

David Cassidy

The invasion of American teenyboppers in the early 1970s was led in no small part by David Cassidy, the cow-eyed star of top-rated US sitcom *The Partridge Family*. Following in the footsteps of *The Monkees* and *The Archies*, the show featured an all-singing, all-dancing family whose adventures were a flimsy premise to sell records by the shedload. Head of the family was actress Shirley Jones, who was in reality David Cassidy's stepmother, but the star of the show was without doubt 21-year-old Cassidy himself.

After the Partridges topped the US chart in 1970 with 'I Think I Love You', it was decided that Cassidy's profile was sufficiently high to warrant a solo career of his own. It was an immediate success, and in 1971 he topped the charts with 'Cherish'.

To his credit, Cassidy was never comfortable with the teen idol image that had been created for him. He regarded himself as a bona fide singer, and he found the frenzied adulation of prepubescent girls hard to cope with. Yet his attempts at proving he was not a clean-cut heart-throb only served to increase his popularity. When he appeared semi-naked in an edition of *Rolling Stone* in 1972, it brought expressions of disquiet from Middle America but drove his fanbase in the UK to even higher levels of excitement. Indeed it was in Britain that Cassidy found himself spending much of his time on tour, where the ceaseless mania he created began to have worrying side-effects on his own physical and mental wellbeing. At one concert, he collapsed from exhaustion and had to be hospitalised; and in 1974, while performing at London's White City, he could only look on in horror as the crowd spilled out of control, leading to over 1,000 teeny fans needing medical attention. When, a few days later, one 14-year-old girl died in hospital of injuries sustained that night, it sent Cassidy into the early stages of a long and painful battle with his inner demons.

'I'm going to stop touring,' he told reporters. 'I've been touring for three years; I'm tired and I feel like I've done it all the way I wanted to do it. I hope my music always changes. I had no control in the beginning. I was always pushing to do things differently, but I wasn't able to.'

Suffering with drug and alcohol problems, he all but retired in 1975, spending three years living anonymously in Los Angeles.

His return, in a 1978 TV movie, won him an Emmy award and, at last, recognition that he was more than simply a vacuous teen pin-up (ironically, this mantle had been picked up by his stepbrother Sean, who enjoyed a brief moment in the sun in the mid-1970s). Cassidy's subsequent career was spent largely on the stage, where he showed his acting prowess in such productions as *Joseph And The Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *Blood Brothers*. His last meaningful chart success came in 1985, with a Top 10 UK hit, 'The Last Kiss', proving that even if his army of female fans were now in their 30s, they had not forgotten the crazy days of ten years earlier.



David Cassidy was a heart-throb in the early '70s, but the non-stop hysteria gave him a nervous breakdown

roll barely 20 years earlier was personified by MOR (middle-of-the-road) acts like Boston and Foreigner.

It was time for a change. It was time for punk.

Today, punk seems almost touching – like a sulking teenager who would then go on to get a First in Medicine from Cambridge University, a wife and kids, and a house in Tuscany. It was music that was supposed to be based on teenage anger and alienation, a three-minute, two-chord thrash that was the antidote to boring suburbia, unemployment and Peter Frampton. Yet today even the movement's standard-bearers sound respectable and even melodic compared to expletive-filled modern-day rappers like Eminem and 2Pac. The reason for this is that, at its heart, punk was as cynical a marketing exercise as