

Bopalong Cassidy

For David Cassidy it has been a long fight back. It has taken him most of the past 20 years to recover from being a teen idol. When he says that he doesn't miss the old days, he really means it. He talks to **Adriaane Pielou**.

TWENTY years ago I would have been taking my life in my hands having breakfast in public with David Cassidy. I would have been trampled by battalions of screaming fanlets and probably ripped apart limb by limb in the frenzy.

Those were the days when no big hotel in London or New York would have Cassidy as a guest, not because of suite-destroying activities in the Led Zeppelin mould, but because of the riotous armies of little girls.

Today, the girls who once fainted at the mention of his name are women in their thirties and the hit records were long ago consigned to the discount bins.

Cassidy is 44, but he still looks disconcertingly like the teenybopper idol who once earned more than Elvis and whose records outsold The Beatles. In his skimpy black T-shirt and jeans he still looks as if he could fit into the trademark appliqued dungarees and purple jumpsuits.

These days, David Cassidy is doing what he did before The Partridge Family star-making machine rolled over him. He is acting. He has been starring on Broadway — to good notices — in *Blood Brothers*.

One of the things that has most cheered him about it is the positive reaction he has had from other actors and directors whom he respects.

And he has just written his autobiography.

"When The Partridge Family show came along, I was an actor working in the theatre, living like any young guy, and it lasted a long time. We were prisoners. It was an incredible pressure and all an illusion: I wasn't anywhere near the guy they promoted me as and no one can live up to an illusion. I felt I disappointed people.

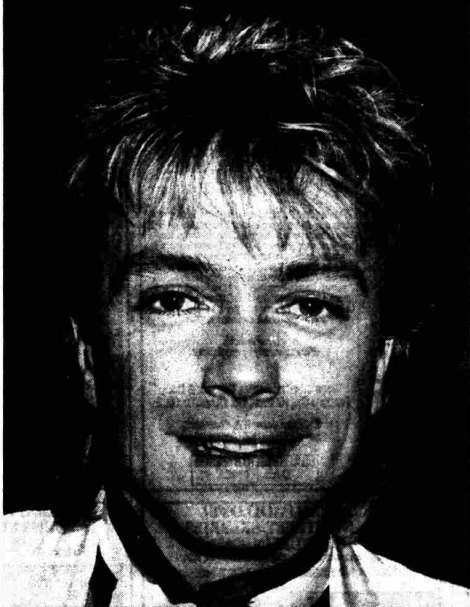
"When I left it, I went into a downward spiral. At first it was party time. I'd been very dedicated to my work. I didn't take drugs and I hardly drank, so I was really ready to go wild. The make-up department made me a beard. I got a severe haircut and I went around the world, in disguise when necessary. I was invisible for the first time in four years

‘No one knew what I was doing. I felt ashamed of who I was, what I had come from and the mistakes I’d made. I felt a failure.’

and it was fascinating, but then it became very dark." For months he would lock himself away in a room, drinking and taking drugs to try to numb the depression.

The lowest point came in 1985. The \$8 million he earned during his time at the top — a fraction of what he should have received, due partly to inept financial management, partly to a recording contract that earned him \$15,000 in royalties on 20 million album sales and partly to crooked franchise holders who never paid him his dues from merchandising deals — had gone.

Homeless, carless, jobless, full of self-loathing and reduced to sleeping in a friend's spare room, he took up an invitation to go skiing in Aspen for a few days. At a celebrity party he was snored at by his old friend Don Johnson, ignored



● The boyfriend's back... Twenty years ago he caused a sensation wherever he went. Now, in a more sober incarnation, David Cassidy is trying to set the record straight.

by everyone else and ended up slinking away unrecognised and unnoticed.

The incident proved a turning point. He finally embarked on intensive therapy sessions with a psychiatrist. He got a new agent. Within months he had also bumped into Sue Shiffin, whom he had first met in 1973, and who is now his wife and mother of their three-year-old son, Beau. The climb back to normality had begun.

Part of the recovery process was writing his autobiography, *C'Mon Get Happy*. It charts the story of his life as a pop star, starting with his broken-home childhood as the eldest son of the Irish Broadway actor, Jack Cassidy.

It makes engrossing reading. It is candid and honest, rather than particularly well written.

He may have been abstemious as far as alcohol and drugs went in his heyday, but he more than made up for that with sex; several chapters described 'a endless brief encounters with groupies, up through the

locked, wrought-iron gate of his Hollywood home.

There are also all sorts of entertaining vignettes: Elvis ringing up the agent they share to complain that Cassidy was earning more than he was; John Lennon sitting on his bed one New Year's Eve singing old Beatles songs with him; and who knew David Cassidy wrote the Barry Manilow hit, *I Write The Songs*?

His book is already selling well in the U.S. Once his promotional tour is over, he has a month of concert dates, performing a mix of Seventies music and more recent songs, and a television pilot to shoot. That will take him up to the autumn, when he expects to embark, with his wife and Beau, on a project close to his heart.

"We're putting together a parenting video — pre-natal and post-natal information with songs for children," he explains, giving that famous, crinkle-free grin. "It's fascinating and very necessary — there's so much lame music around for children."