

THE DAILY SPECIAL

'70s pop idol David Cassidy sings at the PNE

Having survived the Partridge Family and its marketing, the former teen idol has found a balance between his life and his music



BY JOHN MACKIE
VANCOUVER SUN

At the height of David Cassidy's fame in the 1970s, his image seemed to pop up here, there, and everywhere. There was David Cassidy bubble gum, David Cassidy lunch boxes and David Cassidy love beads, David Cassidy t-shirts, David Cassidy posters and David Cassidy comic books.

To Cassidy, the fad hit bottom with David Cassidy dresses.

"I had an aunt who called me," recounts Cassidy over the long-distance line from Saratoga Springs, New York.

"She was in New York and I was in L.A. doing the [Partridge Family] show. 'I saw a full-size cutout of you with your arms out, and they were hanging David Cassidy dresses on your arms.' This was at Macy's at Christmas, okay? Do I need to say anymore? Needless to say they didn't ask me for approval about the dresses. 'Yeah, I love that dress. That looks really good on me.' Ai yi yi."

David Cassidy and Partridge Family collectibles grossed an estimated \$500 million in the 70s. Alas, Cassidy received a mere pittance of the merchandising money, because the show's image (and his TV character Keith Partridge's) was owned by the producers.

Cassidy obviously would have liked a bigger piece of the merchandising action. But at 56, the erstwhile teen idol has put things in perspective, and seems quite satisfied with his lot in life.

"I don't focus on what's lost," says Cassidy. "I have a great life and a fantastic career. I've made a lot of money, and I'm pleased with that."

That career has taken him from TV stardom to music stardom to Las Vegas stage shows. Tonight, he's back in singer mode, playing his first Vancouver gig in over a decade at the PNE's Rogers Amphitheatre at 8 p.m.

Yes, he'll be playing the hits. "I'm gonna go back and do a whole bunch of the Partridge Family stuff, and early David Cassidy," he says. "And we're going to blow the roof off that place."

Well, there is no roof on the Rogers Amphitheatre, but no doubt the screaming hordes of 40-something female David Cassidy fans would blow the roof off the joint if there were one. Over three decades after the Partridge Family went off the air, his fame remains undiminished for the hard-core fans.

Cassidy says his fame was "instantaneous" when the Partridge Family hit TV in 1970. Asked what it was like — fun, crazy, wild? — and he says all three.

"It was all that: fun, crazy, wild, and completely out of control," he says.

"Not for me, necessarily, but for everyone else around me who was trying to control it. It's such a different time now, you really can't compare it, because there is really no such thing as true hysteria. It was a very different world that we lived in. People were much more naive, I think, and much less educated. I must say [the fans] were always incredibly enthusiastic, and that hasn't changed a lot. Although their voices have changed, probably dropped an octave."

It sounds a bit strange, but Cassidy got the Keith Partridge part as an actor, not because of his singing ability. In the pilot episode, the Partridge Family's music was sung by musicians who didn't appear on the show.

"They knew I could sing and they knew I could play, but they were looking for people that could act in a situa-



The mature David Cassidy doing what he enjoys — performing solo to adoring fans who recall the hits of the '70s.

tion comedy, which is what it was," Cassidy notes.

"If there was anything beyond that, that was a bonus. After they cast it and we did the pilot, they decided it might be a good idea for me to go and sing live and play live."

It was. Cassidy's singing career brought a whole new element to his TV stardom. The first Partridge Family single, *I Think I Love You*, spent three weeks at number one and sold over over five million copies, making it the top-selling 45 record in 1970. The Partridge Family wound up having seven Top 40 hits between 1970 and 1973, while Cassidy had four hits as a solo artist during the same era.

But the hit TV show, hit records and sold-out live shows were a bit much. Cassidy tired of singing as the Keith Partridge character, rather than as himself. In 1972, he shocked the world by posing in the buff for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine, and there were further shock waves from an in-depth profile which described him smoking pot and talking about groupies.

