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Music messiah back

Three-year exile ends for David Cassidy

By JAMES BROWN
Los Angeles Times Service

HOLLYWOOD — A few years ago David Cassidy had the American Dream pretty well locked in his hip pocket. He was the golden boy, Keith Partridge, the baby-faced star of the hit TV series, *The Partridge Family*, a bubble-gum music messiah 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 star-maker machinery at full throttle.

AND THEN HE quit. Quit cold. Three years ago Cassidy called a press 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.

Cassidy is coming back now. He starred in a two-hour episode of *Police Story* and has plans for other shows.

"I was emotionally and physical-

ly drained," Cassidy said the other day 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."

Cassidy added that he and *Police Story* executive producer David

Gerber have a further agreement to do an NBC World Premiere movie and a possible series beyond that. Cassidy also has a new record contract with Warner Bros.-Curb, with a single due out shortly. So, if there was ever any question, David Cassidy has definitely retired.

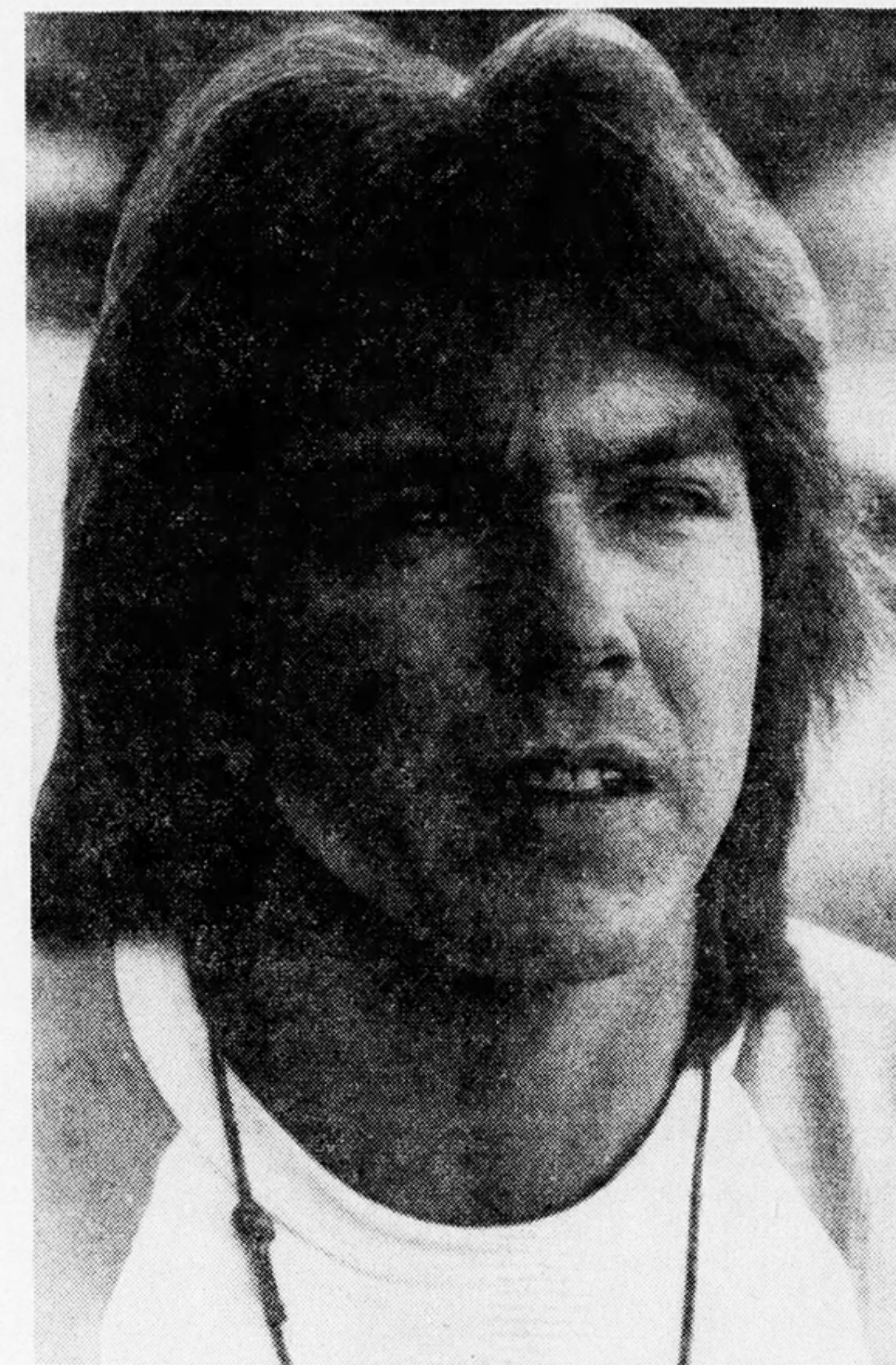
CASSIDY, 28, could well pass for that high school senior if looks were the judge. Very little has changed in that regard. But there's a calm, measured confidence about him now — an attitude of someone who flew through the hurricane and lived to tell about it. Cassidy, in fact, has mostly good memories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

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."

AND DURING the David Cassidy 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 this desire to change that squeaky-clean image that prompted Cassidy — at the height of his fame — to do a candid interview with *Rolling Stone* magazine, complete with a partially undraped photograph of himself.



Singer David Cassidy
... a lot of irons in comeback fire

Cassidy refers to that now as "just an interview that began much like this one, and it just got out of hand." He said he's now 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 alleging 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?"

It's ironic that as Cassidy dropped out three years ago, his half-brother Shaun assumed his role as the multi-media 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."

Cassidy laughed for a moment. "You know, I discovered that Shaun and I made the Guinness Book of World Records, the only brothers to have their first records go gold and then platinum. And now I'm thinking to myself, in 10 years will my youngest brother Ryan be there, too?"