

# David Cassidy is still drawing attention

*"The David Cassidy Story" airs at 8 p.m. Sunday on NBC.*

## acqueline Cutler

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Some mothers indulge their daughters' passion for the Backstreet Boys. They understand unattainable love all too well because they felt it for the prince of pinups 25 years ago: David Cassidy.

As hot as the Backstreet Boys are, Cassidy was hotter; all that teen-age mania was concentrated on just one guy. He, too, did concerts, beamed for posters and cut records, but he also was the star of the TV series "The Partridge Family." For five years, he was the world's highest-paid solo performer. Just try to find someone who was within earshot of a radio in the early '70s who can't hum "I Think I Love You." (The single sold 4 million copies.)

When the TV run ends and the fans grow up, many teen idols fade away. Not

Cassidy. He says he is busier than ever, and during a long, freewheeling interview, he is delighted that his six office phone lines are all lit simultaneously.

Cassidy was born in Manhattan to actors Evelyn Ward and Jack Cassidy and spent his "wonder years" in West Orange, N.J., a well-kept Newark suburb.

"A lot of what I have experienced in my life, the difficulties, come from a very early split of my parents and the pain and suffering that I felt being kind of abandoned by my father," Cassidy says. "And a lot of the difficulties we had through our life initiated with the guilt that he felt and the sense of competition and sense of frustration that he had with his own career and a certain jealousy that he had with mine. I was able to forgive and heal a lot of my wounds through my becoming a parent."

He's extremely close to his 9-year-old son, Beau, and though he has a 13-

year-old daughter, Katie, he can't see her as often as he'd like. But with Beau, a public school student in a Las Vegas suburb, Cassidy says he golfs, attends open school sessions and coaches Little League games.

Being the father of a teenager has prompted Cassidy to reflect on his own adolescence. "I was not dangerous, but I was wild," he says. "I very much align myself with the political ideology of the '60s. Let's get to the truth. Let's deal with social injustices, and let's try and change the world in a better way. There is something to peace and love and happiness. . . . The '70s lacked political thrust and had the style. It was just let's sweat and have a good time and have sex."

And who should know better than its poster boy?

Cassidy is troubled by misconceptions about him. Four months shy of age 50, playing Bobby Darin intermittently in a Las Vegas revue he created, and involved in other successful

Vegas shows, he agreed to work with NBC on "The David Cassidy Story," which airs Sunday, if only to set the record straight. Andrew Kavovit ("As the World Turns") plays him in the TV movie.

The biggest misconception about him? "That I was Keith Partridge. That I lived a life of squeaky clean and innocence, that I was shallow." Keith's superficiality was a calculated effort on Cassidy's part. "I tried to make this character have some character, and I tried to make him a humorous guy with real flaws and make him an airhead and have him preoccupied with hair and looks," he explains.

Cassidy's voice is still a tad raw when he remembers his teen-idol years. "I was so busy trying to just stay emotionally together that I didn't give a damn," he says. For five years, screaming fans camped outside his home, so he moved three times in the middle of the night to throw them off

the trail. He couldn't go to the library, zoo or store.

Now Cassidy says he does shop at the market.

"I do go because I want to maintain my connections," he says. Connections in the produce aisle? "With the human race. With being a person."

Cassidy was recently shopping at Trader Joe's, an upscale market, when he saw a group of teen-age girls giggling. "And of course I recognized 'the giggle.' I have heard this for 25 years. I am listening to it, and I walked up behind them and said, 'Hi.' And they said, 'I can't believe it's David Cassidy.' I keep thinking because you are 13, you won't know me. I was thinking I am old enough to be your father, easy. And they said, they saw 'The Partridge Family,' VH1 and 'E!FX' (his Vegas show). It's so interesting. Their parents were fans of mine, and now their kids are.

"I am really lucky."