

## Schoenberger, Frances: Barfuss in Hollywood

### Translation:

...Oh, if only they were all so uncomplicated, I sighed even then. With David Cassidy, the idol of screaming teenagers, it was not nearly as easy. During the week he filmed his TV show *The Partridge Family*, in the evenings he worked in the recording studio, and at the weekend he went on tour one of his first big performances was in New York City at Madison Square Garden in front of 20,000 screaming girls. In the Houston Astrodome he broke all records: two performances with 56,000 tickets sold each. All he had to do was raise one hand and the girls went wild. Bravo commissioned me to approach him. In America, the excitement surrounding the *The Partridge Family* had already died down, but in Germany the David Cassidy phenomenon had only just begun. Soon more fan mail was pouring in from there than from the rest of the world. David and his management had learned their lesson. They were particularly cautious with the press, which David had had enough of. A Rolling Stone cover with a half-naked Cassidy was considered scandalous and almost ruined his career. It was nerve-racking to get close to him. Countless phone calls, exchanges of letters, taking people out to dinner. He was surrounded by people who were agents, managers, actors, and each of them tried to keep everyone else away from him. The press agent kept fobbing me off. So, I wrote a letter of complaint to Ruth Aarons, Cassidy's manager, with a hint about how many records could be sold in Germany. But it was only through the connection with the photographer Henry Diltz, whom I had met during my time in New York, that my first appointment came about. I had a stack of Bravos with David Cassidy on the cover under my arm - I quickly learned that cover images can break the ice. I was allowed to visit Cassidy during filming. A group of teenagers were gathered at the entrance to the TV studio in North Hollywood, hoping to at least catch a glimpse of him as they drove in or out. When I saw him, I remembered the words of my editor-in-chief Gert Braun: "Girls in puberty don't like hairy guys. They feel shy and afraid of masculinity." The scrawny David looked like a girl with a male body. Pretty face, no beard, flowing shoulder-length hair, shorter than me at 1.72 meters. With his cute face and mischievous smile, 19-year-old Cassidy seemed completely believable in his role as 16-year-old Partridge. *The Partridge Family* was the story of a band consisting of a mother and her five children. David played the eldest son. The Partridges rumbled from place to place in a funny bus to give concerts. What teenager wouldn't want to be part of this family and have David as a big brother? Cassidy's fan club grew and grew and was soon bigger than this of the Beatles or Elvis. In the days before the invention of the video recorder and the endless repeats on the many private channels, this show was a real hit: on a Friday evening at 8:30 p.m., people sat in front of the television - or they missed the show.

After each scene, David disappeared into his trailer with a separate sleeping area and kitchen. In Hollywood, these trailers are the symbol of power, and their size is carefully negotiated by the agents. And only as a star do you get your own trailer. David was constantly on the phone. I could observe him. I found him charming and cheeky, but at the same time extremely reserved, cautious and aloof. He was wearing jeans and a striped shirt. Around his neck was a shell necklace from Hawaii. His hair was freshly washed and blow-dried. His facial skin was suffering from the daily mask. I discovered spots. Big news for teenagers in Germany! At some point it was my turn to ask embarrassing questions: "What is your favorite color? Why are you a vegetarian? Who is your favorite star? What is your favorite animal? What is your favorite food? What size shoes are you? Do you have a talisman?" Without Henry Diltz's humorous support I would not have gotten any answers. Henry had let me in on how I should deal with David. "He hates this teen star act. Try to take him seriously." I was relieved to have finally found a direct line to David. We had fun together. That's why he even agreed to an exclusive photo shoot for Bravo. I was in seventh heaven because that meant more to me than just a report.

