

Q&A

David Cassidy reflects on days as a global idol

'Partridge Family' star likes to connect with an audience.

By Roger Catlin

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David Cassidy shot to success almost as soon as he first appeared with his excellently feathered hair as Keith Partridge in "The Partridge Family" 45 years ago.

Roughly based on the family band the Cowsills, "The Partridge Family" did feature some actual family (Shirley Jones was Cassidy's stepmother) and produced 96 episodes and eight albums in four years. It also launched Cassidy to a level of teen idolatry that might impress even Justin Bieber.

Stints on Broadway and in Vegas followed, with Cassidy, 65, returning only this century to performances with a band. He's now at more intimate venues.

We spoke recently with a rejuvenated and four-months-sober Cassidy

from his home in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., about the old days and the influence of his family, particularly his father, the late actor Jack Cassidy, as well as encounters with John Lennon and Donald Trump.

Q: What can people expect when they come to see a David Cassidy show in 2016?

A: Very high energy, obviously a lot of my hits. I take people kind of on a musical journey of my life, including a Cole Porter song that my father taught me when I was 3½ years old.

Q: Who is coming to your shows these days?

A: It's a broad, broad audience. But the core audience is 40 to 50 and maybe even 60. And they're extremely enthusiastic. A lot of them scream and yell. It's very much like it was in the early '70s. The voices have dropped about an octave of course, but that's about it.

Q: Your live shows back then were record-setters.

A: Yes. I still hold the record at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and broke



After his "Partridge Family" TV run ended in the 1970s, David Cassidy focused on performing on Broadway and in Las Vegas. At 65, he's entertaining with a guitar in his hands again. RICK DIAMOND/GETTY IMAGES FOR IEBA

the record at the (Houston) Astrodome.

But those are venues where you play and there's not a lot of connection because there's so many people. I couldn't do that kind of business now. But I love playing where I can really get close and connect with people.

Q: The sound systems must not have been great in those big stadiums either.

A: When you're playing sports arenas and places like that, of course it's not. It's not meant for music.

Q: It must have been hard for you to process performing for so many people.

A: It was very, very difficult, because I was working all day on the "Partridge Family" television show and was recording at night, right after I got off work, driving over the hills from Burbank to Hollywood. I cut maybe 250 songs during that period, then did two or three albums that were successful. My first five albums were triple-platinum, and I played a lot of concerts.

Q: But acting was your first focus?

A: Acting was absolutely my first focus. I graduated high school in L.A., and two weeks afterwards I moved to New York City and I got a job in a mail room, and I got an agent, doing what actors do, with head shots and all the rest of it.

But I don't want to live in Hollywood anymore and I don't want to go out and work with producers and casting directors anymore. L.A. is not a kind place for anybody at this stage unless you're George Clooney and you get offered scripts. I got offered a couple of movies in the last five years, but the quality was not what I wanted. Quentin Tarantino offered me an opportunity. From a scheduling standpoint I couldn't do it.

Q: Were you influenced to go into acting by your father?

A: Most definitely, my dad was my biggest influence. I knew what I wanted to do when I saw him on the stage, as one of the leads in a show called

"Wish You Were Here" back in 1953, at 3½ years old. And I remember, we were living in Manhattan, and they were struggling actors and singers. My mother (Evelyn Ward) was also on Broadway a few times. But my dad did 40 Broadway shows. His talent was just daunting. He was a brilliant actor, and most people don't know what a singer he was.

Q: Were you in some rock bands before the Partridge Family?

A: Oh, yeah, a lot of garage bands, playing at school functions. I was always the lead or rhythm guitarist or lead singer. I played a lot of blues. I became a fan of a lot of British bands – the Yardbirds, as well as the Beatles, Stones and all of them. But B.B. King was a great influence on me, (as well as) Eric Clapton. I saw Jimi Hendrix – it must have been four times. And he was incomparable, and his legend lives on. To have been in L.A. in the roaring '60s was an incredible time to be alive and to be a teenager.