

Cassidy can still set hearts fluttering

□ Partridge Family star was once the world's teen idol

By Alison Mayes

(Herald writer)

You're "an absolute gorgeous hunk" and "a great entertainer." You should definitely give a concert in Calgary.

In fact, David, We Think We Love You.

That's the consensus from 64 callers who dialed the Herald's David Cassidy hotline after the former Partridge Family star expressed a desire to perform at the Stampede.

And Cassidy has responded by saying, "I'm very flattered, and I'd love to come up and play."

Judging by the passionate calls, Cassidy's appeal hasn't faded in the nearly 20 years since he hung up his velveteen Partridge vest and bell bottoms.

"I think he's sexier than he was 'way back in '72," gushed a caller named Tina. "I want to add that if he had married me back then, he would not have been divorced at all. He'd be extremely happy."

Two callers offered to have Cassidy stay at their homes. Six enthusiastic calls were from males. Several were from adolescent girls who weren't even born when Cassidy — now seen in reruns on MuchMusic — was the world's biggest teen idol.

Just three callers voted against a Cassidy appearance, including one male who dismissed Cassidy and comic Danny Bonaduce (Danny Partridge) as "over the hill" and another who said the Stampede should avoid "being so cheap and hiring hasbeens."

Among the positive comments from females:

"I think he's just as cute as ever at 42, and I am a 50-year-old mature lady."

"He hasn't aged in an old way. He's aged like fine wine."

"I believe the man is talented, just as Donny Osmond is . . . I can easily get 20 of my friends to attend."

One woman called on behalf of a group of 10 mothers in their 30s who would all "just love" to see Cassidy live. Another mom said she is embarrassed to admit that Cassidy still makes her heart flutter. "If he ever came to the Stampede, I think I would go in disguise," she confessed.

Former Montrealer Susan Cunningham, 32, recalled a childhood trauma concerning Cassidy: her mother forbade her to attend his concert at the Montreal Forum when she was 11.

Devastated, she ripped down the David Cassidy posters from her walls and ceiling, threw away her treasured copies of Tiger Beat and 16 Magazine and stopped watching The Partridge Family. She spent the evening of the concert in her room, crying.

"I reacted as though he'd rejected me personally, and I hated him for years," says Cunningham, now a computer student at Calgary's DeVry Institute. But a funny thing happened: in her mid-teens, when she was a fan of David Bowie and Patti Smith, she picked up a 1975 solo album by Cassidy called The Higher They Climb, which included his pre-Barry Manilow version of I Write The Songs.

"I fully expected it to be mediocre pop, but I was really impressed with it. . . I found it refreshing, and rather self-deprecating," she says.



Rob Galbraith, Calgary Herald

CUNNINGHAM: Clutches the Partridge Family Christmas album

Her loyalty to Cassidy was rekindled, and she was soon digging through bargain bins for his older stuff. "He's got a great voice," she says. "I think he was overexposed, exploited, and given this cleancut, boy-next-door perfect image which nobody could ever live up to. He was manipulated, definitely. He's got to fight that much harder to be taken seriously."

Renee Burdick, 32-year-old co-president of the "Just David" International David Cassidy Fan Club, somehow got wind of the Herald's Cassidy poll and phoned in her support from her home in Santa Barbara, CA.

"It's no longer David Cassidy the teen idol. It really is David Cassidy the performer and the person. We all have a really great admiration for David's talent," says the prim-sounding Burdick about the 19-year-old fan club, which claims about 2,000 current members in the U.S. and more in Europe,

and Canada.

When Cassidy acted at Calgary's Stage West 11 years ago, Burdick spent two weeks here, seeing the show almost every night. In 1983 when he performed on Broadway in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, she made three trips to New York to see him.

The unmarried bookkeeper still owns a Partridge Family bulletin board, along with thumbtacks that have Cassidy's face on them.

Burdick looks back on the early '70s as a time when stars were truly superstars. "Almost everyone was a fan of David's — if you fell into that age period, you were a fan," she says.

Burdick adds that club members' devotion to Cassidy "may sound abnormal" but "we do have our own lives."

It now looks as if there's a good chance of Cassidy appearing in Calgary this summer.

"Since MuchMusic started running The Partridge Family I've had an incredible amount of interest in me and the show and my new stuff," Cassidy said by phone Friday after hearing about the Herald's poll.

He said he is considering an offer to tour Canada this summer. "I know I have a lot of fans up there. I'm very anxious to come up."

Cassidy inquired if the Stampede still kicks off with a parade and said he remembers the '82 Stampede for its "party atmosphere." As for our callers' offers to host him personally, he gave an embarrassed laugh and said, "Uh, I thank them for their good wishes."

This year's acts for the free Stampede stages have nearly been finalized, said Jack McDonald of the fair's midway entertainment department. Among them is twist king Chubby Checker.

But McDonald sounded intrigued with the idea of booking Cassidy for 1994 and said he is looking into "what kind of dollars" Cassidy charges for an appearance.

He also noted it's possible another local promoter may want to book Cassidy if the former teen dream tours Canada this summer.