

Zac Efron is the new David Cassidy

CAN WE TALK?

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The other day I got a shocker, complete with dropped chin and bulging eyes.

My neighbors brought over a Tiger Beat magazine, which I thought had died when David Cassidy's hairline receded and the Monkees grew old and pot-gutted.

Tiger Beat was the magazine stapled with the huge posters inside, the hottest gossip sheet on the shelves in the '60s and '70s when Bobby Sherman and Donny Osmond ruled girls' hearts.

If my sister and I were good, Mama would buy us a Tiger Beat and grab a Baby Ruth and movie magazine for herself.

Tiger Beat got rolling in the '60s, giving us junior high adolescents heart-pounding, cry-if-I-can't-marry-him crushes on the likes of Davy Jones, The Beatles, Jack Wild, certain Partridge family members such as . . . drumroll . . . David Cas-

sidy, who reigned king on and between the covers for four years.

Donny Osmond, with the release of the family's 1971 rock album, also splashed the pages for the next decade. The front cover was always a collage of teenybopper stars, though one or two typically dominated the pages and pull-out posters.

Lucky for me, I outgrew Tiger Beat, trading up for Seventeen and Glamour. Thus I missed the likes of Leif Garrett and Shaun Cassidy. One Cassidy, David, was enough.

Then came Andy Gibb, Scott Baio (Chachi from "Happy Days"), Peter Barton, and Erik Estrada, the "Chips," hottie.

Oh, and here's a shocker: the Bay City Rollers were the pop band de jour of the '70s. I only knew one girl who liked this freaky group, and she had cooties. So they said.

Over the years, the beat marched on, and in the '80s, Duran Duran, Tiffany, Debbie Gibson, Rob Lowe, Rick Mansfield, Billy Idol and Blondie took over the glossy.

When the Monkees had their comeback later in the '80s,

Tiger Beat was waiting on them and the magazine soared.

In the '90s, New Kids on the Block, Paula Abdul (now a zonked out judge on "American Idol") and Vanilla Ice grabbed Tiger's headlines and pages.

The strange thing is, most of the people my age (old as dirt) had NO idea Tiger Beat was still purring, if not trying to roar. But the teen scene got hot: with "Beverly Hills 90210," the Spice Girls, Hanson, the Back Street Boys, and N'Sync, making the mag as popular as it was during the Cassidy boys' domination.

I learned all this good stuff at www.sunshineday.com/neugast/gallery/tigerbeat.html

The reason I even looked it up is plain old curiosity after my child got a copy. I nearly died when I saw Tiger Beat in her hands, a flood of emotions and memories returning.

Today, it's all about stars of the Disney Channel and "High School Musical" parts one and two.

I walked into my daughter's room one night and 24 posters of Zac Efron — the new David Cassidy and star of "HSM" —

covered every wall, even the mirror.

"Who is that?" I asked.

"Mah-aaaaam! You don't know? That's Zac Efron only the cutest boy on the planet."

Suddenly, I was 9 and crying because Bobby Sherman had a girlfriend and the little record cut out from the back of my cereal box had torn.

"He IS cute," I said about Efron.

"Gross. That's just sick."

"Why?"

"Because you're old."

"Well, after watching 'High School Musical 2,' I was impressed with the quality of singing, dancing and acting and decided this show was wholesome fun, something not seen in a while."

"It's still gross if you like him."

"Oh, I don't really. I'm in love with Davy Jones."

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