

RITZ



# David Cassidy

by George Michael



(The interview between DAVID and GEORGE first took place over lunch at Pier 31 Restaurant, at which they both got rather inebriated... So much so that they endeavoured a second, more successful and sober meeting at DAVID's house the following week...)

GM: Have you got any plans as to what you'll do if you take off in anything like the proportions you did last time? What would you do this time round? What would you do differently, because obviously you started differently, you have control?

DC: Relative control. (Laughs)

GM: OK — We won't talk about last week...

DC: No, we won't talk about last week! Well, obviously it's important for me this time around that people get a true sense of who I am as opposed to a commercial sense, because I became successful last time from a TV series. I have no intentions of doing anything like The Partridge Family ever again.

GM: So, what you're saying is basically that the last time, the personality that you were landed with was simply The Partridge Family personality?

DC: Well, when you see somebody on the TV screen and he's playing a part as an actor of this all-American good guy, who doesn't do anything wrong or use naughty words, and he's very safe and scrubs his teeth three times a day. I did a lot of that, and I think when you see him on the back of cornflake boxes, it's difficult to get anything from that except, well this is who that person is. I think because of the kind of merchandising that was done in a blatantly commercial sense, DAVID CASSIDY was that poster that was up on the girls' walls, and he was sexually non-threatening. I don't think I was really able ever to come through that.

GM: Don't you find that if your image was one thing, if you have been created or are part of something which creates an image, that when you try to do anything which is even vaguely upsetting to that image, even though it's really you, people see it as false, which is very frustrating, obviously?

DC: I think because of the time that has lapsed — in terms of eight years not making a record and not being a basically public person, I think that people are a lot more forgiving and a lot more willing to take a look and say, "Well, who is this guy?" This album is more revealing as to who I am. There aren't a handful of poppy tunes that have nothing to do with what moves me, or where my passion is, and the songs that I've written on it are about that.

GM: Do you have any real worries of being taken as light pop again, or is it basically that you don't want to be seen as the teen thing again?

DC: Yes, the music speaks for itself. You let it go, and put it on the radio and people perceive it exactly how they want to perceive it. Some people might listen to this album and think, "Jesus it's deep, and it's heavy," and other people might listen to it and think, "Yeah, they're good songs," and they're not blatantly commercial, but commercial enough. I don't cringe when I listen to this album, I don't think "Oh no, why did I record that", which I used to do.

GM: I think the problem these days in a situation like that is that unless the music you put to those lyrics, or whatever you're singing is blatantly non-commercial, then nobody gives a fuck what you're singing about

DC: I agree.

I first met DAVID CASSIDY in early 1984 at one of London's more prestigious (i.e. posey) restaurants. The dinner was arranged by our mutual publisher, DICK LEAHY, who told me that DAVID was seriously considering making a comeback. (It's a horrible word, but at least it has a ring of confidence, which is an ingredient sorely needed when approaching such a mountainous task.)

At the time, I was having a particularly hard time coming to terms with my own position in the public eye. Consequently, I could think of no reason why an artist who had seen the mayhem of the early '70s (which many people do not realise was a huge phenomenon in comparison to the reported scenes of 'hysteria' today), should want to strike up a new relationship with the music business. I was also keen to find out whether a man introduced to such a ridiculous business at the tender age of 18 (well, he looked tender, didn't he?) and subjected to all its distortions for a solid six years, had actually retained his SANITY...

Luckily for him, and somewhat encouragingly for me, DAVID CASSIDY appears to be a well-balanced and happy individual. The effect of those six years, though sometimes very apparent, are inoffensive, even engaging, and after all he is an American.

DAVID and I have met on several occasions between that meal and this interview, we've become friends and I think I can confidently say that, as far as the man himself is concerned, being DAVID CASSIDY is no problem at all.



photo David Zanes

GM: I think that's probably even more the case than it was 10 years ago. I mean, you have to decide what you want.

DC: I want success again. I wouldn't be doing it otherwise. I understand the commitment to the music business. It's two words, it's the music and now it's 'the business', which is what you and I are doing.

GM: I think, having seen some reviews of the stuff, there are a lot of sympathetic ears, and there are a lot of people who would slag you off for no reason. There are also people that would give it an open ear or even a biased beneficial opinion because they have memories of you from their youth and everything, like through rose coloured glasses. I think the situation evens out in many ways, but it's got to be better than the situation you had before.

DC: Much!

