

**NEW YORK'S** Central Park, just before sunrise. On a dusty bench, beneath layers of rustling newspaper, a tramp sleeps, fitfully. Stumbling towards the bench comes another tramp. He's drunk and is singing 'Roll out The Barrel' in a slurred voice. "Newspaper, eh?" he mutters suddenly, seeing the improvised bed-clothes. 'The National Tattler', I'll wake this guy up.

"Excuse me, but I wanna borrow your paper. It's nearly dawn and you won't be needing it much longer, will you?" The tramp groans as the paper is taken away. "Good God, listen to this," says the intruder. "Some of these people you read about just can't be real, can they?"

"Look here, Teen idol finds girl in arms of other man! Fading teen idol Da idy... Da iddy? Oh, Goddam, there's a hole in the middle of the name, we'll never know who he is, ... is reported missing. He's got no money, he's broken hearted."

### Silver

"Oh well, what do we care anyway? We're just two hoboes and — hey, wake up! I recognise you, you're grimy, your clothes are tatty, but you're him, you're this Da idy! Right?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'm him," comes the reply.

"You don't look too well."

"You've got no idea, man," he says. He's in silver. Dressed in silver bomber jacket and silver trousers covered with curious bird-like transfers, David Cassidy reclines slowly on the softly padded chair and explains.

"That was something I had in my head. I knew I had to do it, I had to bridge a gap with it and do it."

The story of the bum and the mysterious fallen teenage star (adapted above) appears as a dialogue track on the new Cassidy album, 'The Higher They Climb, The Harder They Fall'. Extraordinary.

"There was one guy I knew who would do the track with me," Cassidy continues. "I've been a fan of his records for years. His name's Phil Austin and he works with the Fire-sign Theatre. They're fantastic. To me, they make Monty Python look humourless. They're really funny."

"Austin and I sat down for an hour together and wrote the thing out. When we got around to recording it, I was in stitches, I was biting my wrists trying not to laugh."

### Adulation

"It was three in the morning and I'd been working, like, 12 or 15 hours already. Austin's just all over it and I'm snoring on the other side of the speaker. I had to bring myself completely down because I was blowing it, I was losing it and he was right there."

"I'd been delirious all day, working and overdubbing vocals. We did the dialogue at the last moment, after all the music had been completed. I think it's really great. I think it really works."

Why did you do it? "Why? Well, it's tongue-in-cheek, you know, it's not serious, come on. I'm not busted, I'm not broke. It's like ... it might have happened a couple of years ago. It was like making a movie, it's not me. Not all of it, anyhow."

It was more than you might have expected, less than you could have hoped for. When I arrived at RCA there were just nine or 10 Cassidy fans in sight, wearing only slightly fraying fan club scarves and rosettes; by the time I got around to interviewing him, their numbers had swelled to around 150. A fair amount, I suppose, and they were making quite a din, mostly high-pitched variations of football chants. "We love you Da-

vid, oh yes we do; 'Come on David, come on David; 'D-A-V-I-D — David! Etcetera."

