



David Cassidy, left, is portrayed by Andy Kavovit in 'The David Cassidy Story' tonight at 9 on NBC.

# 'The David Cassidy Story' perpetuates teen idol image

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There's nothing worthwhile about "The David Cassidy Story" in traditional terms. It looks cheesy, the writing and performances seem slapdash, it's emotionally uninvolved and it obviously was made on the cheap.

But don't miss it. As a work of sheer ego, it must be seen to be believed.

The title is supposed to — but does not — say it all. "The David Cassidy Story" is a dramatized biography of the kid who was a TV star and teen-idol, pop-music star 30 years ago.

In 1970, 19-year-old Cassidy parlayed family connections into a breakout role on "The Partridge Family," a new show ABC was developing as a companion to the successful "The Brady Bunch." With his stepmother, Shirley Jones, already signed as the "Partridge" lead, Cassidy was quickly cast as Keith Partridge — the family's impossibly cute, guitar-playing lead singer/big brother.

The show became a hit and, overnight, Cassidy became the dream lover of millions of squealing girls. Equally overnight pop stardom followed.

The theme of the lumbering, tedious "David Cassidy Story," however, is not success, but suffering and sacrifice. (His, not ours.)

Trapped in the role of teen idol, we're told, was a frustrated, serious young actor. Hidden under the glittery veneer of the onstage teeny bopper, we're told, was the soul of a frustrated, creative rock musician.

And at the core of it all, we're told, was a sad little boy hungry for the love of his father — the alcoholic, womanizing, success-turned-bitter-failure, emotionally remote Jack Cassidy.

Only Jack, played by Malcolm McDowell, comes across as the least

bit believable, and the character's credibility owes more to the persistence of the actor than the script by Duane Poole.

As for the rest, well, there's a lot of talk about David's creative gifts, but no evidence of it. His suffering appears to consist of sweating after concerts, avoiding prepubescent female stalkers, staying in cheap hotels on the road and kvetching about how "all the songs are starting to sound the same."

Well, knock me down and call me bubblegum.

Other gems of dialogue include the following:

■ "Can't we hold out for something with a little depth?" (David to his manager.)

■ "It's out of control, like my life." (David to his mother.)

■ "Why can't you just be proud of me?" (David to his father.)

■ And the always popular, "Listen, man. I love you, but you're turning into someone I don't even know anymore." (Nicky to his best friend, David.)

Cassidy clearly has suffered enough, and there would seem to be little point in criticizing a throw-away TV movie about the guy.

Except that one of the executive producers responsible for inflicting this film on viewers is David Cassidy. Except that it is based on the 1994 biography of David Cassidy written by David Cassidy.

Except that the real David Cassidy apparently still regards himself as such a superstar/artiste that he has the gall to insert himself, Doppelganger-like, into the movie's final scene.

That's right, there on a rock-concert stage playing guitar and singing together — OK, lip-and-finger-syncing — are both David Cassidy and Andrew Kavovit, the actor who has played him in the film.