GM: Which is totally created by the people. Now, let's go onto something totally non-musical. Your permanent home is in LA now?

DC: I live on a farm two hours north of LA.

GM: Two hours is just outside in America isn't it? It's like the difference between London and Manchester over here...

DC: Well it's not quite that far, but it's definitely outside; when you're there you know you're not in LA.

GM: Have you always had a passion for horses then?

DC: Yes, since the time I can remember breathing.

GM: They scare the shit out of me!

DC: They scare the shit out of me sometimes too!! They're wild buggers, but I do have a passion for it. I love the racing. We breed them, but my real passion is, well, ultimately if anyone asked me what I really wanted in the world, I would have to say the one thing that I want more than anything else, more than an Oscar or a quadruple platinum album and single, and 15 Grammys, would be to win the Kentucky Derby. (Laughs) And after I'd done that, I'd probably want to win the triple crown and then...

GM: Would that be more important to you than having a string of No. 1 singles say?

DC: Yeah. It would be, although I look at it as two different things. It's certainly, I think, easier to get a No. 1 single than to win the Kentucky Derby.

GM: (Laughing) This is true!

DC: You know, you go in the studio with a great song, or you write a great song. It's wonderful to get a No. 1 single. I'm just happy to be having success again. To be heard and listened to and accepted again, and being back in the business, it's the first step.

GM: So, it's the first time you've taken on such a large musical responsibility?

DC: Yeah, it is, and as somebody who's come from the 70s, the kind of records I used to make were made for me and I was just told to sing. I had very little control over what I recorded and how I sounded, so there

was very little creative freedom and satisfaction when they went to No. 1, coz they weren't really mine. At least this is mine, and in the case of 'The Last Kiss', when I wrote it and when I'd finished it, I felt it was the best record I'd ever written. It's about something very real and important that actually happened to me.

GM: I find it incredible that I can write something very personal, but when it becomes a hit record, I almost forget what I wrote it about. It's funny how the actual public and success of the record can take things away from you.

DC: In a way it does, because then that becomes the experience, as opposed to the experience on which you wrote it. I have to keep going back to that everytime I perform it, I have to keep getting back, in order for it to be real to me.

GM: I've found that if I actually tried on stage, as I did at a certain point, I realised I was no longer singing about the experience, but was singing a hit record. When I actually go back to the experience, I get too heavily involved, and my voice actually starts to waiver because my mind goes, and I start to lose control. You have to strike a fair balance between the two.

DC: I never thought I'd be saying this, but from the old days what I really savour is standing up on stage and being able to do that. Being the focal point, you understand this as well as anybody does, being the focal point to 10, 20, 30,000 people that love everything you're doing, they know all the songs. They can't wait for you to sing your next hit, the old ones. I have a lot of years, and a lot of hit songs that I honestly thought I'd never sing again. I'm gonna have the opportunity to be able to sing the ones I want, because I have a lot of hit songs to pick and choose from, as well as the new stuff. I'd never, for any amount of money, just go out and do that nostalgia act.

GM: I've often thought about the idea of trying to get out of the public angle of what we do, the decision you made in terms of stepping out of the limelight....

DC: Well, I did that — very drastically!

GM: ...and saying, "Right, I'm going to make records, but I'm not going to do all the shit."

DC: You can't.

GM: Well, you can — you can still make records, but you can't expect them to sell in anything like the same proportions. Was there a point when you said to yourself, "I really miss it?" That is the fascination for me. Every time I think it's getting too much for me, and I'm not enjoying being part of everybody's lives, I do have to say to myself what would my real reaction be if in two years from now I hadn't been in a paper for a year.

DC: Well, after five years, of it, maybe six, I was so fed up with it, and it got to the point where it literally did take three years before I started even thinking about missing it, and thinking what fun it would be again, but I didn't want to step back into the same situation again. I wanted to be able to have that momentary hit, and be singing and performing on stage, and having that experience again. I missed that. It becomes almost like a drug. When you go on tour, night after night, you come to expect it because it happens all the time, everywhere you go. It became the only thing I ever looked forward to, actually being on the stage. Being on the road is extremely frustrating and boring. I understand why a lot of



people go completely nuts. When they walk into a hotel room, they're so fucking crazy, they end up throwing TV sets out of the window. It's just to break the monotony and boredom.

GM: I think to a degree, the late 60s and early 70s rock 'n' roll tour syndrome was probably a matter of people justifying their status. Normal people don't throw TV sets out of windows! The whole thing is that you are told you're not normal...

