

Why David Cassidy happily gave up the willing girls

GOOD-LOOKING David Cassidy, whose success in the Broadway revival of the Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* can be measured by the shrieks of delight from his many female admirers, told me over lunch about the time he had been embarrassed by a phone call from Elvis Presley.

"It happened at the height of my popularity as the teeny-boppers' No. one pin-up," he said.

"It was at the beginning of the 'seventies. I'd made several gold records and you couldn't walk 10 yards without seeing my face on the cover of some magazine or other.

"Anyway, one day the phone rings and it's Elvis, whom I'd never met but, of course, like every other pop singer around, admired more than anyone else.

FAMILY

"Well, the next thing I knew was that Elvis—who also sounded pretty embarrassed I might tell you — was apologising for disturbing me, but his daughter, Lisa, was a terrific fan of mine and wanted more than anything else to meet me.

"And would I mind very much if she came backstage after a concert I was giving?

"In a sense, I guess, it was the greatest compliment I'd ever had. But it just goes to show how little kids rate their own parents! Presley was the greatest, but it was me his daughter wanted to meet."

Cassidy has a showbusiness family background — his father was the actor Jack Cassidy, his mother is the actress Evelyn Ward, his step-mother the film star Shirley Jones. They are enthusiastic about his pursuit of a theatrical career.

"Yes, but only after I



DAVID CASSIDY

received a college education," he said. "The only trouble was that my father sent me to three schools which were so overcrowded that I rebelled at the lack of individual attention and was dismissed from all three for clowning and making myself the centre of attraction.

"It was only after I was sent to a more exclusive school that my education took a turn for the better. Then, as soon as I graduated, I bought a ticket to New York got myself an agent and found myself in a Broadway flop.

"Undaunted," he said, "I auditioned for several big TV series like *Bonanza* and *Marcus Welby*, but it wasn't until I landed a really good part opposite my step-mother Shirley in *The Partridge Family* on TV, that I really felt I'd arrived.

"And when it was discovered that I could sing as well as act my career really took off. It was quite incredible.

"Unreal, almost. Apparently I had the kind of looks which sent young girls into ecstasies

and in no time at all, as soon as I became a pop singer, I was mobbed wherever I went.

"In Los Angeles, where I lived, I had to change apartments three times in one year because there were always crowds of girls hanging around waiting for me to return home after a concert. And for each of those three moves I had to sneak out of the old apartment at about 4 a.m. when there weren't any people around to see me!"

Did he enjoy the adulation?

"To a degree, yes. I enjoyed the fact that I could have any woman I wanted and that wherever I went people made a fuss of me. But after a while the lack of privacy got to be quite painful.

"What was even worse," he said, "was that I found I had very few real friends. Not only that, but I discovered that many people actually resented my success, were jealous of it, or something.

LONELY

"And despite the crowds, or probably because of them, I went through periods of loneliness and depression.

"By 1975 I decided I couldn't take much more of that kind of life. It was all too much, and I honestly felt my sanity was in danger and that if I didn't quit I'd have one helluva nervous breakdown.

"Besides, I'd given well over 300 concerts and made 18 gold records as well as a great deal of money. Enough was enough.

"So I packed it all in and went to live in Hawaii away from the limelight. It was the

wisest move I ever made — it made me feel human again.

"It also gave me time to indulge my love of horses. Ever since I was a kid and saw a movie with Cornell Wilde and Maureen O'Hara called *The Home Stretch* I've been passionate about horses. When I'm not acting, I'm breeding thoroughbreds on my farm outside Los Angeles and I get as much satisfaction from that as from anything else I might do."

So how does he see his future?

"Very rosily," he said. "I'm engaged to a South African girl I met at a horse auction and I'm looking forward to being married quite soon. My career as a leading man in musical comedy is going very nicely, thank you, and at the age of 33, well — the world's my oyster."

He paused. "You know, the hardest thing about being a pop star was trying to maintain a sense of reality about it all. And trying not to believe that you were anything special. Six years ago I came pretty close to cracking up.

"Now for the first time in years, I feel I'm totally in control. And that is very reassuring indeed," he said.