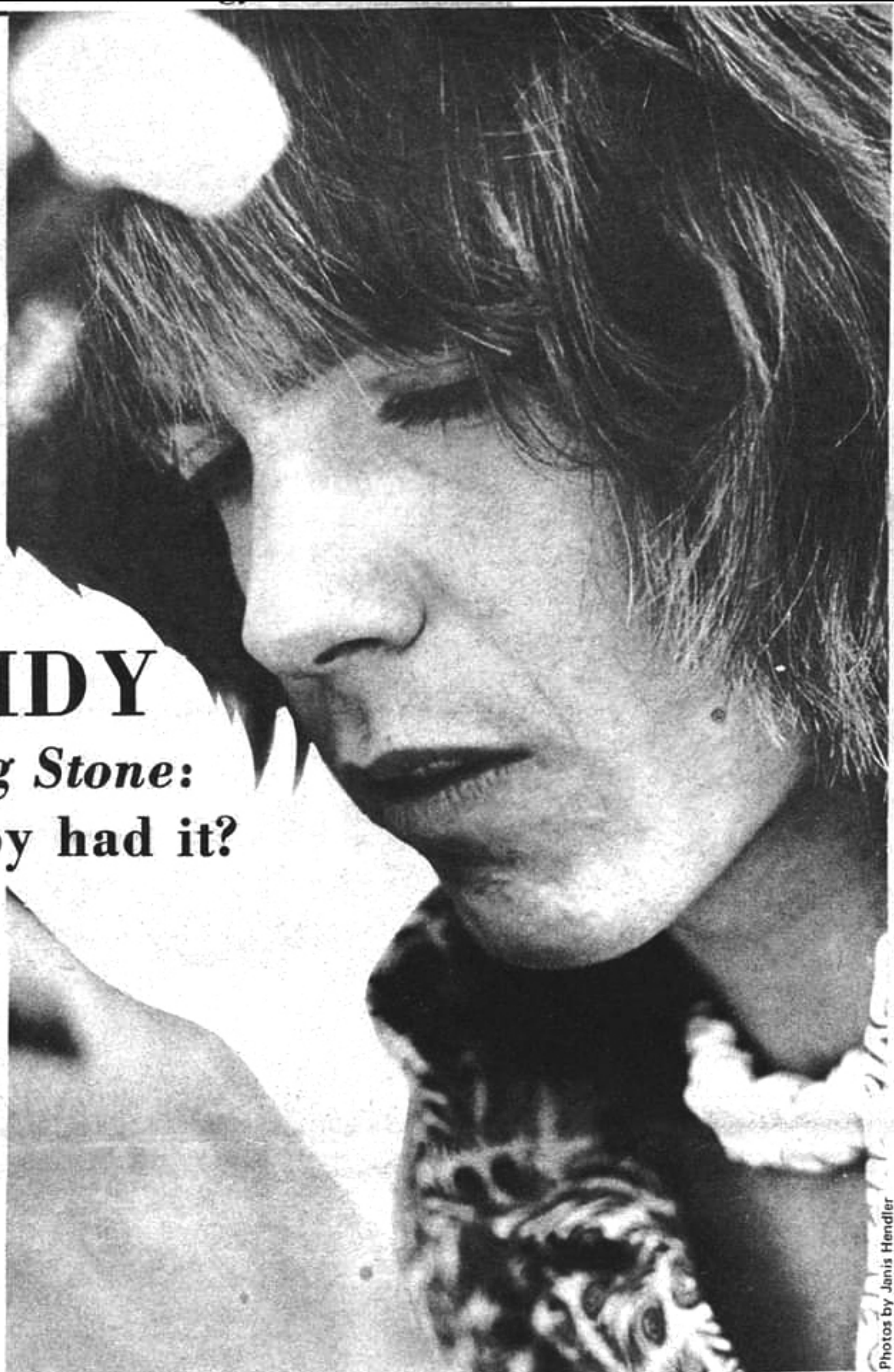


#### JANIS HENDLER

Sixteen-year-old, honey-faced Keith Partridge of *Partridge Family* fame is a likeable fellow, silly and fallible enough to be readily accessible for schoolgirls' daydreams. Keith is the embodiment of what Hollywood-wrought teenagelandia of the Surreal Seventies ideally ought to be: the product of a paradoxical blend of excitement, fame and fortune with innocence, Normalcy and Decency. He's got it all going for him, what with being a rock 'n roll star and all cute and mod and nonetheless unsullied by the usual nastiness of his art. Keith goes to high school, makes mistakes, gains and loses crushes, grows up slowly and supersafely experiments with life. He's everybody's nextdoor neighbor in the TV Utopian sense, unantagonistically chasing his brother, being teased by his sister, arguing with grownups and humbling himself by asking for the car keys. He always looks nice, never breaks out, wakes up with his tastefully-coiffed shagged hair in place and rarely ventures near a bathroom. In short, the only credible thing about Keith Partridge is the

from as far back as Frank Sinatra or Eddie Fisher through Elvis, the Beatles, and David's numerous and more recent predecessors to the spotlight. One young mother, rather embarrassed about her own recollections of Eddie Fisher, observed her nine-year-old daughter hugging a photo of David Cassidy to a creamy cheek and commented, "I think it's the age-old good-looking face. And the charm that comes out of it. If he sings and smiles sideways while he's singing, well, it's more charm. Elvis Presley basically had the same thing — the same type of animal attraction that the girls seem to cling to. Whether it's a matter of awakening something in little girls or not, I couldn't answer. I really wouldn't want to know."