DC: If you were normal, you wouldn't be doing that.

GM: I think some people can't face how they're written about in the most ridiculous terms, but all these terms are flattering and huge enlargements to their life, and they feel, "Oh my God, I'm just sitting here in my hotel room, I've got to do something larger than life, I'll throw a TV set out of the window."

DC: Also in the late 60s and early 70s you'd hear what ZEPPELIN did, and ZEPPELIN would hear about what BAD COMPANY did and what THE WHO did. It almost became like, well, I have to become more outrageous than they are. I never got to the point where I was doing that, but I felt I wanted to. I guess I was just sane enough not to.

GM: If the room service was bad, you'd throw the TV set out of the window! Do you think you'll ever do anymore acting?

DC: Definitely. Yes. But not for the next year or so because of this. I spent the better half of last year putting it all together and making it happen and I've come all the way from nowhere to where I am now, which is a great step in one year. In order to get involved as an actor again with film — it takes such a commitment — ten to twelve hours a day when you're working on a set. You have no time to do anything else.

GM: You have to do one thing or the other...

DC: So I'm going to see this album through and then go on tour.

GM: Did you find when you were doing stage work, that there was any resentment in TV and film when singers go and become actors?

DC: Not really, because I'd come from the stage and the theatre. My first job in the business was when I was 18 years old, in a Broadway show.

GM: Did people know that and remember it? By the time you'd gone through being DAVID CASSIDY and done the Partridge Family?

DC: Well, a lot of people understood that I'd got that part as an actor and I had done a lot of other things. I was an actor first. When I started seriously just doing anything again, I knew I didn't want to go back doing rock 'n' roll or making pop records again. I just knew I didn't want to go back in the studio and open that can of worms. It's very difficult to turn that around, as you well know, the business is about momentum.

GM: If you lose it, it's very hard to get back.

DC: Very hard. As an actor it's more difficult to get it back, than it is with one record. I'm back in it again and I'm very pleased to be sitting where I am with the album and the record. As an actor, it's going to take me some time. Hopefully, from this, and with people being aware that I'm back in the business again, as opposed to dead and gone and buried, I think that, hopefully, the scripts that I'll be looking to do will be coming my way. A lot of people do know that I'm an actor. I don't know, it'll be interesting to see what happens in the next couple of years, but it's definitely at

least a year from now.

GM: In terms of coming over here to make an LP and comeback, which makes very good sense these days with the way America looks upon England...

DC: I think Britain is the most important place and has more to do with influencing the direction of music and is more important than any country in the world, in terms of what is going to be successful in pop.

GM: It's funny. Like the top 4/5 records in America this week are British.

DC: For good reason. If you hear the records that come out of Britain and America, there is a sense of climate here in Britain that there isn't in America. A few things do become successful, and in this climate, if it's good, it will be successful. You don't have to invest six million dollars into an artist like you do in America, nobody is willing to do that unless it is a proven artist and consequently there are very few new artists. When 'The Last Kiss' was in the top ten, I looked up and said 'Thank you Jesus, I can still make it!'

GM: Having come here and done things from a British angle, do you think in terms of the way you've presented yourself, i.e. video, clothes, etc. that you've made any British concessions that you wouldn't have made in America?

DC: Since I'm a product of being here, for the best part of a year now, my taste in music, clothes and fashion has changed and I'm a lot more aware of what's going on coz I'm confronted with it on the streets here — a lot more than in America. On the farm, nobody wears anything other than dungarees, wellingtons, etc.

GM: (Laughing) I used to have a great pair of dungarees...

DC: That's it! I'm totally removed from it over there. In America, for instance, by the time the punk thing got over there, it was very watered down. I was in the Kings Road on Saturday — it's a great show.

GM: It is a great show. It's amazing, the Kings Road has kept the late 70s alive, it's all there.

I'm not gonna talk directly about your career. Right, where do I start.

DC: (Laughing) Why did you change your haircut? Oh I'm sorry...

GM: Everyone always asks me how many times I wash my hair! If you really want know that, it's three times a day!! What was the longest period of time you spent out of England between the early '70s and now?

DC: It was quite a while. It was from '77 to '84 — seven years.

GM: Do you see differences — what do you think are the main differences that happened during those seven years?

