

Former teen idol David Cassidy is back

By JAMES BROWN

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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 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 Cassidy ate for breakfast. Toy stores stockpiled a healthy inventory of David Cassidy dolls. Kids wallpapered their bedrooms with 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. On Sunday 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 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.

Cassidy, 28, has mostly good memories of his teen-idol experiences.

"I feel fortunate to have gone through it. I wish everybody could," he said.