

# The king of teeny-bopperdom

by Don Lechman

LOS ANGELES — "I just wanted to thank you from the bottom of my heart for printing the letter I wrote to David . . . I wanted others to see how truly wonderful he is. The day after I read it, I received a letter addressed to me in a handwriting that was very familiar. I was afraid to open it, but finally I did. It was a personal letter from David and I cried and cried. It was so beautiful, it makes me sad to think that all I can say in return is thank you, again, David. I love you.

"Jenny  
"Tiger Beat  
"August, 1971"

The young girl crept slowly down the stairs of the Sea Arena at Marineland. Her goal was only inches away.

Suddenly, a guard whipped around and motioned her to the rear. She made a face at him and started to back up the stairs.

He shook his head and a finger as if to say, "Huh-uh. You can look, but don't touch."

Suddenly, the young man with the shoulder-length brown hair and the smoldering hazel eyes turned and flashed the "most beautiful smile this side of heaven."

David Bruce Cassidy, the reigning king of teeny-bopperdom, had arrived. It was enough to make your knees wtery and the blood rush to your head.

Cassidy and other members of the ABC-TV series, "The Partridge Family," came down to Marineland to film an ecology segment.

David, son of actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of actress Shirley Jones, is the latest of a unique phenomenon:

The teen idol.

It was Frank Sinatra in the 1940s, Elvis Presley in the 1950s, Bobby Sherman in the 1960s and now David. The first two are firmly entrenched as the two musical superstars of the 20th Century. Only time will tell what will happen to the latter pair.

Young Cassidy, no teen-ager himself at 21, is the biggest thing to hit the pre-teen and early-teen set since Hula-Hoops.

Dozens of teen magazines (usually aimed at the 8- to 16-year-olds) sing his praises and carry his pictures. A recent edition revealed more than 70 photos of David.

Articles carry provocative but meaningless titles like "Come Home With David," "Are You a True Cassidy Lover?" "David's Love Test," "David's Hates and Loves" and "David's Dos and Don'ts."

Cassidy items like photo albums, love beads, charm bracelets and love stickers abound.

The singer-actor-musician receives more than 10,000 fan letters a week, most of them declaring their love and allegiance forever. One magazine even carried a series of "death-threat" letters from a girl who claimed that if she didn't get David neither would anyone else.

David, the son of actor Jack Cassidy and actress Evelyn Ward, was born in New York City. After his parents were divorced, he moved with his mother to Los Angeles as a junior high school boy.

Not until he was graduated from high school in 1968 did he show any specific interest in theater. He appeared with local groups and went to Broadway to appear in a new musical, "The Fig Leaves Are Falling.