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Cassidy gets happy over whirlwind career



Scripps Howard News Service

David Cassidy performs "At the Copa," a show he produced and starred in at the Rio Casino Resort in Las Vegas.

Former 'Partridge Family' star quits Vegas, returns to touring, recording

By Mark Wyckoff

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Las Vegas has it all, right? Pyramids, castles, beaches, the New York City skyline, Venetian canals ... even the Eiffel Tower.

But what happens when the thrill of living in such a garish desert mirage starts to wear thin? If you're entertainer David Cassidy, you put your \$4 million European-style mansion on the market, talk your wife and sixth-grade son into making another big move and follow your heart to the balmy shores of South Florida. Fort Lauderdale, to be exact.

"It's paradise," said Cassidy, who turned 53 Saturday. "My wife and I were just talking about it this morning when we were walking on the beach. She said, 'You know, I don't think I want to leave this place.'"

Who could blame her? In the past decade, Cassidy and his wife, songwriter Sue Shifrin, have bought, remodeled and then sold almost 10 homes, zig-zagging coast-to-coast as Cassidy's career caught fire again after an '80s lull that left him

broke and wondering if he'd ever break out of the shadow of "The Partridge Family," the 1970-74 ABC-TV sitcom that transformed him into an international singing superstar.

His travel odyssey, and the accompanying career renaissance that ultimately landed him in Las Vegas, began in 1993 when British theater impresario Bill Kenwright handpicked him to star in the Broadway company of "Blood Brothers." Suddenly, it was so long Sherman Oaks, hello Manhattan.

In the ensuing years, the couple settled back in California's San Fernando Valley briefly, moved to Ridgefield, Conn., then pulled up stakes again when Cassidy was tapped to headline the high-tech Vegas production show "EFX" at the MGM Grand hotel in Vegas.

In the five years he worked in Vegas, he not only starred in "EFX" but created and produced the musicals "The Rat Pack is Back!" and "At the Copa," executive-produced the short-lived Fox sitcom "Ask Harriet" and released the album "Old Trick, New Dog," which featured the

Top 25 Billboard hit "No Bridge I Wouldn't Cross." In December 2000, Las Vegas Life magazine declared him "The New Mr. Vegas."

But the torrid pace — welcome though it was after so many years fighting to get quality work — finally drained him.

"It's funny how your life flourishes," he said. "But I was working seven days a week, all day and all night. There was no life; it was all about work."

He finally decided to scale things back, closing "Copa" after a year in early 2001 and refocusing his energies on touring and recording. By the end of the year, he had recorded and released "Then and Now" in England.

The CD, which featured Cassidy faithfully revisiting such past hits as "C'mon Get Happy" and "Rock Me Baby," and putting his own soulful spin on a handful of classic covers, shot to No. 5 on the British album charts and stayed in the Top 75 for 15 weeks and went platinum. Seven months later, the CD charted in America, extending Cassidy's span of Billboard

chart hits to 32 years.

Cassidy has been touring behind the record ever since.

Cassidy's current live set fuses his love for classic R&B (think Bill Withers), British Invasion rock (think Beatles) and his own brand of buoyant '70s pop (yes, he'll do the 1970 No. 1 hit "I Think I Love You"). As an encore, he's been doing Bob Seger's "Hollywood Nights," a tune the New York-born Cassidy says perfectly captures the essence of the years he spent growing up as a teenager in sunny SoCal.

He may record "Hollywood Nights" for his next Universal studio album, which goes into pre-production next week, but he's unsure if the rock tune will fit in with the midnight mood he has in mind for the CD.

He's also hoping to finally cut a mid-'90s tune he wrote in Ridgefield called "New York City Life." Cassidy is a little wary how Universal execs will react to his desire to create such a moody album.

"I don't know if my record company is of the same mind," he said. "So therein lies the rub."

If you want to make records today, you have to follow a specific directive. There is a specific audience they feel they want to reach and they feel in doing market research they want X. And I'm I'm happy to do X as long as I can do some Y and some Z, you know?"

On Saturday, he guest stars on "The Agency," the CIA drama his half-brother Shaun Cassidy executive produces for CBS.

In the episode, titled "War, Inc.," he plays Everett Price, an investment banking CEO who is bankrolling the murder of Saudi royal family members.