

Getting it together

David Cassidy is back with a book, Broadway show

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The Stamford Advocate

NEW YORK — As a young man with talent, good looks and meteoric success, David Cassidy had every opportunity to spend his life as a total jerk.

It is a testament to his inner resources that he turned down that opportunity. Now with his triumphant return to Broadway in the British musical "Blood Brothers," Cassidy is settling into a life beyond the teen idolatry that defined him in the 1970s when he was Keith Partridge on the hit show "The Partridge Family."

The stage door at New York's Music Box opens and Cassidy, now 43, slips in. He's a small guy wearing a black baseball cap, but you'd know him anywhere.

"I've been looking for a house around Stamford and Westport," he tells his Connecticut interviewers. "It was funny. A real-estate broker was taking me around New Canaan. Driving around, they said, 'You know, that's where David Letterman lives.' I said, 'Uh-huh, very nice.' As much as I feel attuned to people in the business, the last thing you want to say is 'I live right down the street from David Letterman. We're both celebrities.'"

"I'm pretty much a recluse in that respect. I'm looking for modest digs. I'm really a man of modest means. I think I'd like to raise my son around here; it's a great environment."

"I talk to kids about life in general, especially having them understand that a lot of what they see and hear, and a lot of what they come to believe from Hollywood, is based on illusion. I deal with this in my book."

"C'mon Get Happy," Cassidy's autobiography, was published recently by Warner Books. It's subtitled "Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus," Cassidy says, because he talks about the dark things that have stalked his life.

"I was robbed of my own identity," Cassidy explains, "and somehow I had to rise from the ashes and walk away from it. 'I became a very successful, very famous person, very early in my life. And, of course, I was doing this during the '70s, the last decade of sin and abuse and everything else.'"

He virtually retired from public life from 1975 to 1978, he says.

"I went through a lot of years of darkness then. My dad died. My manager died. I didn't work at all. I was really lost, very much reeling.



David Cassidy

"Like a lot of people, I turned to substance abuse. But I did it very quietly. No one ever knew what I was doing."

"My personal life is where I've always been able to pull down the curtain. As a professional person, well, here I am. I'm happy to do all this stuff. But when I go home, drive through my gate and walk through my door, that's it. And I don't like people trying to penetrate that."

He's done with that thought and careens to the subject at hand: "I'm very happy to be back in New York where my father, my mother and I got our professional starts. My very first professional job was on Broadway" (in "Fig Leaves Are Falling" in 1969.)

Cassidy is the son of Broadway actor Jack Cassidy and actress Evelyn Ward, whom Jack divorced to marry Shirley Jones, mother of David's brother Shaun and one of David's co-stars on "The Partridge Family." Although David Cassidy returned to Broadway in the mid-1980, in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat," he feels that the role was more as a teen idol than as a serious actor.

"In 'Blood Brothers' I feel like I'm really coming back as an adult. This role has been a very important part of my evolution and growing," he says. "I can't tell you how fortunate I feel to have had the opportunity and how much I've loved the

experience. I feel part of the theater community again and I actively want to do a lot of other theater."

He warms to a firmly held principle:

"It's very difficult to see that you don't equate your personal self-worth with your financial status or your success. So many people get caught up in that vicious cycle: 'If I'm the CEO of a company, I must be a wonderful person. If I'm the delivery boy, I must be a failure.'"

He gives a personal example: The bankruptcy of his recording label, Enigma, in 1990.

"I had a new record ('David Cassidy'), and my record company went under when it was out. I had worked on it for almost two years, trying to write, develop and produce the songs. Things started to happen when it came out and then to have the rug pulled out from under me. . . ."

"It was a very frustrating experience, but one that I was able to pick myself up from. I was able to say, 'I've gone down this road now for a couple years. (I'm going to) put everything else away and save my relationship with my wife (songwriter Sue Shifrin) and son (2-year-old Beau). I'm going to be dad.' I didn't know what else I was going to do, but I wanted, for the first six months of my son's life, to be a 50-50 partner with my wife in trying to nurture my son."

"I made the decision to take myself out of the game. I said, 'I don't know what we'll do next year, what I'll do next year, but I'll create something.' I had been in analysis at that point for a couple of years and it was pretty painful and pretty difficult, but I knew it was the right thing to do."