

# 'Partridge Family' idol leaves the nest

BY JIM FARBER

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**H**e registers under his own name now.

When David Cassidy checks into the Mayflower Hotel, he needs no aliases and wants none. In fact, the whole point of his trip here — along with his trek to 16 other cities in as many days — is to convince radio people and the press that after 20 years of living in the shadow of "The Partridge Family's" velvetreen bell-bottoms, he is no longer a human dangle.

"Are people going to think I'm cool?" he wonders. "Will they think I'm lame? Or just a novelty?"

The strain of such questions, and the travel required to answer them, doesn't show with Cassidy, but it's beginning to be felt. Slumping into a chair overlooking Central Park, he says, "One forgets that one isn't 19 anymore."

**LOOKING AT HIM**, one could easily forget that, too. Though Cassidy turned 40 this year, he still twinkles. A few extra lines may mar his wide, eager face, but his smiles still flash and his shag still shines.

What's different about Cassidy today from the guy he was 10 years ago is that he no longer launches into pitched speeches about what a misunderstood artist he is.

On this trip down the possible comeback trail, bolstered by the appearance next month of his first U.S. album release in 12 years, Cassidy finally seems willing to accept his old self. "Ninety percent of what I did back then, I look back and embrace," he says.

These days he grandly refers to his old "Partridge Family" TV show (an instant hit in 1970) as "the last gasp of innocence in America."

The last belch, critics might say. Of course, Cassidy himself claims that at the time he also had conflicting feelings about the show. When recording such chirpy Partridge Family hits as "I Think I Love You," the singer maintains: "I was going to Hendrix concerts. I was playing in blues bands."



David Cassidy of "Partridge Family" fame recently turned 40.

Even now, Cassidy bristles when people compare his career with that of Donny Osmond. Growing up, Cassidy insists, "Donny and I were the antithesis of each other. He was all of that (innocent stuff). I was wild, very rebellious, a troublemaker."

**CASSIDY SAYS** he didn't straighten out until late in his teens, at which time he took up acting, eventually landing the part as the weeny-bop idol of a generation.

The first time he got a chance to act as anything other than Keith Partridge in public was his infamous

1972 Rolling Stone interview, which came complete with confessions of drug sprees and near-naked photos. "It was the first time people heard my voice," he says.

After that, Cassidy tried to get rock respect with several albums in the mid-'70s, but none proved convincing. After doing regional theater, some TV, and making one or two successful albums in England, Cassidy's first U.S. deal in more than a decade came as a fluke.

When two wisecracking deejays started making fun of him on L.A.'s

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KLOS last year, Cassidy (who happened to be listening) decided to call up and get in on the joke.

The deejays invited him down, and Cassidy spent some four hours on the air, during which time he took the opportunity to play three demos he'd been working on. "By the end of the four hours, I had three separate offers" from record companies, Cassidy boasts.

**SINCE THAT TIME**, Cassidy has been sending up his ersatz psychedelic past at politically savvy events — the International Rock Awards, The New Music Seminar, and MTV's Video-Music Awards. The last-named event even featured a reunion with Partridge sister Susan Dey.

To further embrace his cuddly history, Cassidy says if he gets the chance to tour for the new album (which sounds like an even less substantial Bon Jovi), he'll perform several old Partridge Family faves. Enough time has elapsed, he feels, and anyway, the world seems more forgiving of former teen idols these days.

Just look at last year's shock comeback of Donny Osmond.

Still, Cassidy says he's not surprised by Donny's resurrection. "If you've sold as many records as Donny has, or as I did, people will always want to hear you," the singer says in dead earnest. "There will always be people who'll think you're cool."

Or at the very least, who'll think you're cute.

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