

David Cassidy has shucked his old image and is trying to establish a new one with a new album. He walked away from his career as a teen idol a year and a half ago.

# David Cassidy's back

By JERRY PARKER  
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In the early Seventies, millions of American girls put away their Barbie dolls and took up David Cassidy. They watched him on "The Partridge Family," bought his records, attended his concerts, read David Cassidy comic books, chewed David Cassidy bubble gum, put David Cassidy posters on their bedroom walls, and took their peanut butter sandwiches to school in David Cassidy lunchboxes.

Thanks largely to his sometimes hysterical prepubescent following, David Cassidy, at the age of 21, was earning more money in a single night than most people make in years. He sold 5.5-million copies of his biggest single, "I Think I Love You." One afternoon in Houston, twice he

filled 56,000 seats in the Astrodome.

His career brought him a Corvette, a mansion in Encino, Calif., and an income in excess of \$250,000 a year. Of course, he hated it. A year and a half ago, he decided he couldn't stand it another minute.

"I walked away from it," he said. "I stopped touring, stopped doing concerts, stopped doing the merchandising, stopped doing the television show, stopped doing interviews, stopped recording."

"What I really stopped doing," he says, "was feeding a machine that was creating an image that was manufactured, fabricated, false."

He is a mellower 25 years old now, and though he says he is rich enough not have to work again, he recently has emerged from self-imposed oblivion to resume his musical career. Last week RCA released his album, the first Cassidy has made in two years, and he has embarked on an international tour to plug it.

## Prettiess present

As he sprawled in a corner of his suite at the Plaza Hotel in New York the other day, Cassidy's choirboy looks seemed to have taken on a touch more strength, a little maturity, though he still re-

tains the essential delicate prettiness that young girls might envy as much as lust after.

He looked very much the kid mogul, with his white Keds propped up on the coffee table and his dark glasses firmly in place while he talked business into a telephone cradled against his cheek.

A photographer was present, and Cassidy's dark glasses stayed in place as long as the shutter clicked. "I woke up late and my eyes are swollen," he said, adding that he had got 15 hours' sleep the previous night and none the night before. "And you didn't tell me I was supposed to have my picture taken," he said, wagging a finger at his publicity woman. "Naughty, naughty, naughty."

Cassidy has occupied himself with a number of things since he dropped from public view. There are the horses that he keeps on a ranch 2½ hours out of Los Angeles, his new house in Hawaii, his music, and, he says, a couple of nervous breakdowns.

Defining his terms, he says that no he was not hospitalized for emotional problems and never sank into an alcoholic or drug-induced quagmire. He did seek psychotherapy and he did, he swears, take to his bedroom and refuse to come out for three months.

"I took a long time reevaluating what I wanted to do as an artist," he says. "I took a long time reassessing my relationship with friends I had lost because of devoting so much time to a career that was fabricated."

## Hated the music

He once told a reporter: "Listen, if they're going to buy lunchboxes, they might as well buy David Cassidy lunchboxes." But he came to hate the thought of himself as a commodity being peddled to children. And he came to hate the music that he was singing to them.

"My record company didn't care about me as an artist," he said.

"They didn't understand my saying, 'I don't want to record this anymore. It's all the same.' They said, 'You're making money, why not?'"

Cassidy and his friend, Bruce Johnston, coproduced the new album and wrote several of its songs. Called "The Higher They Climb, [the Harder They Fall]," the record is a kind of tongue-in-cheek chronicle of the rise and fall of a teen idol.

"It's like putting a cover on the last five years of my life," Cassidy said. "I lived the personification of the American dream. People no longer want to become movie stars," he said, scratching his nose with his thumb as he talked, as he does quite a lot. "People want to become rock and roll stars."

The seven gold record albums that he did for Bell Records notwithstanding, Cassidy calls his new effort the first album he's made that represents him as an artist. RCA, in its publicity material, says it is the album that finally allows Cassidy to emerge as the knowledgeable, mature musician his stalwart fans always knew him to be.

## 'Old David' bad

Well, maybe, but the most obvious trait about the new David Cassidy is the intensive bad-mouthing of the old David Cassidy, the one to whom the stalwart fans were attracted in the first place.

What was so dreadful about



being the idol of millions of juveniles? "I took a part in a television series ['Partridge Family'] when I was 19, playing a 16-year-old," he said. "I finished at 23, playing a 17-year-old. That's the way television is, you don't grow up. They don't let you grow up."

"In the beginning it was sort of fun. It was like a loon. I never thought it would be anything that would be taken seriously. I never thought people would look at me as that person on the television show."

In the midst of it all, Cassidy rebelled via a cover story in Rolling Stone. The counterculture publication photographed him in the nude, then further shattered the image by reporting that he watched a "Partridge Family" episode while smoking pot and quoted a 24-year-old woman, with whom he'd had a casual, on-the-road affair, complimenting him on his sexual prowess.

"The network went berserk," Cassidy said with a mean grin. "The Kellogg's people almost didn't want me to do the Rice Krispies commercial. Unfortunately, it wasn't quite as effective as I wanted it to be."

"Every day that I was on the set," Cassidy said, "I related to myself as the Billy Gray of the '70s."

Billy Gray!

"Remember Billy Gray? He played Bud on 'Father Knows Best.' All that 'Hey, Mom, can I borrow the keys to the car?' 'Hi, Pop, can I go to the prom?' Screen Gems does it again, folks. Fifteen years later, but still in all, they've found themselves another Billy Gray."

## Jack Cassidy's son

"I wasn't living at home in a family situation like that. My parents got divorced when I was 4 years old. Nothing was real about it."

Cassidy is the son of actor Jack Cassidy and actress Evelyn Ward. He saw little of his father during his boyhood and has said that he felt shunned. Although he maintains a good relationship with his former stepmother, Shirley Jones (who played David's mother on "The Partridge Family" and is now divorced from

Jack Cassidy), he is not speaking to his father.

"I'm incommunicado with my old man," he said. "I've never known him, and I never will. You can't miss something you never knew and I don't care to, quite candidly." His own adolescence was far removed from Keith Partridge's "Hey, Mom, can I borrow the keys to the car?" wholesomeness. At 16, Cassidy was one of the thousands of dropouts who converged on San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. He was "experimenting" with various drugs—marijuana, amphetamines, LSD, he says, but never became a "serious" user.

Mononucleosis took him back home to his mother's Los Angeles house. He finished high school, decided against college, and came to New York to be an actor. He worked in the mailroom of a garment-district textile firm and took acting lessons from Philip Burton, Richard's mentor and father-figure.

Perhaps the nicest thing that his father ever did for him occurred at that time. Jack Cassidy asked his own agent, a savvy show business veteran named Ruth Arons, to look after David. Through her, he got a part in a Broadway flop, "Fig Leaves Are Falling."

When that show folded, Ms. Arons reportedly offered him a choice: "Stay in New York and become an actor, or come back to Los Angeles and be a star." Cassidy went to Los Angeles and right away landed several good television shots. A juicy role as a hemophiliac on a "Medical Center" episode sent letters pouring into the editorial offices of Sixteen Magazine, and that was six months before the premiere of "The Partridge Family" in the fall of 1970.

## Groupies galore

"If they're liking you, or if they're not liking you, at least it will be for something you've accepted the responsibility for," he said.

The album was released last week. Soon enough he'll know whether they're liking him, not liking him, or asking their mothers, "David Who?"