But the stars come and go and with each generation another crew of bewildered policemen fight clawing females to guard a slender performer and shake their heads in astonishment at the barrages of fans attempting to surge closer to their hero. What transforms just another pretty face into a star seems to be the data about him on the ensuing pages of teenage gossip magazines,



Photos by Janis Hendler

# DAVID CASSIDY

## after *Rolling Stone*:

### ...Has teenage superboy had it?

fact that he appears regular as clockwork at 8:30 P.M. every Friday night (pre-emption allowing) in the television-fed living rooms of the thousands of girls between ages six and sixteen who believe in him.

But where television is involved, what merit hath credibility? Where do you suppose the money that the Partridges make vanishes to? Whatever happened to Mr. Partridge? How is it that no two of the five children look alike? What is the true relationship between attractive Mrs. Partridge and her omnipresent manager? Will Keith ever graduate from high school? To the thousands of pre- to pubescent girls who refuse camping trips and free movies on Friday nights in order to watch with chewed knuckles as Keith bounces across the TV screen once every five minutes, the only important question is, when will Keith dominate an episode?

Needless to say, reality isn't what they're watching for, or even the most sophisticated or perverse of nine-year-olds wouldn't dream obscurely of winning the affections of an older man such as sixteen-year-old Keith. Rather, the dream is the reality, for to all of the little girls who stand crying in lines to buy costly tickets to his overflowing concerts, cherish every recorded and journalistic release featuring him, proudly bear his face on dresses, T-shirts, necklaces, lunchboxes, book covers and bubblegum wrappers, wallpaper their rooms with his posters, eagerly join his fan club and allow his praises to dominate their conversations, Keith Partridge is infinitely more real than David Cassidy, the twenty-two-year-old actor who portrays him. All of the memorized quotations, measurements, likes and dislikes, life history and personal data belong exclusively to Keith Partridge and it's he who is adored and imitated. They call him David Cassidy in conversation in order to lessen the communication gap between themselves, parents and non-TV viewers, but their real idol is not-too-long-haired, apple-pie Keith, who looks cute and bouncy when he sings and never steps far enough from the scanner lines as to be threatening.

To members of the older crowd, big kids or adults who only know about David Cassidy through their children or siblings or by hearsay, the Teenage Idol is little more than a successful promotional package on legs. They're not new to seeing young stars sifted through the fickle fancies of little girls, and they may be able to scan the phenomenon

much of which is contrived to answer to ideals cultivated in youthful readers by their parents and reinforced by what they read.

Elvis was one of the few teenage stars to present a sexy image, and the bottom half of the TV screen went black when he gyrated. "They weren't permitted to go anywhere from here down, forget it," the young mother continued, reminiscing. "And everybody'd go awwww. Everyone felt so terrible because they wanted to see all of him." Apart from Mick Jagger, who drew a basically older crowd than his chronological counterparts, the Beatles, the direct sexual approach to image-building seemed to die with Elvis. In some sort of a toss-back to scrawny Frankie and innocuous Eddie, teenage idols after Elvis have been basically the moderately-hip, style-setting androgynous cultivations of promoters' imaginings. All attempts are made to draw the largest possible crowds by making the hero sufficiently ambiguous to appease even the most conservative of parents.

For example, it wasn't until several years into their careers that the Beatles began to stray publicly from their designated paths of virtue. Moralists hid their eyes when the unmarried Beatles conspicuously vacationed with their lady friends, parents shook when the Fab Four some were busted for possession of drugs and admitted to having experimented with LSD, album covers burned when John Lennon proclaimed himself more popular than Jesus. The shattering of the Beatles' image caused them relatively little grief because financially and popularly established as artists, but it did leave a lot of growing little girls with no heroes to identify with. The vacuum left by the absence of the likes of angelic Paul McCartney was immediately filled with a plethora of new sweet boys including second-time-arounders Davy Jones and Bobby Sherman.

As little kids become more and more tied to the media, they are, of course, less and less easily satisfied by minimal information on their stars. It was largely magazines and radio shows which kept the Beatles alive during the annual voids when no new records appeared; no TV shows were taped and the gossip-mongers were running low on new blood and guts. But today, if a little girl falls in love with a performer, she wants him in her own home. On television. And seeing and grabbing such a profitable market, TV tries to comply with her needs, even if it

means synthesizing them.

Hence, the burgeoning of The Monkees. The astonishing popularity of the unlikely combination of Jones, Nesmith, Dolenz and Tork was checked by only two shortsights on the part of the program's creators. First, Jones alone had the sweet-faced charm natural to a teenage idol (if past success stories can dictate). Second, the younger and older audiences had difficulties relating to the obscure format of the show. Nonetheless, The Monkees proved that television could create rock stars and the idea of a program featuring rock performers was picked up again in 1970, this time inspired by the "real-life" phenomenon of the Cowsills rock 'n roll family. This time, the show would hold something for everyone; a single heroine for the middle-aged to oggle at, a family situation for Middle America to relate to, little children for little children, clean rock 'n roll for everyone, and last but by no means least, a handsome young male lead who could be cultivated into the next teenage heart-throb. It was with this in mind that the Partridge Family was created, in hopes that at least one of its stars, predictably the male lead, would "catch on" with the kiddies. Keith Partridge was to come out of a much-thought-out teen-worship mold, and had to be cast to meet with the designated standards of teen dreams. In order to cut down the margin for error, the part was filled by a young man whose debut in the teen magazines with appropriately positive reader response had already taken place.

