

'David Cassidy' gets happy with NBC

Not one but two made-for-TV movies about *The Partridge Family* in the span of three months — what does that say about us?

That we're shallow? Nostalgic for anything that recaptures a shred of our youth, no matter how mundane? That we miss the shag haircut?

I'm no sociologist, but I'd guess it says nothing flattering, no matter what David Cassidy may say.

"Whether you loved it or hated it, it was well-written and designed, and well-crafted and well-performed," Cassidy says in a phone interview about the show that made him a teen idol. "Otherwise, it wouldn't have had the enormous impact it's had."

That impact is debatable — the show's biggest contributions to the culture so far have been an excellent VH1 *Behind the Music* episode on the show and a handful of syrupy AM radio hits notable mostly for their kitsch value. (And this from a former member of *The Partridge Family* Fan Club. Sigh. The truth hurts.)

But we'll feel tremors of the impact again Sunday, when NBC airs *The David Cassidy Story*. It was only a couple of months ago that ABC gave us *Come on Get Happy: The Partridge Family Story*, which might as well have been called *The Danny Bonaduce Story*.

The earlier movie was something of a goof, a movie so bad it was almost good. It was at least funny, although not always intentionally.

The David Cassidy Story is different. Starring Andrew Kavovit in the title role (he's quite good), this is Serious Stuff, of the successful-son-can't-get-dad's-approval variety. Cassidy is an executive producer of the movie, which portrays him in a far more flattering, dramatic light — big surprise — than the previous film.

In *Come on Get Happy*, we saw the Cassidy of legend: sulking, trapped by fame gotten by what he considered an inferior vehicle, eager to be the rock-star freak he was at heart.

In *The David Cassidy Story*, we see a thoughtful fellow longing to do Good Work.

"Can't we hold out for something with a little depth?" he asks his manager while initially turning down an audition for *The Partridge Family*.

Don't bother asking Cassidy to



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ON TV

The David Cassidy Story
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compare the two — he didn't watch the ABC movie. But he maintains that even though it may have taken a few years to realize it, he enjoyed his years on *The Partridge Family*.

"I've never not been proud of my association with it," he says from Las Vegas, where he now lives and works. "Or the fact that I became so successful from it — toured all over the world and played the biggest stadiums and arenas and had the largest fan club in history and all that stuff. But I knew that continually perpetuating that was making me more and more unhappy."

Thus the descent into booze and pills, followed by the resurrection of his career, told much more compellingly in the VH1 version.

Cassidy is something of a name-dropper, who just happens to mention that John Lennon was his friend, that he sold 25 million records, that kind of thing. Annoying, but the truth is that, in the '70s, he was phenomenally popular.

And apparently still wants to be. You'd think nothing could top the hubris of having his dead father (played by a hammy Malcolm McDowell) appear to him after David's life-and-career rebound — this ain't *Hamlet*, pal — but something can.

At the end of the movie, the real-life Cassidy appears during a concert segment, along with Kavovit, whom he coaxes into lip-syncing along with him.

It's ludicrous, although it makes one thing clear: Two movies and 25 years later, it's time for Keith Partridge to leave the stage.

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