

The Star who launched a million sighs

by Peter Jones

LONDON

David Cassidy, owner of the face that has launched a million sighs, was staying aboard a luxury yacht in the middle of the River Thames.

He had a few of us scribes over for a lunch-time chat. All I can say is that it was all right for HIM! It was me who had to burrow through a crowd of teenage girls who pleaded with me to "take us with you." One offered ten pounds for my Press pass . . . and flashed the tenner as an act of good faith.

Several others threatened to swim over and gatecrash the party. Two of them tried it and had to be rescued. And that is the kind of dedication and devotion David Cassidy inspires in his fans.

Last time I met him he was also being screamed at, but now the whole Cassidy Craze has got out of hand. When one sharp-eyed journalist wrote that it appeared that 22-year-old David still had boyish spots on his face, a few hundred fans wrote rude letters and enquired: "If he's the most lovely thing in the whole wide world, why pick on a few spots?" Or words to that effect . . .

Damaging rumour

But the most damaging rumour was that David Cassidy didn't much care about his fans. That he himself was a kind of manipulated puppet, right from the days he first hit the world's TV screens via the Partridge Family series — and that he in

turn manipulates his fans. Now it so happens that David really does care about those fans. He lodged official complaints when the police criticised him for "just showing my face" at London Airport, where there were fans scenes reminiscent of the days when the Beatles were together.

David told me: "On one occasion I just stuck my head out of the car, just to wave and say hi' to some kids who'd obviously been waiting there for ages. But this policeman told me that I'd already caused one riot and that was enough for one day."

"Now what IS a riot? Those fans were just screaming a bit and waving their arms about and they were glad to see me, but that's surely not the same as busting up the whole airport."

"But the fans . . . I honestly do love 'em. You don't have to tell me that one day they'll go off me, and find somebody else. Or they'll just grow up and maybe dig classical music or opera or something. But let's not analyse too deeply what makes things swing right now. Anyway, I never did think about being a pop singer when I'm seventy-five years old."

So that's one rumour I'm glad to nail. But it got me thinking about how these rumours start, and the sheer black-minded, warped thinking of the people who initiate them. In the days of the Beatles, I was plagued with people asking if it was true that John Lennon was going blind. And was it right that Paul McCartney was suf-

fering from an incurable heart disease?

And furthermore, — each of the Beatles was killed in car crashes — according to "Gospel-truth rumour" — at least five times. More recently I've had to assure fans that Marc Bolan is NOT suffering from a dreadful and hopeless blood disease.

David Cassidy is NOT married and, in fact, isn't even going steady with a regular girlfriend. Marc Bolan IS married, but it's not true that he's planning a fast divorce. Rumours again.

But there is one slight problem that David Cassidy does face. He gets the screaming adoration of the teens and sub-teens but singers and artists of his own age don't much respect the way he's won that adoration. He is not, in short, rated as a singer.

Says David: "I expected it would take time, because I was launched on the industry in a difficult sort of way. I was really an actor who actually sang a bit. But I believe, in fact I'm sure, that the respect is starting to come through my latest records. I'm singing better — I'm positive of that. I know more what I want to do in the studios."

David now is sitting pretty, if he'll pardon the expression. But in its every waking hour, the pop industry is looking for somebody to take his place . . .