Cassidy's face was on the cover of every teen magazine, and the singer was nominated for multiple Grammy Awards. He also was the first TV personality to be marketed globally. His face was imprinted on posters, lunch boxes, coloring books, postcards, comic books and cereal boxes. His fan



David Cassidy was originally hired as Keith Partridge for "The Partridge Family" because of his acting skills. Today, he's known for a string of hits as well as starring roles on TV and in theater.

club was bigger than Elvis' and The Beatles'. To date, he has sold more than 35 million records and received 24 gold and platinum record awards.

But for those who think Cassidy is only living in the past, nothing could be further from the truth. After his stint on television (and his sold-out arena and stadium tours around the world as a solo act), he returned to acting. He appeared on the highest-rated "Police Story" TV episode, earning an Emmy Award nomination for best dramatic actor.

In England, he took over the lead role from Cliff Richard in Dave Clark's West End (Britain's Broadway) show "Time." He starred in the original Broadway production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" and then broke box-office records starring with his brother Shaun Cassidy and Perula Clark in the play "Blood Brothers."

"It was the most successful show in the West End," Cassidy says. "It's still running."

Then "EPX" called. The 1996 Las Vegas extravaganza was faltering and needed help.

"I had been writing and had done stuff with Broadway shows and this was the most expensive show in Las Vegas," Cassidy says. "Michael Crawford was cast in it and it didn't work. The story wasn't right. The book needed work. The music needed work."

Cassidy revamped the \$75 million show, giving it his own creative touch and starring in it. The result? He turned the show into the most successful production in Las Vegas, bringing in more than 1 million customers. After just four months, "EPX" was voted Best Production Show and Cassidy was named Best All-Around Per-

IF YOU GO

Who: David Cassidy

Where: Commerce Bank Arts Centre, 519 Hurlfville-Crosskeys Road, Sewell, N.J.

When: 8 tonight

Tickets: \$28 to \$98

Information:
(856) 218-8902 or
www.cbartscentre.com



Where: Count Basie Theatre, 99 Monmouth St., Red Bank, N.J.

When: 8 p.m. Saturday

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former and Best Singer.

"I was in it for six years," he says.

By 1999, Cassidy was voted Best All Around Performer again, Entertainer of the Year and Show Star of the Year in Las Vegas.

That same year, Cassidy wrote, produced and directed "The Rat Pack is Back!"

"It takes place in 1961 and pays homage to the music of the early 1960s," he says.

Others play the lead roles of Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr. and Joey Bishop.

"We have a great band, great music and I play an occasional role as Bobby Darin, singing 'Mack the Knife' and 'Beyond the Sea,'" says Cassidy.