

Rich, unhappy David Cassidy tries to grow up

By JERRY PARKER
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NEW YORK — In the early 1970s, millions of teen-age 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 lunch boxes.

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, he filled 56,000 seats in the Astrodome twice. Of course, he hated it. A year and a half ago, he decided that he could not 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 that he is rich enough not to have to work again, he has recently emerged from self-imposed oblivion to resume his musical career. RCA has just released his album, the first that Cassidy has made in two years.

Cassidy's choirboy looks seem to have taken on a touch more strength, a little maturity; though he still retains the essential delicate prettiness that young girls might envy as much as lust after.

A photographer was present at our interview, 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.

Cassidy has occupied himself with a number of things since he dropped from public view. There are the 14 thoroughbred horses that he keeps on a ranch two and a half 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.

Although he once told a reporter, "Listen, if they're going to buy lunch boxes, they might as well buy David Cassidy lunch boxes," 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.

Cassidy and his friend, Bruce Johnston, co-produced 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.

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 step-mother, Shirley Jones (who played David's mother on *The Partridge Family* and is now divorced from Jack Cassidy), he is currently not speaking to his father.

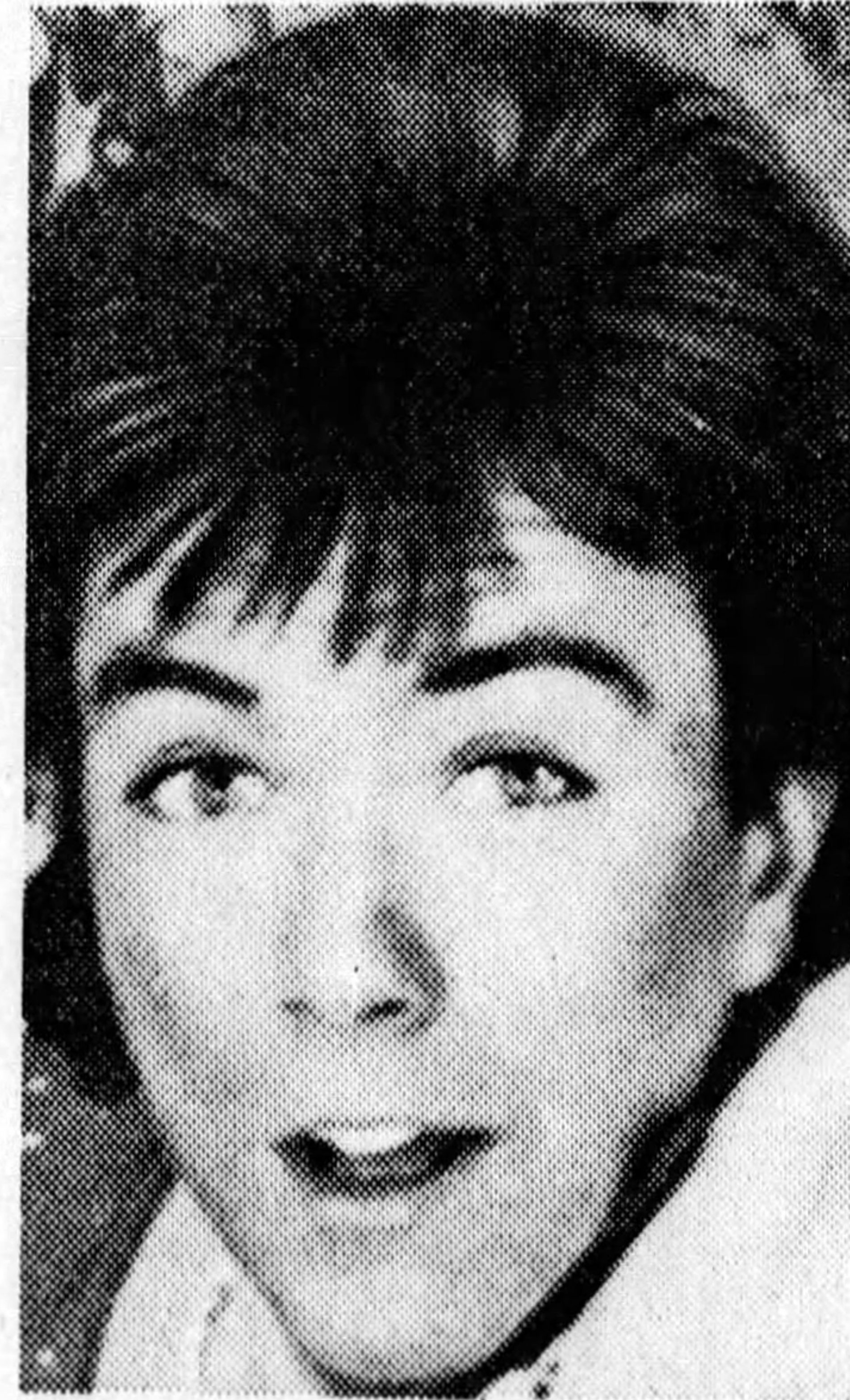
His own adolescence was far removed from Keith Partridge's "hey, Mom, can I borrow the keys to the car?" wholesomeness. At 16, Cassidy was one of the thousands of dropouts who converged on San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district. He was "experimenting" with various drugs—marijuana, amphetamines, LSD, 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.

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 Aarons to look after David. She 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 and then the series.

"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 counter-



David Cassidy

culture 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."

★ ★ ★ ★

By JOHN LAYCOCK

Poor little popstar, so lonely at the top. As a Loudon Wainwright song once observed, its fun to ride in a limousine. More fun than driving it, anyhow.

David Cassidy's new album gets by with more than just a little help from his friends. Its best moments — and it has some decent ones — bear more than a passing resemblance to recent Beach Boys stuff, what with various Beach Boys past and present passing through the sessions, led by Bruce Johnston who "helped" David with the production and arrangements.

At least the songs don't have the weepy self-pity of Cassidy's recent interviews. Many of them were written by other people anyhow — Cassidy's major talent remains the promotion of a star's reputation, with the musical values taken on consignment from others.

It's not bad at all — certainly not compared to his cutesy-pie days. His slender voice has been ably supported with the standard pop-music production values. **Get It Up for Love** is a basic hit-parade thing and I can't find the sleaze promised by the title (but then, I'm not as imaginative as the BBC, which banned it in England.)

Best of the lot is **Darlin'**, compulsively catchy in the Beach Boys manner — a couple of them wrote it — and with background vocals by Phlo and Eddy that put it between gospel and surf. Could be hitbound, Davie-boy.