

David Cassidy: Return Of The Prodigal

By Vernon Scott



David
Cassidy

DAVID CASSIDY, who sold 20 million records, starred in "The Partridge Family" and packed concert halls, turned off his career like a water tap three years ago and walked away from it all.

The youthful millionaire bought an estate in Hawaii, a horse farm in Santa Barbara, Calif., and let the rest of the world go by.

During the frantic four years of television series Cassidy was a

teen-age idol whose public appearances fostered riot control precautions. To youngsters he was Elvis, the Osmonds and Elton John all rolled in one.

His image was wholesome, drugless and romantic. There was no telling how high his career might have soared. But David quit cold after a concert for 40,000 screaming fans in England.

It was a matter of self-preservation.

Now David, 27, has surfaced to star in an upcoming, two-hour episode of television's "Police Story," the first step in re-establishing his career.

"I'm glad the mania is over," he said. "It was an incredible trip and tremendous experience to go through. I enjoyed it. But I stopped because I was overworked. I didn't think I could take that part of my career any further.

"I needed a readjustment to living and to get in touch with myself and my friends.

"It seemed everyone had a piece of me, pulling in different directions. I'd lost control of my life. I can understand what Freddie Prinze went through. He was younger than I was and had to contend with the same sort of pressures.

"There comes a time when overwhelming success at an early age becomes too much to handle. The only option that made sense to me was stepping back from it.

"The whole phenomenon of David Cassidy was a bizarre way

of life. And I was fortunate to have come out through the other side with my head on straight. I survived.

"The key to survival is that I left the experience at the peak. It didn't leave me. Rejection is what really takes its toll on young people in this business.

"When I hung 'em up there were all kinds of offers waiting for me—TV series, record contracts and even movies. But I refused to let anybody with tons of money seduce me into going on.

"I didn't retire. I just wanted a rest. I told myself, hopefully, when I returned the people who cared for me would care for me again.

"I haven't missed the pace and the excitement. I enjoyed the luxury of not having to work for a living while I took a long look at the future."

The young man invested his fortune wisely and, even in the face of inflation, could live comfortably the rest of his life.

Cassidy has matured considerably. He married actress Kay Lenz seven months ago. His baby faced good looks have given way to attractive masculinity. His voice has deepened and he's developed a sense of humor about himself.

David discovered the public isn't as fickle as he had heard. During his hiatus he traveled around the world twice. He was recognized and besieged for autographs in this country and abroad, due in part to endless reruns of

"The Partridge Family."

When the "Police Story" episode was filmed at a Los Angeles high school (David plays a narc) barriers were erected to keep kids from swarming all over him. But the old frenzy was gone.

"I was flattered by the positive reaction of the kids," David said. "It would have bothered me four years ago. But this time I loved it.

"I wouldn't want the old intensity of the past. I'm coming back because I think it's time to act and record again. It's not a popularity contest I've come back to.

"The fans confused me with the character I played, Keith Partridge. I was never Keith. I see the reruns once in a while and I really can't relate to him. Reruns represent a time warp where people never get old.

"I wonder what goes through Jackie Gleason's mind when he sees replays of 'The Honeymooners.' He's not the same man now. And I'm not the same person who began 'The Partridge Family' when I was 19.

"My singing voice is different now. On the show they sped up the sound track to make my voice higher.

"I wrote a flock of songs during the last year or so and I plan to make an album of them. The songs are different from what I used to do.

"But my primary interest is straight acting, the kind of thing I'm doing in this 'Police Story' segment." •



David Cassidy and actress Kay Lenz were married last April 3 in Las Vegas, as Cassidy prepared to resume his career after a self-imposed three-year hiatus.