Then in 1974, he abruptly quit touring.

"I had done it for five years at that point," he says, "and knew that the only way for me to move on was to try and create other opportunities for me to do other work, and to have people see me as something else other than Keith [Partridge]."

The Partridge Family phenomenon also ran out of steam in 1974, and the show was cancelled. Cassidy switched



David Cassidy (left) and Shirley Jones from an episode of *The Partridge Family* during the show's early 1970s heyday.

to RCA records and recorded a critically acclaimed album, *The Higher They Climb the Harder They Fall*, which he co-produced with Bruce Johnston of the Beach Boys. It wasn't a hit, but it was creatively satisfying, and he is proud to report "most of my really hard-core fans think [the first few post-Partridge records] are the best albums I ever made."

He has continued to record through the years, and scored a Top 40 hit in 1990 with *Lyn' To Myself*. But his big successes have been on the Las Vegas stage, where he starred in a \$75 million production, *EFX*, and co-produced the

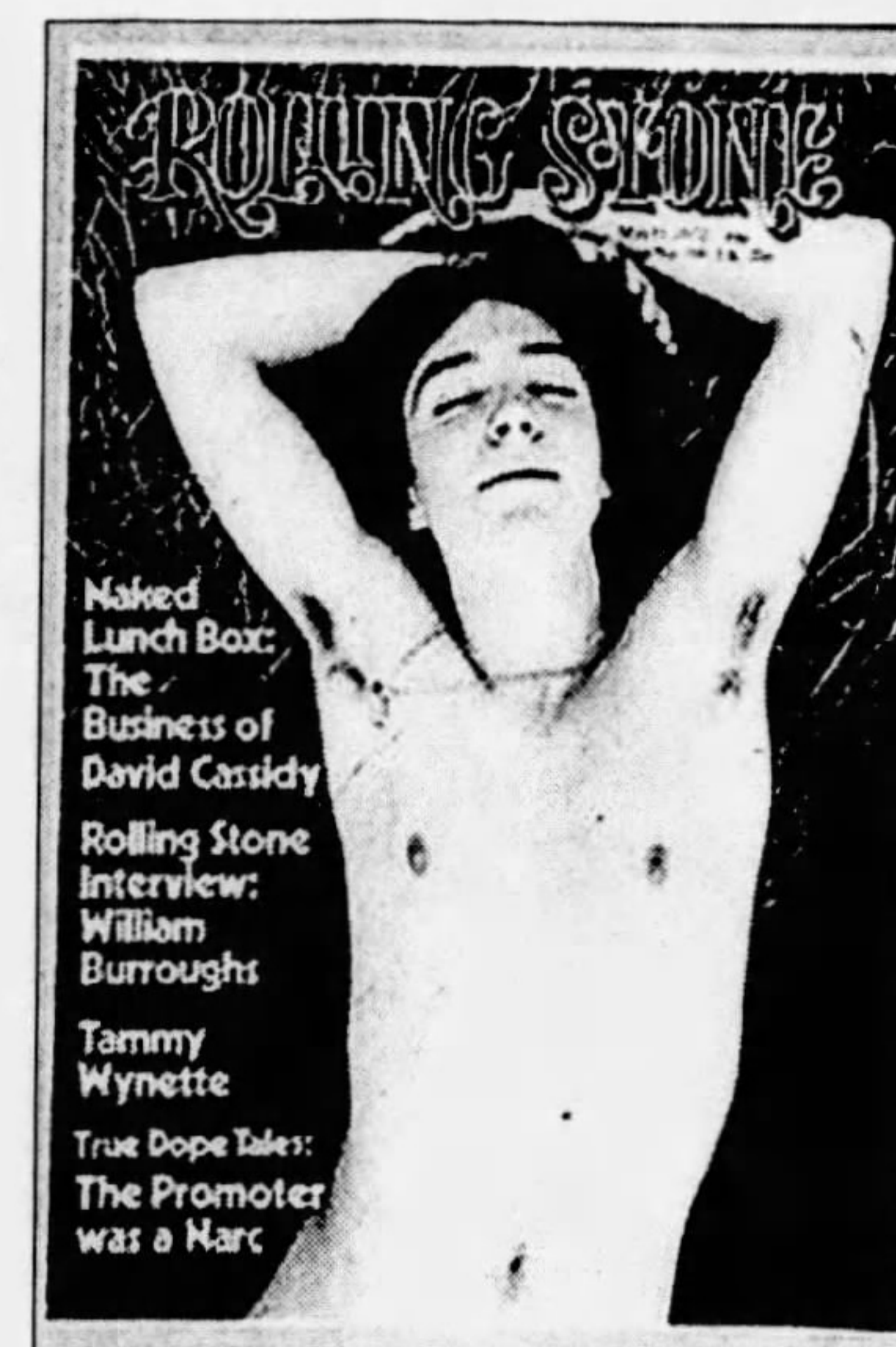
musical *The Rat Pack is Back*.

