

Young Ones Idolize David Cassidy

By MARY CAMPBELL
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Somebody once said of David Cassidy that he looks like a person whose high school guidance counselor predicted he had a future as a teen-age idol.

It's a good line and everybody in the room laughs at it — Cassidy, the interviewer, two press agents, a girl writer from Rolling Stone who is following him around for several days and a couple of people who work for Cassidy. Cassidy related it when asked whether he set out to become a teeny-bopper idol. "No. Does anybody? Can you imagine somebody saying, 'Someday I'm going to be a teen idol?' I never ever did."

But Cassidy is an idol, to pre-teens and even little girls more than to teen agers. At his Madison Square Garden concert, sold out three days after tickets went on sale, many members of the audience were astonishingly young — 6, 7, 9, 11. Parents brought the young fry, because they consider Cassidy's image wholesome on the TV show, "The Partridge Family."

Cassidy, who started as an actor, non-singing, doing mostly TV, is from a show business family. His parents, Evelyn Ward and Jack Cassidy, who were divorced when he was 5, and his stepmother, Shirley Jones, are in show business. Miss Jones plays the mother on "The Partridge Family" and member of its family rock group. Cassidy's voice and hers are heard on the five "Partridge Family" LPs; the other voices are not those of the young actors seen in the TV series. The first Partridge Family release, "I Think I Love You," featuring Cassidy's voice, was a hit and his first one under his own name, "Cherish," last October, also was a hit.

On the April 18 best-selling charts, Cassidy's "Could It Be Forever?" was No. 18, down from the previous week's high of 15 and the Partridge Family's "Am I Losing You?" was No. 44 and climbing. On the LP chart, his first LP in his own name, "Cherish," was No. 15, down from 12, where it had stayed for three weeks, and "The Partridge Family Shopping Bag" was 29 and climbing.

Cassidy doesn't say anything startling when interviewed, but he works up steam a couple of times. For instance, he says, "People say to me, 'Give our kids something to follow, something to believe in.' Everybody wants to make me the Pied Piper and I'm not."

"Adults say, 'You have all this influence on our youth



DAVID CASSIDY

What are you doing to save them from this wicked world?"

"How can I tell anyone what to do? How do I know what is right for them? What is right for me is not necessarily right for you. It's only right for me at this time."

"Sometimes the kids themselves ask. They write and want advice and say, 'I know you'd know how to handle things like this.' How would I? I couldn't handle things like that when I was that age."

Cassidy also enjoys talking about times he has disguised himself to get to stages with no easy entrance, such as at Atlantic City. "And I've had to move three times in the Los Angeles area. Kids come to my house, which I can't tolerate. And they dress up as maids and bartenders and try to get to me in hotels."

"They don't know what to do when they do get to the door. They just get flustered when they get up to me. They haven't thought past the conquest. They don't know what to do — unless they're in a group. Then they attack."

How does Cassidy deal with fame? "Man has learned to deal with much heavier things than that. There have been obstacles and inconveniences but the majority of it is just really nice."

Like what? "It might be easier to say what I don't enjoy from success. I don't enjoy the loss of privacy. I don't particularly enjoy seeing stars in people's eyes. I don't enjoy not being able to go out and hang loose and not be noticed."

"The Partridge Family" is in its second season. This season Cassidy, in the series, is 17. Actually, he is 22. Next season, for which shooting starts in

May, he'll be 18.

"It certainly does get tiresome doing a series. The same people, the same situations, the same house, the same friends, same everything." Is he tired enough of it to quit? "Eventually, but not now. But I can't see myself being 25 on 'The Partridge Family' and still singing and playing guitar in a wheelchair." Does Cassidy expect to be in a wheelchair at 25? "No, but I'd feel like it."

From the interview, the group in the room go by limousine to John Jay College of Criminal Justice, for a press conference of writers from New York high school and college newspapers. The girl introducing him says usually they have political figures, but at present they're all campaigning for the presidency, so here is David Cassidy.

Cassidy, says, "I'm sorry I showed up instead of Richard Nixon."

Cassidy answers into a microphone but since nobody repeats the questions, most of the time nobody knows what is being answered.

"How does it feel being back in New York? Has it changed?"

"Well, I was here about a month ago so I don't think the change is since then. I lived here three years ago. It's as dirty as it ever was. This time I haven't been out on the streets."

"How do you go about appealing to college kids?"

"I don't care if I do or don't appeal to college kids or adults. I no longer go through the insecurity of feeling that I'm only followed by a certain age group. If someone in college can free themselves of the idea that it is not hip or sophisticated to like me, fine."

"Teen magazines write you up as being almost perfect. Are you?"

"Absolutely not. That has been one of my main concerns, because obviously I'm not."

Well, you'd never be able to sell that idea to the fans at the concerts that Cassidy has been playing on weekends during the last year — not at places like 21,000-seat Madison Square Garden or two nights at the Astrodome. There he drew 42,000 each night.