



"It's all right," he said.

"We're terribly sorry."

"That's all right." Elton squeezed Dom Perignon and scrubbed more vigorously. He is used to such accidents, as a man who had some 250 guests over for a party complete with drag act and strippers.

"Donovan's having a party next week, and he's invited the whole world. It threatens to be a booze up. Keith Moon says he doesn't want any galactic fairy dust, he wants a good booze-up. Rod says he's not much into mushrooms and toadstools, but he'll go."

As can be gathered, rock celebrities are among his near neighbours and he says: "I had trouble insuring the house because we live too near Keith Moon! I was going to buy his house originally. Then I saw a picture of Keith in the *Mirror*, outside the place, and I knew it was too late. I was going to buy another house called Charters Farm. When I saw the owner I called it Farters Charm... by mistake of course. I've lived here for a year now and before that I lived in London, only five minutes from the Speakeasy. I never got any sleep for years."

Apart from a swimming pool, one of the more pleasing diversions about the house is a games room, complete with genuine jukebox, stocked by Elton with hits by Judge Dread, Rod Stewart and T. Rex: a musical pin-table, and a football game at which Elton is such an expert

he gave the MM a 9-0 thrashing.

Yet amid all these splendours there is one possession that gives him most pleasure, a suitcase full of spectacles of varied hues and designs. "This really freaks out the customs." But, without them, he cannot see much farther than the end of his grand piano.

The piano, big and black, takes up one corner of the main lounge, and Elton avows that he never plays his own compositions on it. "I just doodle. Great fun doodling."

His tastes in music are wide, ranging from the classics to David Cassidy. "Poor guy. I know him quite well. We took him to the Troubador in LA to see a group and it was the first time he had been out in one-and-a-half years. He'll keep up the pace for a while then go and live in Hawaii for the rest of his life.

"You know he gets up at 6 am every day, goes to the TV studio, makes an LP, gives a concert—he's like a robot. He gets very depressed. He asked Bernie and I to write a song for his next album, and I wouldn't mind that at all. People like him always get written off. Because it's the Osmonds for example everybody says: 'Oh it's terrible.'"

"But records like 'Crazy Horses', are really good. It's a sign of everybody getting old when they start grousing about the groups. The trouble is, there are no young groups around today. All the 'new groups' are the same old faces coming back

again."

We talked about his album "Don't Shoot Me I'm Only The Piano Player", which could perhaps be some kind of answer to the Mailbag blues.

"We made the LP in June 1972 and it seemed like it would never come out. But I wanted a long gap and we only had one LP out in '72. I didn't want the situation where every few months there was an Elton John album out.

"My first five albums were released in the first three weeks of my career. Yes, it was a hurried job. I prefer to have the situation where you have a hit LP and have another already in the can. Before, everytime we went into the studio it was a rush. Two days to go and he hasn't written the songs yet! This one was done in France when I was on my last legs. I had glandular fever, which I never had before. The first day in the studio, I said to Gus (Dudgeon), 'I can't make the album'.

"I felt it had more balls than the previous albums. I haven't got the voice to sing ballsy songs—it's a drag. I'd love to stand there and scream.

"It was more of a band album. It's better than just Elton John and his f——— piano," Elton laughed. "Legs Larry's told me some marvellous things you can do with a piano. But I just put mine through a Leslie Speaker cabinet.

"It took me over a year to find out



# David



# The Battle for the Boppers

Enough human emotion was expended at the Empire Pool, Wembley, earlier this year, that if such energy were harnessed, it could power a small township for several days.

There was a great wailing, and sobbing; a gush of air expelled from many thousand tiny throats, sufficient to blow a man down.

But the man in question, one David Cassidy, love object of a new generation of concert patrons, stood up to the gale force of adulation, and blew what they used to say in ye olde rock scene parlance "a mean set". Several in fact.

Who and what is this mystery figure who comes among us amidst such hullabaloo and furore? Is he merely the product of the much discussed publicity machine, a talentless buffoon, dangling from the strings of the manipulators? Is he just a piece of smiling, plastic cheesecake?

Not entirely—perhaps, not at all. From the evidence of his tough schedule of concerts—six at one venue, each before 6,000 capacity crowds—he is a professional entertainer, happy in his work, and possessed of a healthy degree of talent.

A rather disappointing verdict for those who came to mock, but Cassidy is a lot better than many a teen idol who has trod the boards of the cavernous Empire Pool before him.

It was in the same echoing edifice six years ago, that a well known popular group performed, largely assisted by backing tapes, who were

accorded similar acclaim. There was no such monkey business with Mr C. He won his applause admittedly largely due to the smile that now peers down at the populace from the same anti-litter posters where once Marc Bolan held sway, but at the same time showed he had real vocal ability and an understanding of the art of rock that communicated, even through the screams.

The fans, nearly all girls, all under 15, converged on Wembley in that show of force that instinctively arouses aggressive violence among the more atavistic of the male population.

I arrived on Saturday for the lunchtime show, which started at 12 noon, and there were pressmen who had seen the previous night, genuinely angry at the treatment they claimed had been meted out to some of the more hysterical fans.

Doubtless they are difficult to handle and impossible to communicate with in reasonable fashion. But the sight of dog handlers showed an element of ruthlessness not always evident when football fans go on the rampage or tougher prey take over a rock festival.

Perhaps it was early in the day, but my Cassidy concert was a comparatively orderly affair.

The sun shone brightly and the wheelchairs brought in the handicapped children, the coaches brought up the youth club outings, and mums and dads staked out in the car park.

"'Ere, do you like David Cassidy then?" A slightly older girl gave me what once might have been called

by  
Chris  
Welch

# Cassidy

an old-fashioned look as I strode in burly fashion through the infant throng.

