

## David Cassidy is coming to town just in time to celebrate his 53rd year

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You know the words. Don't pretend you don't. And you're just dying to sing along. Think of the memories. Think of the fun. Come on, let's get happy.

One, two, three.

"Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you ..."

What, you were expecting something else?

Forget "Come On, Get Happy" and "I Think I Love You." The song that should really have the State Theatre rocking Saturday night is "Happy Birthday." That night's show by former teen idol

David Cassidy isn't just a feel-good nostalgia fest. It's also the eternally youthful Cassidy's 53rd birthday.

"Yes, indeed, it's my birthday," Cassidy said in a recent phone interview. "I've performed on my birthday so many times. But we'll have a celebration. Why not?"

Cassidy's career has taken a winding road from supreme superstar highs to "Behind The Music"-worthy lows. All the while, he has kept the smile that once graced thousands of lunchboxes, pillowcases and magazine covers.

After the success of the "The Partridge Family" made him America's teen heartthrob of choice, Cassidy went on to a successful solo career, stints on Broadway and stardom on the Vegas strip. He returned to the road and concert stage in 2001.

So what, after all these years, does Cassidy get from performing live?

"A lot of underwear," he deadpanned.

Indeed, Cassidy long has been a favorite of the ladies. As Keith Partridge, he became the subject of countless teen-age crushes, and then there was the infamous 1972 Rolling Stone cover with a nearly nude Cassidy laid out in blissful repose. At the height of his popularity, Cassidy's fan club was the largest in the world, outpacing Elvis and The Beatles.

State Theatre Executive Director Dana Plummer said she expected the show to be popular. But with fans flying in from as far away as Vermont, Washington and all corners of California, the response has been overwhelming.

"I had no idea they would come from states all over," Plummer said. "It is unbelievable. They are really, really energetic about getting in the front row."

Plummer said people have been sending the theater birthday cards and bringing their Cassidy records and T-shirts when they come to buy tickets. Instead of fading over the years, his appeal has aged to a fine vintage.

"I think that he plays a big part in the lives of these ladies who grew up in that era," Plummer said. "He was such a big star and really important in their lives."

And Cassidy promises to deliver. He said that while no show is the same, he will be singing his hits -- from "I Think I Love You" to "Cherish" and "I Woke Up In Love This Morning." But don't be surprised if some of his favorites slip in as well, from The Beatles to B.B. King.

"I like to play the stuff that inspired me to be a musician," Cassidy said. "(Shows) are really a celebration in a lot of ways. A celebration of the last 30 years."

And Cassidy has learned a lot in those three decades. While he once chaffed at his squeaky-clean image as lead singer of the Partridge clan, Cassidy now realizes what the show meant to so many.

"It was kind of like the last gasp of innocence in America," he said of the show. "It was a great idea to have a family stay together and get on a bus and play music together. It felt good and a lot of people's lives were not that good. People wanted to be in the Partridge family and wear crushed velvet."

After the show ended its successful four-year run, Cassidy kept recording and playing to packed arenas around the globe. But in the late 1970s, his songs stopped topping the charts. The next few years were dark amid reports of alcohol and drug abuse. A short-lived TV series came and went.

"You realize that no career is always ascending," Cassidy said. "There is a descending period in every career -- be it Elvis or Michael Jackson or Madonna or David Cassidy. You go through personal challenges."

What he did learn from his time outside the spotlight, Cassidy said, is not to focus too much on results. He came out of his funk in the 1980s, acting on Broadway, London's West End and television.

Then came Las Vegas. In 1996, Cassidy opened the \$75 million extravaganza "EFX" at the MGM Grand. The successful show led to more Vegas ventures. He co-created the show "The Rat Pack Is Back!" for the Sahara Hotel & Casino. Then in 2000, he created and starred in "At The Copa" for the Rio Hotel & Casino.

The grind of doing up to 10 shows a week, regardless of sickness or sprained ankles, took a toll and Cassidy closed his Vegas shows in 2001. And though he still acts and makes TV appearances, Cassidy said the Los Angeles lifestyle isn't for him anymore, either. He recently moved to south Florida and plays half a dozen dates each month.

"I spend so little time now in the world of TV and Hollywood," Cassidy said. "Not because it doesn't interest me, but because I've been so devoted to what I'm doing. I've got so many other things I want to do in my life."

First and foremost on his mind are all those fans. The very fans who used to scream and faint and kiss his poster as it hung on the back of their bedroom doors.

"To have a relationship with your audience and have people care about you, that's what it's all about," Cassidy said. "It's not about having a hit record. That's 15 minutes. This is 33 years later. I certainly am having the time of my life right now."

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**David Cassidy plays the State Theatre at 8 p.m. Saturday. Tickets are \$40 and can be purchased at the theater 1307 J St., or by calling 527-4697.**

1971 -- Begins his solo career

1972 -- Solo album "Cherish" released; title track cracks top 10

1974 -- "The Partridge Family" ends a successful four-year TV run

1975 -- Switches from Bell Records to RCA

1978 -- Stars in TV police drama "David Cassidy, Man Undercover," which runs until 1979

1983 -- Stars in "Joseph And The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" on Broadway

1987 -- Is in the musical "Time" on London's West End

1990 -- Launches a comeback and scores a top 30 hit with "Lyin' to Myself"

1994 -- Autobiography, "Come On, Get Happy," is published

1996 -- Opens "EFX" at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas

1999 -- Is featured on VH1 series, "Behind the Music"

2000 -- "At the Copa," which Cassidy co-created, wrote, produced and starred in, opens at the Las Vegas Rio.

2001 -- Closes his Vegas shows and returns to the concert stage

2002 -- Releases CD "Then And Now"

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