

How to Lose Weight—Be a Teen Idol



BY CLARENCE PETERSEN

David Cassidy was practically invented two years ago by a former high school teacher named Chuck Laufer, who now runs a \$2.5-million business that includes four fan magazines and sells such trivia as David Cassidy Luv Beads and David Cassidy Super Luv Stickers. He also heads the Partridge Family Fan Club, with a membership approaching 100,000.

Laufer saw Cassidy, then 19, in a guest role on *Marcus Welby, M. D.*, and a day later started doing picture layouts that emphasized what Laufer calls David's "emaciated, wistful quality."

Today David Cassidy is 21 and he is the No. 1 idol of the bubble-gum set and his life has changed remarkably, but rarely has any young star handled instant success so well. If he is making any costly personal mistakes, it may be simply that he works too hard. He eats only once a day, because that's all there's time for, he says, and his weight problem is, as a result, the opposite of the weight problems that bother most people.

When David is not filming *The Partridge Family* series, in which his role will be emphasized next season, he is on the road singing with a 13-piece band. Two days a week he devotes to interviews—he is that much in demand—and he is so accustomed to them that he can read the next day's shooting schedule while not only hearing your questions but giving you the answers.



David Cassidy

Every now and then he looks up, as if he has finally heard a new question or has thought of something new to say. Whatever he says comes out in a softly self-confident voice. He is a very likable young man. He objected but not strenuously to a recent national magazine article that dwelled on the woes of being David Cassidy. "When I read it," he said, "I didn't like myself. It was too negative, I thought. Like when I said, 'I never thought of myself as a teen-age idol,' what I meant was that I never wanted to be one, that it was nothing I had ever considered at all. But I don't mind, and I don't think that I have copped out on my friends, as the article also said.

"I don't know why the kids like me," David continued, "but they are so devoted, and they show it. I like that. Adults are hung up, afraid to show their emotion. The young girls, if they like you, they tell you; if they don't like you they tell you too. In that way it's gratifying."

But David does pay a price for his success. "I don't date," he said. "I might go out to dinner with a girl sometimes, but I haven't had what you'd call a date for three years because I can't go anywhere without being recognized." The day I talked to him, David had been down the coast to scout one of the *Marineland*s, where a *Partridge Family* episode would soon be filmed. He had some idea, contrary to all previous experience, that he and his entourage might mosey around the porpoise tanks without attracting attention.

"Then all of a sudden," David said, "they were chasing me. I had to run. I literally had to run for my life." He ducked into a men's room to escape, he said, and later in the day Shirley Jones, his TV mother and real-life stepmother, told me that the girls even followed him in there!

"Now," David said, "I'm having a beard made, and if I slick down my hair, I think I'll be able to move around more. Meanwhile I stay home a lot, or I'm on tour when the show is being shot. When I'm on stage, I'm pretty well protected. There are always security guards there, not so much to protect me but to keep anyone from getting hurt. Sometimes the girls rush to the stage, and we don't want anyone to fall and get trampled."

When he became an idol last summer as the series was getting under way, he was bothered by what he read about himself in the fan magazines, but no more. "They're so outlandish," he said. "Stories about my 'secret desire,' my 'sudden tragedy,' the interviews they print without interviewing me. But now I'm totally oblivious of it. It doesn't mean anything."

In the past season's episodes David's role was for the most part that of the big brother and, to an extent, of the man of the fatherless *Partridge* household. Next season, he said, "It will be more the 'romantic lead,' as they say, because the stories in which I had girl friends seem to be popular."

Of course they were. Millions of the 9-to-16-year-old girls who are the mainstays of David's vast following can identify with the girl friends they see on TV. The best example, perhaps, was a recent episode in which a plain young girl who followed David everywhere with stars in her eyes triumphed over the sassy, sexy sophisticate who at first had David in the palm of her hand—the perfect adolescent fantasy.

But what about the real David? Does he have a girl friend? "There are several girls I like," he said, "but I'm so busy and away on tour so often that it wouldn't be fair to build an important relationship with one girl."

Teen-age idols typically enjoy a two-year run, and David is aware of that. His life will then change again, but he is not sure just how.

"Eventually," he said, "I would like to own a recording studio, but whether that will occupy 25 per cent of my interests or 50 per cent or what, I don't know. I have one now in my parent's house, which is nice because I get to see my parents a couple of times a week, but I'm not ready to settle down in a house of my own."

David does have his own house, a small house, he said, with a pool. "But that is because I like to swim and I can't go to the beach any more because I'd be recognized."

"I want to go all over the world," he said. "Before I say 'here,' I want to see all there is—but I don't know how I'll manage that in the near future."