

CASSIDY RIDES AGAIN

By JIM FARBER
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HE registers under his own name now. When David Cassidy checks into his New York hotel, he needs no aliases and wants none.

In fact the whole point of his 16-city trek through the United States is to convince radio people and the media that after 20 years of living in the shadow of The Partridge Family's velveteen bell-bottoms, he is no longer a human dimple.

Slumping into a chair overlooking Central Park, he said: "One forgets that one isn't 19 anymore." Looking at him, one could easily forget that, too. Though Cassidy turned 40 this year, he looks about three days older than he did in his Keith Partridge days.

Today Cassidy is on the comeback trail. This month, he released his first album in the United States in 12 years, a revival for which he has to thank two wise-cracking deejays.

It was Cassidy's birthday and he remembers hearing the pair on Los Angeles station KLOS say something like: "I wonder what David's doing now. You can only imagine he's got a couple of babes on each arm, and he's probably drinking champagne."

Impelled, perhaps, by a trace of impishness, Cassidy phoned the deejays.

"Of course, the switchboard didn't believe it was me," Cassidy recalled. "But I finally got through to the producer and got on the show."

Adopting a scraggly, weather-beaten voice, Cassidy told the deejays: "Hey, y'know, things ain't been goin' too well for me, so I ain't got any chicks on my arms. Actually,

I'm livin' out of your garbage can."

Surprised by Cassidy's call and his willingness to be a

little irreverent about himself, the deejays invited him down and asked him to bring some demo tapes of songs he had been writing.

Cassidy recalls spending some four hours on the air. "The response was incredible," he said. "There were people out in the parking lot. Amazing. By the end of the show, I had three separate offers from record companies. Really. While I was sitting there. Please call Enigma Records. Please call... two other record companies I won't name."

Thus was launched the 1990 return of David Cassidy. But what's different about Cassidy today from the guy he was 10 years ago is that he no longer launches into pitched speeches about what a misunderstood artist he is.

"Ninety per cent of what I did back then, I look back and embrace," he said. These days he grandly refers to his old Partridge Family TV

show (an instant hit in 1970) as "the last gasp of innocence in America."

Of course, Cassidy himself claims that at the time he also had conflicting feelings about the show. When recording such chirpy Partridge family hits as I Think I Love You, the singer maintained: "I was going to Hendrix concerts. I was playing in blues bands."

Even now, Cassidy bristles when people compare his career with that of Donny Osmond. "Donny and I were the antithesis of each other," he said. "He was all of that (innocent stuff). I was wild, very rebellious, a troublemaker."

CASSIDY says he didn't straighten out until late in his teens, at which time he took up acting, eventually landing the part as the weeny-bop idol of a generation.

The first time he got a chance to act as anything other than Keith Partridge in public was his infamous 1972 Rolling Stone interview, which came complete with confessions of drug sprees and near-naked photos. "It was the first time people heard my voice," he said. And the first time they saw he had pubic hair.

After that, Cassidy tried to get rock respect with several albums in the mid 70s, but none proved convincing until this venture with Enigma records, an album called David Cassidy.

Besides the album and a video for the first single, Lyin' to Myself, there have been other recent signs of a career revving up, including Cassidy blurbs in the pages of People and Rolling Stone magazines and Cassidy himself serving as a presenter (along with "Partridge Family" co-star Susan Dey) at the recent MTV video awards.

Also in prospect, says Cassidy, are two film roles. In "Spirit of '76," a satirical look at the '70s that Cassidy reports will also feature Rob Reiner and Moon Zappa, he plays a "futuristic, high-tech grease monkey" who travels via homemade time machine from 2176 to 1976.

In "Instant Karma," Cassidy is cast, in his words, as "one of the great egocentric would-be television stars".

For the moment, though, Cassidy's album is the vehicle carrying him once again into the public spotlight.

To embrace his cuddly history further, Cassidy says if he gets the chance to tour for the new album, he'll perform several old Partridge family favorites.

Enough time has elapsed, he feels, and anyway, the world seems more forgiving of former teen idols these days.



David Cassidy on stage in his days as a teen idol and (right) today at 40 — no longer the human dimple

