

Two-for-one tonight: David Cassidy and Keith Partridge

By John J. Moser
Of The Morning Call

David Cassidy has decided he likes Keith Partridge after all.

More than 30 years after walking away from his character in the 1970s sitcom "The Partridge Family," and after a decade of not singing "Partridge Family" songs he made famous, Cassidy again is embracing his teen idol years.

Now 56, Cassidy says he'll do a healthy dose of "Partridge Family" songs when he performs tonight at Lehigh University's Zoellner Arts Center as part of Musikfest's Performing Arts series.

"It's still a part of me and I covet it," Cassidy says in a telephone call. "I covet the music and the experiences that I've had because I went and did so much other work in the theater, on Broadway, as a producer, as a writer, director and all the rest of it — working in Las Vegas, I did over 2,000 shows there. I carry it with me because that music is synonymous with me and my work. It's a great gift to be able to go back."

Cassidy became a teen idol as Keith on "The Partridge Family," a sitcom about a single mother and her four children who form a rock band and drive to shows in a multicolored school bus. Cassidy's fan club, even in pre-Internet days, claims the largest paid membership in music history (about 200,000).

The show led him to record hits such as "Cherish" and "Rock Me Baby," and, Cassidy says, gave him the opportunity to play with such legends as John Lennon and Brian Wilson — "some of the greatest musicians every single night."

But his fame was overwhelming. At a 1974 show in London, hundreds of fans were injured and a 14-year-old girl killed in a crush at the front of the stage.

So, like other teen idols who try to break free from their images, Cassidy says he went 10 years without doing such "Partridge Family" hits as "I Think I Love You" or "I Woke Up In Love This Morning."

"I can't relate to what it must be like for people like Tom Jones and Paul Anka, where basically that's all they've ever done — they've gone out year after year after

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AT 56, David Cassidy has a different perspective on the music from his teen idol years. After not performing those hits for a decade, he now celebrates his teen time in the spotlight.

year playing the same 'What's New Pussycat' how many times?" Cassidy says.

He left Keith Partridge behind. He starred in an episode of television's "Police Story," for which he received an Emmy nomination, and for one season in 1979 had his own TV police drama, "David Cassidy, Man Undercover."

He turned to Broadway in 1983, starring in "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," and followed that in "Time" on London's West End. In 1996 he took over the show "EFX" in Las Vegas. In 1999 he co-wrote, produced and starred in "The Rat Pack Is Back!," a show about Frank Sinatra's circle. He also wrote, produced and starred in the Vegas show "At the Copa" starting in 2000.

In between, he went through two marriages, then scored a comeback Top 30 hit with "Lyin' to Myself" in 1990. He married current spouse Sue Shifrin-Cassidy and had a son, Beau, in 1991. He also became a successful race-horse owner.

But then, Cassidy says he went back through his 22 albums, 18 of them gold or platinum, with 35 million sold, with a different perspective.

"When you go back and find all these great songs ... and pick out your favorite stuff and pick out the hits that you really like the most and ... not only that people want to hear, but I love to play, it's a joy for me. It's a celebration."

He resumed touring as a singer. In 2003 he hit platinum with an album, "Then and Now," that reworked some old hits.

Asked to compare his performances today with those as a teen idol, Cassidy says, "I get asked this question a lot and the truth of the matter is that I enjoy it much more now. But I would think that it's true about everybody. If you live 40 years or more, don't you appreciate everything a little bit more now than when you were 20?" he says, laughing.

"I have a balance in my life with my wife and son, and my daughter [Katie, 19] is doing great," he says. Performing "means more to me, but everything does. I don't know anyone who can say at 45 or 50, 'I don't appreciate it as much as I did when I was 20.' Everything is that much better, that much sweeter."

Cassidy says that through all of the changes in his career, he has been able to keep his integrity because "it's not just about being famous, and it never has been for me."

"It's not even about the money. If you do good work, the rest of it comes. I think that there's a perception now and almost a belief now by people that it doesn't really matter what you become famous for, it's just cool to be famous," he guffaws. "I just don't get it."

Cassidy says the unbridled pursuit of fame is what

stripped the integrity of his "Partridge Family" brother, Danny Bonaduce, who Cassidy says is "all about the fame."

"I love him and care about him, but his need for fame and his need for attention is greater," Cassidy says. "He had his radio show, and I think that's wonderful, and he said, 'I'm going to do a TV show ... I just got asked to do celebrity boxing.' And I said, 'Danny don't do that.' [And he said] 'What are you talking about? They're going to pay me 30 grand.' I said, 'So is it worth compromising your integrity [with] people who have known you and love you and care about you, and you've had an impact on their life for 30 years and you're going to throw that away. I mean, you're going to look like an absolute ass----."

"You know, he doesn't care. ... It's sad."

Cassidy points out that even Donny Osmond, who was perhaps the biggest challenger to Cassidy's teen idol throne in the 1970s and who also went on to Broadway with "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," is now a game show host.

"Donny is a very talented guy, but ..." Cassidy says. "I've been offered to do things like that. It's not about TV and making money for me. It's about doing what I love to do, and I just haven't had any interest in doing things like that. But that doesn't mean that it isn't a great job and he's carried on and been successful, and he's a very musically talented guy."

Cassidy says the path he followed from "The Partridge Family" into a major recording star hasn't been repeated. Perhaps the closest example is Hilary Duff, who starred on the Disney Channel's "Lizzie McGuire" before topping the music charts.

An attempt last year to create a new "The Partridge Family" failed, although the search for a new "Keith" resulted in the discovery of new teen idol Teddy Geiger, whom Cassidy says "is a talented kid ... and I want it to be said."

Cassidy says it's difficult to find "somebody who can do all of that and will connect with an audience. ... Hilary has done it in a way that, I guess, one could compare. [But] because she's of another generation, another time, I don't know that you can compare one time with another."

In fact, because the times are different, most of what happened in the 1960s and '70s has never been duplicated, Cassidy says.

"I grew up in L.A. in the

'60s when it was a very, very fantastic, creative, social-sexual revolution, and was a part of that whole generation," he says. "And I ask myself often times where are the voices of my generation who stood for something? Are they all now stock brokers? I don't know. I don't know. I scratch my head sometimes."

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THE DETAILS

DAVID CASSIDY

- **When:** 8 p.m. today
- **Where:** Zoellner Arts Center, Lehigh University, as part of Musikfest's Performing Arts Series
- **Tickets:** \$30-\$45
- **Info:** www.musikfest.org, 610-332-FEST