And David Cassidy was already taking up front page space in a few teenage magazines when he won the role of Keith of the Partridge Family. David became phenomenal promotional history so fast that his teenybopper predecessor Bobby Sherman was forgotten nearly as fast as a 1960's post-Beatle rock 'n roll group. For a brief period Bobby Sherman remained the King of the Magazine Covers, but his television series had already been lead to the gas chamber, and air space soon belonged to David Cassidy. Bobby Sherman became permanently "out" with most grammar school to junior high school crowds, just as David Cassidy is presently being slowly replaced by twelve-year-old Donny Osmond.

People who have devoted two full years to the painstaking planting, cultivating and care of a teen star's image are bound to be a little bit touchy about whose tractor they let into the field. Predictably, seeing David Cassidy is a difficult undertaking, only slightly less than comparable to attempting to gain an in-person interview with the President. His personal manager, Jim Flood of Aarons Management Corporation, is naturally concerned about who approaches David journalistically and what the writer will then set down for posterity. A cordially extended invitation to a personal meeting at Aarons' office on a secluded street in the hills of Benedict Canyon allows Jim an opportunity to evaluate the perilous nature and objectives of a potential interviewer.

Jim Flood's private office on the ranch of Miss Ruth Aarons, who developed Aarons Management, is built in a seemingly converted, tastefully white-washed barn which houses, among other properties, an elegant pool table, complete bar and hundreds of souvenir promotional materials, photographs, autographs and sheet music from past business associations of Jim's. George Chakiris, Shirley Jones (David Cassidy's *Partridge Family* co-star and real-life stepmother) and Jack Cassidy (David's father), not to mention Chuck Connors even, smile down from old photographs which juxtaposed provide a visual history of the artists' careers. Overshadowing all are huge, post-coloured posters of David Cassidy; David Cassidy onstage, David Cassidy with fans, David Cassidy alone and smiling the sweet, half-sad smile which has won him the none-too-flattering description of androgynous superpuppy. David Cassidy a la mod, Funky David Cassidy and David Cassidy the teddy bear. Appropriately, Jim also avails a large selection of favourable reviews and descriptions of David and his career, cut devotedly out of magazines and newspapers from all over the country. David's star status becomes increasingly apparent in the light of all the regalia, making one feel slightly sheltered for not having every detail of his much-highlighted life at one's mental fingertips.

Jim Flood himself is a seemingly casual and confident man in his mid- (please turn to page 2)



# David Cassidy: Million-Dollar Duck?

(continued from page 1)

Thirties personifying someone who could indeed afford to drop Jerry Lewis as a client in order to devote his full time and energies to manipulating the career of David Cassidy. He's suave, hip, cool and a lot of other adjectived things that make him seem a bit incredible from the onset. Nonetheless, his rapport with David is unquestionable, they ski together and call each other Stan and Olly and give little indication that their interdependence is on a business level. Jim helps to create and sustain the image and it is David's job not to make the task too difficult. Jim describes David as bright and free-thinking and quite his own man.

With any actor, one knows that his art is illusion and that his talent lies in developing new characters and making them credible — a fact which makes the separation between actor and person a rather difficult one to rely on. It is therefore impossible at a casual meeting with David Cassidy to tell if Jim Flood's description of him is accurate or not. He is seemingly independent, straight-forward, and slightly headstrong, and one becomes convinced that he is a complete self-thinker until his analogies for his work and life-style coincide a bit too perfectly with Jim's.

But David is distinctive, very slender and lithe, a slip of a man whose pale green eyes are apt to stare off into space when he's discussing his career, a subject about which he is possibly too well-informed. His voice is high but strong, still betraying the crackling grumble of an adolescent, and its professional transformation in song is quite remarkable.

David most enjoys sitting by his pool in the yard of his attractive, ambling Spanish/Encino home, dangling his slender legs into the heated water or soaking up the sun. He relishes temporarily not concerning himself with his appearance, which is of great importance to him whenever he is at work, and grows a bit of beard, leaves his hair unwashed and tosses aside his mod threads. His two years of superstardom have taught him many lessons, not all of which he heeds, and have left him prepared to respond reasonably to any press questions about his work, past and present. He says dubiously "I have nothing to hide," and will probably answer proportionately honestly to the manner in which he is asked.

Jim Flood could verify the fact that no pop star who is the product of much promotional effort truly has nothing to hide. It is by the nature of his work that he must sublimate his self-image to his commercially-created image, and can live however he wishes as long as he doesn't let anybody on the Outside know. Every little female fan who sees David as Keith and Keith as the boy just like the boy that married dear old Mom, doesn't want to know about any relationships between David and sex, David and drugs, David and illegality, or David and personal problems. In their minds, David has no right to interfere with the fantasy worlds which they have drawn around Keith Partridge, and they will

protect the illusion at the risk of ignoring David Cassidy altogether.