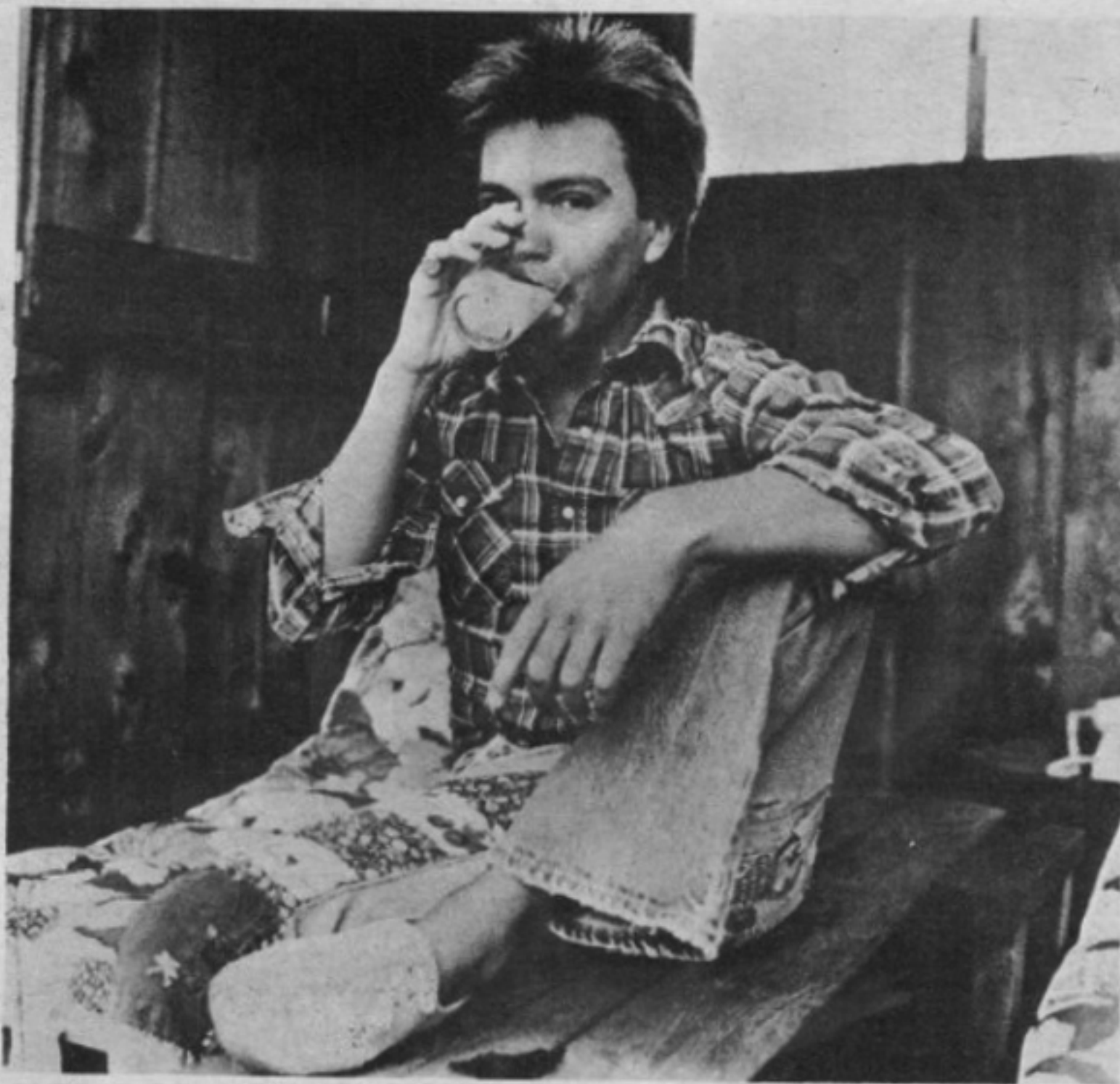
The stop-start interview, for reasons which will become apparent later, took place on RCA's roof patio, so the row-de-dow was quite obtrusive. Workmen on scaffolding adjacent to us pointed out where Cassidy was sitting to the fans below. While some girls were content to stay and stare up from the road, others climbed up fire escapes or forced entry into nearby buildings to get close. Periodically, they would appear on other roofs and by chimney stacks to look in our direction.

Cassidy revelled in this adulation, yet somehow found a balcony about twenty feet to the left, where no fan had yet infiltrated, rather more interesting.

He's cocky and smooth-talking, sure of himself and supremely confident of the reaction that a flash of greying

*'Take your clothes off, come on, come on'*

# Cassidy: the monster on the patio



## DAVID CASSIDY TALKS TO GEOFF BARTON

(or so a recent Daily claimed) quiffed hair, or the merest glimpse of silken trouser leg will bring.

Cassidy mania is undoubtedly on the wane, but there are still hordes of diehards willing to risk life and limb for there hero. I gestured to the fans below and asked Cassidy if he still found all this surprising.

"No," comes the answer, quickly. "Does that sound really conceited and blasé? But no, it doesn't surprise me at all. I accept it. I've been doing it a long time and you just kind of get used to it. As blasé as that sounds, it's true. It's like anything else, you just accept the fact that it's going to be there. If it's not there, it's OK. If it is there, it's OK

too, it doesn't hassle me. Really."

"I like turning people on. It's nice, I think everybody likes to do that. It's great to know somebody's digging you."

You've probably heard talk of the new Cassidy album. Released in July, it's far removed from the Partridge family, from the 'Didn't We Have Ourselves Some Kind Of Summer', 'How Can I Be Sure' stuff. As is apparent from the album's title (and from the dialogue track), Cassidy is anxious to shove all that teen star, chest: 37 inches, inside leg: 31 inches, favourite wild animal: jaguar, miscellaneous dislikes: American food, lime green jelly irrelevance well and truly behind him. He's enthusiastic about the record and considers it a huge departure from his previous recorded efforts.

