

Just Who's Michael Gray?

By BOB GREENE
Chicago Sun-Times

CHICAGO — A new publication arrived in the noon mail the other day. The cover identified it as Star Magazine, and the major feature, according to the coverline, was "12 color pinups! — Donny giant poster!"

This edition, it turned out, was the "first fab issue" for Star. In a letter which he signed "Peace and Love," Star Publisher Donald R. Berrigan informed his readers that "we believe that Star Magazine readers are not teenyboppers nor bubblegummers who can be told just any old made-up thing and they're supposed to believe it! Star Magazine respects each and every one of its readers and promises always to treat you accordingly by telling you the truth!"

Berrigan's letter to the readers was accompanied by a large picture of himself. Also in the picture was Donny Osmond, who was shown placing his hands on the top of Berrigan's head.

AN ANALYSIS of Berrigan's essay indicated that the audience for Star Magazine is expected to be the pre-teen and young teen-age girls who admire and spend money on such entertainers as Donny Osmond, David Cassidy, Bobby Sherman, Michael Jackson, Butch Patrick and Michael Gray. I had never heard of Michael Gray, although he was certified as a superstar in the magazine and there were several pinups of him in the issue. But I did not recognize the face.

Happily, a solution appeared on Page 7. A headline advised readers that they could "Hear Your Favorite Superstar Rap! Call Star Mag Hotline With Your Own Special Telephone Number" The meaning of this, further reading revealed, was that Messrs. Osmond, Cassidy, et al would tape messages that could be heard at a Los Angeles telephone number. The article said that the editors of Star "don't want you to run up your folks' phone bill," but that it would be permissible to call the LA number "if you feel an irresistible urge, like at a slumber party."

Also on the page was a



David Cassidy

"Hotline Guide," which listed which superstar could be heard on which particular day. As luck would have it, this was the day for Michael Gray, so I decided to call Los Angeles and listen to Michael rap to me, and maybe figure out who he was.

I CALLED FOR 15 straight minutes, and the number remained busy throughout. While I waited, I read the rest of the magazine. The lead article was written by Henry Diltz, who was identified as "director of photography for Star Magazine," and also as "one of David Cassidy's closest friends." His story was an account of a long trip he took with Cassidy.

One of the best sections of the story carried the subhead "How I Was Invited by David!" Diltz wrote that he was shooting pictures of Cassidy when "David started talking about his upcoming concert tour to Florida. David said, 'Henry, how would you like to come along to Florida with me this weekend and shoot exclusively for Star Magazine?' What would you have said? 'Hey, outasight, David!' was the first reaction I had! 'Great,' he said. 'We can meet at my house at 8 a.m.'"

I continued to dial the Los Angeles number so I could hear Michael Gray rap, but the busy signal was unrelenting. It seemed a little early in the day for so many slumber parties to be rolling into high gear. But I kept reading.

AN INTERESTING feature was the "Great Kiss Debate." In this, all of the superstars explained their opinions on such topics as "What is the sexiest kiss technique?" following the story were two pages of pictures of the lips of each superstar. The readers were invited to put on as much lipstick as they needed, then to kiss the picture of the lips of their favorite superstar. The lips were then to be ripped out of the magazine and sent in to be judged in some sort of contest.

There was a fold-out game included in the magazine. It was called the "Marry Your Fave Game," and the point was to move your token around the board until you reach the altar with the superstar of your choice.

There were two remarkably similar stories. In one, David Cassidy goes to Hawaii for a vacation, where he comes upon a dog. He falls in love with the dog and wants to keep it, and the dog's owner a

young girl, offers to give it to him. But David discovers that the girl really loves the dog, and is only making the offer because she admires David so. David sadly gives up the dog.

IN THE SECOND story, Michael Jackson finds a cat and falls in love with it. The cat is owned by a crippled girl, who offers the cat to Michael. Michael sees that the girl truly loves the cat, and insists that she keep it. He befriends the girl and before long she gets rid of her leg brace. But in the end the cat dies.

There are a large number of advertisements in the second section of the magazine, all offering pictures and souvenirs of the young superstars for a dollar or two, and all bearing the same Hollywood box number for a mailing address.

I tried for nine hours, off and on, to call Michael Gray and hear him rap, but got only busy signals. Finally I resigned myself to reading a feature entitled "Take A Shower With David" in which the reader was invited to send in a bar of soap with a secret message to Cassidy scratched on it. The editors of Star promised to deliver it to Cassidy. "He may shower with your soap," the article said.