In fact, though David Cassidy reaps the Upper Class advantages of playing Keith Partridge, i.e. his large two-acre home, his white Corvette, records delivered to his door, top-notch stereo and musical equipment and the lot, Keith Partridge actually leads a much less precarious life than David. When fans and star seekers trot merrily home with autographs, scraps of hair and clothing from their idol, David Cassidy mourns a cramped hand and defaced personage while the new tributes are hung at the feet of monolithic posters of a grinning Keith Partridge. Each time Keith pouts and gripes his way through another Partridge Family episode, David spends a week awakening before dawn, cold-water washing the TV-cuteness into his face, answering to interviewers and phone calls during his lunch breaks and grueling the rest of the day away under the proverbial Bright Lights. When Keith smiles from a magazine page, one can be sure that David has spent a couple of hours of forced courtesy with some undesirableable photographer. For each commercially packaged, overproduced Partridge Family or David Cassidy record, David invests night after night trying to out-scream horns, strings and background singers in a recording studio, only to follow up his own act with blitzkrieg concerts all over the Southern and Eastern states.

And all of the fanaticism and hysteria has taken its toll on David. In the past year he has dwindled from 135 to 125 pounds, and is a perpetual victim of colds and flu. In 1971 while twenty-one years old, he was forced to have his gall bladder removed due to the development of gallstones therein. He rarely eats a full meal because neither he nor his roommate, Sam Hymen, cooks and both are tired of frozen beef and chicken pies.

Still, David is not a mass of complaints and indeed, as has been pointed out by many, who would complain about \$250,000 a year? But he claims to be counting off the time until he can retire to the land he recently purchased in the Hawaiian islands. "I'd like to just see how dark I could get my skin for a while. Just lie back and play my gee-tar, sing some songs with my friends. Just see how content I'd be not to be pressured by the world around me. Like I could live in this area right in here probably. Although, I just bought some land, about twenty-six acres in Hawaii and, uh, I'll probably move there in about, hopefully about two years. It's a nice place."

Even as he speaks of leisurely retirement, his career wheels are turning. Scripts for potential major movie roles for David are being read every day, both by him and by his managers. "David has talent," says Jim Flood, "and he knows it. He's confident that he can act and he wants to act. And his singing ability has developed greatly over the past two years. As far as acting goes, the series probably hasn't helped him much. When you're working on a series, your acting muscles don't

stretch"

David further expounded this point. "I definitely am an actor and I definitely always was one. It kind of becomes buried underneath all of these titles that people put on me like, you know, singer, actor, performer, teenage idol ... someday I'll do something hopefully. It is acting when I'm doing the show, but it's difficult to explain ... it's like having a muscle and building it up when you're studying and when you're working, when you're acting. And then you get into a television series and all of a sudden you've got that muscle and it sort of relaxes. You've still got that muscle, but you just don't really have to use it, you start lifting really light weights, and you're still lifting but you're lifting only light weights, so that you're not stretching or growing. And as an actor, just doing the Partridge Family, that's really what is happening to me, or has happened to me. It happens to everyone doing a TV series, 'cause it's the same thing every week. It's just not stimulating doing the same thing over and over again. It's like doing a play on Broadway."

Before turning to a television career and doing the guest spots on shows such as Marcus Welby which won him the attention of the fan magazines, David would have been very happy to get a part in a play on Broadway. "After I got out of public school, I was in a continuation school and I almost dropped out. I was getting crazy. I was doing a lot of bad, evil things I just was crazy, I don't know, I was having fun, I thought it was fun at the time, I guess, just because I hadn't done it before. I suffered, I suppose, a little because of it. I was at the point of dropping out, and I went to see about this private school so I tried to get in and they said, well, I don't know, you're pretty far gone. And my parents went in, 'He wants to make a stab at it again,' you know, and I did. So I didn't lose face in my family, it was one of those kind of trips. So about two weeks after I graduated, I just went, you know, just another one-way ticket to lie around and get wasted all day. So what I did was, I split. I went back to New York and I started studying again, and I got an agent and walked the pavement for ... not too long. It was really a low in my life. I was really depressed, and I was lonely, and I was alone. Things just weren't happening for me like I wanted them to. I mean, being an actor and walking around the streets of New York is just not a great gig, it really isn't. I was fortunate, though, I got a job in a Broadway show, and I came out here about six months after that."

After returning to L.A., David enrolled in night classes at Los Angeles City College to enable him to do television work during the day. There, he learned how to write his name on a paper, where to sit in a classroom and the art of raising his hand, after which he ran towards the first reasonable offer, coincidentally for the Partridge Family. "If three



years ago or four years ago, if I'd imagined this, it would have been absurd, as absurd as my saying four years from now I'm going to be a garbage man, because I might be that, you know, if that's what I want to do. I do know that I'll never have to work for money again. Never will have to cop to that, doing the Million Dollar Duck or something. They'll never catch me doing those funny little films.

