

Having been a teen-aged television junkie and a fan of the ABC series "The Partridge Family," I half expected to see David Cassidy walk out of his dressing room at the MGM Grand with long hair, swinging a guitar around his shoulders and singing "C'mon Get Happy." Instead, what greeted me was the warm handshake of a neatly coifed, self-assured and outgoing man who had obviously survived The Seventies, both in terms of the age itself as well as his own huge success in it, and who appears to have come a long way in taking his own above-mentioned musical advice.

Yes, there is life after television. And Partridges and NBC peacocks aside (Cassidy had a short-lived series on the latter network called "Man Undercover"), David is one of those rare birds to have had all his feathers plucked, and gotten up to fly again. Granted, he has switched channels and gotten with a new program, moving into the realm of live theater—the latest aspect of which is his guest starring role in the MGM Grand's \$40 million high-tech odyssey through space and time called "EFX." And while, in the show, he takes the audience on a wonderful journey, becoming different characters along the way, perhaps even more remarkable is David's personal journey that has brought him to this very point—with all his own character transformations within.

"My father said one thing that I never will forget," says Cassidy, "and that is that talent will survive. They may laugh at you, they may reject you, but ultimately, if you have talent and you stick around long enough, your number will come up again. Fortunately for me, it has."

It all began to happen for David again after what might be called, in TV terms, one very long commercial break. But first, a bit of history. David, the son of stage actors Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward, initially came to prominence in the early 70's when he landed the part of Keith Partridge on "The Partridge Family." The role catapulted him to stardom. At the age of 19, David created international pandemonium. At the time, his was the largest fan club in history.

Over the next five years, he sold more than 25 million records, garnered multiple Grammy nominations and sold out concert venues around the world, becoming the world's highest paid live solo performer by the age of 21. To the outside world, Cassidy appeared to be the epitome of success. But to the young singer/actor, it was a different story.

"I couldn't adjust," he admits. "Not when you work 18 hours a day, seven days a week. I would wake up at 6 a.m., get to work at 7:30 a.m., and work on the set until 7 p.m., at which point I'd drive to the recording studio to record not only as 'The Partridge Family,' but as David Cassidy. I had two separate recording careers going. I would record until midnight, then drive home, get to sleep around 1 a.m., and get up at 6 a.m. again."

Weekends were not a luxury for the young David either. On Friday night or early Saturday morning, he would hop on a plane and do four concerts. "We're talking seven days a week, 24 hours a day, living and breathing it," he says. "When I got home at 1 a.m., I would sit there like a dummy thrown against the wall with my head bobbing. I'd think, what ever happened to going out and hanging with my friends? From a career standpoint, it worked. But you don't get the largest fan club in the history of the planet and become the highest paid solo artist and not pay a price for it. At the time, I was not emotionally prepared for the fame. But I lasted almost five years doing what I was doing."

In the days before video and cable television, when twelve channels was about all the average household could choose from, David says he managed to sell 25 million records because of the impact of performing on TV. Plus,

with "The Partridge Family" traditionally getting about a 40 percent share of the audience, and with 80 to 90 percent of that share being 18 or under (and predominately female), Cassidy's huge popularity turned him into the media darling of the teen magazines. He became the focus of a huge marketing push that included posters, merchandising and the like.

But Columbia Screen Gems owned his name and likeness, and as a result, the public's image of David was as Keith Partridge, the sweet, innocent guy that every girl under 16 was in love with. Cassidy maintains he was never that guy, that he was "a rockin' guy," living the free-love, free-wheeling attitude of the 70's, although, he never resorted to drugs. And while he revered his manager, Ruth Aarons (who also managed both Jack Cassidy and his wife, David's real-life stepmother, Shirley Jones—who also played his mother in "The Partridge Family"), David felt he wasn't being managed properly. After his first year on the TV series, David had re-negotiated his contract for another four years, which bound him for five years instead of the original seven. And at the end of those five years, he said "Enough."

"The price I paid was that I lost my own identity in it all," David says. "Besides a couple of people who had been with me all along, I no longer had any friends. My career hadn't gone the way I wanted it to go. I wanted to be a serious, respected actor. I was in the theater and my father was in the theater. I had come out of drama and acting classes and approached it as a serious artist. Instead, I ended up this bubble-gum card, comic book doll pop-out, with my likeness on dresses and David Cassidy guitars. I was the epitome of commercialism at its best. I was bringing light and joy into people's lives, but I was still 18 or 19 years old, even at 24. I had never gone to college, never had the chance to do my rah-rahs and get my yah-yahs out, like the rest of my friends did."

"I was not well," he continues. "I didn't know who I was. I couldn't walk down the street—people would scream and everywhere I'd go there would be hysteria. I couldn't be anybody. As far as my

career, I was already playing stadiums, so what else was I going to do? I decided to retire. I had to find out what I wanted to do with my life."

Cassidy retired in front of the Hollywood Women's Press Club. He recalls saying, "This is it; it's over; I'm walking away. And I don't know if I'll be back." Like David Bowie, who Cassidy quips retired every year so he could come back, David realized that no one believed him. But he was serious—the only thing he did for a year was put himself through intense psychoanalysis three times a week, to try to end the misery he was feeling. To complicate matters, a couple of years into this lost, dark period, both David's father and his manager died, sending him reeling.

David says a lot of his problems were rooted in his relationship with his father, whom he idolized. David was 3 1/2 when Jack Cassidy divorced Evelyn Ward. The young David felt abandoned. And for much of his adult life, David carried around a sense of guilt, feeling there was something wrong with him because his father didn't want him. Though he says he and his father were very similar, he admits that the elder Cassidy was very difficult to connect with, because he was, in David's words, very emotionally damaged.

"My dad was an alcoholic, a very self-destructive, creative genius," David says. "He had a lot of problems with my fame and he became very jealous of it. It caused a lot of problems for him and Shirley, who I was very close to. Suddenly I'm spending more time with his wife than he was, and I'm getting all the attention, even though he's the genius actor. People were asking him, 'Wow, what's it like to be David Cassidy's father?'"

"So for a guy with an ego and needs like his, my fame didn't sit well. And I think as much as he loved me and was happy for me, he was also in

"My only trepidation was that I didn't want to do what my predecessor had done, because ultimately the hotel wasn't completely happy with what it was. They wanted it to be something else and it wasn't, so they never had an official opening. Although a lot of it was sensational and brilliant, a lot of the story didn't make much sense."