



David Cassidy, star of television and Broadway, has become a draw on the casino stage as well. He performs May 26 at the Plaza at Harrah's Reno.

Photos by Marilyn Newton/Reno Gazette-Journal

He thinks he loves it

Cassidy finds balance between career, family

BY NEIL BARON

Come on everybody — that includes David Cassidy — come on get happy. There's a whole lot of laughing and singing he'll be bringing, so come on get happy. Cassidy has a dream he'll be coming to Reno, opening the Plaza at Harrah's Reno for the summer. With a 13-piece band, he'll be playing a free show, so come on down and sing with the man.

Actor, singer, TV star and stage entertainer, he's sure to make you happy. And himself happy. And Harrah's happy, yeah.

Five months into the new millennium, Cassidy is happier than he's ever been. But not on the morning of the day he gave this interview. It seems he was confined to his bathroom for four hours because of food poisoning he contracted from a restaurant he dined in the night before.

But despite the misery of the short-term ailment, Cassidy spoke cheerfully of his life, his family and his career.

His happiness stems from many places. Of course, it all begins at his Las Vegas home that he shares with his wife, Sue Shifrin-Cassidy, and their 10-year-old son, Beau.

But it was a major change in his career that has allowed Cassidy to spend time at home with his family. And now, for the first time in 10 years, Cassidy is preparing for a national tour, with more than 30 of those dates working for Harrah's properties.

Cassidy perhaps is still best known for playing the role of Keith Partridge in the 1970 television series, "The Partridge Family," which also starred

SHOW INFO:

Who: David Cassidy
When: 7:30 p.m. May 26
Where: The Plaza at Harrah's Reno
Cost: Free
Details: (800) 427-7247

his stepmother, Shirley Jones. The 49-year-old has been something of a workaholic the past 10 years.

He starred in the Broadway play, "Blood Brothers," from 1991-93. Then he spent one year on a "Blood Brothers" national tour. Then six months in London followed by four more months in Toronto, Canada.

The day "Blood Brothers" closed, Cassidy moved his family to Las Vegas and took the lead role in the \$75 million MGM Grand hit show, "EFX." That was a demanding role physically, especially since he underwent foot surgery but continued to perform nonetheless.

When Cassidy left the role in 1998, the MGM Grand took out full-page ads in two Las Vegas newspapers, thanking Cassidy for bringing more than 1 million paid customers to the show.

He won numerous accolades from the Las Vegas press, including best entertainer and entertainer of the year. After "EFX," he teamed with writer-producer Don Reo to create the successful "The Rat Pack is Back," which plays at the Sahara Hotel. He also wrote, produced and starred in a

semi-autobiographical show, "David Cassidy at the Copa," at the Rio All-Suite Casino Resort with Sheena Easton.

It was good, it was successful and it was fun. But it also exacted a price on Cassidy's life.

"I had two shows, 77 employees and was working seven days a week," Cassidy said by phone from his home in Las Vegas. "Basically, I had no time for my family and the rest of the things I wanted to do in my life. It just never seemed to end."

Why Cassidy, who has released 18 albums, allowed himself to take on so many projects is a mystery to himself. In part, it was because he wasn't satisfied with all the success he had in the 1970s when he had seven chart-topping singles with the Partridge Family and five as a solo artist.

That turned into the 1980s, a time of immense pain but great emotional growth for Cassidy. He fell deeply short of money and had two marriages fall

apart. His career had stalled. That began to change when

Cassidy changed his outlook on life and took the role in "Blood Brothers." In the 1990s, there was more work than Cassidy could seemingly handle, though handle it he did. His press kit includes several dozen interviews; it makes one wonder where he found the time to talk to the press.

Still, the constant work began to wear on him. How did he go from the famine of the 1980s to the gluttonous feast of the 1990s?

"You'd have to be my shrink to really understand that," Cassidy said, laughing. "He understands, and I'm getting a grasp on it. I have a tremendous drive, and I love the work. It's never been about the fame or the money or any of that. It's just I've been provided so many fantastic opportunities that I have a difficult time saying no. And also, when you have ideas that you want to do creatively and you have the opportunity to do them, you don't think about the consequences."

Cassidy gives credit, not blame, for his drive to his late father, actor Jack Cassidy.

"I have a great work ethic that I learned from my father," he said. "He taught me that professionalism should be foremost in everything that I do. I have a responsibility. If this is going to be my work, then I have to dedicate myself to the idea that I'm going to be the best I can be every single night. You never just walk through it."

Cassidy describes the feeling he has on stage as being in "The Zone," much like Los Angeles Lakers guard Kobe Bryant has been in the past several weeks during the NBA playoffs.

"It's an indescribable experience," he said. "It's something I can't articulate because it really is difficult



Cassidy puts real feeling into his singing at a recent show at Harrah's Lake Tahoe.

to define. But it keeps me loving what I do. It's not a job."

Cassidy said he feels blessed that his fans have stuck by him during the good and bad times of his 30-year career.

And now, with the Las Vegas shows behind him and a much lighter schedule planned for this year, Cassidy said he feels a great sense of balance between his professional and personal life.

"I'm having the best time I've ever had in my life," he said. "Working six to eight shows a month as opposed to six to eight a week is a totally different world. I get to go on vacation like normal people. I get to go to my son's baseball games. I've actually gone out to see a couple movies, which is something I literally haven't done in 10 years. I've been a workaholic, which is a term I'm not

comfortable with. I'm much more interested in being on stage and doing the best I can and also doing the best I can in my personal life. This has provided me with a great balance."

Cassidy's hits include:

- ◆ "I Woke Up in Love This Morning"
- ◆ "Doesn't Somebody Want to be Wanted"
- ◆ "Breaking Up Is Hard to Do"
- ◆ "I Think I Love You"
- ◆ "Cherish"
- ◆ "Could It Be Forever"
- ◆ "How Can I Be Sure"
- ◆ "Rock Me Baby"
- ◆ "Lying to Myself"

Cassidy has garnered many Grammy nominations and 18 of his recordings have reached gold or platinum status, including four consecutive multi-platinum releases. He estimates he's sold more than 25 million records.

Cassidy, who is a big baseball fan who grew up in New York and loves the Yankees, will bring a five-piece horn section, three singers and four other players to Harrah's Reno. He'll perform a selection of his old hits as well as some newer material and a few covers.

"They've been with me for 18 months now," he said. "We played 356 shows together last year. We've done only 15 shows this year. I'm going to work less and try that much harder when I am working. And I'll have that much more energy and enthusiasm

for it. We're going to blow the roof off the place. So we're really looking forward to coming and playing Reno."

Neil Baron is a Sparks free-lance writer.