



He sang "I Think I Love You," but millions of preteen fans were not as tentative.

They *knew* they loved David Cassidy—from his flyaway shag to his chunky platform boots. He was barely 20 when he shoehorned himself into the role of 16-year-old Keith, the adorable elder brother of TV's *Partridge Family*. Propelled to popularity in 1970 when his peers were experimenting with drugs and sexual freedom, Cassidy and his all-in-the-family rock band (with stepmom Shirley Jones) were part of what he called "the last gasp of innocence in America."

It was a gasp that lasted. During the show's four-season run, Cassidy sold more than 20 million albums and pulled in millions of dollars more in merchandise bearing his likeness. His effect on prepubescents was so magnetic that some hotels banned him as a security risk, and he had to be smuggled in and out of his concerts to avoid being fan-handled. "You can't capture the public's imagination," he says. "It captures you."

Trapped in the glare of celebrity, Cassidy in 1974 quit the show, quit touring, quit being Keith. While in self-exile he suffered the loss of his father, actor Jack Cassidy, and the breakup of two marriages. Now, he says, therapy and the passage of time have given him perspective. "Today when people see me, they say it's like seeing an old friend," he says. "That feels good." Renewed at 42, Cassidy is married to Sue Shifrin, his songwriting partner, and has an infant son and a new album. The title he chose is poignant: *Didn't You Used to Be . . .*

david CASSIDY

As TV's cute Keith Partridge, he was every young girl's dream date

Photograph by Henry Diltz

INSET: REFUNDS, NYC

Those days were like being on a runaway horse, says Cassidy. "I couldn't control it."