

The Top of Pop

The Real David Cassidy

By LILLIAN ROXON

A FEW WORDS in defense of Mr. David Cassidy. What is this nonsense about "writhing sensuality" and "apple pie and sex"? If there's one thing wrong with David's act, it's that he still has problems about how to move. In order to get an advance preview of last week's Madison Square Garden spectacle, I slipped down to Philadelphia to see him a few weeks ago and my complaint then was that he didn't move enough. Since then someone must have spoken to him because suddenly there he was at the Garden wiggling like Marilyn Monroe in "Niagara." But, if you noticed carefully, he was not one half as comfortable with it as, say, Michael Jackson or Ray Davies or even, heaven help us, Alice Cooper.

Perhaps I should explain that there are two David Cassidys. The public David Cassidy wears those rather jive fringed white suits because the kids, especially the little kids, love them. The real David Cassidy is a blue jeans man.

The public David Cassidy is hell to interview. He's intensely aware that several million little girls read every word he says and take them very seriously, so he's cautious to the point where he starts to sound almost dumb. The private David Cassidy is also cautious, but a lot smarter, smart enough to try to get a perspective on what is happening to him now, smart enough to take off in a camper recently to tour Europe all by himself and think.

You could see at Madison Square Garden he was totally high on all that love flowing in from those little (and not-so-little) girls, and indeed who wouldn't be?

But I've met a lot of teenage idols in my day and I've never met one who's less on a star trip than this one. I don't suppose many of you remember, but he began his career as an actor making guest appearances when he was still unknown on some of the top TV series in the country. He is a much better actor than anyone would suspect from his work on "The Partridge Family," which in private moments he

tends to call "Yes, Mom. No, Mom." He doesn't really like the series which, as it happens, is carefully tailored to meet the requirements of its official star, Shirley Jones, and gives him absolutely no opportunity to flex his dramatic muscles.

He's kind of proud of his first solo album, "Cherish," but except when he has really good material like "I Think I Love You" and "I Woke Up in Love This Morning" (and of course "Cherish") I don't think music, despite his suprisingly good voice, is his strong point. A billion fans heartily disagree but that's because the whole Cassidy *presence* is overwhelming.

There's that husky rather intimate speaking voice and the eyes that one definitely not teenage lady writer called "emerald" and that almost girlish skin and slim body. Let's face it, he may be the darling of the 11-year-olds, but I could name you at least a couple of very worldly 26-year-olds who have been totally captivated by him and who, weeks, no, months later, were still impressed with David's capacity to "relate"

to the opposite sex. He's not a sleazy Casanova or anything like that, but when, at a press conference, he described his love life as "dull" he was merely guarding his privacy and preserving his public image. He is a very normal 22-year-old boy. Did you really think anything else?

Unfortunately all the publicity has been geared to the public not the private David and it's left him sounding like a beautiful Barbie Doll — safe, sanitary and barely human.

I loved the concert at Madison Square Garden, I loved his gentleness with the girls, I loved that screaming, demented audience of 21,000, but really there's this other David Cassidy there, too. Do you think they'll ever finally let him come out and show himself?