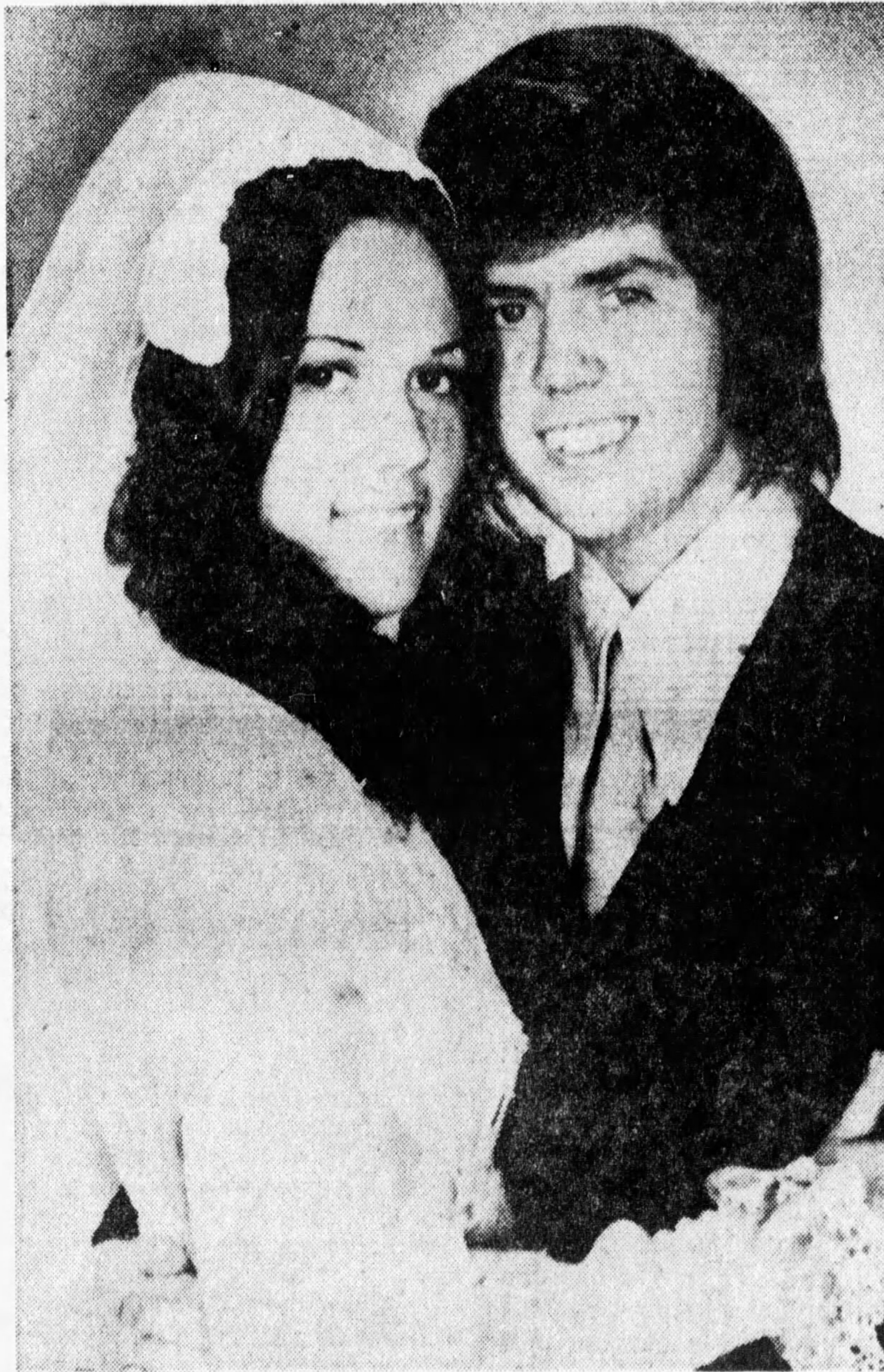


With his role as a teen idol almost over, David Cassidy can look back and advise his successors to always "approach the whole thing with a sense of humor."



Unhappily for the fortunes of the Osmond Brothers, their young fans all too easily survived the marriage of Merrill Osmond. He is shown with his bride, Mary Carlson.

# Bubblegum Music Marks Time Awaiting Next Batch Of Teens

By MEGAN ROSENFELD  
Washington Post Service

It was an eventful year for the bubblegum entertainment industry.