He now lives in Florida with his wife and 16-year-old son, and spends much of his time raising horses. But every few weeks, he leaves home for a brief tour.

"The fans have been there for me, and thank God they have," he says.

"In a lot of ways it's been a very serious celebration for me. I go out and do three or four dates at a time, then I go back home, it's not like being on the road for months. I get to see my son and be part of his life. I have a great balance now."

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A 1972 issue of *Rolling Stone* showing David Cassidy's nude upper body. He did the cover to subvert his squeaky-clean TV image.

The David Cassidy file:

■ Cassidy was born on April 12, 1950 in New York city, the son of actors Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward. After his parents divorced, Jack Cassidy married Shirley Jones, who was David's mother on the Partridge Family.

■ The Partridge Family was initially supposed to star a real life family band, the Cowsills. The Cowsills backed out when the producers wanted to cast Shirley Jones as their mom rather than Barbara Cowsill, their real mom, and Cassidy wound up playing the part originally designed for the late great former Vancouverite Billy Cowsill. Cassidy never met Cowsill.

■ The Partridge Family's breakthrough hit, *I Think I Love You*, hit the top of the U.S. charts on Oct. 31, 1970 and stayed there for three weeks. It sold five million copies. It appeared on *The Partridge Family Album*, which reached number three on the charts.

■ The Partridge Family's other big hits were *Doesn't Somebody Want To Be Wanted* (which reached number six), *I'll Meet You Halfway* (reached number nine), and *I Woke Up In Love This Morning* (# 13).

■ Cassidy's biggest solo hit was *Cherish*, which hit number nine in 1971. Other solo hits included *Could It Be Forever* (#37), *How Can I Be Sure* (#25), and *Rock Me Baby* (#38). In 1990, he scored a come-back hit with *Lyn' To Myself* (#27).

■ Cassidy was not happy with his squeaky-clean image in the Partridge Family. So he subverted it by posing nude for the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine in May, 1972, back in the days when *Rolling Stone* was still considered an edgy underground publication. The *Rolling Stone* cover and interview can be viewed online at "http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/5939503/naked_lunch_box".

■ In 1994, Cassidy penned a tell-all book about his teenage idol years called *C'mon Get Happy: Fear and Loathing on the Partridge Family Bus*. A reader named Lisa Marie wrote a review on Amazon.com that states "This book was like a car accident. I did not want to continue reading it, but I could not put it down."

■ Cassidy had an active libido when he was a teenage idol. In *C'mon Get Happy*, he writes: "Every 20 minutes that I could get free would be spent with women. In my dressing room, in the lot, in my car, anywhere."

■ Cassidy has been married three times, to actress Kay Lenz, Meryl Tantz and his current wife, Sue Shiffren-Cassidy. He has a 19-year-old daughter, Katie, and a 16-year-old son, Beau. Katie is a successful actress (she will play Lucy Ewing in the upcoming movie remake of the TV show *Dallas*), and dates current teen heart-throb singer Jesse McCartney.

John Mackie