

DAVID CASSIDY

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he's not completely sure he's ready for it.

David, like his good friend Bobby Sherman, has a tremendous amount of responsibility towards his young, impressionable fans. Because he is viewed by so many, he has an obligation to set an example for American teen-agers. He has come out very strongly against drugs any number of times, and David believes in speaking out his mind with a firm sense of conviction on such important issues. But there is a whole mystique that surrounds a teen idol, and David doesn't feel he fits the mold. "I don't think I want to become another Bobby Sherman," David admits quite freely, even though he is Bobby's main competition in teen-oriented fan magazines.

Contests by the score appear in these magazines—contests to win a date with either Bobby or David, contests to win a page from a scrapbook; the list seems to continue interminably. Yet David is a very level-headed fellow, who would love just to be able to communicate freely with his adoring fans without all the fuss and accompanying fan fare. "I answer a fan who is frank, first," he explains of his technique for approaching his tons of fan mail. "Terrific honesty is one thing I can't forget." And that honesty is most apparent in David's own life. While he could have easily relied on Jack Cassidy's and stepmom Shirley Jones' show business connections to land him a choice role on TV, he preferred to work, and work hard, for what he got. "My agent set me up for the part," he explains of his role as Keith on *Partridge Family*, "and I went to two interviews and a final reading, and they got down to about two people. At this point they told me, 'We're considering using your stepmother.'" Shirley and David were hired completely independent of each other, and it wasn't until fairly far into the casting proceedings, that the studio linked the name Cassidy with Shirley Jones' husband, who for a while was also being considered for a part on the series.

Unlike the flippant image of the teen idol Conrad Birdie in the now classical musical *Bye, Bye, Birdie*, David has not let his popularity go to his head. He does not feel he's completely made it, that he doesn't have to go any further with his career or that he can merely ride with the wave of success. He is too well aware of the critical problems of the day, and has himself gained considerable strength in overcoming a number of problems that had plagued his own childhood.

Jack Cassidy and David's mother, Evelyn Ward, had divorced when David was only six. Jack's career kept him fairly busy when he was married to Evelyn, but when the divorce came along, David rarely saw his Dad. His mom was also in show business—so David spent a great deal of time living with his grandparents in New Jersey. In a very real sense, David's early experiences with problems that can make a marriage fail and break up a family gave

him the inner power to forge ahead with his career. Of his first taste of the spotlight and applause, at the tender age of three, David recalls, "The best way I can put it is that it was like feeling loved." And for a boy whose world must have seemed like it was crumbling when his parents divorced, that must have been a very good feeling indeed, so good, in fact, that the desire to regain the spotlight became his sole desire.

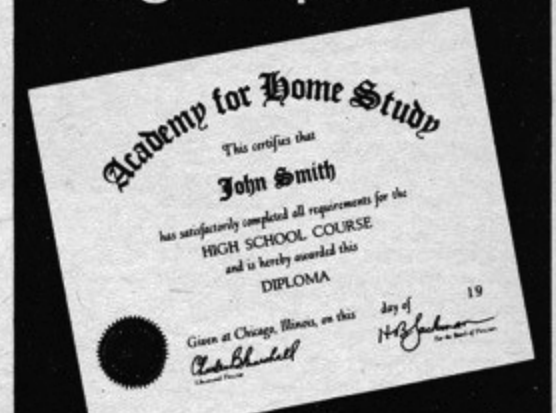
David became quickly bored with school. "I had no interest . . . I became lost," he says of those years. But he had done a play with the Los Angeles Group Theater, and that seemed to be just the right carrot to dangle in front of this aspiring young actor. It held out hope, and after transferring to a private high school, he managed to complete his high school education in 1968. He did a number of guest stints on TV series before he landed his present role.

Today David has his own home in Laurel Canyon. He shares the house with a long-time friend, film editor Sam Hyman, and two dogs. The house is furnished uniquely. The living room sports chairs that can best be described as early milk crate—which is what they were before being converted into furniture. And David's made a coffee table out of a spool the telephone company uses to wrap wire around. The pedestal for the table consists of three tree stumps that have been smoothed down. The Cassidy bachelor pad has no curtains or drapes to shield David from inquisitive eyes, and he's a firm believer in sitting on his carpeted floor to keep his posture upright.

But while David's house may be "far-out" by conventional standards, David comes down hard on some of the far-out ideas today's youth have latched onto. When David was in his driftless period, restless in school but unable to begin a career yet, he had gotten involved with a rather rowdy bunch of kids. "I was twelve the first time I saw anyone smoke grass," he says solemnly. He's painfully aware that many kids today believe taking drugs is an "in" and therefore an acceptable thing to do, but David has been in close contact with people who ruined their lives with drugs, so he tries to avoid any sort of intoxicants that could make him lose control of his actions. He doesn't even like the taste of alcohol! "I've seen a couple of people I really cared about wrecked by drugs," he continues. "They started out innocently enough, but pot led to methedrine, and so on and on. They ended up on heroin, finally. If it doesn't kill them, then it kills any chance they have of leading a good life." Some of the fan mail David receives requests advice from their idol. And this is when the responsibilities of stardom become quite heavy. After all, here are thousands of young people, the hope for America's future—and for some of them, what David Cassidy says is the law.

Just ask stepmom Shirley Jones, though, whether David is capable of giving good, solid advice, and you'll get a resounding "yes." "One day I just realized," Shirley comments, "David's an adult. Not just because he's twenty-one, not just because he's got his own apartment. It's his whole way of thinking that's grown. If something's on my mind,

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