DC: You have to understand first of all from my perspective how I viewed England. I viewed it from a limousine in the '70s or from the boot of a car, surrounded by thousands of kids and security guards on tour. So I never got into the heart and soul of England. In those days, I came over as an American sensation (I hate that word), and on News At Ten, the first day I arrived, they said "We understand you're the greatest thing from America since processed cheese!" I can only judge people from the media standpoint, which is TV, radio, magazines etc. My impression is that it hasn't changed that dramatically. Only something that is controversial is worth printing. Not something that has any substance or artistic merit or creative value. The only thing that's important is how ANDREW RIDGELEY got on last

night at the Hippodrome. The only thing that really means anything to them now is if it's going to shock someone into buying it. It's absurd. So my impression is more escapist — it seems now like when ANDY WARHOL said that eventually everybody is going to be famous for 15 minutes — that's his famous quote. I'm not sure how good ANDY WARHOL is or anything, except for that quote, the more I look at it, the more I find incredible wisdom behind it.

GM: I find the Americans are starting to follow the British pattern and starting to throw people away very quickly...

DC: Yeah, that might be, but I think probably we always have. I think it takes so much to break an artist now. With yourself, it took two years, so you know how big it is and what it takes. We try to savour and maintain it a little longer. I'm not sure that fans and the record buying public is as fickle as the media, I'm not so sure that they would want to continue to buy people's records if the record company didn't dictate and the radio didn't dictate.

GM: Yes, I think radio has started to dictate in the same way. It's frightening that PRINCE was heralded by everyone as taking over from MICHAEL JACKSON, not "Is PRINCE good for this or that reason?"

DC: What kind of comparison is that?

GM: Exactly. The guy is black, he's been around for a while and he's camp. There the comparisons end. They're two totally different things.

DC: Well, I don't think that MICHAEL's even camp.

GM: (Laughing) Oh I think MICHAEL's camp!

DC: No, not at all.

GM: Well, anyway, PRINCE is now being knocked down for his latest album, which I haven't heard yet, so I don't know. I think he's an incredibly talented performer. The point is, he's set himself up to be burnt out, just like MICHAEL JACKSON and now in PRINCE's wake is MADONNA, she has five records being played now on American radio as we speak. I was over there last week, and couldn't believe it. It's like everyone is setting themselves up to be burnt out.

DC: Back to before, maybe ANDY WARHOL was right.

GM: I think it's going down to five minutes!! (Laughing) We've got a bit sidetracked here haven't we! What I basically feel about England, after people say it's ten years behind America, is it's probably twenty years behind! England hasn't caught up. That is why these days being a pop star is national press because it's trivia.

DC: It's escapism. Being a pop star is really rubbish now, you're right.

GM: I think it's always been like that. The records are what they are, whether good or bad, but being a pop star has always been rubbish. I wondered if you find any differences with the attitudes towards money? There was a huge area of time where wealth was not something to be proud of. These days wealth is in.

DC: Yeah, I know. It's very hip. Glam rock is very fashionable.

GM: Here we are in 1985 and it's all money again. It's realism. When the greenbacks are put in front of them, they take them. I find that very much more so in America. The last time things were really glamorous I was only 13, so when I grew up, there was no respect for the rich. Suddenly I'm one of the figureheads

of that and I'm rich...

DC: So you have to deal with it. So you have a difficult task in your life as I do, because most of my friends and people I grew up with didn't become popstars and famous, and in a way, I felt embarrassed about it and I've always played my wealth down. I lived in a very simple environment, I'm not a real flash person. I like to dress up and enjoy myself...

GM: (Laughing) I don't see any gold medallions.

DC: Yeah, SAMMY DAVIS and I are not close friends! But you know what I mean. When I made a lot of money, I was 21 and I was incredibly rich in those days. In America being 21 years old and a multi-millionaire that you'd made yourself — forget it. It was a joke. Nobody knew how to relate to it and I didn't either.

GM: Did you come from a reasonably affluent background? What was the background in terms of your parents?

DC: (Laughing) 10 bucks a week and that was it!

GM: I know what that's about, you see I didn't get a penny. I had to wash the windows if I wanted to make any money! But my parents lived in a big house, my dad had a big car so the 10 bucks a week story...

DC: I wish this interview was going the other way, coz then I'd ask you the next question. What are you doing with all your money?

GM: What I'm doing is — I'm earning a huge amount of money — (Laughing) you know, this is really going to interest Ritz coz they like this kind of thing — most of which I'm keeping and a certain amount for my conscience, I give away to various things, like Ethiopia.

