

David Cassidy plays all octaves now

When David Cassidy begins an interview by saying he can't wait to get it over with so he can end the day, you brace yourself.

This is the guy, after all, who's spent the better part of his life trying to distance himself from the squeaky-clean image of Keith Partridge, the shaggy-maned heartthrob on "The Partridge Family," a squeaky-clean television show about a squeaky-clean family band.

The past few years have seen a resurgence in Cassidy's popularity, sparked in no small part by a slew of television bios that dig up dirt on the Partridge clan. In all of them, Cassidy is portrayed as a talented musician who had a yearning for Jimi Hendrix but was instead forced to play sugary pop for four years, until finally quitting the series in 1974.

In the ensuing decades, as he fought to remove the sticky bubblegum residue from his name, he gained a reputation for being sensitive about his past.

So you brace yourself for a cranky David Cassidy — and you're pleasantly surprised that it never comes. Instead, he's gracious, funny and even willing to revisit the old "Partridge Family" lore.

What gives?

"I was never uncomfortable with the 'Partridge Family,'" Cassidy said recently at the end of an all-day series of press and radio interviews. "I was never uncomfortable with the fact that it had a tremendous impact and was so successful. I just didn't want to be a nostalgia act. I wanted to go on and have a present, have a front (ended) career.

"And it took me a long time to create that, to where people recognized me for my talent as opposed to this demi-god. I

SHOW INFO:

Who: David Cassidy
When: 9 p.m. Dec. 14
Where: Harrah's Reno, Sammy's Showroom
Cost: \$29.95
Details: (800) 427-7247
Web: www.harrahs.com

wanted to create other work. I wanted to do other things to express myself artistically and creatively."

Perhaps it's because Cassidy has been able to accomplish those goals, in both music and theater, that he's grown more at ease with his teen idol past. He recently released a new CD in the United Kingdom, "Then and Now," for which he recorded a few new tracks and re-recorded some of his old hits. The CD is slated for a U.S. release in early 2002. He's taking a break from his busy theater schedule in Las Vegas for a tour, performing songs that encompass his entire career.

"I went on my Web site (www.davidcassidy.com), and asked fans to give me the top five requests of songs they'd like me to do," he said. "I was pretty fascinated by the results. 'Cherish' was by far the No. 1 most requested song, I guess because I hadn't done it in so many years. I was kind of surprised by that. Two of the top five were on my last CD, 'Old Trick, New Dog,' which was out in '98. I was surprised by that as well.

"I guess that's what it takes now to have a sustained career, that people like the work you do now as well as the work you did back then."

When Cassidy said goodbye to Keith



David Cassidy

Marilyn Newton/Reno Gazette-Journal file

Partridge, he did so at the peak of his popularity. He had almost single-handedly revived the teen idol format from the midst of acid rock.

When he re-emerged, there were the failures, like the short-lived television series, "David Cassidy — Man Undercover." He hit pay dirt when he again combined singing and acting.

This time, the conduit wasn't television, but theater. Cassidy starred in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" on Broadway, co-starred in "Blood Brothers" with Shaun in New York, and produced, wrote and starred in "At the Copa" with

Sheena Easton at the Rio in Vegas. In 1990, he went back in the recording studio and scored his first Top 30 pop hit in 18 years, "Lyin' to Myself."

All this activity has introduced him to a new generation of fans.

"The fans who were kids in the '70s, their kids are into it now, and it's really wild," Cassidy said. "Today, I must have had 50 people come up to me and say, 'I saw you in 'Blood Brothers,' I saw you in Vegas, I saw you in this and that.' So it's really about the work. If you keep doing good work, that's where careers are built."

Knight Ridder Newspapers