

# Magazines Tantalize, Girls 9 to 14 Fantasize

By JOHANNA PETROCCIA

There was a time when children's heroes were made of rugged strength and courageous deeds.

But modern-day hero worshippers of the teeny variety have traded Davy Crockett and Buck Rogers for fluffy-haired heroes with toothy grins, clear complexions and slight bodies — and most of all, talented vocal chords.

In case you are beyond the teenybopper bracket, do the names of young pop stars like David Cassidy, Donny Osmond and Bobby Sherman ring a bell?

If not, rush to any drug store magazine rack and you will find all the information you need inside glossy, comic-book-sized publications — from the new idols' most intimate secrets to their measurements.

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**THREE MILLION GIRLS** between 9 and 14 are doing just that every day across the country.

Some flip through the magazines in stores while others save their allowances to invest 50 cents in the latest issue off the presses.

These girls represent a flourishing market for the publishers of Flip, Spec, 16, Star, Tiger Beat, Teen Life, Fave, Loving Fashions and others.

Descendants of adult fan magazines with the same teasing headlines and devotion to the stars, the magazines have replaced the importance dolls and lipstick once had in a little girl's life.

Why the great appeal?

A random survey of young girls in the Triple Cities area unearthed their reactions — pro and con — to the teen-age fan magazines, and offered a few words from their sponsors — mothers.

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"WE LIKE THEM BECAUSE they have all our favorite stars in them, like David Cassidy and Bobby Sherman," simply explained one 11-year-old girl.

Her 10-year-old friend buys the magazines because of the 8-by-10 pictures and centerfolds of Donny Osmond which come in many of the issues.

"He's just so cute and he's our age," she cooed.

Osmond, who often sings with his brothers, is 14, while Cassidy, the current king of bubblegum, is 22. And Sherman is a ripe old 26.

Many of the girls interviewed had that same gleam in their eyes evidenced in women who religiously read movie magazines to learn the confidences of the stars.

"We want to know about their personal lives, who their girlfriends are and how they live," said one 12-year-old.

While many girls believe that the magazines tell the truth and nothing but the truth, some realize that not all the information given on their idols is unvarnished fact.

"You have to kind of pick out the facts," said Patricia Edgerton, 13, of Port Crane. "It's kind of hard because sometimes the writers make the stories up."

For example, one story said Osmond was lost and another claimed Sherman was going deaf.

Another complaint was the fact that alluring headlines do not always match the toned-down stories inside.

"Lots of times the stories are disappointing," said Debbie Eilers, 15, of Binghamton. She remembers a headline which read "David Cassidy's Wedding." After reading the story, she found that rather than getting a juicy bit of information, she or any other fan could be the intended bride if she were willing to let her imagination stretch that far.

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**ASIDE FROM "INTIMATE" STORIES**, the magazines have other appealing features for the young girl with stars in her eyes.

There are colorful centerfolds in each issue of a pop star which can double as posters on the walls of a teenybopper's bedroom.

Eleven-year-old Denise Prislupsky of West Corners said she buys about four magazines each week — "I borrow the money from my mother" — to collect the centerfolds and 8-by-10 pictures of her favorite singers.

"I keep all the old ones and have about a hundred of them," she estimates.

Other popular features include the advice columns like "Dear Karen" and "Dear Jill," and articles on dating do's and don'ts, makeup and hairdo tips.

Eleven-year-old girls can write for information on subjects like what to say to a boy and how to act on a date.

Other attractions are the products fans can send away for — love patches, records, clothes and diaries. The products, which sell faster as the star's popularity is boosted, have proven a great boon for money-making publishers.

One current offering is a black book with the home addresses and phone numbers of the stars.

Eleven-year-old Joan Emerick of Endicott, who has the book, claims she talked to Bobby Sherman and David Cassidy.

"When they answered the phone, I almost fainted. We talked for two minutes," she recounted. Unfortunately, mother did not share her daughter's excitement after she received the phone bill.

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**MOST OF THE GIRLS** interviewed said they would faint or get hysterical if they ever met their idols in person. And this seems to be the magic formula for the popularity of the magazines. They allow little girls to fantasize.

"All kids have dream worlds. Boys want to grow up to be great athletes. Girls want to grow up and take good guys for good husbands." Those words come from none other than David Cassidy. The girls agreed.

"The stars are better than the boys we know. They are cute and have lots of money and clothes," said one 10-year-old.



Press Photo by George Widman

**TEENYBOPPER IDOLS**—Waking up to the faces of David Cassidy, Donny Osmond and other pop stars might be enough to unnerve any adult. But the glaring smiles do not ruffle Lori Cannon, 10, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Crooks, 319 Paul St.,

Endicott. Lori is an avid reader of teenage fan magazines which supplied many of the pictures that decorate her bedroom wall. She is not alone. Over three million girls 9-14 are buying and reading the glossy books Lori holds in her arms.

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## Parents Look at Magazines But Seldom Forbid Them

"They are special somehow, the way they sing and look. I'd like to meet them. I would just stand and look," said Jo Ann Retorto, 10, of Endicott.

"They are nicer than boys our age. They like girls and don't act so strange. They are amusing," reflected Lori Cannon, 9, of Owego.

Some girls admitted even to dreaming about their favorite stars.

Tracey Bloom, 10, of Endicott, dreamed that Donny Osmond's car broke down and he slept at her house that night.

Kathy Warren, 14, of Endicott, dreamed that she and Donny were being chased by bank robbers and hid in a box. Later they were saved by a parachutist. "After that Donny asked me to get married and I said yes," she shyly admitted.