Indeed, there are those who will agree that at twenty-two years, David Cassidy has indeed had it. Speaking professionally, both Gloria Stavers, editor of popular teen magazine *16* and Henry Diltz, David's photographer, have been quoted as referring to David as "on the way out." The probability of David's having passed the peak of his career as teenage superstar is verified by many of his young fans. Pondering the question, nine-and-a-half year old Naomi sadly confirmed the fact that Donny Osmond is indeed taking over the hearts of the younger set. "Well, for one thing, um, last week on the show, um, Danny said it was going off the air. If the Partridge Family went off the air, David would be unpopular, like Bobby Sherman. Like, you know, 'cause they're both in magazines, but they wouldn't be as popular. If David's show went off the air ... I'd like ... Donny Osmond."

Whereas both Naomi and her friend Leslie agree that an absence of David Cassidy from his regular TV appearances on the Partridge Family would bring a quick death to his massive popularity, they don't feel that the Partridges as a family would suffer greatly from the loss of David. "I'd still watch the show even if David wasn't on it," said Leslie decisively, and her friend nodded in agreement. "Cause we like the rest of the people." "They're a fickle audience," muttered a post-teener, recalling how long her own harbored crushes had endured.

Jim Flood laughs over the telephone at the very notion of a pending television death for either the Partridges or David. "This is the first I hear of any thoughts of cancellation," he says. "Sure, David's growing up, and Keith's growing up with him. This year he's going to be eighteen. The Partridge Family's been a huge ratings success ... I'd say it may go on for three or four more years."

But a twenty-two year old Keith would be hard pressed to still be hanging around the high school halls, wise-cracking and running around in pajamas. Possibly he, like such longevity wonders as the offsprings of Ozzie and Harriet could be married off or could get a job working with some undefined insurance firm somewhere. But David Cassidy will be twenty-six in four years and predictably tired of still playing the Million Dollar Duck week in and week out. "It gets pretty heavy. You become like a robot, like someone has to wind you up in the morning at six o'clock, you open your eyes and think here we are again, you know? It's like ... one more day ... ticked off. I don't know, I won't be doing it forever. Financially it's worthwhile. And creatively it's worthwhile too, because I really like doing all that I'm doing. Being able to do that and then go away and do live stuff, you know, it's really great. But I'd just

like to do it one at a time instead of all at the same time, you know? I don't know. You can't have your cake ... pie ... and eat it too."

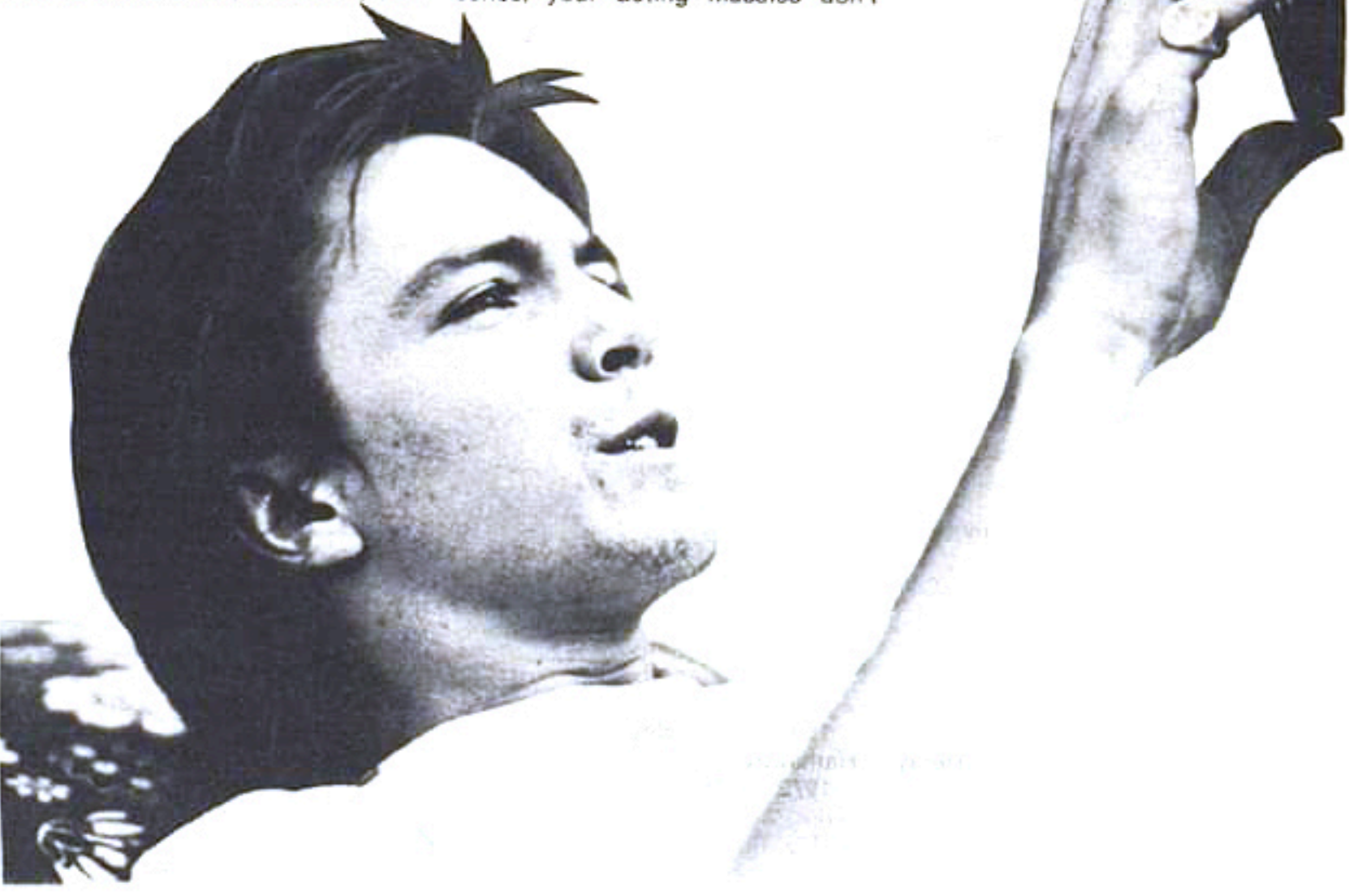
When he tires of eating it for the long breakless periods of television shooting, recording, performing in concert and building promotion, David grabs weekend vacations, skiing in Mammoth with Jim Flood who owns a house there, scuba diving in Hawaii or relaxing in his yard, where visitors are frequent and the telephone rarely stops ringing. "You have to when you work seven days a week or when you work, you know, really a heavy schedule, and the kind of work I do is not so much the work involved; although it is, like standing all day long, standing on your feet, that's hard, it's trying on your body, but ... it's um, it's really emotionally trying because you never get a moment to yourself, you constantly have to push yourself aside, and you become almost frustrated, like, Give me a minute, okay? You know, just let me take a minute for myself. And that's hard. That hurts. See, I have to cop to to other people, I have to cop to a time schedule, or like being here at six in the morning, or being there at seven o'clock in the morning. It's hard when you're on the spot, you know, it's like right here do it, produce, let's go. You have to produce here, you have to produce here, and you have to produce here. And it's like you want to give a hundred per cent to each one, but you can't because if you do, you become ... I'm sick every other week. I don't know what's going to happen next year."

