

# Book recalls 40 years of 16's 'fave raves'

By JAME BURNS  
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All but the recent talk about hounding paparazzi doesn't impress Danny Fields. He's seen worse — much worse.

"I remember arriving at the airport with the Bay City Rollers at 2 o'clock in the morning and there were thousands of girls," he says. "There was danger in the plate glass breaking because of the screams. There were girls climbing the walls of hotels — they were crazy. People talk about paparazzi; they're nothing like crazy teen-age fans."

For years, that was his audience. He was one of the editors at 16 magazine and co-author of a new book, "Who's Your Fave Rave?" It celebrates the 40th anniversary of the teen magazine and offers a nostalgic look at the days when Herman was a Hermit, Paul Revere was a Raider and Andy Gibb was alive.

This was celebrity journalism for teenyboppers. Readers learned about Barry Williams' secret past (pictures of him when he was 3 years old), Donny Osmond's hush illness (appendicitis) and Jermaine Jackson's turn-ons (hamburgers).

"It was imagination and fantasy. That's what we were selling, Fields says. "You were playing with a very fragile thing — a child's emotion. You had to be careful not to abuse it."

The magazine began in 1957, with Elvis on the cover and a price of 15 cents. It was a bare-bones publication with photos from press agents and no advertisements, and it was aimed at young teen-agers.

But it caught on because it was the only magazine featuring pre-teen girls' dreamboats. Photoplay may have had Debbie Reynolds and Eddie Fisher, but 16 had Bobby Rydell, Bobby Darin and Bobby Vinton.

In 1958, Gloria Stavers was hired as a clerical assistant to open reader mail. As she read the letters, Stavers got a sense of what the girls really wanted out of the magazine. She set up appointments with the young stars to find out the answers to the questions the teen girls had: What is your favorite color? Do you have a girlfriend? What is your favorite subject in school?

Teen idols cooperated, and the publisher preferred Stavers' approach. She was soon hired as editor-in-chief and molded 16 into a key component in the idol-making machine of the 1960s and 1970s.

Fields and co-author Randi Reisfeld began this book as a biography of Stavers, who died of cancer in 1983. Publishers thought it would be too risky, that her name wasn't known enough. But it was known to anyone who wanted to be famous, because Stavers was a star-maker.

They all went through the magazine's offices overlooking Central Park. Many of the photo sessions were shot by Stavers herself.



David Cassidy was 16's No. 1 cover boy in the early 1970s, but he didn't really enjoy being a "fave rave."

The magazine had a language of its own — "fave raves," "pix" and "luv." In its early 1970s heyday, with David Cassidy as the main cover boy, sales shot to 700,000 a month. By that time the publication cost 35 cents an issue.

The book doesn't just have pix and "fax" (as in facts) from old magazines; some ex-teen idols reflect on the impact of their celebrity. Of course, few have anything bad to say about 16, just as it never said anything bad about them.

Cassidy, however, was one who cringed at being a fave rave "luvved" by so many girls. He didn't care for the boy-next-door image.

"He has to be proud now that he did that so well," says Fields, who is still friends with Cassidy. "I told him he was the best teen idol. There was just something about him — he was cute, he was lovable. Everything sort of worked. He said, 'Oh yeah, I was pretty good.'"

Some weren't good at it. When asked about his favorite color, one of the Bay City Rollers answered, "I am not a racist." The authors don't identify which one it was.

Then there was Jim Morrison, who lit the fire of Stavers as much as of any teen girl. The two were having a well-known affair, and he was featured prominently in 16. But Stavers was about Morrison's only fan around the office.

"We wrote about a Dream Date with Jim Morrison, and we knew just even being near him was a nightmare," Fields says.

It was one of the many times they stretched the truth. The magazine featured advice columns written by Susan Dey and LaToya Jackson. Very little was written by the stars in first-person pieces. The columns were generally done with the stars' knowledge, however.

"We'd say, 'Susan, we're going to write a column, and we'll take a nice picture of you for it.' She knew nothing in there would be embarrassing to her," Fields says. "She couldn't object to it, but she and LaToya Jackson certainly didn't write these things."

Stavers left 16 in 1975, and Fields and Reisfeld took over. Neither are with the magazine now. Today's fave raves are teen rockers Hanson, who pushed "Home Improvement" actor Jonathan Taylor Thomas off the cover.

The magazine may not be a symbol of journalism ethics, but its long life shows it found something that young people hold dear.

"People say it was all lies. It wasn't lies; it was the way you'd wish it had been," Fields says.

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