

'I feel like I've missed something'

to Hollywood with his mother. He was 7, she was on a promise of movie breaks.

He grew up in Beverly Hills with a transistor radio firmly attached to his ear, explaining: "The Beatles wrote the soundtrack to my youth. They plugged me into music."

He went to high school, saw his father on weekends and played basketball around at the YMCA and stopped growing at about the same time he got interested in girls.

He tried singing, didn't like the sounds that came out so he decided to become an actor, working for a time with the Los Angeles Theater Group.

He returned to New York when he was 17, stayed just long enough to decide the action was really in Hollywood, so he once again went West.

Cassidy was working in a garment factory and living on peanut butter sandwiches, when he was discovered in 1969 by Ruth H. Aarons, who got him his first acting debut role in "Fig Leaves Are Falling."

Immediately he found leading dramatic roles in hot television shows like "Marcus Welby, M.D.," "Medical Center," "Adam-12," "Ironside," "Bonanza," "Mod Squad" and, in 1970, became a regular on "The Partridge Family," which also starred his step-mother, Shirley Jones.

"It was difficult to keep him in line," recalls Shirley, who recently broke off with Jack Cassidy. "He's basically very private, and here he was being watched regularly on television by his friends, who mostly pooh-poohed the series. I had to be a stricter mother on television with him than I was in real life."

The studio did not know David could sing until the series was actually under way. His voice caught on and his very first single, "I Think I Love You," sold 5½ million copies.

So he cut a lot more, made a string of successful tours and, after four years, decided to quit "The Partridge Family."

As he says: "I got sick of myself. Throughout my entire television career I was totally frustrated, devoting so much time to a person I wasn't.

"It was all a massive misrepresentation. Like, I NEVER woke up to Kellogg's rice crispies. And I NEVER said, 'Hey, mom, can I borrow the keys to the car?'"

"They painted me as a living extension of bubble gum, when I wasn't, which does not mean I was some negative dude hanging out shooting smack.

"Oh, a couple of the songs weren't bad. But it was mostly pretty thin. I couldn't record what I wanted to record. I couldn't even get the producer I wanted.

"When I finally quit, I had to wait a whole year doing nothing before the head of my record company would also quit, allowing me to change producers.

"What I'm going through now is a kind of re-entry experience. I'm getting accustomed to relating to women one on one. I'm associating with people for no other reason than they're my friends. I can even just walk down the street — but I still wouldn't go near a high school. No way!

"Now that I look back, my other life seems unreal. I'm ashamed of the way I sometimes acted. It got very low, divvying up girls. Very chauvinist.

"But that's what the road is. A lot of people make the mistake of bringing the road home with them, but I figured it was messing up my head."

The new David Cassidy is looking at Hollywood with horror, and his own father with indifference, admitting: "My dad has always been into showbusiness and parties and all that and it makes me sick.

"I just can't relate to Jack. He and I are about as 180 degrees as you can get. Henry and Peter Fonda are very much on that same trip.

"By bringing us into show business the way he did he put me in a position where I am very successful in some areas, and unsuccessful on other levels.

"Sure, I have money. I need never work again. But I'm not into things. Clothes and big houses and big cars are just manifestations of the need to show people you're wealthy.

"I don't need to do that.

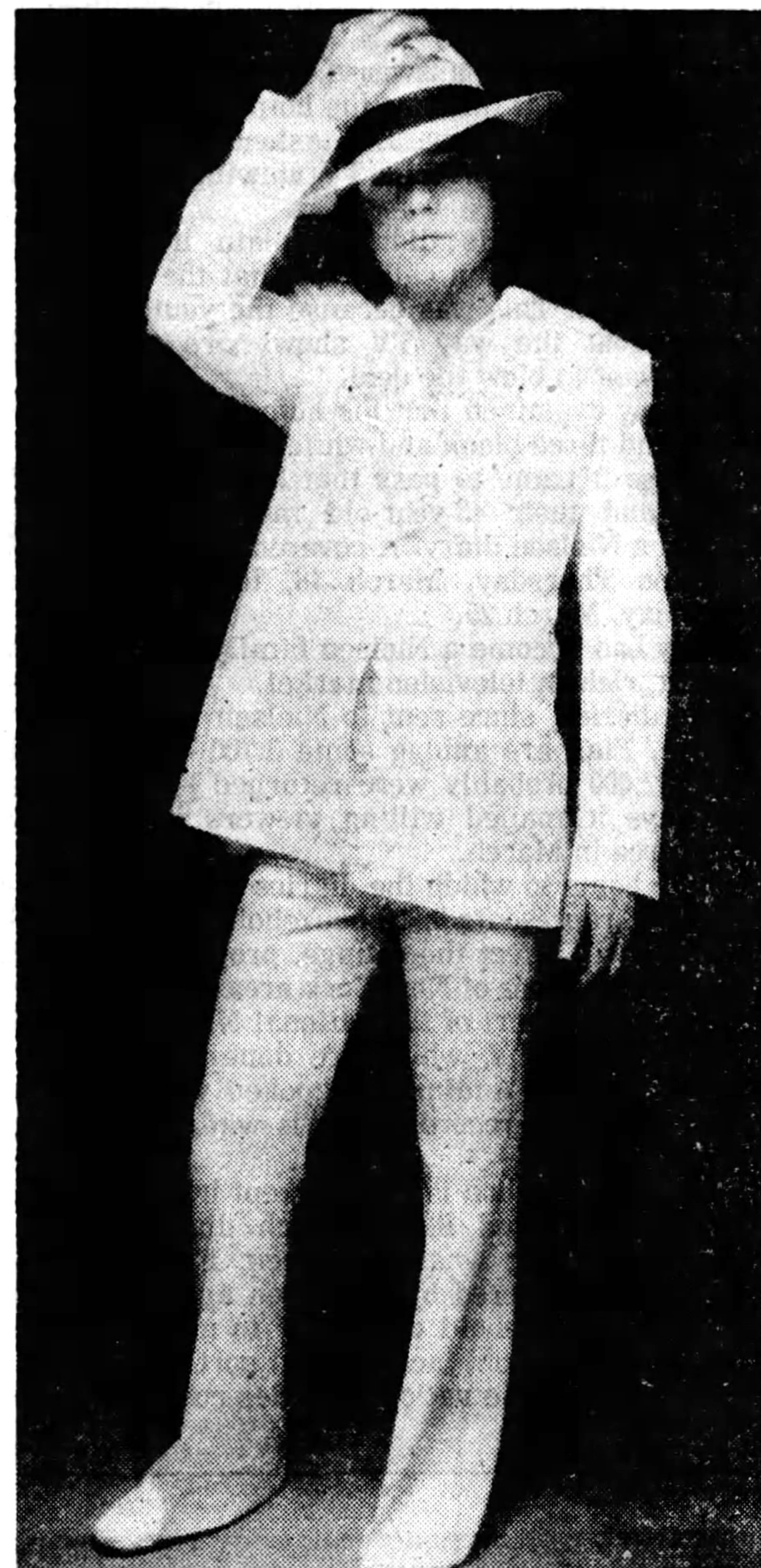
"What I need is the satisfaction of achieving something as an artist — which I just haven't done. My album is a start, but that's all it is.

"Today I have a lot of things, but I do not have the years that I spent working 18 hours a day, when other kids were just hanging around, growing up.

"I feel like I've missed something. Time will tell if it was important."

He looked at a life-size picture of himself on the door of an associate's office, laughed, and said: "Boy, I sure looked great when I was 12!"

Then he climbed into his \$15,000 BMW and drove off somewhere to look over his stable of 14 thoroughbreds.



Singer-actor David Cassidy