David Cassidy, for four years the idol of millions of teeny-and weeny-boppers, has announced he's leaving "The Partridge Family" and is going off to "live a little." Donny Osmond's voice changed. Merrill Osmond became the first of the singing Mormon brothers to get married, and two of the Jackson Five got married.

One of them — Tito — even fathered a child, and also faces charges in California of receiving a stolen amplifier and tape recorder. (A family spokesman says Tito has receipts to show he paid for the stuff.)

**THE** multimillion-dollar bubblegum industry — a record, concert, magazine and souvenir establishment aimed at America's 20 million girls between 5 and 15 — has been gaining momentum in recent years.

Following the methods of other pockets of special interest in the entertainment field (rock, pop, young adult, family, etc.), the bubblegum crowd churns out hit records and television shows, souvenir autograph books and pillow cases with the same professional wizardry that has made the entertainment industry an industry.

The hit records may not be the best sellers of the year, and perhaps few over 21 have ever heard of David Cassidy or the Osmonds, but the power of their screaming, madly devoted fans is strong enough to make these stars (and others) millionaires. Donny Osmond is only 15, but his face and persona have helped sell 18 million records.

**AT THE MOMENT**, however, bubblegum is in a slump. Record and magazine sales are down, and concerts may take weeks to sell out rather than hours.

Cassidy, whose first single, "I Think I Love You," was released in 1970 and sold 5½ million copies, didn't even get into the charts with his latest album, "Dreams Are Nuthin' More Than Wishes." The highest the Osmonds' latest record reached on Billboard magazine's chart was 58.

The reason, say the editors, press agents and managers, is that the industry is in a "transition."

"The screamers in the first row four years ago are now 18 or 19 and married," said Jackson Five tour man-

ager Jack Nance. "They aren't buying records." And today's young teens are waiting for their own show business idols.

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**THE STARS** and their fans are simply growing up, and the love affair is ending. In addition, industry sources complain, there are no new teen idols surfacing, no irresistible heartthrobs to inspire the kind of devotion that demands posters for the bedroom walls, records to dream with and concerts to scream at.

"This happens every now and then," says Gloria Stavers, editor of the senior of the teen magazines, "16." "Of course they're still hundreds of girls who say they will love Donny till they die, but basically my girls are bored with him."

Miss Stavers has been a teen fan mag editor for 16 years, and she's seen the cycle, the boom period and the cooling off, many times.

"I really can't explain it," she says. "I think if you want to fall in love you'll fall in love — if you don't, you don't."

**CHUCK LAUFER**, who publishes Fave, Tiger Beat, Tiger Beat Spectacular, and Right-On, has a theory that all teen idols have a 2½-year "flush" period for merchandising and idolatry, and that the current depression is due to the fact that David's and Donny's cycles have simply run out.

But he thinks the girls are ready to fall in love if

presented with the appropriate material — namely the DeFranco Family, five Italian Canadians that his company is "handling."

The three brothers and two sisters have a No. 4 record, "Heartbeat — It's a Lovebeat." Laufer says the next teen idol is undoubtedly going to be Tony DeFranco, 14, the youngest and lead singer of the group.

"**The mail** is Tony all the way," he reports. "It's comparable to what we got for Cassidy and Donny at this stage. The kid's a natural."

The DeFrancos have not yet started doing live performances — Laufer says they are not quite ready — but he tested them out with a free show for 7,000 girls in Buffalo, just to see if "the fever was there."

According to him, it was. The group's bubblegum rock sound and wholesome family image, modeled on all the other teen stars and their bouncy, simple songs, may be what the screamers are waiting for.

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**THERE ARE** other hopefuls featured in the glossy pages of the dozen or so fan magazines, including Andy Williams' adolescent twin nephews.

For the first time since Annette Funicello stole the hearts of millions in her heyday on the Mickey Mouse Club, a female is trying for the attention of the young audience.

She is Marie Osmond, 14, sister of the brothers. Marie is being promoted as "a star in her own right," according to a family press agent, and will be booked separately.

Her first single has made No. 7 on the charts. It's "Paper Roses," a melancholy tale of false love, which she sings in what is being called a "country pop" style produced by veteran Sonny James.

**THE REST** of the Osmonds seem to have shifted the focus of their mass adulation overseas, to Britain in particular.

They have added a choreographed karate ballet to their act, which previously included rock music, juggling, strobe lights and a barbershop quartet.

Their latest album is also a departure from their usual bippety-bop rock. Christened "The Plan," it repre-

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