



The Partridge Family ran for four seasons, from 1970 to 1974.

**DAVID CASSIDY**

# *The Rise & Fall of a* **TEEN IDOL**

**WORLDWIDE FAME AND ADORATION WEREN'T ENOUGH TO FILL THE HUGE HOLE IN HIS HEART** *By* LOUISE A. BARILE

**W**hen his phone rang late at night, celebrated horse trainer Gary Contessa expected it to be a call from David Cassidy. "We would talk horses all night," he tells

*Closer*. "He knew sires and broodmares like no one I ever met. He learned from me, and I learned so much from him. He was one of my best friends."

At the dawn of the 1970s, few stars shined as bright as David, who catapulted to fame on *The Partridge Family*. His green eyes, feathered hair and velvety singing voice provoked such fervor among his fans that it would become a burden. "They get flustered and I get flustered," David said. "It's no fun when they rip your clothes."

The memory of his disapproving father, Broadway actor Jack Cassidy, also haunted David. The Tony-winning star had sneered at his son's television success and died in an apartment fire in 1976 before they could reconcile. "I didn't have a chance to say, 'I love you.'" David confessed.

Born to Jack and his first wife, actress Evelyn Ward, in 1950, David spent his formative years with his maternal grandparents. "The thing that used to make me sad about David was that he was so happy remembering the years before he was famous," Chip Deffaa, co-author of David's autobiography *C'mon, Get Happy: Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus*, tells *Closer*. "He showed me the little woods he used to run around at Eagle Rock Reservation in

West Orange, N.J. He would say those were his happiest times."

David eventually learned of his parents' divorce from a neighborhood kid. He had a long-distance relationship with Jack, but that didn't stop David from idolizing him. "His father did such a miserable job raising him — the wounds were so deep," says Deffaa, "but the odd thing was, that as a grown man, David was still in awe of his father. He would tell me his father was the greatest performer he ever saw."

## **C'MON GET HAPPY**

After David arrived in LA in 1969, Jack helped his teenage son find a manager. David appeared on episodes of *Ironside*, *Marcus Welby, M.D.*, *The Mod Squad* and more before being cast as Keith Partridge in *The Partridge Family*, which also co-starred his stepmother, Shirley Jones. "David and I had a great thing going. He would even come to my house and help me with my kids," Shirley, 88, the mother of Shaun, Patrick and Ryan Cassidy, tells *Closer*.

The sitcom, based loosely on the Cowsills family musical group, was never a ratings juggernaut, but proved extremely popular with younger viewers, who made David a sensation. "I Think I Love You" topped the charts, and the Partridge Family earned a Grammy nomination for Best New Artist of 1970, even though David and Shirley were the only cast members who sang on their recordings. David