

Margit Rietti, BRAVO
correspondent in London,
interviewed David Cassidy.

*"Experiences of love move
me deeply. I have to sing
about them."*

BRAVO Talk Show

David Cassidy: Stars in Private

One day Elvis called me...

BRAVO: What brought you back into the spotlight after an eight-year hiatus?

David: Myself. I needed time to reflect.

Okay, my former record boss in England, Dick Leahy, called me at least once a year to convince me to come back. But I didn't want to. I was happy with my ranch and my horses. My peace and quiet, my balance meant more to me than anything else. Until a year and a half ago: He called again, and I said, yes, I'll come. Now I'm ready. You see, I needed time after the emotional turmoil I went through as a teen star.

BRAVO:

What kind of trauma was it?

David: I was manipulated and controlled so much that I hardly had time to develop, to become a real person. I was constantly being pushed, adjusted, so to speak. First in the TV series "The Partridge Family," which made me a star in America. Then success in Europe and around the world as a singer. I was constantly surrounded by people who said: Now you have to do this, now go on a world tour, the new single has to be like this and like that, it should sound like this and like that. I was like a straw doll without a will of my own. So it had to come to an end with a crash...

BRAVO: How did you manage to become an independent person despite all that?

David: It was particularly difficult, almost impossible. First of all, my family: my parents divorced, both of them were actors. I grew up with my mother. Only people from the show business world visited our home. Then there was the "Partridge Family."

Once again, I only hung out with people from the showbiz world. Crazy, freaky people, so to speak. Then there was my time as a teen star. I played in front of 70,000 fans at once. I was their idol, I turned them on, they screamed for me, they wanted to be like me. Until then, I had never had time to hang out with normal people, to really live, to be myself. It was only my artistic break that helped me do that. And, of course, my experiences with girls.

BRAVO: Do you have a real friend who has stayed with you over the years, who has remained loyal to you?

David: I don't have many, but there are two: Sam and Russel. I've known them since I was eleven. From Virginia High School and later from University High School. Sam—he's a restaurant manager in Los Angeles—I could call him in the middle of the night and tell him all my problems. He knows me inside and out. I also have close relationships with...

my mother Evelyn and my stepmother Shirley.

But with Sam and Russel, it's like this: we don't need to exchange a word for months, but when we see each other, it's as if we've never been apart...

BRAVO: How and where did you meet your wife Meryl?

David: Wait a minute, I'm terrible with dates and years. But recently we talked about it. Yes, it was 1975. We met at the racetrack. She was the wife of a friend of mine at the time. I found her incredibly likeable. But the spark hadn't been lit yet. I married Kay Lenz. Meryl and I always stayed in touch as friends. That's why our marriage is going so well today.

BRAVO: How do you write your songs?

David: The album "Romance" is my pride and joy. It's the best thing I've ever produced. I took a year and a half to make it. I wrote seven songs myself, including "Be Nice," "Someone," and "Touched by Lightning." They all express stages in my life, such as "Heart of Emotion" and "Romance," which is about a girl I once fell deeply in love with. It was a real experience, and although it was a few years ago, it will never fade from my memory. When I write songs, I sit down at the piano and strum away. Or Alan Tarney, my English producer, and I take turns at the piano: we both write melodies and lyrics.

BRAVO: What inspires you to write songs?

David: I have to be swept away by a really profound experience. I have to go through real highs and lows and suffer. That's what I can write songs about. It's the experience that matters most. The human experience. That's what stays with me.

BRAVO:

Do you think you interpret your songs better today than you did in the past?

David: I still have the same ideals today as I did when I was a teenager at 15/16. I am particularly moved by experiences of love and romance. I can sing about that today just as I did in the past. My fans are just as interested in such issues today as they were back then. Nothing has changed in that respect.

BRAVO: Which country, apart from America, do you find most beautiful?