DC: Are you doing it to satisfy yourself?

GM: I'm doing it to satisfy my conscience and because of guilt. But at the same time, I also feel I'm in the privileged position to be able to do something which is giving great amounts of money to good causes and it doesn't make a big dent in my pocket. My success causes some success in some other areas. I think that's why a lot of pop stars do it...

DC: I think everybody appreciates that. Honestly, I think they view you as someone who does have a conscience.

GM: This interview is turning round now!! I think we'd better be careful.

DC: Yeah, you're right. I'll shut up.

GM: OK, what do you do with your money, DAVID?

DC: (Laughing) I think it's fantastic that at the age of 21 you're living at home...

GM: Not any more, I've just move out. It's 47A...

DC: I think it's fantastic that you've been able to maintain your life style and who you are. You're still probably very much the same guy as when you started. I look back on the times that I was in my early and middle 20s and I was a tragically wealthy and unhappy person. You're making more money that you ever imagined — filthy money that people are constantly trying to steal from you...

GM: My money's not filthy! I iron my money! Do you know, I know somebody who does that... (laughing) Really!! When are you going back to LA?

DC: Mid-June approx. It'll be a total rest to get away from working. It's really about going home. I've been here for the best part of a year and five months straight. Now I'm really mentally exhausted and I need to go home and let the well fill up a little bit and relax. Also I have the horse



business over there — I miss my farm and the horses and I miss being in America — sitting with my feet up on my coffee table relaxing.

**GM:** I find that you can walk into an American hotel room and in terms of attitude, it's like a completely different planet

**DC:** Why?

**GM:** *(Laughing)* You're not supposed to be asking me questions — but I find it very much more self-centred in America

**DC:** It's pretty slick.

**GM:** Tell me what you hate and/or love about London.

**DC:** The weather — that's a definite hate! What I love about it is that it's like a big small town to me. I feel safe here, I'm not paranoid when I walk down the street for the most part.

**GM:** And you're saying that you are in New York?

**DC:** Oh yeah. I lived in New York for six months — almost as long as I'd lived here, a couple of years ago. I love New York.

**GM:** As the car sticker says!

**DC:** Honestly, it's a great place. It's the capital of the world. Everything to be found on this planet can be found there except some green grass and fresh air! It's a very exciting city and I think London has the best of what New York has and a lot less of the worst that New York has, which is the filth and the poverty and the frightening screaming sort of loneliness you see people walking around New York with. The thing that strikes me every time I go there is that there are thousands and thousands of homeless people.

**GM:** Unfortunately too there are a hell of a lot more here in London than there used to be.

**DC:** I've noticed more this time, not having been here in eight years. I think London has changed in that

respect. I am a lot more aware of it now than I used to be. New York is such an intense city that it is almost like a drug. Once you get hooked on it as I have been, I need to go back there often to get a fix of it.

**GM:** Some people don't take to it and in a large number of cases there's a certain danger to New York which is in fact exciting.

Somebody may come up and say hello but they might also come up and blow your head off!

**DC:** I once saw a guy walk by in New York with a bullet in his head and his head bleeding. I have experienced that in New York and it does frighten the shit out of you. You think if you just happened to turn the corner 10 seconds earlier you could have caught that bullet.

**GM:** I remember the first time ANDREW and I went to New York, I was absolutely paranoid for the first two days but by the third day, I started to feel at home and more relaxed. I sat there saying to ANDREW, "It's great here and I can't understand why I was so shit scared of it," but then somebody got stabbed outside the hotel we were eating in!

**DC:** It slaps you in the face.

**GM:** I saw Harlem a couple of weeks ago because we were playing at the Apollo, and I've never been in a Western high street where there was not one white face other than my own and that was half-way down the seat in the back of the car!

**DC:** It does make you feel a little insecure because we've all been told we should be frightened.

**GM:** I do have a strong sense of the fact that there shouldn't be ghettos. There's no need for them. That was my feeling in the back of that car. I was amazed at the warmth that I received as one of the few white

artists at that event — it knocked me over!

**Coming back to London for a minute. What about other areas of London that are not connected with music in terms of eating, etc?**

**DC:** With the restaurants here, I've found that you often have to join these clubs which I find a little unusual. You have to be a member to eat there and I've gone to a couple of them. The Ritz and the White Elephant are some of the better places. I feel comfortable there — people don't come up to me or hassle me and I feel like I'm in London when I'm in those places. I feel like I'm at home. You probably know more about this than anyone as you came from the clubs and spent most of your youth in the clubs...

