

# David Cassidy—ready to face the music again

He escaped from the loneliness of fame and made a real life for himself

**D**avid Cassidy was a solid-gold pop phenomenon a decade ago, a fresh faced kid who could whip 50,000 young female fans into a frenzy just by undoing a button of his shirt.

At the peak of his career, he was one of the biggest pop stars in the world. But he was also as lonely as hell.

"I was an emotional cripple who lived for five or six years with absolutely no loving relationships," said David, who retired at the height of Cassidy-mania "to become human again".

The road back to normal life was, at times, painful but the 34-year-old singer/actor has come through a contented man. He is happily married, still looks terrific and has his appetite for music back.

When David flew into Heathrow Airport recently with his new wife Meryl and her nine-year-old daughter, Caroline, he hardly turned a head.

At the height of his success, airports used to be thrown into screaming chaos whenever he landed.

Ironically, David's quiet arrival could be the start of mass hysteria for him all over again. He was in London to promote his latest single and album. But the vulnerable teenager has matured, and if superstardom comes again, he'll keep it in perspective — with Meryl's help.

David was married to actress Kay Lenz for three years and he concedes that the relationship was doomed from the start because he was unsettled and struggling to find himself. Meryl came along when he had "thawed out".

Friends tell David he is mad to become a pop singer again, that he could end up right back where he started. But with Meryl by his side, David said, "This time I'll be in control — I'll set the pace".

As a teenybopper pop idol, 19-year-old David was a money-spinning puppet in the hands of TV, record and marketing men who were eager to exploit his success.

It all happened so fast. No sooner had the young unknown actor signed for the television show *The Partridge Family* than he was besieged by adoring girls. "I became this very lonely thing completely cut off from life," said David.

His lifestyle was bizarre: in a night he'd go from having 20,000 girls screaming "I love you" at a concert to the loneliness of a hotel room. Cushioned from everything by bodyguards, he had no friends and no way of forming close relationships.



No fans crowd the airport to meet David, his wife Meryl and her daughter, Caroline.

A romantic, with an old-fashioned view of dating, David wasn't interested in girlfriends or one night stands. He lived in a solitary twilight zone.

"I felt I had to make a choice — either my career had to go or I had to sacrifice my life to my work." Meetings with rock greats John Lennon and Elvis Presley helped him decide. "John told me how he became an ordinary guy again, a family man and father, and overcame the mass adulation."

David knew he didn't want to live like Elvis, but that if he didn't take drastic action to change his situation he would end up in the same goldfish bowl. Luckily, he didn't choose drugs as a way out of his problem. Instead, at 25, the millionaire pop star retired.

He didn't care that he was rejecting more wealth and fame. "I just wanted to

feel whole again," he said. Surprisingly, no one tried to stop him.

Heavily disguised, David travelled the world. He cut music completely out of his life and settled down to breed racehorses at his California ranch.

Then, a couple of years ago, he turned on the radio and heard a pop tune that "made me feel 16 again". He was suddenly in love with music again.

His first comeback was as the lead in the musical *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* on Broadway.

This success on the stage encouraged him to try the pop scene again.

David Cassidy will probably make female hearts flutter once more. He's gorgeous, talented and knows how to excite an audience, but this time he won't let the fans take over his life.