

The teenie mystique: David Cassidy works magic with a mumble

By MEGAN ROSENFELD, ©The Washington Post

WASHINGTON—"Are the car doors locked?" the manager asked. They were. "OK, let's go," and they left for the theater.

Minutes later, the big black limousine with David slouching in the back arrived at the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Md. And there, spilling out on the entrance road, overflowing the guard rails and metal barricades, was the David Cassidy Fan-Atic Club—hundreds of shiny Brownies, eager Girl Scouts, budding Miss America contestants—all awaiting for their first glimpse.

They were reaching out to stop the car, straining to see inside, waving, taking pictures, screaming, crying, pressing against the windows.

"It's David! It's David!" they squealed. "He's here!"

Meanwhile, David the superstar, totally cool and utterly together in blue jeans and shirt, waved nonchalantly, then worked his shoulders even lower into the plush upholstery.

A YEAR AGO David Cassidy was a 20-year-old teenie-star with guest appearances on "Marcus Welby" and "Bonanza."

Today David, his baby-blue eyes, and his throbbing delivery are part of the folklore. He has the lead role in "The Partridge Family" series.

The Partridges are a jolly, singing ensemble—a sort of rock-and-rolling Southern California Trapp family.

His concerts have been sellouts, sometimes within a day and a half after the tickets go on sale. "I Think I Love You," the first single from the television show, sold over five million copies, topping charts in England, Australia and Japan, as well as in the U.S.A.

The other records have sold more than a million each and are still going strong. Three concerts one weekend produced a gross of about \$115,000.

DAVID FAN-ATICS are more in the permanent-press league than the funky denim-bottomed Lolitas you find at

Rolling Stones or James Taylor concerts. They're bra-less, some of them, but that's because they're only 6 years old. They get hysterical, but you can be sure they don't rip their clothes off or smoke grass.

When David streaks onstage in a blazing white ensemble, trailing fringe in his wake, all hell breaks loose. Popping flashbulbs, screams, banners waving, girls rushing down the aisles, jumping up and down, clapping, stamping, throwing things—it's a three-ring explosion that sends replays of those scenes in "A Hard Day's Night" flashing through your mind.

ALL THE SONGS sound the same, and they all sell millions of copies. David introduces each number with a sort of mumbled commentary. No one knows what he's saying, and he doesn't seem to know what he's saying, but it fills up the spaces and gives him a chance to catch his breath.

He strides across the stage when he's singing, giving each side of the house equal time. His style is gawky-young. It reminds you of your brother doing imitations in front of the mirror.

