

# A celebrity crush like only teenage girls suffer

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Last year, I was in the lobby of a Dallas theater when a friend said, "Oh, there's David Cassidy." It was probably a good thing that my husband was standing next to me, so my response fell within the bounds of human dignity.

Of course, what I wanted to do was run up to Cassidy and make some sort of clever allusion to one of his hits from the '70s to prove what a loyal fan I had been.

I knew all the lyrics, having sung them a bajillion times in a mock Partridge Family band with my best girlfriend and the boy next door. Who says there are no time machines? Suddenly I was also in a living room in Massachusetts asking someone to please point me in the direction of Albuquerque.

David Cassidy! David Cassidy! My middle-aged heart was pounding.

"I can feel your heartbeat, and you didn't even say a word ..."

Apparently, Allison Pearson, growing up in South

Wales, had a similar Cassidy crush.

Pearson, author of the 2002's fabulous "I Don't Know How She Does It," is back with her second book, a novel that takes the Cassidy crush as its central theme and turns it into an exploration of teen heartthrobs, celebrity, and the agony and the ecstasy of teenage girlhood.

Pearson's protagonist is Petra, who in 1974, when the story opens, is 13 years old and is obsessed with Cassidy. She and her girlfriend Sharon hungrily consume every word of *The Essential David Cassidy Magazine*. They kiss his image on the shrine of posters on Sharon's bedroom door. They are in love.

"This morning I woke up with this feeling, I didn't know how to deal with ... I think I love you."

The girls and their entourage, led by mean girl Gillian, make plans to travel from Wales to London to attend Cassidy's farewell concert. What will they wear? How will Petra keep this from her mother, who disapproves of pop music? What will it feel like to see David?



## Book review

"I Think I Love You" by Allison Pearson; Alfred A. Knopf (336 pages, \$24.95)

Part I of this book rings so true with young teen angst that I almost wondered if my face might break out reading it. I was Petra. We were all Petra.

Pearson introduces another point of view in Part I, that of a guy named Bill, who is starting his career as a music journalist and has, quite luckily and unfortunately, landed the job as the voice of Cassidy for *The Essential David Cassidy Magazine*. It's a humili-

ating job yet it pays the bills, and he's good at it.

He writes, and Petra and her gang believe.

And just when the reader is getting quite comfortable in 1974, Pearson takes us to Part II, 1998. A grown-up Petra is at her mother's funeral with her husband, whom she is divorcing because he's shackled up with a younger woman. Petra's got a daughter, a 13-year-old who is madly in love with Leonardo DiCaprio. Same song, new verse, but then something happens and Petra — having lived her entire adult life in London as a cellist and music therapist — is suddenly confronted with a surprising situation that compels her to travel back down the Cassidy roads of her past.

Pearson's Petra is so real that I almost felt like I should call her up and tell her how much I related to her story. This is a well-told tale with equal parts of teenage and grown-up drama, all of it almost too real. As the years fly by, the pages fly by.

A grown-up Cassidy is a surprising and fun part of this story, too. And so the novel expands from one about teen

dreams and desires and grown-up realities to one that looks at the crush phenomenon from the viewpoint of the celebrity.

What was it like to be David Cassidy then? What is it like to be him now? For that matter, what is it like to be Nick Jonas or Justin Bieber? What is like to be the object of so much high-pitched affection?

Not too long ago, I met Jonas briefly after a concert he gave at Dallas' House of Blues. He seemed like a nice kid — earnest, soft-spoken. On the way back to the car, I saw hundreds of girls camped out in tents in the January cold waiting for him.

If you've ever been a teenage girl, you know exactly how the desperation feels and maybe understand why it was so hard for me at the age of 48 to restrain myself when Cassidy walked by.

If you don't understand the phenomenon, read Pearson's book for entertaining insight.

The crazy longing is really not that complicated. But it is essential.

As David once sang, "Love is all that I ever needed."