"I was playing a lot on it, I co-produced it with Bruce Johnston. I think there are

some real fine things on the album. I started progressing with it, instead of getting into, like, rock and roll, I decided to try an R&B thing. Two tracks I really enjoyed doing — 'Common Thief' and 'Darlin', that old Beach Boy's number. I wanted to get into an um - cha - um - cha feel on it, as opposed to the same old thing."

"But I don't think it really represents me as a writer. There are actually a lot of songs that I have written already that didn't go on the album. I think they're perhaps better than the ones that did go on it, but they didn't really work within its concept so I decided to leave them for the time being."

"Consequently, I've got about five finished tunes for my next one. 'Love In Bloom', now that's a good track," he changes the subject completely. "I wrote it with Harry Nilsson. It's real teenage, that's what I like about it. Harry wrote it in 1965 and I just changed it a little to put it on the album. It's fine. Harry likes it. It's such an old number, so it's hard for him to like something around 10 years old, but he dug it, and in the end was real pleased that I did it."

The album seems, broadly, to follow some sort of concept.

### Aliases

"Concept? Oh yeah, it is, it definitely is. Its original title was 'The Rise And Fall Of Jackson Snipe', which is one of my aliases on the road. This album kind of puts a final cover on these last four or five years of my life."

At this point a dark-haired girl — not a fan — appears on that left-hand balcony wearing a bikini, obviously preparing to sunbathe. Cassidy stops in his tracks and, distracted, blows kisses. She disappears.

"Anyway ...," he continues. "It's conceptual in as much as it deals with me as a small town boy thinking what it might be like to be a rock and roll star. Nobody wants to be movie stars any more, it's not like it used to be, everyone wants to be a rock and roll star. So, small town boy becomes pop star, you know."

He looks around himself, and sees the fans appearing on the rooftops. "God, there are a lot of birds around here," he says. "Jesus ...," his narrow eyes widen considerably.

"Yeah, well, sorry. I just ... my attention wandered a little bit, you know. What was I saying? Oh yeah, about the small town boy. Well, I had this idea and I walked in and just wrote the first track on the album, 'When I'm A Rock And Roll Star' in, like, five minutes, as quickly as that."

### Delighted

"I didn't have a song to start off with, but it suddenly came to me. I was originally going to do Elton's number, 'I'm Gonna Be A Teenage Idol', but ..."

A group of fans wander on to a roof, very close to us indeed, but they're looking in the wrong direction. "They're trying to find me, man," says Cassidy, delighted. He whistles and they turn.

"Hang on," he says to them, "hang on, I'm doing a little interview here."

"It's him." The girls run to the railings. One starts to snap pictures. Having attracted their attention, Cassidy contemptuously turns his back to them and resumes talking about the album.

"So I had to stick with a sort of storyline on the album, it was like a puzzle some of the time. I went in originally to produce it myself, but Bruce Johnston called me up and said, hey, I hear you're going to do it alone. Let me come down and listen. So he did."

He came by and I had three songs to do — 'Get It Up For Love', 'Love In Bloom' and 'Be-Bop A-Lula'. I cut them on the first night and he didn't really do anything at all. He just stayed out of my way. Then we started kind of feeling each other out and, eventually, he emerged as sort

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*'Oh my God, a man can only take so much. Get her attention for me will you? Awww. . .'*



# Cassidy: the monster on the patio

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backing vocal arranger. He's so good at that, you know, and I was real glad to have him along."

The girl on the balcony reappears. The bikini's small and revealing.

"What..." ogles Cassidy. "Oh my God, a man can only take so much. Get her attention for me will you? Awww..."

The fans on the next roof see him pandering unsuccessfully for her attentions, and turn to go. He notices and waves to them.

"See you," he whistles again, "see you soon, huh?" They're out of sight. "Look at that," he marvels. "I've disrupted everybody's day around here. They're all blown out about it."

"Anyway, what was I saying?" The screams below are getting louder, the girl in the bikini is still there. "How about, er, let's just turn this off for one second."

He switches my tape recorder off and proceeds, suggestively, to bare his shoulders to the girl on the balcony. She smiles.

## Compromised

"Where was I?" I turn the machine on again. "Oh, let me just take a minute to think about what I was saying." He takes a deep breath to compose himself. "I knew what I wanted to do with the album, I wanted it to run as a sort of story, to tell the tale about my whole teenage trip. Some of it was tongue-in-cheek, you know, but mostly it was a therapy album that I really needed to make."