I happily drove home in my car. And then came the invitation by phone: "Come to the swim over, then we'll chat by the pool." David lived on a small ranch with an iron gate and a long driveway in the Encino district of the San Fernando Valley. It is oppressively hot there in the summer, much hotter than on the Hollywood side. You couldn't see anything from the street, no neighbors could see in. His mailbox was three times as big as usual. The main house was overgrown with bushes and trees. Behind it was a swimming pool. Opposite a huge orange grove my Californian dream. Next to it was a small guest house with two rooms. And a doghouse for

Bullseye, David's best friend, for whom he once rented a private jet so that he could take him to Colorado to record records. A cat was purring on the kitchen table. A lace tablecloth on the dining table. The living room was full of instruments. A drum kit stood in the middle of the room and guitars leaned against the wall. Typical bachelor furniture. "Frances, don't be embarrassed. Come into the bedroom. I can't get up yet," I heard from the other corner of the house. David was still in bed in the early afternoon. He was reading his favorite newspaper, *Racing Form*, a paper about horse racing, and moaning: "I was in the recording studio all night. I can't open my eyes, they're swollen. I can't go swimming. The sun, the pool, it's too bright. Oh dear, I'm tired. What a life!" He groaned and yawned. At his side was a girl I hadn't even noticed in the big bed at first. He changed his playmates more often than his bedclothes...

When I was the only female journalist to accompany him on his European tour, I assisted him in selecting the girls. In Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Paris and Munich, the girls were waiting for him everywhere, in hotel lobbies, at the airport, at the back entrance of the concert hall, in the elevator. The roadies also benefited from this. Some girls only spent the night with a roadie to get closer to David Cassidy. David had a watchful eye - he wasn't interested in those who were too young, he was extremely cautious and a big appetite. "Hung like a donkey," Henry told me. What does that mean? Let's put it this way: Nature had endowed his manhood very generously. On the way to Munich, David pointed to a photo of a blonde girl in a *Bravo* photo article: "I like her." Then she was actually standing at the airport. David wanted to disappear with her straight away to his room in the Hotel Four Seasons. But Bubi Heilemann, the photographer, scolded him: "First we have to work!" Smiles for the camera, in different clothes, visit to the editorial office, autograph signing. As soon as their duties were done, the two ended up naked in bed, the *Bravo* girl between his legs. David waved Henry into the room. He beamed: "Go ahead and take photos... Isn't that a beautiful sight?" Puppa Armbrüster, a Munich groupie, travelled to Los Angeles to follow him. But an affair with David never lasted more than a few nights. "I don't have time for a steady girlfriend," he explained to me. "I work 18 hours a day for months and have to hide from the public. There's no chance of developing a deeper, serious relationship with a girl. Too many people cling to me. No possibility of living my own life at all." When the end of *The Partridge Family* was in sight in 1974, he seemed relieved: "I never dreamed of being a pop star. I wanted to be a decent actor and not a freak on stage who made little girls scream and squeal. There were times when I felt invincible like James Bond. Then totally lost again, Magazines wrote about me, the Messiah come! I said to myself, my God, this is absolutely crazy! I'm only here to sing. I was simply pushed on stage, even though I was hoarse and couldn't bow at all. Others called me dangerous, unhealthy, when 50 girls fainted at a concert in Australia. "

He quit at 25: "I couldn't stand the way people acted crazy when I walked into a room and always felt like I had to apologize for being a normal guy. Compliments are wonderful, but there comes a time when you react adversely: 'Take your hand out of my shirt, I don't want you to touch my chest. When you're so successful, everyone wants to touch you in the hope that it will rub off.'"

After his big world tour, David Cassidy withdrew and lived according to his own rhythm for a while. He got up at 6 in the evening and went to bed at 9 in the morning. He no longer let anyone get close to him, except his psychiatrist, whom he visited at least three times a week. During this time, his father, with whom he had not had a good relationship, also died. Back from his voluntary exile, David Cassidy tried for years to make a comeback as a singer and actor. But he was never as successful as he was as a teen star. Today he lives with his third wife and their son in Florida. Far away from Hollywood. At 50, the circle is completed: On his website [www.davidcassidy.com](http://www.davidcassidy.com) he is marketing the CD *Then and Now* a collection of his hits, with photos from then and now. He still has the same fans as back then. They have just gotten older, just like him. 40-year-old mothers who are reliving their innocent teenage times back then, flowers landed on the stage at his performances, today underwear flies...