

# Call 'Em Teen-age Idols, But Look At 'Em Now

By Cheryl Lavin  
Of the Chicago Tribune

*Hey! Hey! He was a Monkee!  
People say he monkeyed around.  
But he hasn't been too busy lately —  
So he's taking any gig in town. . .*

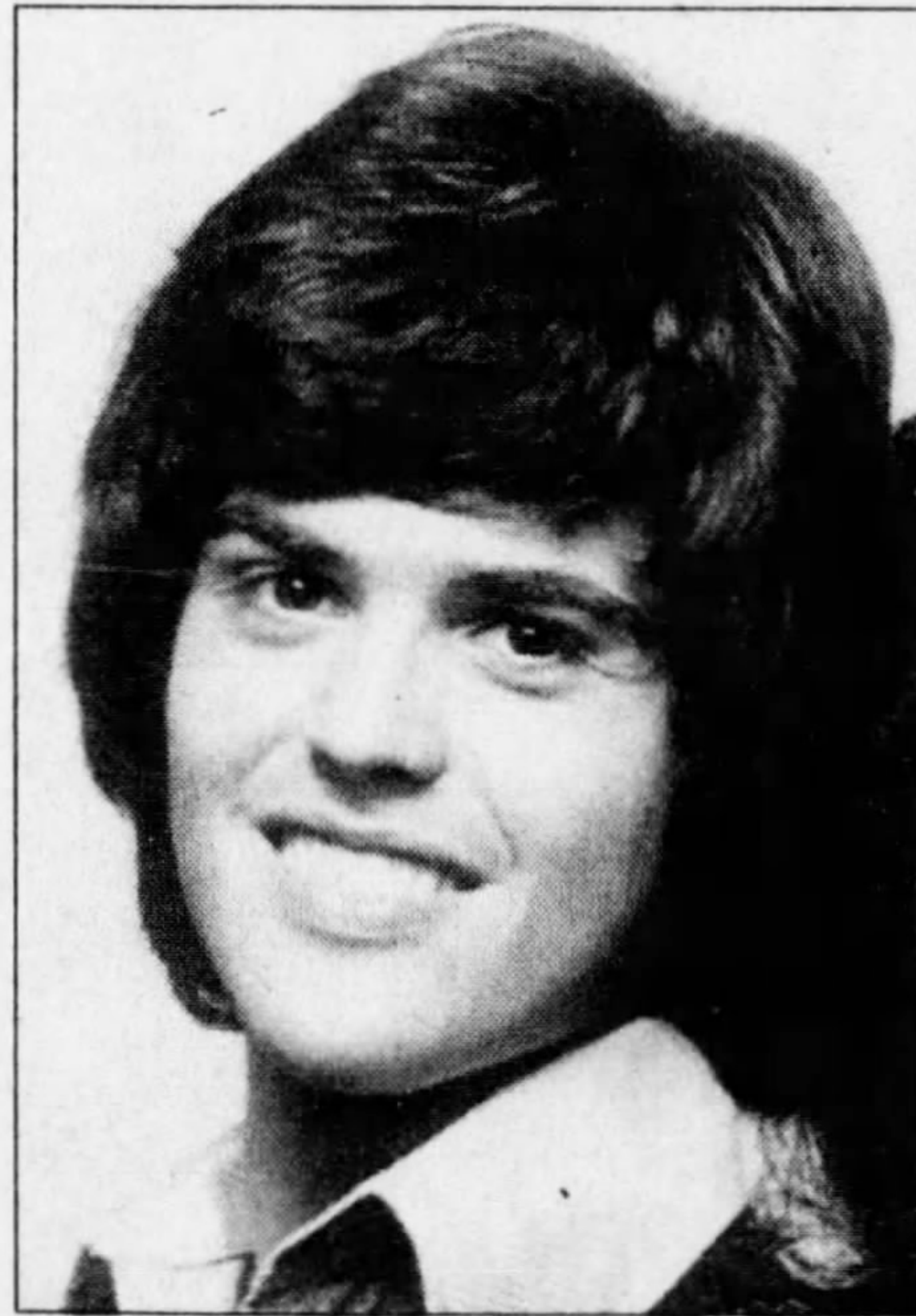
**E**X-MONKEE Davy Jones appeared in "The Real-Live Brady Bunch" earlier this year at the Fox Theatre, "Oliver" at The Muny a couple of summers ago and recently opened in "Grease!" at the Shubert in Chicago, along with Rex Smith.

"Partridge Family" heartthrob David Cassidy recently played the Shubert in "Blood Brothers," a show he had done on Broadway with his brother Shaun, and will take to St. Louis next month. Donny Osmond stars in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" at the Chicago Theatre, replaced from time to time by Michael Damian.

Another former Monkee, Micky Dolenz, is in the current Broadway production of "Grease!" Christopher Atkins ("The Blue Lagoon") toured in it several years ago. Peter Noone (Herman's Hermits) took a turn in "The Pirates of Penzance" on Broadway in the '80s. "The Waltons" John-Boy, Richard Thomas, has starred in productions ranging from "Richard III" to "Peer Gynt."

Former Tiger Beat heartthrobs all. (OK, Thomas is a stretch.) Which proves there is life after Clearasil commercials.

**And it's not** on TV, in the movies or on the charts. It's on the boards. America's graying, aging, balding,



**Donny Osmond in 1975.**

wrinkling, spreading former teen-dreams are getting a second wind starring in revivals of "Grease!" and a handful of other productions.

Are they hired for their talent or their sentimental value?

To New York magazine's peppery theater critic John Simon, they have no sentimental value.

"This whole teen-age culture passed me by," says Simon. "I grew up in Yugoslavia. By the time I got here, I was almost 16 and I didn't have many teen-age idols, nor did I pay much attention to other people's. That's why this crowd doesn't mean much to me. I don't have the sense of 'Gee, I knew these kids and now look at them.' By the time I see them,



**The Monkees in their salad days: Davy Jones (left), Peter Tork, Mike Nesmith and Micky Dolenz.**

they're somewhat worse for the wear."

The producers who hire these old kids on the block are hoping that Simon, who doesn't have a warm, fuzzy response to the actors, is in the minority. They're hoping when you read that Davy Jones is in "Grease!" you'll get a gooney look on your face and start singing "Wake up sleeepy Jean/Oh, what can it mean/To a daydreeeeam believer and a homecoming queen!" They're hoping you'll remember back to a time when you were young, care- and sag-free and would sit cross-legged in front of

the TV watching "The Monkees." And, most of all, they're hoping you'll buy tickets.

**It seems to work.** Barry Weissler, producer of the current "Grease!," says that, nudged by the nostalgia factor, not-your-everyday-playgoers are arriving "by the droves, in busloads. We've got people from 30 to 55 coming and they're bringing their children, as young as 8, and their teen-agers. They respond in a most visceral, energetic, excited way."

Weissler, who produced "Othello"



**David Cassidy ("The Partridge Family") in 1972.**

with James Earl Jones, "Cabaret" with Joel Grey, "Zorba" with Anthony Quinn and "My One and Only" with Tommy Tune, is looking for any audience spillover he can get.

He added Rosie O'Donnell to the Broadway "Grease!" cast for her talent and her ability to bring in her Generation X fans who know her from her days as an MTV veejay. Stars who can bring their own audience to a show can only help a production. As long as they can act.

"We try to balance out the character and needs of the show with a personality that is known to the public," says Weissler. "It gives more credence and support to the

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