In addition to having affected David's health, his rigorous time schedule has taken its toll on his personal life, which in fact now barely exists. Most menial tasks such as washing his car, shopping or marketing are now done for him. "I can go out in L.A. I get hassled; like, it's a drag when you want to be alone or when you want to be with someone to go out to a restaurant or something ... I mean, I can't even go into supermarkets or anything like that. That's a death trap." Jim Flood says that with what little time he has to himself, David has become increasingly more private. "He's gained a lot of scar tissue. He's run across people who have purposed to be honest and then they turn on him. But it's all part of a maturation process. I think that David's better prepared to carry it than most."

If David is coping with the confusion and wariness born of stardom, he is at best not particularly enjoying it. "Personally, um ... I'm unfulfilled and I haven't ... grown as much as I would have liked to as a human being. I'd say, in the last ... few years I don't really have that much of an opportunity to meet that many people, you know? And, uh, the ones I do meet ... it's not really on a one-to-one. It's more like on a business level. Talk at me and I'll talk at you, you know. Ask me the question and I'll zip into my file cabinet and whip you up a willy answer. I don't know. I get stir-crazy sometimes."

David sings softly to himself as he wanders around his kitchen, mixing together a light lunch of tuna salad and fresh summer melon. Few people, aside from the fans who

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# David Cassidy

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heard his albums and have memorized every inflection of his phrasing are aware of or concerned with the fact that David can actually sing. His albums, including his first solo album, *Cherish*, are so full of background that his producers' confidence in his singing ability fails to shine through. In fact, David has a maleable professional voice, loud and expressive, tapering off into wispy vibrato reminiscent of the Association-type ballad singers whose materials he has recorded. Certain of these artists have been quoted as moaning and pleading for their songs to be spared the violation of being recorded by a teenybopper star such as David Cassidy.

David strongly resents being categorically put down for his singing, particularly because he feels that he has talent. "I've only read *Rolling Stone* three times, but I read this one thing about me in an article about Michael Jackson that said that the Jackson Five have an incredible appeal to Blacks and Whites; and Michael has a following of young Black kids and young White kids unlike saccharine teeny idols like David Cassidy and someone else. He's got soul. And I said argh! Give me a break! At concerts, people tend not to listen too closely, and that's bothered me a few times, but not really, because people do listen. For all the ones that don't there're that many who do. I have a couple of close friends who come over and we jam together ... I sang that way before I ever started acting. It's something that I just love to do. I like to sing and I like to play. I just really dig doing it. It just feels good to do it. I'll never stop singing. Whether people are buying my records, I don't know."

The screaming, mobbing, hysterical effect of David's singing upon thousands of little girls at his concerts all over the country definitely reinforces David's confidence in his singing. An announcement of David's first L.A. concert scheduled at the Hollywood Bowl in

August was advertised in the *L.A. Times* practically a month ago, and his promoters are expecting it to be sold out long before the date rolls around. "The concerts are really intense, and it's very draining for me. It's not like James Taylor coming out with his axe and sitting down and playing, it's not that kind of trip at all. It's not really Mr. Showbiz, because I'm not really Mr. Showbiz, far from it, it's more like, I'm the only one who's on. I don't have three other guys like, let's say the Beatles or someone had to look to and say, take it, John, or take it, Paul, and they could lie back and relax and do whatever they want to do and shake it a little. I'm up there singing and it's on me all the time.

