



It all started innocently enough, when David Cassidy was awakened by KLOS' "Mark & Brian," who decided to send up the former teen idol's birthday with a phone call. "I just told them it was lonely at the top and lonelier at the bottom," laughs the good-natured 40-year-old son of character actor Jack Cassidy and actress Evelyn Ward. "It's all the same ride, and once you embrace that, you don't feel as if you have to prove anything to anyone." A follow-up trip to the station led to Cassidy playing some demos of songs he'd been working on, which happened to be heard by an Enigma art director, who set the wheels in motion for David to be signed by the Culver City label. All of a sudden, 12 years after his last U.S. album and 15 years after performing live in this country, David Cassidy was hot again.

At his peak, playing Keith Partridge in the hit TV series, "The Partridge Family," David Cassidy was a superstar whose very first single, "I Think I Love You," went straight to #1 and sold more than 6 million copies around the world. His new album is bound to be a bit of a surprise for those who remember David from his bubblegum days. "David Cassidy," the album, is a mature, rock & roll-ing work whose first single, "Lyin' To Myself," was one of the most added records in the country its first week out. Produced by a variety of top-name sessioneers, including Phil Ramone, E. T. Thorngren, Greg Edward and Carter, it puts David Cassidy back at the center of the pop universe once again, marking an unlikely but very welcome comeback. In this era of '70s nostalgia for smile buttons, disco and "Have A Nice Day," David Cassidy looks back only once, when he samples his own "I Think I Love You" on the new album's playful version of "Hi-Heel Sneakers."

The first thing you notice about David Cassidy is he's not afraid to make fun of himself or his image. He's comfortable with his success — and the years that have passed since those triumphs. He hangs with his girlfriend Sue Shifrin, who co-wrote several songs on the new LP. He feels his musical abilities have always been misunderstood by people who thought he was the character he played on TV. "While we were cutting this Partridge Family stuff, I was out seeing Jimi Hendrix," he told HITS' own Reuben Kincaid lookalike Roy Trakin. "You can only imagine what it was like to look up and see Danny Bonaduce playing bass, while I was doing sessions with people like Larry Carlton, Jim Gordon and Hal Blaine."

WE THINK WE LOVE HIM

You don't seem to mind that people consider you a camp curiosity.

Even when I thought I was out of fashion, and really didn't know what the fuck I wanted to do, I just looked at it as, this is really an interesting hand I've been dealt here, and how am I going to play it? The only thing I wouldn't do is try to go back and re-create what came before. That's done. It was time to do something else. It

just took me a long time to decide what I wanted to do. When Mark & Brian invited me on their show, I wasn't interested in getting a record deal. I had decided it wasn't going to happen. And I didn't want to go out there and get my guts kicked in by hearing how uncool or out of the groove I was. Or hearing some guy who had never sold or made a record tell me what a genius he was by saying I didn't

have that drum sound right.

You began recording a solo record in Nashville back in '82.

I did three sides with Larry Butler, but I felt like a stranger in a strange land. They didn't get me; I didn't get them. For whatever reason, it didn't work out. I wanted to see if I could take my pop thing and graft it onto that. I didn't want to be a country artist. I went to New York to do

some theater, then I came back to L.A. and kicked around for awhile, but nothing was going on. I received an offer to go to England, where I wrote and recorded an album, "Romance," for Arista U.K., which was a hit in Europe, but I had become disillusioned with the music business.

Was it difficult to avoid the typecasting after being in "The Partridge Family?"

People always wanted me to go back and

make that kind of record. In the music business, you have to have a really definite idea of what you want to do. I've always been the kind of guy who has felt, let's go into this and see what happens. "You're doing things my way" has never been my approach. When going into a creative situation with a writer-producer, I've always felt, let's see what we can develop together. That's where the great stuff I've ever created as an actor has occurred. Let's play the scene and see how it goes.

I guess it's easy for that to be interpreted as weakness in the record business. I think people perceive it as someone who's not really sure where he's going and what he wants to be. But that's not true at all. George Michael, for instance, has the most uncanny way of removing himself from himself. It's beyond objectivity. He sees the entire picture and how he fits into it — whether it's the next video, the next album, how he's going to look, how he's going to sound, who he's going to play with. That's a phenomenal talent.

He certainly was able to recover from the teenybopper stigma of Wham!

He had the ability to get to the next step. And tremendous record company support. And great management. Which is important. It was a classic case of the artist, management and label deciding what they wanted to do, how to do it and having the talent to bring it off.

There seems to be a tremendous amount of interest in your return.