"It's over now, anyhow, and I think there are some real fine moments on it. I'm into something else now, but talking about it is OK. I like some of it... I like all of it, actually. There are parts of it that I think I could have made better if I'd had the time and hadn't had to rush. I even lost my engineer in the middle of it, so recording wasn't without its ups and downs. It was the first thing I'd tried to produce and I was so preoccupied with that side of it that I think I kind of blew it as a singer."

"I was so into arranging and playing that I sort of forgot about my vocals. I compromised on my vocals a lot, I was trying to drive the band and I over sang a little here and there. I think I'll be more pleased with the next one — although I am pleased with this one. I'm just striving to be better all the time, that's what it is."

## Bowie

"It worked out all right. I liked working with Bruce Johnston — we might work together again, we might not. I'm just leaving it all open. I don't want to say that I'm definitely not or definitely going to do something. I want to leave it all open."

"I had a meeting with David Bowie about a year ago. He called me up and said, I want to produce you. I said, well, OK, let's have a talk about it. Then I thought, well, why does he want to produce me? I asked him, and he didn't really have an answer — he just said, well, where do you see yourself in five years?"

"I said, man I can't answer that. I don't even see myself in five days! So he went on the road and I split for a while and it never came together."



*'There's this girl over there in the bathing suit and I want her to take her clothes off'*

But he was, like, too definite. I don't like that.

"It's probably for the best that it didn't happen. I believe in doing what feels right at the time. I just want to keep recording and producing myself until somebody comes along who I think can do it better than me. I don't know. I'll just keep going."

She comes back again, and Cassidy goes off on a tangent. "Take your clothes off," he whispers, "come on, come on."

One of the Cassidy entourage comes out on to the patio to see what the fuss is about. Cassidy explains, "There's this girl over there in the bathing suit and I want her to take her clothes off..."

## Frustrating

By this time a little surprised, rather taken aback by Cassidy's actions, I ask him a question in an attempt to bring the interview back on to an even keel. Something like: the headline to a recent piece about you in a daily paper said that you went through 'five years of hell' as a teen star. Was it that bad?

"Really?" he says. "Yeah... there she is, there she is, see? Lovely isn't she?"

Useless. "I don't know. Five years of hell? Five years of heaven? More like five years of being on an emotional yo-yo. It was really that as opposed to being hell. I mean, there was hell in it, but there were some real high moments as well. As I say, I really like turning people on, in fact a whole lot of people got high with it all, which was fine."

"It was just unfortunate that, creatively, I was never able to do what I wanted to do. That was the most frustrating thing, that was the hell of it, constantly being rubbish to something I wasn't. I don't mind people rubbing me for something that I'm honestly responsible for, but this was just not me. I had no control over the... monster I'd become."

Below, the chants were becoming very loud indeed.

"So, after I gave it all up I went through a period of re-evaluation and deliberation. I

didn't know what I wanted to do, I didn't know who I was."

"I cut off all my hair and I said, shit, I want to start all over again. It was an important thing to do, it took me a while to come to terms with..."

"We want David!" comes the chant.

"Let me just say hello to those girls," he says, getting up from his seat. He goes over to the edge of the roof, clips his feet beneath an iron bar and leans precariously forwards. He whistles and waves and the screaming starts.

"DAAAAVID!"

"Jesus, this is lunacy," he says, on his return. "So, anyway... this is real distracting. I'm sorry if this isn't coming together. It's just real hard to take all this. It's going on, and I'm just amazed at it all, constantly."

"Anyway, I did go through an identity crisis, you know. I had waited so long to have my freedom, and then I thought, hang on a minute. Maybe I don't want to do anything ever again. I knew that I wanted to make records again eventually, but I thought I'd better cool it for a while."

## Individual

"I went to Hawaii and hung out. I relaxed, got loose a little bit, started relating to people, gradually became less of a recluse. It's taken me this long to get in touch with myself."

"It used to drive me crazy when people used to recognise me in the street because it was like recognising somebody I wasn't. I hated that. Now, I want people to recognise me, but as myself. I want to emerge as a person, as an individual with an identity and not... Keith Partridge. I would like that to happen. I think it will. But it's going to take a while."

People were queuing up in the other room, waiting to interview Cassidy after me. The powers that be reckoned that I'd had long enough. The interview finished here.

His final words: "Sorry about all the interruptions and," taking another long look at that nearby balcony, "distractions."

Extraordinary.