



Photo by Barry Scheraga

four performances in December of that year.

Cassidy, though, didn't have time to be crushed. Five days after the show closed, a scout from CBS Films flew him out to Los Angeles for a screen test. He didn't get the part, but another agent, this time from Universal, saw him. Soon after, Cassidy was landing guest shot after guest shot on some of the top dramatic shows of the day: "Bonanza," "Adam 12," "Ironside," "Mad Squad," "The FBI," "Medical Center." Cassidy, it seemed, was well on his way to becoming a respected young actor. There was even a buzz among industry folk that he might win an Emmy nomination for his performance as a troubled young hemophiliac on "Marcus Welby."

The steady, serious, and dramatic course Cassidy was following took a sharp left turn (or right turn, Cassidy still isn't sure which) when he won the role of Keith Partridge in ABC Television's "The Partridge Family." The show, about a single mother who joins her kids' rock band, would change Cassidy's life forever. At the time, though, he didn't realize that. To him, it was just another role. In fact, if it hadn't been for the show, Cassidy today concedes that his passion for music would never have gone beyond being a "tobby and fantasy pastime."

"I didn't sing in the pilot," Cassidy said

on the "Mark and Brian" radio show in 1989. "They didn't ask me if I could sing. They cast me as an actor. They cast all of us as actors. When the show sold, they brought in a record producer, Wes Farrell, who had written some real good songs, *Come a Little Bit Closer*, *Hang on Sloopy*, and *Boyz for the Beatz*. I said, 'Let me say something to you for what it's worth. It's not really necessary for me to get a background singer and mouth him. I can sing.' And he looked at me and thought, 'Hey, there's an idea.'"

And so, when "The Partridge Family" premiered September 25, 1970, it was Cassidy himself who was handling the singing duties. He and step-mom Shirley Jones were the only members of the cast who

would sing in the show or on the records. The other voices and instruments were dubbed in by top session people, including guitarists Tommy Tedesco, and Larry Carlton, drummer Hal Blaine, and keyboardist Larry Knechtel.

"Yeah, I was the only one who sang," he told Mark and Brian. "There was no credibility in it for me, because none of the other people sang and wrote. So I had a contract, I had to act, and I had to sing those songs. They were not the kind of songs I wanted to sing and record. It was hard for me. I was in my room screaming, yelling, and rocking, and I'd walk on and have to sing those fabulous songs we've known for many years."

When "The Partridge Family" became an instant Nielsen smash, the executives at Screen Gems/Columbia Pictures Television cranked up the marketing machine. Sox, stars were flooded with David Cassidy posters, lunchboxes, bubblegum cards, love beads, comic books, pillowcases, board games, and dresses. Cassidy's face was plastered on cereal boxes, cans of Hi-C fruit juice, and every one of the nation's teen magazines.

Between the marketing hype and teen magazine blitz, the line separating Keith Partridge the character and David Cassidy the person was quickly blurred. The screaming girls believed he was their white knight while a cynical press believed he was another so-called, pretty-boy who couldn't act his way out of a paper bag. In just a matter of months, the "serious" image he had worked for dissolved in a pool of teenybopper's tears.

To Cassidy's credit, he never pardoned the image. He fought it. By the show's second season, he had disposed with the

notion of playing Keith as the perfect boy-next-door. Instead, he turned the character into a satirical caricature — an egotistical, charismatic, airhead boob who was only concerned about blow-drying his hair. He also posed nude on the cover of *Rolling Stone* in May 1972, hoping that would shock people into realizing "Hey, I'm not this guy." Even in the songs he was writing for "The Partridge Family," Cassidy tried to dispel his image. Consider the lyrics from *There'll Come a Time*, from 1972's *SHOPPING BAG*:

*Just take a good look at me
Forget just who I might be
Don't be surprised if someone real is foused
You know I've got feelings just like you
When I get lonely I cry too
Can't you see I'm not a circus clown?*

In his solo work, too, Cassidy fought to break the creative shackles his producers, especially Wes Farrell, had locked him into. His R&B-flavored *Rock Me Baby* single, which hit No. 38 in the U.S. and No. 11 in England, was his first step in that direction. But still, as he was making the *ROCK ME BABY* album, he had to compromise. On several occasions, Cassidy would lay down guitar tracks at night and Farrell would come in the next morning, wipe them out, and have them redone. When Cassidy went to Bell Records president Larry Uital to complain, he learned he was stuck with Farrell. Farrell, it seems, had made a deal with Uital that as long as Cassidy was associated with Bell, he would be the sole producer.

When it came time to record his third solo effort, 1973's *Dreams Are Nashin' More Than Wakin'*, Cassidy paid off Farrell and hired his own producer, Rick Jeward, who at one time produced Jefferson Airplane.