Back when I was in "The Partridge Family," all the journalists were older. Now, all the writers I speak to are my age or younger. They grew up with me. They know everything I've ever done. I talked to one guy this morning who said to me, "I've spoken to a lot of people in the entertainment business, but I've never been as

excited as I am talking to you." I really appreciate hearing stuff like that. I knew how genuine it was. I could hear it in his voice. He didn't have to say anything more. It's nice to know writers aren't looking at me half-cooked and strange like they did when I first started out. I am this guy. I've been this guy for a long time and I've finally come to accept it. Not only am I not denying my past, I like it.

Did you ever wish you hadn't gone through it?

A thousand times. If only I hadn't gone to that meeting and done this film instead of that television show, I would've been someone else. But if I hadn't, I wouldn't have learned all the things I've learned about myself in life. Maybe I would have had a certain artistic credibility I wished I'd had at that time. But I've been dealt a great hand, even if it didn't always seem that way. At times, it was horrible. I was this guy locked up in this body, pictured on the back of lunch boxes and bubblegum cards. It can take your soul away. Donny Osmond was what you saw. I wasn't.

Did Donny's comeback influence you at all?

It had nothing to do with what I'm doing, though we did have some of the same problems. But Donny was Donny. I was an actor playing a part. Keith Partridge was not me. At all. And it's taken this long for people to realize that.

"I Think I Love You" was released as a Partridge Family single featuring David Cassidy.

Bell Records was very smart. They put out Partridge Family albums as well as David Cassidy albums. One would come out every three or four months. In the beginning, most of the songs were written by outside songwriters. I started writing more later on.

What was "The Partridge Family" experience like?



DAVE & E. T. PHONE HOME: DAVID CASSIDY and producer E. T. THORNGREN place the backwards masked subliminal message, "DANNY BONADUCE is an absolute geek" on his new Enigma Records LP.

I was an actor trying to pay the rent. I came to L. A. from New York, where I had done Broadway, and started working my ass off. I did ten leads on episodes in a year before I landed the gig in "The Partridge Family" when I was 19. I went into this audition that they had to twist my arm for because I read the script and thought it was horrible. Shirley [Jones, his real-life stepmother] was cast way after me. My mind was blown when I found out

and up coming to you. Enigma called and wanted to make a record with me. I thought they wanted me to go back and do what I had done, but they really liked the demos of the new stuff. Enigma's fresh and on the edge. I don't think I could flourish at a large record company as me. I think I'm very important to this label and they're very important to me. It's a good marriage. Creatively, I've been given a great deal of freedom, yet with a lot of

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she was going to be my mother in the show. The whole thing was a tremendous strain. I became famous and successful, but as this other person. I had very ambivalent feelings about it. I told the teen magazines I didn't want to be a teen idol. And they looked at me and went, yeah, sure, kid. My signature on the contract gave Columbia the right to my name and likeness.

You worked a bit with Mick Ronson in the late '70s.

He and I met in New York and began playing a little bit. He was floundering and so was I, looking for a direction. We decided to get together and see how people would respond. I liked him a lot. He's a very musical guy. He didn't want to be a foil for me, because he had already done that. He wanted to be an equal member in a band. We did some demos and rehearsed awhile, but it never quite happened. David Bowie was supposed to produce an album of mine about a year before that, but that never happened, either. I've heard he's done that to people before, though.

You had no plans to get back into the music business.

The interesting thing about it is, once you give up hoping things will happen, they

direction and input. I've never had the head of the company, head of promotion, head of A&R and head of publicity involved in what I was doing to this degree. How do you think this album will do? I think people are going to be surprised. I've heard shocked.

A lot of people have been reassessing the '70s and even looking back fondly on it. People are recognizing, like they did with the '50s and '60s, that the '70s had something to offer, including the last gasp of innocence. There was a lot of good music that came out of that period.

What's success like for you the second time around?

I appreciate every breath I take, honestly, when I get up in the morning. I love what I get to do every day. I walk down the street and people come up to me and say, "Wow, man. Can I just tell you what you've meant to me in my life?" That's great. Anyone who wouldn't be complimented by that is out of their mind.

What's the biggest misconception about David Cassidy?

That I was Keith Partridge. It's taken me a long time to find the humor in it. I used to pretend it didn't bother me, but it did. Now, it's just hysterical. ☐



DAVE TATTOOS RIKKI: Enigma Records recording artist DAVID CASSIDY takes one look at MTV Headbanger's Ball host and Cat Club founder RIKKI RACHTMAN's arms and notes, "Y'know, you can't get buried in a Jewish cemetery with those things."