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David Cassidy (left) will be portrayed by Andrew Kavovit in *The David Cassidy Story*: "The journey to find happiness while bringing happiness to millions of people was very difficult," Cassidy said.

Behind the happy face

Movie traces David Cassidy's biggest challenges

BOB THOMAS
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — They sit side by side on a couch in a suburban living room, one a veteran of the show business wars, the other at the beginning of his acting career.

David Cassidy, 49, became a huge star of the 1970s as the teen heartthrob on TV's *The Partridge Family* and as a rock singer who sold millions of records and headlined sellout concerts.

Andrew Kavovit, 26, appeared as Paul Ryan on the soap opera *As the World Turns*, spent two seasons on *The Magnificent Seven* and played roles on TV series and movies.

Their connection? Kavovit stars in the title role of *The David Cassidy Story*, an NBC movie airing Sunday at 9 p.m.

Based on his 1994 autobiography, *C'mon, Get Happy... Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus*, the movie tells of Cassidy's attempt to deal with his overwhelming fame and his struggle to win the love of his distant father, Broadway star Jack Cassidy.

David Cassidy served as executive producer, but says he made no effort to sugarcoat the movie's portrayal of his trials and tribulations.

"There's a lot of sadness, a lot of emptiness and loneliness and feeling lost and being robbed of my own identi-

ty," he said. "The journey to find happiness while bringing happiness to millions of people was very difficult."

Kavovit, who has acted since he was 10, admitted that he came to the project knowing nothing about David Cassidy. "I was too young to be in the middle of the Partridge thing," he said.

"I wasn't so much interested in the fact that he had been in *The Partridge Family* or even had the success as a musician. It was the relationship with the father and the emotional ties he had with certain people in his life. It was the real-life part of him that interested me, not the sensational life."

The resemblance between the pair, who were interviewed at an associate's home in Sherman Oaks, is minimal. But Cassidy says he wasn't seeking a lookalike but someone who could look convincing at 40 as well as 19.

Kavovit was the staff's unanimous choice among the many actors who auditioned for this latest in a series of TV biopics about stars of the 1960s and '70s that seek to tap the boomer-driven retro market.

He neither sings nor dances, but he only had to lip-sync Cassidy's singing voice and he was able to learn a few steps to imitate the onstage style.

The film portrays the boy's anguish when his father (played by Malcolm McDowell) left David's mother to marry Shirley Jones (Dey Young in the movie).

She and David starred in *The Partridge Family*, which appeared on ABC from 1970 to 1974. At 19, David was a big star, and that added to the gulf between father and son.

"My father was a manic-depressive and an alcoholic," Cassidy declared. "He had struggled with being Mr. Shirley Jones for a number of years. Although the entertainment industry thought of him as a great talent and he won the Tony and was nominated for Emmys, he never had the film career he wanted."

Jack Cassidy built a solid theatre career as a singer and dancer, but his film roles were sporadic. In his last important film, *W.C. Fields and Me*, he portrayed John Barrymore. He died at 49 in a Los Angeles apartment fire.

David Cassidy found himself broke and jobless after *The Partridge Family* folded, his onetime fans having moved on to other favorites. After a rough period, he began rebuilding his career, appearing in television drama and in the theatre, notably in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*.

In Las Vegas he replaced Michael Crawford in the extravaganza *EFX*, produced a Rat Pack show and is now preparing an autobiographical musical starring himself.

♣ *The David Cassidy Story* airs on Sunday at 9 p.m. on NBC.