

David Cassidy: He quit at top, now he's coming back



David Cassidy

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HOLLYWOOD — A few years ago, David Cassidy had the American Dream pretty much in his hip pocket. He was the Golden Boy, Keith Partridge, the baby-faced star of the hit TV series, "The Partridge Family," a bubblegum music king whose records were certified gold, a flutterer of untold millions of prepubescent hearts.

He played to packed concert halls and was mobbed wherever he went. Teen magazines wanted to know what David Cassidy ate for breakfast. Toy stores stockpiled a healthy inventory of David Cassidy dolls. Kids wallpapered their bedrooms with David Cassidy posters. It was the starmaker machinery at full throttle.

And then he quit. Quit cold. Three years ago, Cassidy called a news conference in England to announce that he was taking time off for a long rest. Insiders exchanged a few knowing winks. He'd come back, but fast. The teen-idol business is a short, swift ride and you'd better let it carry you as far as it can. Ask the Monkees. Ask Bobby Sherman. But David Cassidy decided to step out at the summit.

Update

This year, Cassidy began the process of stepping back in again, but on different terms. In June, he returned to television as the star of a two-hour "Police Story" in which he played a rookie cop who went undercover at a high school to crack a narcotics ring.

"I was emotionally and physically drained," Cassidy said recently of his career break. "I was all used up. You can look at an experience like I had, that incredible media experience, and I think I took it to its farthest point. From there, it would have been a downhill ride and I just had to get out."

"I wasn't bored, I didn't sit around," Cassidy said, "and there was a time in those first couple of years when I wasn't sure I ever wanted to work again. But there's something about getting up in the morning and having something to look forward to. I discovered that I did want to work, I did want something to invest my time in."

"'Police Story' was just something that happened. I felt that the quality of the show merited my reading the

script, and I'd been wanting to work but hadn't yet found anything to do. This script was good, the cast (Vince Edwards, Dane Clark, Anne Lockhart, Dee Wallace) was good and the time was right."

Cassidy added that he and "Police Story" executive producer David Gerber have a further agreement to do an NBC World Premier movie and a possible series beyond that. Cassidy also has a new record contract with Warner Bros.-Curb. So, if there was any question, David Cassidy has definitely retired.

Cassidy, 28, could well pass for a high school senior if looks were the judge. Very little has changed in that regard. But there's a calm, measured confidence about him now — the attitude of someone who flew through the hurricane and lived to tell about it. Cassidy, in fact, has mostly good memories of his teen-idol experiences.

"I feel fortunate to have gone through it. I wish everybody could," he said. "The best thing about it was the concerts, going out and exchanging all of that energy with thousands of people."

"When it first started happening, I remembered it was like being a little kid and going to the circus. I

thought, God! Was this meant to happen? Was this me? You know, I can look at it now and think how lucky I was, but it took the time I spent away to put it in perspective. When you're involved in something like that, you can never be objective while the whole thing is going on."

During the three years he spent away, Cassidy said, he received and turned down countless offers to work again. "I remember people saying that it was all a gimmick, that I'd come back if the money was right. But with money it finally reaches a point of where you have to say how much is enough. I won't do garbage for money. I'll work because I want to. I don't ever want to be embarrassed again."

During the media blitz, there were times when he was, indeed, embarrassed. "There were things that I felt totally misrepresented who I was," he said. "They painted this picture of me as a white knight, the all-American boy, and that wasn't me. I didn't want a doll with my name on it! I simply had no control."

Some believe it was his desire to change that squeaky-clean image that prompted Cassidy — at the height of his fame — to do a candid interview with Rolling Stone maga-

zine, complete with a photograph of himself partially draped.

Cassidy refers to that now as "just an interview that began much like this one, and it just got out of hand." He says he has learned to take the printed word in stride.

"It used to eat my guts out," he said. "I'd read things that people wrote that couldn't possibly be true. Now, I just try to ignore the negative things people say." Cassidy specifically refers to a publication that has said that he uses drugs.

"It isn't true, of course, but now 80 million people are going to think I'm a drug addict. I'm just an innocent bystander in all this. And why? Here it is, how many years later, and what do I have to do to convince people that, hey, I'm just a singer, just an actor, and why do they want to say lousy things about me?"

As Cassidy dropped out three years ago, his half-brother Shaun assumed his role as a multimedia teenage heartthrob. "Shaun's an intuitive person," Cassidy said. "He saw me go through it when he was 13 years old. His girlfriends had crushes on me, and I know he had to suffer being my brother."

"But I'm glad for him that he's out there making it, doing it for himself."