

DAVID CASSIDY. To most people the name probably means no more than his single "Could It Be Forever", in the Top 20. But on the other side of the Atlantic they're crazy over him.

The average age of Cassidy fans is 11+. They save their pocket money for weeks to see him at a concert, where he attracts audiences of 20,000 or more.

There are 200,000 members in his fan club.

You can send away for strange items like the David Cassidy Lover's Kit, and David Cassidy posters, bubble gum, colour slides, lunch boxes, 3-D postcards, dolls, dresses and books. They're on sale throughout America and Canada.

In America he's the biggest thing since the Monkees.

Does he ever wish that he were part of a group, so that the fans' affections could be divided between a few others?

"Oh yeah. I've often wished I had other people around," he told me last week. "The Beatles weren't in my position because everything there was divided equally. When you're alone you're being watched every moment.

I can't trip off on my guitar even for a few minutes. I've got to constantly try to please all those people by myself."

Cassidy plays the part of 17-year-old Keith Partridge in the American TV series "The Partridge Family", now in its third year. But he's really 22.

When he auditioned for the role the producers didn't care whether he could sing or not. They just knew his pretty face would make their series successful. They couldn't believe their luck when they found that he could sing.

After playing a pop star for a season he then became one, doing solo gigs at huge stadiums whenever he wasn't on location. His two concerts at the 10,000 seater Garden State Arts Centre sold out one month in advance.

"The adults in America are picking up on me now," he said. "The age groups seem to run from 10-16 then from 25-50. A lot of whole families sometimes come to see me when I'm in town."

Do you ever fear for your life?

"Yeah. I get really scared when it gets out of control. When I was in England in February I found that English girls demand a lot more of you. They're strong, positive and very physical, and will go to any length to get at you.

"I get scared because they hurt me sometimes, y'know.



DAVID CASSIDY

scratches and minor cuts. They're all pouncing on me. Apparently they love you to death. It has been very frightening at times, but not too often, because the security is usually very good."

Records by Cassidy himself and by the Partridge Family

THE CASSIDY PHENOMENON

Report: PAMELA HOLMAN

have a fleet of limousines with uniformed chauffeurs. He goes for clothes that are comfortable rather than fashionable and prefers to lead his own life rather than having his manager or PR tell him when to smile, dance, sign autographs or answer fan mail.

"I just do what I want, wear what I want and say what I want," he says with determination. "The people surrounding me trust I'll use my discretion."

"I'm now living in a nice house with three-and-a-half acres in Encino, California. I've had to move house three times up to now because fans have discovered my address. But I love this one and I've no intention of moving again.

"There are times when I wish I wasn't who I am. Then I could visit Disneyland or the Zoo. As it is, too many people would recognise me. I often wish I could go out alone. But that's out of the question.

"Sometimes I've worn disguises, but I always feel like a clown."

When Cassidy was five his parents, actor Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward, divorced. Later Shirley Jones became his step-mother. Shirley Jones happens to play the part of his mother in the "Partridge Family".

When he finally decided to be an actor, he didn't let daddy pull any strings. He did it the hard way.

After graduating from high school he worked for a year with the Los Angeles Theatre Group. On returning to New York he then appeared in the American equivalent of our repertory theatre, and took classes at the David Greig School of Musical Comedy.

From there he won a co-starring role in the Broadway show, "Fig Leaves Are Falling", which in turn helped get him acting parts in TV shows like "Ironside" and "Bonanza".

"I've been really fortunate," he said. "I've been in showbusiness for about four years, but I've always sung, and played guitar with my friends."

"I started playing guitar when I was 11 or 12, and then stopped for a while. Then about three years ago I took it up again. I play a lot at my concerts and I like to jam and play rock'n' roll with my friends."

"The guitar is a good release. I lose myself when I play it."

"I don't do a lot of writing, although I do more now than I used to. 'Ricky's Tune' is my only composition on the new album. I recorded it not because it was a particularly good song, but because it was dedicated to

a dog I used to have. The dog died. It was the first time I'd written something alone.

"Maybe I'll put a few of my own things on the next album."

Cassidy's looks have been compared to those of Shirley McLaine and Jane Fonda. Doesn't he object?

"I've given up caring," he said angrily. "I've been compared to so many different people, both male and female. I guess eventually people will be compared to me."

"I don't let things like that bug me. The whole day is filled with so many silly things, and I can't let these little things get to me. If I did then I'd have gone out of my mind long ago."

"Now that I've been this successful I'm allowed the luxury of choosing my own material, both in singing and acting, and I'm very pleased about this. I can please myself. I don't have to worry about being used as a vehicle. And I have no worries about gas or phone bills anymore. When these things get on top of you they can really hamper creativity."

"So many fantastic things have happened in the last four years, and I say that gratefully. I'm pretty pleased with life. I've just recorded a new number for my next single 'How Can I Be Sure', which will be released in a couple of months. It's the best thing I've ever done."

"I like to think that my fans go for my music rather than for my face, because that's what I'm all about."

A very successful young man. But how long can it last? Maybe until his fans grow up and their affections swing toward real life lovers, or when he takes the plunge and settles down — and 200,000 adoring teenyboppers realise that there's no chance left for them. That is if they don't kill him before that.

But even when this mass mania subsides he's still got his voice and acting talent to see him through the rest of his life. David Cassidy will never starve.