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**BUT THE MAGAZINES** do not inspire fantasies for those who do not like them. Brooke Crowley, 11, of Binghamton, prefers to buy Mad magazine.

"I'd rather read comic books. They're funnier," she said.

The girls eventually outgrow their interest in teen fan magazines and the pop stars themselves.

Michelle Zemek, 15, of Johnson City, considers the "mags" to be babyish.

They exaggerate everything. They always have the same people in them, and everybody is expected to flip over this or that guy."

Karen Becker, 15, of Endicott said the magazines are just a stage girls go through.

"I don't think the stars should be blown up as much as they are. They are made to look so glamorous that all the little kids go around making them their heroes."

Karen said her 11-year-old sister is "hung up on the whole bit. She probably believes everything in them — she's so gullible."

Many of the ex-teen magazine fans have gone on to fashion magazines, like Priscilla Hamlin of Endicott.

"I don't read that junk anymore."

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**PERHAPS THE MOST INTERESTING** find of the survey, however, was the fact that the fan magazines do not appeal only to the softer sex. They are read by many boys in the same age group.

The only difference is boys won't buy them, but instead borrow them from sisters or girlfriends.

"I'm interested in who those guys are dating. Some of them are popular, but some of us guys aren't," said Gene Bucci, 10, of Endicott.

Frank Tovornik, 12, of Endicott said he is interested in finding out about the pop stars' personal lives because "they are paid to act like they do on TV, and that might not be what they are really like."

Wayne Judge, 15, said although girls give him the magazines, he only reads them on a rainy day when he has nothing else to do.

But boys are still boys, even if they read fan magazines. They prefer sports magazines and comic books to the glossy teen fare.

According to one 12-year-old boy, in fact, the teen fan magazines are "dumb."

"David Cassidy sings good but he thinks he's so great because he has all the girls after him."

Another male viewpoint was aimed at the opposite sex. "Girls only like those magazines because they are about one thing — boys."

Do you know what your children are reading?

If you're not tuned in, an afternoon spent at the magazine rack at your favorite drug or grocery store can fill you in on what's happening in the preteen reading department.

Chances are your daughter or son is an avid reader of teen-age fan magazines.

At first glance you may be turned off by flashy headlines on the covers such as "Send Away For All His Measurements," and "Should a Star Kiss a Fan?" But not so for the 10-year-old girls who are invited to "Meet Them, Kiss Them, and Make Them Love You," or told how to get to be someone's girl.

Or more suggestive titles such as: "Bobby's Love Schedule" or "The Most Intimate Pix Ever."

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**SOME OF** the magazines' sexual connotations are more explicit. The first issue of one magazine featured a "Great Kiss Debate," and sponsored the "Kiss King of the Sexy Six Sweepstakes," asking fans to send in their lipstick prints on the mouth of their favorite star.

Another entry was a photo story, "Take a Shower with David," showing pictures of the Partridge Family's golden boy half naked.

Sometimes the ads are more questionable than the stories or pictures. One magazine features an advertisement with an address to send away for information on birth control. Others give tips on how to be the girl you always wanted to be.

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**HOW DO PARENTS** feel about what their daughters, and possibly sons, reading these magazines?

Although some children interviewed claimed their

parents disapproved and said, "Daddy rips them up and throws them away," few Triple Cities parents contacted expressed negative feelings toward the magazines.

Most were aware that their children were reading them and had taken time to read the stories themselves or, at least, had glanced through the pages.

"They're better than the magazines they have for adults," said one Endicott mother. "They are less sensational."

A West Corners mother said she would rather have her daughter spending money on them than on "trashy comic books."

Although she has not read the stories herself, she has looked at the pictures.

"I don't think the magazines are harming her. I'd rather have her reading at home where I can see her than going off to find things out for herself."

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**ONE MOTHER** said she looks through each magazine before her daughter reads it.

"There's nothing wrong with them. I explain things to her that she cannot understand."

The mother of one 10-year-old girl felt the magazines are beneficial.

"It gives children something to dream about." She did not object to the articles on dating and boys.

"She is at the age where she needs to keep up with the world on things like that."

But another mother admitted she had mixed emotions about the teen fare.

She objected to the sensationalism.

"Some children cannot handle the stimulation. It depends on the maturity of the child." Although she does not approve of her daughter reading the magazines, she will not forbid her to do so.

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**OTHER ADULTS**, however,

see more negative than positive effects of the magazines.

A writer on teen-age topics said the main danger lies in magazines' moneymaking efforts to promote products.

"The pop media industry's frank aim is to create needs where none exist — new and better deodorants, new and more exciting kissable posters, new and more lovable faces. Love and happiness are only \$2 and an order blank away." He added that some of the magazines use sex to sell themselves and their products.

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**KENNETH KURTZMAN**, psychologist for Vestal schools, said there is nothing wholesome about the teen magazines.

"They are very suggestive although they do not come out in detail on things," he said.

Some adolescents, he feels, may see the ideas promoted in the magazines as a proper lifestyle to adopt for themselves.

"They are impressionable and identify with these pop stars."

Kurtzman believes one danger lies in the way these magazine writers play up the sensational aspects and distort the truth. "Youngsters accept these facts at face value."

He said the problem is much like that of violence on television.

"The well-adjusted child can take things in stride."

But for the youngster who needs to be recognized and to belong, the magazines can be harmful.

His advice to parents is: "Look through the magazines and put things in perspective. If you tell the child he cannot read them, that will only build up his curiosity."

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