

PROFILE

Ex-teen idol David Cassidy uses maturity to settle into success

■ Star of Broadway's 'Blood Brothers' also discusses his setbacks.

By Geoffrey F.X. O'Connell
and Linda Matys O'Connell
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-idol image that defined him in the 1970s when he was Keith Partridge on the hit show *The Partridge Family*, a singing heartthrob who sold 15 million records.

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

"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," he says. "I deal with this in my book."

Dark side of life

C'mon Get Happy, Cassidy's autobiography, will be published the first week of June by Warner Books. In it, Cassidy 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."

"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



Scotti Bros.

TURNING POINT: David Cassidy said a defining moment in life came after the financial collapse of his record label.

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. Even though David returned to Broadway in the mid-1980s, in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, he feels that the role was more as a teen idol than as a serious actor.

An adult role

"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

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 very 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 the rug was pulled out from under me."

"I had a big hit (*Lying to Myself*) that was only out a couple of months that was all over VH-1 and was actually a Top 20 record, but it got there the week the company went goodbye."

"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 of 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."

"From there, my life just completely, totally turned around. I stopped... stopped feeling this longing for something I had to have to be complete. I just let it go."

"Writing the book was really

cathartic for me. I'm almost embarrassed about it. I still feel like a kid, and here I am writing my memoirs. But I have been this professionally for 26 years. I did my first Broadway show about 25 years ago. So, after 25 years, a silver anniversary constitutes somewhat of a history, a past."

Arts/Entertainment

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Janet Payne Bowles
chalice, about 1925-1931
silver
h: 9 in.
Gift of Jan and Mira Bowles in memory of
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