What it is on record is not what it is in concert, it's a lot harder ... I can't get up there and hum those soft easy tunes on stage. I think it's good for me to get out and do live things, because it doesn't let me settle down and stop trying. You know, every time I go out, it's not like I'm singing the same song, it's like, here, let me try singing that. I think I approach it a lot differently every night. I have to, otherwise it becomes, you know, yawning at that too."

Without seeing one of David's concerts, it's really hard to visualize him performing much other than as a 125-pound Tom Jones. In the posters hanging on the den walls of roommate Sam who is in charge of David's poster distribution, David appears to be the new White Whirlwind, prancing about in head-to-toe crepe and beads and shaking it quite a bit. The news releases and snaps of screaming girls make David's present conjecture that he's becoming less and less the teenage idol per se hard to believe. "I think it's less and less now, I gotta tell you. It feels like it, it feels like it to me. Maybe I'm just getting used to it, you know, it's just been two years. It feels like people are now not staring at that so much because they've stared at that already. It's like they're staring beyond that. My popularity's not dwindling, I mean, business on the road has been better than ever. I

think it's changing. It feels like it's growing. A couple of people told me, from a couple of kind of underground papers where I was in towns and stuff, colleges, it's almost becoming ... the cat that laid this on me, it was a little bit much for me to handle, and I think probably a little too much for anybody else to handle, but I liked it nevertheless ... he said it's become almost very hip to like me. It's almost too hip to like me. Because everybody else puts down on me, it's become very vogue, kind of, to like me and to buy my records ... it's almost like buying old Elvis Presley records or something, I guess, or that kind of trip. No one really dug Elvis Presley; it was just sort of a hip thing to do."

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The Greatest Promotional Story Ever Told, the creation of Elvis Presley by Colonel Tom Parker, is brought to mind by the success story of David Cassidy. David has appeared on the cover of periodicals of every status from *Life* on down. He has read only two negative articles on him and accounts to the sheltering arms of his managers for that fact. "I haven't read any really bad reviews of me ... I'm sure I've had a bunch written about me, but I'm just fortunate enough not to read them, you know. I have read one bad one, but I have to say I felt really good about it because the guy was such an asshole who wrote it. I always figure that when they write shitty things, you know. I certainly don't believe that I am. I've got good people as far as promotion is concerned behind me. It can never be controlled, but it has been better than any I think has been controlled, you know, to a certain degree. Negative or positive, there have been a lot of things written about me and most of it has been positive. Press good, bad or indifferent, it's got to help you one way or another, especially if you're unknown, you know, people rapping about you, whether you're Ralph Nader or whether you're David Cassidy or anyone else, you know, good, bad, or indifferent, it is what it is; it's publicity."

Press publicity good, bad or indifferent helped David indeed until the *Rolling Stone's* May 11th issue featured a story on him entitled "The

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# David Cassidy

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Naked Lunchbox: The Business of David Cassidy," which revealed him to be something less than the sweet, innocent young all-American that the Keith Partridge myth had made him out to be. Much of the gossip and under-the-table giggling over the controversial article, which featured a centerfold layout of David in the nude cropped somewhat below the zone of normal discretion, has yet to die out, particularly and alarmingly in the buzzing ears of the showbiz world. Even non-virgin-eared Joyce Haber of the *L.A. Times* commented in her daily column of the week following David's unveiling, "The talk of the show business overground is the current issue of the underground newspaper, *Rolling Stone*. It features a rather effete and revealing (particularly in view of his teen-age fans) David Cassidy centerfold. David's hands, unlike Burt Reynolds' in *Cosmo*, are across his chest." Miss Haber followed up with a few comments about the ensuing article's content which seem to be representative of that view shared by many others including Aarons Management, Screen Gems and Bell Records, all of David's business associates. "The story that follows the photo is also revealing of the teen-agers' Super-puppy, and also revealing in a rather distasteful way. David's language and behavior, plus his quotes about himself and his managers, Miss Aarons and Jim Flood, and about his female fans — notably one that's unquotable in a family newspaper — are enough to send anyone into retreat."

Although David did fly to Hawaii immediately after the release of the *Rolling Stone* article, any relationship between the two events seems to have been purely coincidental. After having received a deflating phone call from his management company expressing their dismay at the nature of the article, David awaited the special delivery of the *Rolling Stone* to his door with nervous anticipation. He perched on the arm of a dark, heavy wooden dining room chair, flipping unconsciously through a newly-arrived stack of old albums, lapping at a push-up ice cream and vacillating between silent, brow-furrowed worry and good-humoured stabs at the insignificance of the article. When the *Rolling Stone* did arrive, David opened it apprehensively and stared with visible astonishment at his naked countenance in its center. "That's a strange photo," he said. "I hope my mother doesn't see it." He pored through the article slowly, laughing at each joke and description, moaning at journalistic exaggerations and misquotes. "They said this one thing about me saying to little kids, shit man, take drugs. I

never said that. I'm not into that." He frowned. And he left for a week of leisure in Hawaii.