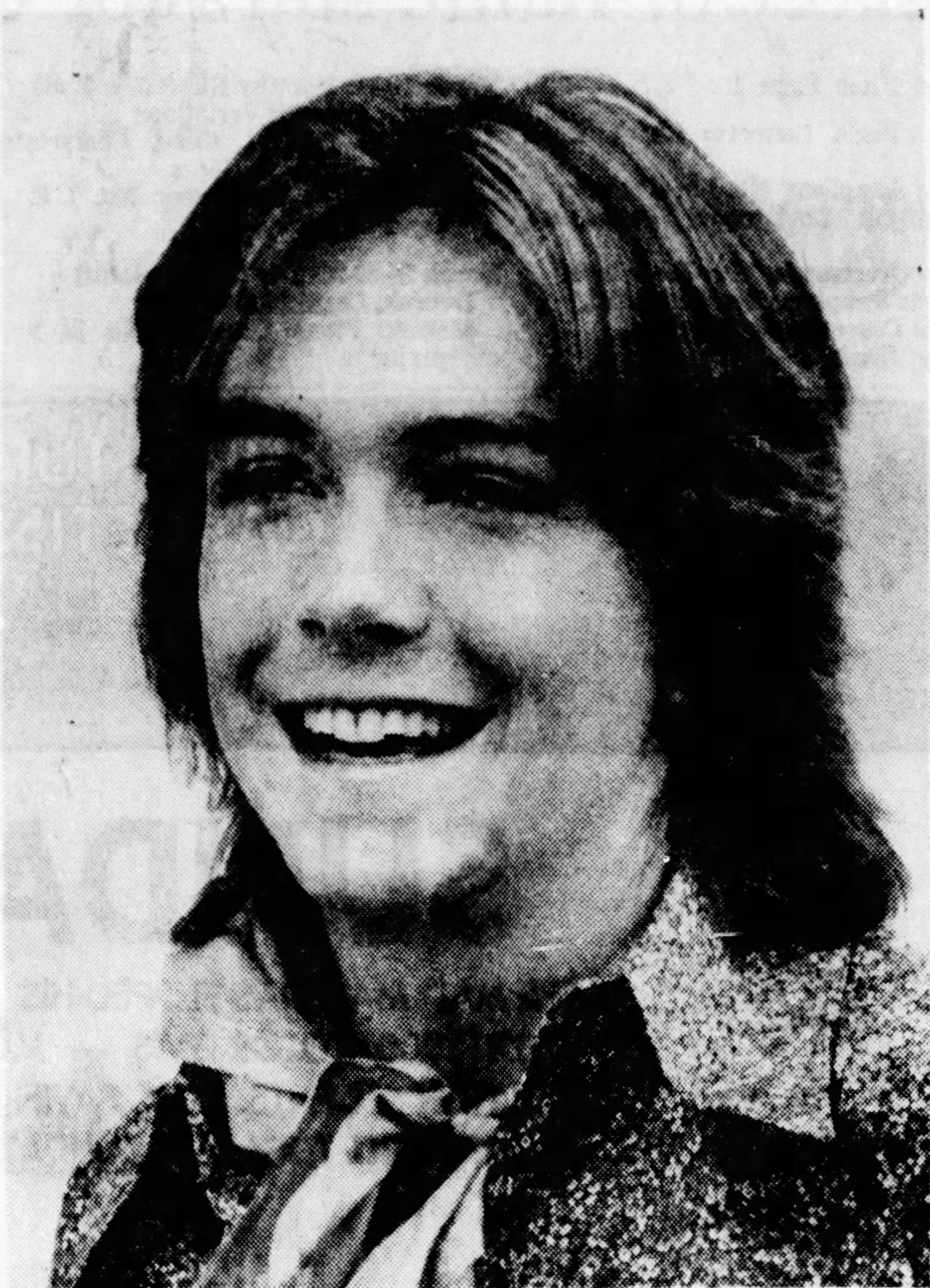
After 12 high-powered numbers and a few plugs for the latest album (they even scream at the commercials), he tears off the stage and into a getaway car that whisks him away before the mob can get him. The limousine remains as a decoy, and when it leaves, carrying the manager and whoever else is willing to risk his life, the crowds are ready and waiting to push up and get their last glimpse of Mr. Perfect. They're disappointed.

DAVID CASSIDY is a superstar, and he's backed up by a well-oiled merchandising machine. The superstar sends the pre-pubescent masses out to squander their adoration. Then the machine takes over and churns out the records, posters, pictures, magazines, and stamps for the fan mail.

His father, Jack Cassidy, is a musical-comedy and television star. His mother, Evelyn Ward, is not as well known, but as an actress, singer and dancer has done everything from Broadway to a flashy nightclub dance act. His stepmother is Shirley Jones, Academy Award-winning movie star and his co-star on "The Partridge Family."

THE KID is always under control. He knows what he's doing, and why, and that it won't last forever.

"This is a lot of fun—for now," he tells you. "Of course I don't plan to be 15-year-old Keith Partridge forever. The transitions I'll have to make to do the things I want to do—like make a good film—will probably blow some minds. Sometimes I wish this were all over, but I know it will be someday. And I wouldn't do it if I didn't enjoy it."



Superstar David Cassidy
All his songs sound the same