

'Look, that old lady has his autograph'

Backstage with a phenomenon called Cassidy

By WINI RIDER
of The Gazette

Along with 10,000 females, aged six to 60, I stood in line Monday night to see David Cassidy.

David, in case you didn't know, is the dimpled, long haired, 'teen' singer of TV's *The Partridge Family*. Actually he's 21.

He's got every North American girl under 14 in love with him. And from the looks of Monday's crowd a lot over 14, although they have their excuses.

Posters of his smiling clean-cut face have threatened to put wall paper companies out of business.

Jackie Onassis has moved to the back of movie magazines so that David can have cover and center spread stories with headlines like — "David Cassidy Discusses Sex With Donny Osmond."

Paper penants that used to read "Go Expos" now say "David, I love you."

And record players that played Frank Sinatra and The Beatles to teen ears of other days have been replaced by huge stereo speakers blasting "I think I love you", one of David's dozens of recordings. Every note, every word, every accompanying chord are memorized by his millions of fans.

Could I not wonder... as a fashion writer... how the gaggle of teens had changed over the years, since the days when I stood as a bobby-soxer in line for Sinatra and later as a mother for The Beatles, and now David Cassidy.

They haven't changed much — long hair, giggles and screams, and the usual cases of acne (which will disappear with their hero worship in a few years.)

EARLIER

It does seem however that this hero awareness (sex appeal) begins earlier these



Cassidy in full flight at the Forum.

days. I didn't even look at Frank Sinatra until I was 17. Yet Monday I saw more than one seven-year-old girl at the show carrying a camera and a pair of binoculars.

A lot of parents spent plenty of hard earned money to take their children and their views went like this:

"His records never stop at our house."

"Every penny she gets she spends on David Cassidy books."

"She hasn't eaten for two days."

And those who denied hero-worship offered excuses for being there.

"I had to take my brother." (Brother's voice had changed and he looked quite capable of taking himself.)

"My sister's out of town. I brought her children."

"I know my daughter's only three but she adores him."

Said 19 year old Debby at the stage door, "I don't want his autograph but my little sister is too shy."

I thought I'd like to see in person this Partridge kid who's got everybody screaming, so I used my press card to get past the police at the back of the Forum.

David had not yet arrived, but his band had. The motley crew wearing jeans and Peter Max psychedelic shirts

jackets. The one wearing the dark glasses, so big you couldn't see his face, and the white 10 gallon hat was Cassidy.

The other was a nice looking kid who protected David like Roosevelt Greer.

I found out later he was Ron Barry who, along with Steve Alsberg are David's road managers and valets and errand runners and body guards and friends who know what David needs when he needs it.

David stuffed his hands in his pockets and walked to his dressing room fast. Isn't this the way a guy should act when he's a star?

And that's how he looked — playing a part. He got to where the cameras flashed and something fell out of his pocket. For an instant he lost his composure. Like a kid he looked to his buddy for help. Ron, right behind him, picked up the dropped object — a Jean Pierre hair brush.

Off to the dressing room. I was allowed in just before show time with four girls aged 10 to 16. His jeans and boots were piled together on a white massage table, a surgical looking piece of hockey furniture for a star's dressing room.

GASPS

The boy stepped out of a narrow closet dressed in a white cowboy suit with fringe on the sleeves. He was smiling, tan, clean. His hair was freshly brushed. He sat down for pictures and autographs. Girlish gasps were audible in the room.

"Pull the little girl close," shouted the photographer. "Hold your head up," yelled another. David complied with empathy for the girls on the

Atkins loses 'irreplaceable' guitars

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — (AP) — Chet Atkins, well-known guitarist and recording star, has lost two guitars.

Atkins lost one of the instruments between Nashville and Calgary and the second between Toronto and Cleveland, Ohio, last week during a Canadian tour.

Atkins, who sometimes purchases an extra airline ticket for his instruments, can be

verge of being sick with hero worship.

"Just keep it cool for the guy," said Steve in the background. He understood. "Now let's get going."