In the meantime, a lot of other people directly or indirectly related to the article were not relaxing at all. Rumors began to trickle down the record company grapevine, tales were told of upper-echelon businessmen in the great halls of Bell Records holding worried conferences about David's future. There was theoretically some talk of suspending David's recording and television contracts as a result of the unexpected and unwanted image iconoclasm of David Cassidy / Keith Partridge. When David heard this, he laughed; but Jim Flood did not. "I'd rather not discuss the *Rolling Stone* at all, if you don't mind," he said. Mellowing slightly, he added "It's far too early to tell yet what the results of this article will be. Working with the media has been a learning process for David, and after a while you learn that all that's written is a matter of editorial discretion. It'll all just die down with time."

David, who does indeed believe that concoctions of the media should often be taken with a grain of salt, has some difficulty understanding what all the commotion is about. What bothers him the most is that the people in whose hands his life and career stand right now should be so gravely affected by a thing as unimportant as a nasty article in an underground paper which lets people know that he removes his shining armour when he leaves the studios. Indeed, although he realizes that the unasked-for change in his image may effect his popularity with the younger fans whose parents will read the article and then refuse to allow their little ones to have anything to do with naughty David Cassidy, he is not all that surprised by the nature of the article, having said much of what he was quoted as saying. He assumed that when Jim Flood and the rest agreed to allow *Rolling Stone* to do a thorough article, they were aware of the same. "I expected it to be fairly good because I spent a lot of time with her (Robin Green, author of the *Rolling Stone* article) purposely, and she spent a lot of time with a lot of folks involved, and uh ... the first story that *Rolling Stone* wrote about me, I have a feeling, I don't know why, I heard a bunch of excuses ... one was that they put me on the cover of *Life* magazine and the *Rolling Stone* was a little insulted by that ... another one was that the article that was written was just too wishy-washy which meant it was probably just one-sided by being just too positive and not enough negative things going for it which, I mean, there are a lot of negative things involved with every human being ... God knows, I'm no Knight in



Shining Armour. I told them, I said I always expected the *Rolling Stone* to slap me in the face, you know, I'm very wary of you, so ..."

Consensus of the older folks seems to be that David displayed very poor judgement by being so free with his conversation and by agreeing to pose in the flesh for *Rolling Stone* photographer Annie Leibowitz, both of which were done without the okay of his managers. A mother of one David Cassidy fan who had reacted to the *Rolling Stone* photos and article by merely staring in disbelief commented, "It will have to hurt his box office so to speak with the younger children ... I still feel that parental influence is very strong. That picture would definitely not hang on the wall of her room. No way! Definitely not!" A twenty-one-year-old friend added, "That picture wouldn't hang on the wall in my room!" "So there you are," said the mother. "You see, there is parental influence! On the other hand, if most kids saw that newspaper and picture on the newsstand, they wouldn't recognize it to be David Cassidy. I didn't. Because now that you mention it, I happened to see that on a newsstand in New York last week and I remember commenting to the person I was walking with, this used to be a nice clean newsstand! And nothing was mentioned about who it was, I didn't realize it either. I thought, 'One of those,' and kept going. I thought it was another publication like *Screw* and all of those."

Her nine-and-a-half year-old daughter said, "Well, my girlfriend Vicki said that he (David Cassidy) went outside with nothing on, and I didn't believe her. Well, I don't think David is that kind of person." She paused, looked at her girlfriend and thought for a moment, swinging her bobbysoxed legs to and fro. "I wouldn't believe what I read because he didn't write it. On the Partridge Family cards I got one and it said, um, do you like, um, when people in the magazines tell lies about you, and he said no, but, um, he can't really help it, just hope that no-one believes the lies. It's his own life. On the program, like, they tell him what to do, but in his own life, no-one tells him what to do. He could just live

any way he wants." Both girls agreed that all they really want to know about David Cassidy is what is portrayed of him on television.

Generally speaking, the notion of David Cassidy changing his image means nothing to the little girls because they don't really understand that the image is other than what David essentially is. Mothers and big sisters, on the other hand, understand that the Keith Partridge image is a product of the business and that as David grows, his image will have to be changed accordingly. "It would seem to me that the people that published the article were trying to put an extreme onto something when even the other side of it hadn't been disclosed yet," said the big sister of one Cassidy fan. "To people our age, he's known as the Partridge Family little girls' dreamboy, you know. And I think the article was almost portraying an extreme where I think a lot of people looked at it and became very hostile and thought, oh yeah, what's he trying to pull now? But on the other hand, he may want to change his image. After a while it depends on a person's priorities. I think initially it was fun to make money and maintain an image, but after a while when you have to start living that image day in and day out, outside the stage and inside the stage, it just isn't worth it. A buck just isn't worth it. You have yourself to live with the rest of your life." A Mother commented, "I think from the adult viewpoint, I never thought he had anything except charm. I didn't think he had talent of any kind at all. I think, though, that that wouldn't hurt him any more than his lapse. In fact, I think that he probably did the article just to get back into the public eye a little more, I really would. Because he is fading."

It's a matter of which will fade first, the tongue-wagging about David, or David himself. While the studios are waiting for the former to die down, David is waiting for the demise of the latter so that he can begin to think about what will come next. Because who knows what the next step will be? Will David Cassidy ever retire to his ranch in Hawaii? What is the fate of Keith Partridge? Is Donny Osmond really the new David Cassidy? Stay tuned. The next episode may be in living colour, and this week, Keith is the star.