

David Cassidy was the number one teen idol of the Seventies, whose squeaky clean image made him a millionaire at the age of 21. But what his teenybopper fans never saw was the acid-dropping, orgy-loving, freewheeling bisexual

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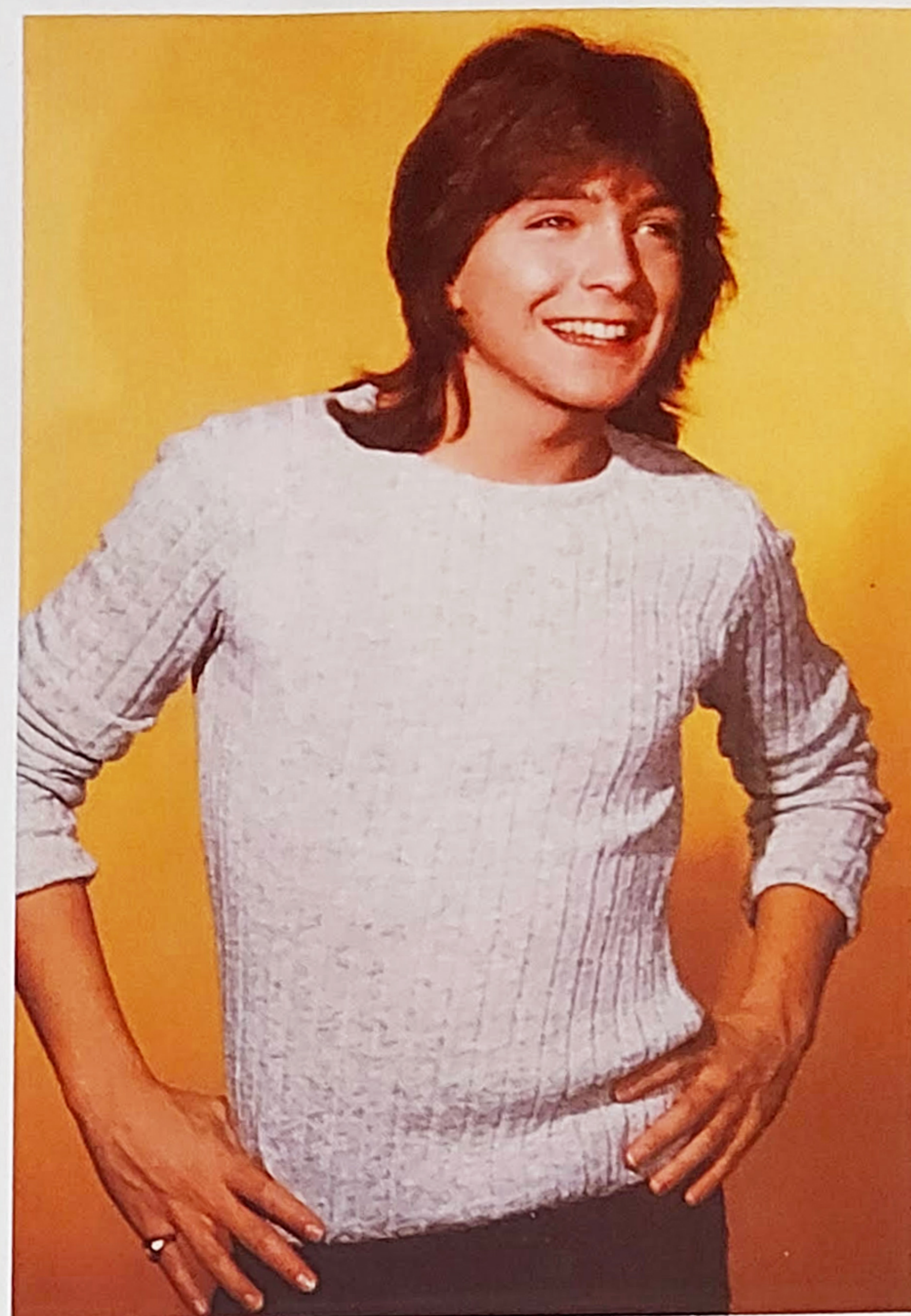
TO HIS FANS, David Cassidy was Keith Partridge, the dewy-eyed, goody-two-shoes lead singer of The Partridge Family. Yet Cassidy's own teen days gave the lie to this idyll of a family pop group living and singing in harmony. Coming from a broken home (his actor parents Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward divorced when he was four), and living the life of Riley as a teenage hippie in California, he conformed more to the stereotype of juvenile delinquent than boy next door.

