

David Cassidy explains what it feels like to go onstage and be engulfed with a wave of little girl desire by an audience that isn't sure what it really wants

T

HE assignment: Go talk to David Cassidy. (And in the faintest whisper, audible only to me . . . leave the summer festival city on a balmy Saturday afternoon and truck out to a place in New Jersey that sounded extremely remote to catch David Cassidy's evening concert.)

David Cassidy? David Cassidy. To a writer who deals almost exclusively in rock music—and makes fledgling attempts at sophistication of taste—the entire project was worth dreading. But, you do what you have to do.

The Molly Pitcher Inn is located in the heart of Red Bank, New Jersey, about five miles from the Garden State Arts Center where David was to perform. Its exterior is stately: the Inn has been the scene of classy weddings and straight-up business conventions . . . hardly adequate preparation for the frenzy created when David Cassidy registered.

The lobby billowed with young teenaged ladies, some clad in worn-bottomed jeans and appliqued T-shirts, others in party dresses—bows of matching satins capturing their pony tails. Their eyes betrayed a fondness for their idol that encompassed more than friendship. Their adoration for David Cassidy is somehow sexual—naive, innocent, pure—but sexual, nonetheless.

And not one of these ladies looked older than 12.

David was doing two shows, one afternoon, one early evening. (Used to rock performers who schedule their shows at say, 9:30 and midnight, David's schedule gave me a clue to where he came from.) Between shows, the press was given a small party—featuring some of the tightest security ever.

Sticky from the bus trip, the Ladies Room looked good. There, too, the girls gathered. They straightened their bows and retied their macrame belts, just in case . . . just in case David should happen by and wonder where they'd been all his life.

In a very real sense, there is beauty in all this . . . this childlike devotion, so unfalteringly loyal, so fiercely protective. It makes you feel guilty about the press credentials that can put you within inches of a star you've been shunning.

And will shun no longer: In the middle of a room bursting with promotion people and their collective children stands a young, shag-headed boy. He's signing autographs. He's tired. But, he keeps signing one after another.

"That one's for me. Now could you sign these eight programs for my friends?"

"Sure," comes David's unhesitating reply. And his famous smile.

I like him, his unpretentious stance. His willingness to give of himself. There's no arrogance here. No bratty child star. And as to the little ladies clustered at the door . . . who could blame them?

We meet up again in David's dressing room at the Garden (Continued on page 60)