



## MATTHEW MYERS PAYS TRIBUTE TO A LEGENDARY BEDROOM PIN-UP, DAVID CASSIDY.

**WHEN YOUR** pop idol dies it kind of crushes your heart. Our idols become part of our everyday lives, we grow up with them, and while we've lost a distant celebrity, it can also feel like losing a close friend. For me, that special idol was David Cassidy, undoubtedly *the* poster boy of the 1970s. He died late last year of multiple organ failure, aged 67, due to longterm drug and alcohol abuse.

Cassidy rocketed to fame thanks to a very G-rated sitcom called *The Partridge Family*, about a suburban family who were also a touring pop band with actual, real-time top ten hits. Their biggest, *I Think I Love You* outsold The Beatles' *Let It Be*. Their sound was vibrant and gay (in the old-fashioned way), and the Partridge's touring bus, painted in Mondrian-style, became iconic in its own right.

In the post-hippy/pre-disco/pre-punk era, *The Partridge Family* was wholesomeness embodied. The Cold War, Vietnam, political assassinations, the energy crisis and the civil rights movement rarely made it past their white picket fence. It was a time before my young mind had to grapple with issues like HIV/AIDS, wars on terror, global warming... no, it was all about *Archie* comics, Paddle Pops and the imminent arrival of colour TV! Not being able to stream *The Partridge Family* at my own leisure made racing home from school to see David Cassidy all the more exciting.

David had his competitors: Leif Garrett, Donny Osmond, Davy Jones of The Monkees and his own kid brother, Shaun. But it was David Cassidy who filled concert stadiums globally, created teenage hysteria dubbed "Cassidymania" and, in some stadiums, caused stampedes leaving many injured and even some fatalities. Cassidy's biggest solo hit, *Cherish*, reached #1 in Australia.

He was born into an entertainment family with parents Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward both actors. His stepmother, Shirley Jones played his on-screen

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mother, Shirley Partridge. Despite the rigors of fame, he enjoyed himself along the way. He toured the world, his fan club was bigger than Elvis' and The Beatles', and he obliged many groupies in his hotel suites. In his 1994 autobiography he wrote, "It's bizarre but true that once I became really famous, virtually the only real contact I had with humans was with women who'd want to have sex with me." By his own admission, he was blessed with a "rock-and-roll cock", inspiring his brothers to nickname him Donk. After Italian film star Gina Lollobrigida met David at the Australian Logie Awards, she whisked him away exclaiming, "I want to meet the monster!"

Finding such stellar fame so early meant the only way was down and his career dwindled to spasmodic appearances on TV and stage.

"David Cassidy" became a pop culture meme, springing up in jokes on *Roseanne*, *Home Improvement* and *Will And Grace*. He even found his way into a Tori Amos song. He had a comeback hit in 1985 with *The Last Kiss*, on which George Michael sang back-up vocals, and earned critical acclaim alongside brother Shaun in the stage musical *Blood Brothers*. His nadir, arguably, was appearing on *Celebrity Apprentice*.

Fame came at a price and he fell into fatal substance abuse.

On Cassidy's death, celebrities tweeted condolences. Elton John said they had many great times together. Boy George said, "David Cassidy was the biggest heartthrob of the '70s. Every boy wanted to look like him. His voice was like silk." Most poignant was from his daughter, actress and star of TV's *Arrow*, Katie Cassidy: "My father's last words were, 'So much wasted time'. This will be a daily reminder for me to share my gratitude with those I love and to never waste another minute."

For me, who pinned his poster on my bedroom wall, he will always be that first crush, that first realisation that there may be more to life than *Archie*, and that adolescence was upon me.

David Cassidy sang, "C'mon get happy!" Millions of us did. Perhaps his time was not wasted after all.