

WHAT MADE DAVID C

David Cassidy was a prisoner in a sordid hotel room, hiding from his screaming fans ... now,

It was just after 11pm and David Cassidy was lying in the bath in a New York hotel when his world started to fall apart. Even though it's now a decade ago, that moment is one he remembers all too vividly. He felt as though a lorryload of ice cubes had been emptied into the tub, and that a sledgehammer was smashing through his life.

He remembers it so clearly because it was a day that had begun in such triumph. At that moment he was simply the biggest pop star in the world. There were millions of women who dreamed of stripping him off and taking him to bed, and he was worth around £20 million. But the night ended in disaster and changed his life for ever.

His performance that evening was his hometown show—for 20,000 girls jammed into New York's famous Madison Square Garden. And right from the start he knew that something wasn't quite right. David says: "I was used to the girls getting hysterical, but this time it was different. The entire building seemed to rumble with their emotions. It was the most terrifying experience of my life because the girls were completely out of control, and I began to wonder whether I'd get out alive".

The security men were wondering the same thing. Outside, girls set about eight limousines waiting to take David and his group back to their hotel, ripping the cars—and themselves—to bits. In their frenzied passion they ignored their wounds—what would they do to their idol, if they got hold of him?

A fresh plan was hatched. David would be wrapped in a blanket the moment he came off stage, flung over the shoulder of one of the guards and dumped in the boot of a beaten-up Toyota—like a sack of potatoes. Only when they were well away from the area would he be allowed to ride in the car for the rest of the journey to the hotel in a murkier suburb of New York.

"The hotel was a real dive," David recalls. "It smelt disgusting and looked as though it had never been cleaned. I ran myself a hot bath, got in, lay back and then it hit me . . . I was in a state of complete shock. One moment I had been performing in front of 20,000 girls who all loved me—30 minutes later I was completely alone, in a squalid bathroom, with no money, no clothes to wear except a sweaty jumpsuit, absolutely nothing. And

for the very first time in my life, I digested my situation. I had plenty of time because I sat there, wrapped in a towel, for three hours, waiting to be collected. I thought, this is it, this is what I have been working so hard for. The kids who couldn't afford to get into one of my concerts were far richer than me, because at least they were having plenty of fun. I was having no fun at all."

Just to emphasise the point, David was picked up from that hotel and driven straight to the airport to catch a plane for Los Angeles. There he was driven to the studio for a day's filming, followed by another concert that same night. The whole process was repeated day after day. As David

concedes, he was making a fortune—but having a miserable time.

Nearly 10 years on, it's sometimes difficult to recall what Cassidy mania was really like. Every time he landed at Heathrow Airport, for instance, the whole place more or less came to a grinding halt. More than 10,000 girls would turn out to see him in scenes most people associate only with The Beatles. The first time David Cassidy stayed in London he spent five nights at The Dorchester in Park Lane—and for five days and five nights the streets around the hotel were kerb-to-kerb with girls.

The next time he came to London not one hotel would take him, so he stayed on a boat on the Thames—and a couple of launches had to stand by to pick up all the girls who tried to swim out to him.

Now David is able to look back on those days and put them in perspective. They are times he has never talked about before because, to preserve his image, he was kept well-removed from the

press. He says: "I was only 19 when we had our first No. 1 hit with the Partridge Family. I was equipped to deal with it about as well as any 19-year-old. There's just no way that you can go to a school to learn how to deal with hysteria, madness and girls going completely ga-ga.

"I was just an actor who had signed a contract to do a television show. There was no guarantee that it was ever going to be screened—and suddenly I was this phenomenon surrounded by bodyguards. There were people living outside my front gates, but I was cushioned from everything by the bodyguards. I was this very lonely thing completely cut off from life.

"People didn't consider that I was actually real, that I could sit and talk and think. I wanted people to see me and talk to me, but it was impossible. I became an emotional cripple—I had no friends and no chance of making any, because I had no opportunity of meeting people. And, on the rare occasions I did meet people

"Friends tell me I'm playing with fire and could end up in trouble—but I'm ready to take risks"