**GM:** Most of the nights — most of my waking hours!

**DC:** I found a couple of clubs that I've been to, I haven't been to the . . . *(censored!)* as you told me not to go...

**GM:** Not unless you want to pick up a secretary...

**DC:** *(Laughing)* I don't think that I need to do that for my image this week — maybe next week. I don't ever go to the clubs in LA because they're very posey. I don't feel comfortable if there's the exciting "let's have a good time" attitude. In Europe, in Italy and Germany, I went to a few clubs and found myself really having a good time etc. People notice me and they come up to me occasionally...

**GM:** *(Amazed)* You had a good time in Germany? I can't think of a worse place to have a good time, but I suppose I don't know Germany well enough.

**DC:** Well, I went to a club in Munich that I thought was great — everyone was in there drinking and laughing — having a good time. They all knew who I was and they'd look at me — a

couple of people came up and asked for my autograph but that didn't really bother me. It was like, he's here, but let's have a good time.

**GM:** I think the truth is that in most capitals and with the clubs you're talking about in America — if you go past a certain age group then you're going to get into that really posey bracket. I mean, there's young posers but they can't really keep it up after the first couple of drinks you know! That's the basic difference and so if you go out at a reasonable time of night to any of the young clubs in London, everyone's going to be pissed out of their heads!

**DC:** Yeah, but that's alright.

**GM:** Yes, but if you go to Tramps or Stringfellows or Blondes or any of those places, you're expecting people to stand there and assess you, you know?

**DC:** Well, that to me is not a good time out. I don't enjoy that so I don't go and partake in that experience. I just don't enjoy myself, I'm not relaxed and can't have a good time. So I tend to stay in a lot and in that respect I think it's more like LA. I've just sold my house in LA but I've lived there for the better part of 20 years and in LA people come to my house.

**GM:** That tends to be what you end up doing, doesn't it? Even now, I think I'll be the same, as the night life generally is not that good in London at the moment, so I've started to do that.

*(A telephone rings)*

**DC:** That's my call to say I have to go now.

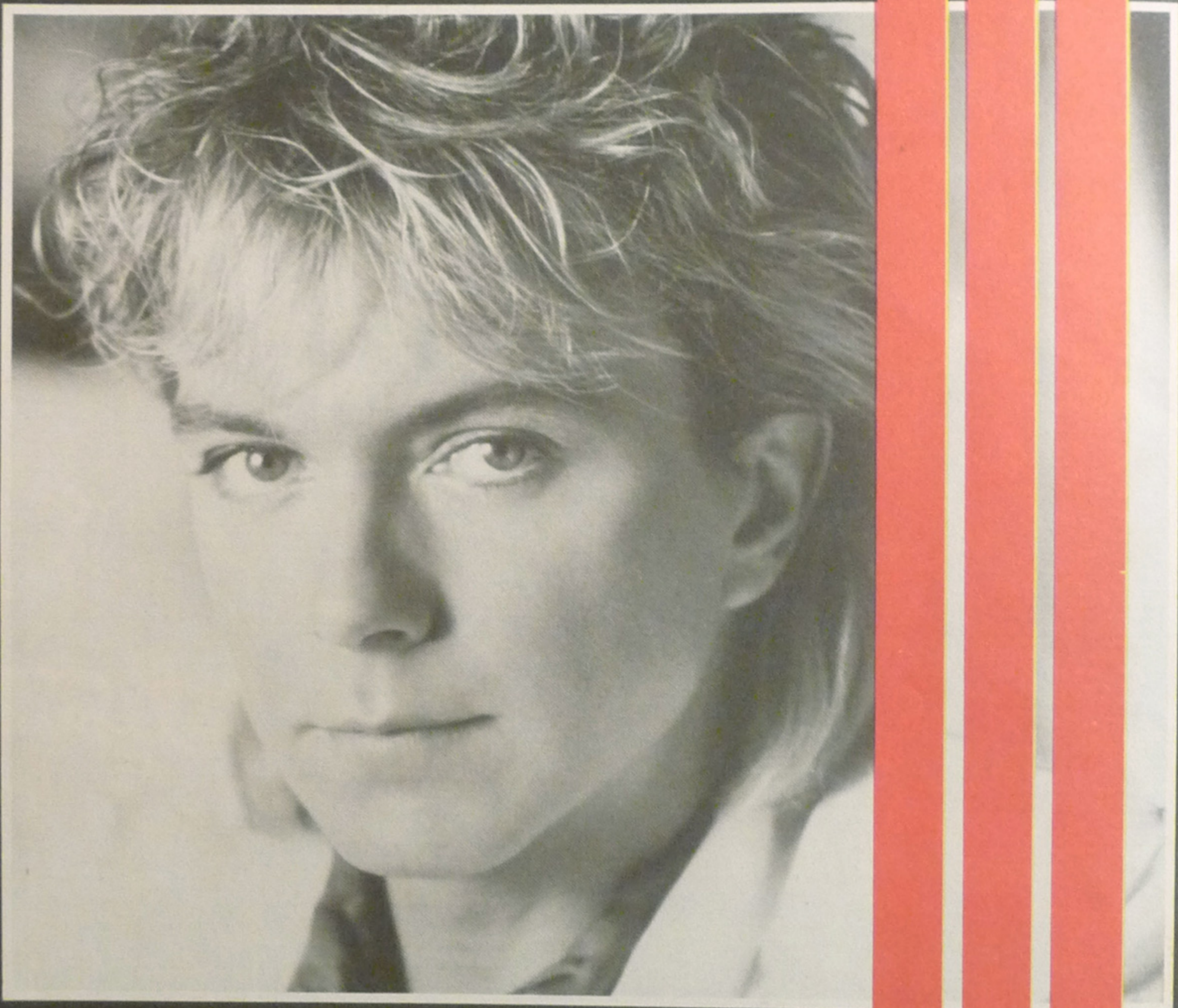
**GM:** Well, I'd better finish with a concluding question or a statement from you...