Ron moved in ahead of David, Steve in back as they walked from the dressing room through the back of the Forum. The young singer was nervous — had butterflies. He crouched over like an athlete catching his breath before a game.

Suddenly giant spot lights, screams that out-decibelled Stanley Cup playoffs and David Cassidy was on stage. The whole center section of the audience stood and waved sparklers to the frantic exasperation of the Forum police.

For one hour and a half the boy sang, jumped, gyrated to deafening cries and applause, like a kid on a gym trampoline. He worked, he sweated, his performance polished beyond what seems possible for his years.

NOTHING UNSUNG

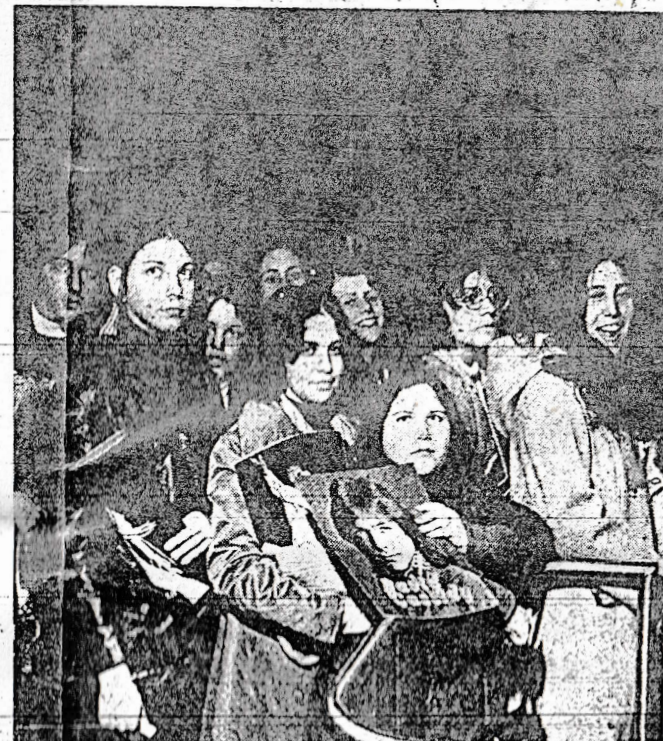
Not one favorite recording was left unsung. Not one person in his audience was left out. He'd stretch a hand to the top gallery then walk to the front stage and smile at a little girl lost on the left.

When he turned his back to the audience and walked to the band he gyrated in a way that made parents think he was turning on sex for the infants. Standing back stage I could see David Cassidy was using this ploy to catch his breath.

The show almost over, he turned to his audience and cooed the sentimental song "Cherish me as I cherish you." He meant it.

Is it any wonder he's mobbed after every show.

Ron and Steve formed the phalanx. They'd already taken care of his needs by putting his comfortable grabby jeans in the back of the Cadillac. They ran a human battering ram right to the waiting car door. Dramatic? No, a life saving device. They



(Gazette, Aussie Whitting)

The fans... different styles, but the same worship.

were off and away before anybody — the star or the star-struck — could get hurt.

AUTOGRAPH

Only four girls were taken to the St. John Ambulance Corps room. "Upset stomachs from all the excitement," said

the nurse.

I stood there with my note book in hand as the limousine sped down Maisonneuve and up Atwater. I was a little awed by the boy who gave so much to his fans, who didn't quite know how to handle his fame, who at once was

frightened and show-biz, cocky and empathic. And I thought, "I like him."

Suddenly I heard a young girl's voice, "Look, that old lady, she's got David Cassidy's autograph."

I quickly used my excuse. "The paper sent me."

tv/times changes

The NABET technicians strike and the baseball players' strike has caused much confusion. Channels 2, 3, 13, 9 and 12 will carry the NHL games Saturday and Sunday at 8 p.m. but there will not be any baseball at all.

Service with Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of North and South America.

1.00 p.m. (3) NHL Hockey, Minnesota at St. Louis, Don Kelly, Jim Gordon and Harry Howell are commentators.

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