"Doesn't it make you sick!" said a uniformed attendant of the "more than my jobs worth" school, resting momentarily from his labours at the chocolate and confectionery kiosk. His lady friend clucked sympathetically over the Toblerone. It had doubtless been a deafening few hours for the staff, and there was more to come.

After the brilliance of the sunshine, the inside of the Pool seemed to be in total darkness. An overpowering stench of oranges smote my nostrils, and then came the first shock wave of screams.

Even behind the inner wall of the Pool, it caused a sinking sensation in the stomach like dropping into an air pocket while flying a DC-9 over the Italian Alps.

Fumbling through the gloom, special Cassidy passes were produced to thrust under the noses of the guards around the front of stage.

All speech was impossible, and as MM photographer Barrie Wentzell and self staggered past the barricades and out into no-man's land, the roaring of music and cyclone of screams became a "portable ambience" that no artistic director could conceive, let alone recreate.

We've all heard of artificial environments and total experiences in sound, whether in an art gallery or funfair. Nothing could compete with 6,000 small children screaming at David Cassidy.

Time was momentarily suspended and all consciousness was directed towards the podgy youth striking postures with his posterior on stage.

Clad all in white, with a sunburst on the now famous bottom, he wriggled, leapt and held out his microphone to sing of love and rock and roll.

There was David—only inches away, smiling, and avoiding the gaze of the camera men, toiling with their shutters.

Having sat in many a dusty orchestra pit, spotting the plastic smile is now but child's play. But it can be said, that this newest of showbiz idols seemed to be genuinely knocked out, and digging the whole affair.

He smiled as if he had just consumed many of the oranges I had detected on my way in, and was bursting with Vitamin C.

He tore about the stage as if it were a tennis court, and even the slightest movement, from eyebrow to ankle, was a signal for further hysterical outbreaks.

Seated at the piano, he played a

most tasteful accompaniment to a belltoned version of "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do." Snatching up a guitar, he played some down home blues that surprised me. Was the other guitarist really playing the lead? No, it was David managing all but the trickiest bits.

Hurling himself upon a spare drum kit, he whipped up a solo that reminded me of Mickey Rooney in "Strike Up The Band". It wasn't half bad. And when 'ere he gave vent to voice alone, he was in tune, and free of all noxious distortions.

So—how bad? He could do with some more original material. Some of the ballads were a bit dull. And he could improvise a bit more in his stage movements.

But when it came to a driving version of "I'm A Man", and his own "Rock Me Baby" . . . like, the kid had rhythm, y'know that?

After the aforementioned ballad, a chant developed that was oddly low-pitched and formed the phrase "We want David", as if there were any danger of him quitting the stage.

But it was interesting to note that during the quieter numbers, the fans did listen in rational fashion, and there was no need to beg for silence as in the days of Beatlemania (The Beatles, beat group popular around 1963-69).





"Here's a tune we've never rehearsed. We just played it in the dressing room, and it's the first time I've sung it on stage. It's one of the three sides on my new maxi-single" . . . SCREAM.

Turning to gaze at the sea of tear-stained faces, biting lower lips and waving arms like tiny tendrils, a lump formed in my throat and a tear filled my eye.

Harmless and happy they seemed. Even the hardened musicians in the backing band seemed to be digging the gig, including, unless my watered eyes deceived, one time MM jazz poll winning saxophonist Vic Ash.

They included tenor, trumpet, trombone, lead guitar and two backing vocalists, Kim and Dave, and the sound they achieved on "I'm A Man" and "Blues Power" was pretty funky. And Cassidy seemed to appreciate their efforts more than the usual front man with backing band set-up.

"How Can I Be Sure" was handled in workmanlike fashion and was greeted with as yet unsurpassed fervour. "This is the first time I've appeared in Britain and you're really fantastic. I appreciate all of you coming—I really do."

After "Rock Me Baby" had stomped its course, there came a

strange quirk to Cassidy's day of triumph.

He tore from the stage, hustled through the back door by a waiting aide, doubtless to be whisked by car to the Esso Hotel. But instead of the anticipated howl for encores, there was not a solitary cry of more.

It was as if the audience fully understood the star's need for a hasty retreat and dutifully picked up their banners and oranges, and began to file out as if school assembly was over.

A compere rushed on to shout, "The show's over. David's definitely gone." But this appeal was needless and then it occurred to me that probably a large percentage of the audience had never been to any kind of concert before and were not aware of the obligatory custom of demanding "more". If the man says the show's over—the show is over.

Outside the second house was beginning to build up, accosted by the salesmen of Cassidy memorabilia, and already chanting "Why are we waiting", as they pressed up against the glass doors.

It seemed like a nice gesture if I gave two spare tickets nestling in my wallet for the second show to a couple of luckless fans, who would doubtless be quite overcome at their good fortune and regard me as some

kind of magic benefactor.

"Free tickets for David Cassidy," I cried out, waving them in enticing fashion. Blank stares greeted me. Others backed away or scowled. Nobody interested.

Eventually we approached a small knot of fans who looked as if they couldn't afford a ticket and had come along to peer through the fencing.

"Free tickets for David Cassidy. It's all right, they're not forgeries . . ." There were no blank looks this time. Instead, a sour faced girl of some 12 years, snatched them out of my hand, and snarled: "Stupid!"

Avoiding my gaze, and virtually ignoring my presence she and her friends glared at the tickets as if they were an obscene publication. And instead of the tearstained thank-you's there was a mutter of foul language.

By this time, the lump in my throat had subsided and the choked-up feelings aroused by the spectacle of childish innocence had been replaced by a desire to strangle the next David Cassidy fan who wandered past.

But I hope the ladies enjoyed the show.