Returning to his birthplace, New York, and moving in with his disciplinarian father after his freewheeling Californian days, he was in for a shock. Jack Cassidy might have backed his son's efforts to become an actor, but in an episode that typified how he treated him, he had young David kitted out at New York's poshest tailor only to tell him he'd have to pay back every cent.

It was only when he was taken on by Ruth Aarons (the agent for his father and stepmother Shirley Jones) that Cassidy began to get work. After a role in a Broadway flop, *The Fig Leaves Are Falling*, he landed parts in *Ironside*, *Bonanza*, *Marcus Welby MD* and, finally, the show that would give him a steady income, *The Partridge Family*.

Cassidy initially resisted playing Keith Partridge. "When they showed us our outfits – these velvet suits and shit – I thought I wouldn't fucking wear this." But for financial reasons he had no choice. At that stage, the show's producers (Screen Gems, who had previously created *The Monkees*) planned to dub the band's performances, but they then discovered that Cassidy could sing. Nevertheless, no-one could have had any inkling that *I Think I Love You*, the single released to launch the show, would sell six million copies. As Cassidy says, "If anyone had told me, in mid-1970, that by

# David Cassidy



the year's end I'd be a household word, *the* number one teen idol, with my picture on the back of Rice Krispies, I'd have asked them if the acid had kicked in yet!"

Cassidy got on well with co-stars Shirley Jones, Susan Dey and freckle-faced Danny Bonaduce, but he was undeniably embarrassed about the show and at having to gush over lines like "Hi, Mom! I'm home from school."

When The Partridge Family's record label, Bell, suggested he become a solo act, his reaction was predictable: "I don't want to do cute records for young kids, because that's just not cool." But neither Bell nor Aarons were going to let the opportunity pass. With fans daily besieging the Screen Gems studios, Cassidymania was up and running, aided and abetted by the David Cassidy Fan Club (which totalled 200,000 members in 1972). An avalanche of merchandise cunningly catered to both pre-teen and teen markets – from dolls, colouring books, pink stationery, bubblegum and lunchboxes, to 'love kits' containing 'lovers' cards' ('with his name and yours').

The publicity machine soon cottoned on to the fact that, compared to the asexual Jackson Five and Osmonds, Cassidy was, well, pretty raunchy. Aarons admitted as much when she said about him, "There are sexual overtones, of

course, but nothing too heavy, blatant or *decadent*." While David had lost his virginity at 13, Donny's Mormon faith forbade him to date girls before he was 16. Little wonder, then, that among all the squeaky-clean Cassidy merchandise, lurked phials of 'love musk'. His first concert, in Seattle, bore witness to this strange mixture of the innocent and louche: although most fans wobbled tearfully under the weight of their earnest 'David spells Luv' banners, others were heard to scream "Fuck Me!" and "I want your baby!"

Inevitably, tasty David was attracting a gay following. In both the gay and straight press, rumours were flying about the epicene teen idol and his 'classically good-looking' schoolfriend, Sam Hyman, with whom he shared a room – and a dog called She – at his secluded ranch. (Ironically, when they were pictured in *Gay News*, the bedenimed David – he was forever in blue jeans – looked positively butch beside the wavy-haired Hyman in a floaty neckscarf, hipster belt and shoulder bag.) A typical message from gay fans was 'I can tell by the look in your eyes that you're one of us'. Cassidy, however, who'd put on 'homosexual plays' at school, was not fazed. *Gay News* (which featured Cassidy as its cover-boy twice) droolingly reported that he'd told a German