**DC:** *(Laughing)* I still think it's a pity we didn't get it the first time round!!



# DAVID CASSIDY

brings back romance

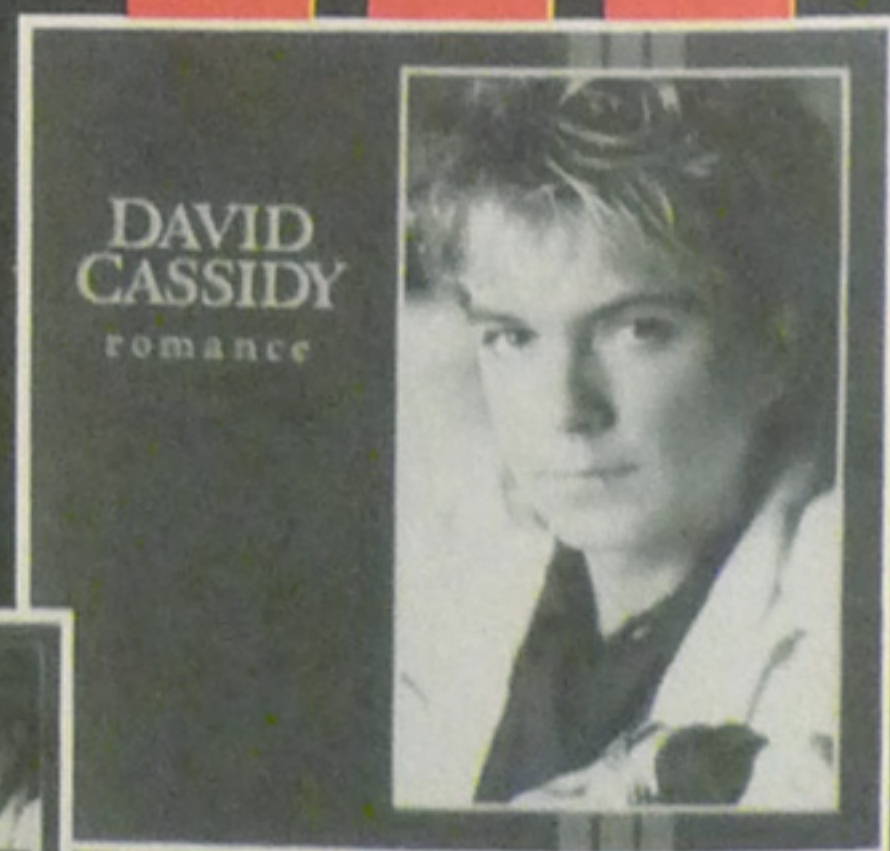


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