

This Peter Pan's riding on a wave of teeny love

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If you don't believe in Peter Pan, then you probably won't understand. But there's a wave of teeny love sweeping North America today that threatens to replace passions once reserved for Barbie dolls, tap shoes and daddy.

The object of all this mini-madness is a five-foot, eight-inch, 130-pound child-man named David Cassidy who wears hair down to his shoulders and sings such songs as I Think I Love You (5 million records sold in the U.S., England, Australia and Japan). He makes his New York debut Sunday and appears at the CNE Grandstand in Toronto Sept. 2.

Like Peter Pan, Cassidy made his first appearance about two years ago by flying in through a window—the electronic window that looks in on millions of living rooms and dens. One glance at guitar-strumming Cassidy acting and singing the part of 16-year-old Keith Partridge on the TV series The Partridge Family (described by one viewer as the story of a sort of rock 'n' rolling Southern California Trapp Family) and millions of young girls were transfixed.

Since then, with the help of savvy promoters and his own astute business sense, Cassidy has taken off with more than 16.5 million albums and single records sold during the past 16 months on the Bell record label.

None of the songs is anything like the one Maurice Chevalier made famous: Thank Heaven for Little Girls, but Cassidy might well be singing those lyrics to himself. Without little girls, he would not have made an estimated \$250,000 last year.

Concert tours fill stadiums

Besides his income from TV and recordings, Cassidy also derives a substantial income from concert tours which fill stadiums with ecstatic Sesame Street graduates.

At the Merriweather Post Pavilion in Washington, D.C., last year, the management hired extra matrons for the ladies rooms to take care of the girls who fainted.

Nobody's predicting what may happen when Cassidy makes his New York debut at Madison Square Garden, but the medical office there, which has had experience treating girls overcome with emotion, is ready. All the Garden now, a spokesman said, is

that advance sales, which began a week ago, already are in five figures and a sellout seems certain.

The son of actor Jack Cassidy and stepson of Shirley Jones, who plays his mother on The Partridge Family, young Cassidy is modest but assured as he talks about his career.

Does he think he has arrived? "Oh yes, definitely," he says. But there's a faint note of anxiety in his voice and you know why. It's apparent on his chin, where the stubble of a beard betrays the fact that he can't remain Peter Pan forever. Now 21, his child-man days are numbered.

Even the pilot wanted autograph

Within a 24-hour period (recently), after he flew into New York from Europe (where he had been touring Italy, France and Switzerland in a camper bus—skiing and thinking, he says), Cassidy met record company executives, talked with representatives of the music-industry magazine, Cashbox, sat down for a few interviews and talked to Garden officials about his upcoming show there. The whirlwind visit ended with Cassidy and his personal manager, James Flood, placing some luggage and Cassidy's guitar in the trunk of a chauffeur-driven limousine and hurtling through rush-hour traffic to make a flight out of Kennedy Airport for Los Angeles.

Once in the air, Cassidy may have had a restful flight but it wouldn't have been surprising if the captain, co-pilot and navigator had taken turns stepping out of the cockpit to get his autograph for their daughters, nieces and perhaps even the granddaughter of the airline president. That's the kind of thing that happened at CBS studio in Manhattan earlier in the day after Cassidy had taped an interview for the Mike Wallace-at-Large radio show.

As soon as the show was completed, the producer and a half-dozen production assistants crowded around for autographs. "This one for my daughter, please." "This one for my boss' niece, thank you." "This one for . . ."

The cozy informality was in stark contrast to the austere and strange technology that had prevailed moments before, with Wallace actually in Moscow. The at large producer filled in, asking Cassidy all the questions, though they had been pretaped by Wallace and will be spliced-in later for airing around the U.S.

As Cassidy churned out the autographs—"All my love to Kelly, David Cassidy." "Happy birthday.

Missy, David Cassidy." "Love to Cheryl, David Cassidy"—the young idol was simply making another contribution to the David Cassidy industry, one that rolls out records, posters, pictures, magazines and answers fan mail that Cassidy estimates ranges from 10,000 to 15,000 letters a week (he personally answers 15 to 20 a week).

In the limousine, heading for the airport, Cassidy had time to mull his meteoric rise in a treacherous firmament where other stars find their professional lifespan is about two years. Cassidy's two years are about up.

"Two-year span?" he says. "I don't believe that's true. I'm not even at my peak yet and I've been around that long already. Bobby Sherman is an example that there's no age limit. He's very old now, in his upper 20s.

"Of course, a lot of people never took him seriously and he never reached really big success. I've always had a pretty level head, so naturally I don't expect this to go on forever. But hopefully, by the time it does start to die, I'll want it to."

The big Cadillac is fighting its way through Long Island expressway traffic now and Cassidy takes a moment out to ask that the radio be turned to WABC to see if they're playing his latest record. It never comes on.

Then the poker face again as David Cassidy, businessman, assesses David Cassidy, hot property—the anomaly sitting there in buckskin trousers, white sweater-shirt, furry after-ski boots and blue maxicoat.

He started at the bottom

"It all boils down to selling tickets. That's why I'm playing at the Garden and not the Copacabana. Will I fill the Garden? Sure, I will. I know it sounds a bit tacky to say that, but I'm sure I will. We should be sold out before the opening."

How did he get to be a star? "I started at the bottom, looking for a job. I tried out for The Partridge Family and got the job," Cassidy says simply.

He makes getting to the top sound far less complex than staying there. "When I look ahead I see a lot of fog, a lot of haze," he says.

"I look forward to some kind of transition, though. I have desires to write and produce and maybe make a good film. But not anything Disneyish. That's what I'm into now. And I don't care to do another show like The Partridge Family."

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MILLIONS of teenage girls across North America have been reduced to passionate tears over modern Peter Pan David Cassidy who will make his New York debut at this year's CNE Grandstand show in September.