David: I was recently on a promotional trip to Germany, in Munich. Early in the morning, I went jogging unrecognized through a beautiful park, the English Garden. In Hamburg, I ran along the Alster. That's when I realized for the first time what beautiful places there are in Europe that I never got to know before because of all the fan hype. Today, I can really experience them with my eyes open. Nevertheless, I feel most at home in England. I speak the language there, and I have most of my friends there. In other European countries, I find it difficult to communicate. I always feel like an idiot when Germans, Italians, French, or Swiss people speak several languages...

BRAVO: What have been your best moments as a private individual in recent years?

David: The horse races in Saratoga near New York. I go there every year with Meryl. We always rent the same house close to the Hudson River. Every morning I jump into the river, which is crystal clear at that point, and swim a few laps. The racetrack itself is one of the most beautiful in the world, quite old, with a lot of style and wood-paneled grandstands. When one of my horses wins, those are my most wonderful and emotional moments.

BRAVO: What has been your most exciting experience so far?

David: The moment Elvis was on the phone. I was filming an episode for "The Partridge Family" (it was 1974) when our assistant director called me away, saying, "Elvis is on the phone..." "Oh, great," I said, not believing a word he said. Even when a sonorous voice said on the phone, "Hi, David—this is Elvis..." I still had my doubts for a moment. It was only when he announced that his daughter Lisa Marie would be visiting the film set because she was a huge fan of mine that I pricked up my ears. And sure enough, two days later, Priscilla Presley arrived with her daughter Lisa Marie to watch me shoot. A week later, I was invited to the King's house in Los Angeles. But, don't get me wrong, I was too young to be an Elvis fan. I knew he was a huge star, but I was more popular than him at the time. It was a strange situation, this 15-minute meeting.

But what was much more interesting for me was meeting John Lennon in 1975. I was still living in Encino at the time, and he came to visit me one day. With John, it was completely different: The Beatles were my idols. I adored them and loved their songs. And John was just like me. He had the same problems and recognized all the situations I had to go through. He thought through everything I even touched on in conversation.

BRAVO: When and why was the last time you cried?

David: The last time I really cried was about a year ago. When a foal I was present at the birth of was given a lethal injection by the vet. My favorite mare, Honey Breeze, had given birth to it, and it had a severe curvature of the spine from birth, so it couldn't stand and kept falling over. Tears streamed down my face when I had to call the vet...

BRAVO: What kind of movies do you like?

David: Above all, they have to be good entertainment films.

That can mean anything: "Killing Fields," for example, was a good film. But so was the film about Howard Hughes: "Howard and Me." I let myself be turned on by different things on different days. For example, I also like the movie Beverly Hills Cop, even though it's just a commercial entertainment film. But it's well made. The same goes for Raiders of the Lost Ark.

BRAVO: Which actors or actresses do you particularly like?

David: People like Dustin Hoffman, Al Pacino, Clint Eastwood. Or Robert Redford. He's just brilliant. When he appears on screen, he fills it with his personality. He completely captivates me with every one of his films. As for the ladies, I vote for Diane Keane and Glenda Jackson.

BRAVO: Are you a sports fan?

David: I used to be an excellent basketball player at school. Horse racing was and still is my great love, but I still enjoy watching baseball today.

BRAVO: What turns you on in girls?

David: There has to be a magic there, it's the charisma a girl has, her personality. I can immediately sense whether I could have a hot affair with this girl, and she knows it too. That's the most important thing for me. Whether she's brunette, blonde, or red-haired, tall or short, is of secondary importance.

BRAVO: How did your love of horses come about?

David: When I was five years old, I begged my mother to take me pony riding. At that time, we were still living in New Jersey, and she had to drive about 30 miles out into the countryside to fulfill my wish. She did that at least once a week. And since then, the smell of horses and hay has stayed with me.

BRAVO: Do the problems of the Third World or Greenpeace move you? Do you think about what it might be like after a Third World War?

David: I think about it, it moves me, but I feel that I can't change anything. My job is to bring joy to people, to entertain them. Let's say I'm a little light at the end of a long, dark tunnel. That's all I can be and do at the moment. Don't get me wrong, I don't take such serious issues lightly, but I know I can't solve them on my own....