

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

# AMERICAN IDOL DAVID CASSIDY

Faces his demons and opens up about his valiant battle with alcoholism

BY DEBORAH SKOLNIK

There was a buzz of excitement behind the scenes at Connecticut's Mohegan Sun casino on March 15 as David Cassidy was about to step onstage. "I feel great. I can't wait to play," the '70s pop star enthused to *Closer* just minutes before performing for a packed audience in the Wolf Den concert hall. David, striking in a slim-fitting black suit with a white button-down shirt, wasn't the only one thrilled to be there: Throngs of fans, including some who'd waited 12 hours to see him, screamed with delight and held up photos of the former *Partridge Family* star and signs pledging their love when he grabbed the mic. After he opened with "Come On Get Happy," his hit show's theme song, David took a minute to address a serious subject. "I'm 64 days sober," he announced proudly, "and it feels so good!"

His news was music to fans' ears. Just this past January, many feared that David's battle with the bottle had his life spiraling out of control after police pulled him over in LA and later booked him for DUI — his third charge in just under three years. Since his arrest, though, life has been all about rehab — and revelations have made David more determined than ever to beat his addiction. "I am not ashamed, and alcohol does not define me," the 63-year-old star reveals to *Closer* in an exclusive inter-

view. "It's been a problem for me for nearly 10 years, but it will no longer be a problem."

## A SCARY SLIPUP

David's road to recovery hasn't been smooth, and his drunk-driving arrest on Jan. 10 pushed him to one of the lowest points of his life. Following about 45 days in voluntary rehab, he'd taken a furlough to visit LA to pursue a lawsuit against Sony Pictures Television over *Partridge Family* royalties. After two intense days of depositions, David was feeling weak — "I had been ill for a couple of days, and I felt horrible," he says — as he prepared to return to his Florida-based sobriety program. But en route to his flight at LAX, he made a fateful choice, stopping at a Japanese restaurant for food — and some sake.

"My habit through the past 10 years or so had been to have a couple of drinks before a red-eye flight so I could sleep," David admits to *Closer*. "I thought, 'You know what? No one's going to know. And I'm going right back to rehab.'" Instead, "within 30 seconds" of getting back in his car, he made an illegal right turn and was

FROM LEFT: GETTY; LISA KERESZ/TRUNK ARCHIVE  
COVER CREDITS CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: LISA KERESZ/TRUNK ARCHIVE; ABC; JAC (2); GETTY (2)



"It's been a very interesting year and a very big learning experience for me," a visibly pumped up David admitted at his Mohegan Sun show.



"I'm not doing the kind of self-destructive behavior I've chosen to do over the last decade."