

David Cassidy: 'This Kid Has Something'

By Barbara Lewis
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NEW YORK — While young girls throughout the world bestow David Cassidy with adoration and standing-room-only crowds, he's never quite established himself as a hometown favorite in Los Angeles.

It's a situation that not only proves irksome to the 23-year-old idol of teenybopperdom, but it was the reason behind his decision to cancel his Aug. 4 date at the Hollywood Bowl.

"The early ticket returns indicated that David was not going to have anywhere near a sellout crowd, and, rather than wait, he and his manager wisely opted to back away," explained Larry Utall, president of Bell Records and the man credited with sowing the seeds of David's success.

When Utall first met David at a press screening heralding the birth of the Partridge Family, he recalls that David was something special.

"I knew this kid had something. There's no name for it and I'm tired of the word 'charisma.' I just knew this kid had it. And what we did was flaunt it," Utall said.

Climb To Fame

David's climb to fame fol-



David Cassidy

lowed Utall's own success. The bearded, record company president, who commutes between offices in London, New York and Los Angeles, started out in life as a haberdasher. His heart was never in his shop, it was on Tin Pan Alley, an imaginary thoroughfare traveled by budding songwriters.

Utall sold shirts by day and wrote tunes by night and one day, 17 years ago, at the age of 32, with a wife and two children to support,

he decided to go into the music business.

Utall began peddling songs for other writers, which proved more successful than selling his own. One of the small concerns he visited was a company called Amy-Mola-Bell. It had been a loser and since they had nothing more to lose they offered Utall a percentage to join them.

Within two months the company had its first hit, "Midnight Mary," which made the top 10.

Sold Company

Seven years later Utall sold the company to Columbia Pictures for \$3.5 million. At that time he had Dell Shannon, Mitch Ryder, the Toys and the Box Tops under contract.

In the interim Utall has increased his business more than five times and has brought the Fifth Dimensions, Dawn, the Partridge

Family and David Cassidy, Mountain and Michael LeGrand.

"It's hard for me to realize that I ended up with the biggest stars in the field," he stated.

Utall has chosen Wes Farrell, well known in record circles, to produce the music for the Partridge Family show as well as records.

"Wes and I knew that Shirley (Shirley Jones, David's stepmother) could sing, but David was an unknown quantity. We were prepared to dub his voice if we had to. After he had the part, he auditioned for us. He cut a tape and it was a smash. I knew this kid couldn't miss."

Which brings us up to the present David Cassidy, a reigning monarch appreciative of his following, but fearful of its fickleness. He knows his ardent army of devoted fans defected from Bobby Sherman to him and there are now dozens of "David Cassidy" types in the wings.

David's intentions, Utall said, are to retain his present following but to try to capture a more mature audience at the same time.

He explained, "David is a star and he has aspirations to expand his vistas and do more in other fields. He's impatient for his present audience to mature."