



David Cassidy, then and now.

Cassidy talks up 'Partridge' reruns

By MONTE WILLIAMS

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NEW YORK — For 20 years, he has moaned about how he's a misunderstood artist — how he's much more than Keith Partridge, that pablum-voiced '70s teen sex idol who inspired a zillion adolescent pants.

"*The Partridge Family* was an alb-tross," says David Cassidy, still dimpled and thin-hipped at 43. "After the show, no one would consider me for serious parts."

So why has Cassidy agreed to play advance man for the deluge of publicity heralding Nick at Nite's acquisition of the vintage sitcom, which starts rerunning on the cable channel on Monday night? And why in the name of crushed velvet bell-bottoms is he penning a confessional about his "reckless youth" for Warner Books titled *Come on Get Happy: Fear & Loathing in the Partridge Family Bus*? Also, why, pray tell, is he working on a campy satirical play with other unidentified '70s icons?

"I'm really not bitter anymore," says Cassidy, togged in black jeans, a black shirt and black cowboy boots in the baroque environs of the New York Palace. "In fact, if I complain again, slap me. The show made me a somebody."

ON TV

Program: *The Partridge Family*

With: David Cassidy

Airs: Monday through Friday at 8 p.m.

on Nickelodeon

Along with Cassidy's reappraisal of his life (thanks to "\$100,000 worth of analysis") comes a revisionist look at the cloying ABC sitcom, which aired 1970-74. "It ain't Shakespeare," he says. But *The Partridge Family* exemplified youthful abandon in a decade that marked the country's last gasp of personal freedom, says Cassidy.

"Here was a family who got up in the morning and said let's go entertain and off they went. The '80s and '90s have been about a lack of personal freedom. People can't walk down the street without fear, can't have sex, can't pay their bills."

Shirley Jones, Cassidy's TV mother and real-life stepmom (she was married to actor Jack Cassidy, who died in 1976), concurs.

"Everywhere I go, people are looking for wholesome entertainment," she says.

"They see enough of the bad things in real life; they don't want to see that when they turn on the TV."

Jones, now wed to manic comic/ad exec Marty Ingels, keeps busy with concert tours in largely small venues.

And other cast members? Danny Bonaduce (Danny Partridge), pilloried for his criminal record (most notably, a 1991 assault of a transvestite prostitute), spins records at Chicago's WLUP.

Suzanne Crough (Tracey), the show's tambourine-playing pixie, owns a bookstore in Southern California. The other pint-sized Partridge, Brian Forster (Chris), races cars in Northern California. David Madden (the clan's hapless manager, Reuben Kinkaid) does voice-over work. And, Susan Dey (Laurie), of course, experienced a prime-time rebirth with *L.A. Law* and *Love & War*.

Bonaduce and Jones are doing some public-relations work for Nick's *Partridge* bonanza, which kicks off Monday-Friday, 8-10 p.m., with specially themed episodes. Cassidy is doing an eight-city tour in a replica of the family's groovy psychedelic schoolbus. He also is host for Nick's *Very, Very David Cassidy* (8 p.m. Saturday), a two-hour festival of his favorite episodes. The next day, he helms an eight-hour *Partridge* bacchanal on MTV (9 a.m.-1 p.m., 4-8 p.m.).

Which leads us to ponder: Does Cassidy have a post-Partridge life? Perhaps. Married for the third time and the father of a 2-year-old son, he still tours with his band, though his last album, released in 1990, was not a smash. He has written a starring role for himself in a TV series under consideration at Madonna's production company. And he has signed a deal that would take him to Broadway in *Blood Brothers* this summer.