

David Cassidy on verge of new career

BY LISA O'KELLY

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LONDON — David Cassidy collapses into the back seat of the car, looking agitated. "How the — did they know I was going to be here? I'm not opening in London for six weeks."

He has just walked out of a photo call at the Phoenix Theatre into the polite embrace of a handful of middle-aged fans and is not sure whether to be vexed or gratified that they care enough to be there.

Sharon, who has been in love with him for 25 years and thinks he is "a lovely person," believes that "whatever it was he had in the '70s is still there."

The difference is that in the '70s the crowd would have been rather more madding. Then, David Cassidy was the teenage dream who set underage hearts (mine included) thumping in five continents. His fan club was bigger than Elvis Presley's. Riot police were called out to control crowds at his concerts; he was mobbed everywhere and had to be smuggled in and

out of performances in the back of a laundry truck. When he was having his gall bladder re-

be turned into a piece of merchandise. Posters, comics, sweatshirts, dolls, pens and lunchboxes bearing his image were churned out; teen magazines reported what he had for breakfast and solemnly chronicled his vital statistics, down to his pinkie ring size (6).

He found this weird enough, but weirdest of all was the fact that the David Cassidy who was being sold was in essence a fabrication, an artificial superstar fashioned out of a marriage of convenience between the real thing and Keith Partridge, the character he played in the television series that made his name, "The Partridge Family."

The show featured an unlikely suburban family, headed by Cassidy's real-life stepmother Shirley Jones, who made a living as a pop group. When he landed the part, aged 20, the producers' idea was to put out Partridge Family records made by session musicians. Then they discovered Cassidy could sing. Unable to believe their luck, they worked into his contract a clause which stipulated that his name and likeness could be used

freely in connection with the Partridge Family.

Very quickly, as the series became a smash hit and the spin-off re-

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