



Shaun Cassidy tops the new fall line of teeny pop stars

# WITH LOVE FROM Shaun

## and Andy and Parker and Robby and Leif... They're the new crop of teenybop idols

By PETER GODDARD  
Star staff writer

How many different groups (or people) have you liked within the past two years?

(a) You like a lot of different people at one time, with one or two getting most of your love.

(b) You tend to like only one star or group loyally and exclusively.

Now take your time. This is the kind of trick question Tiger Beat magazine likes to spring on its readers now and then. Tiger Beat is a teen magazine. Like Bravo in Germany, Popfoto in Holland, Fabulous 208 and Jackie in England, or Sixteen Magazine, Teen or Superteen in the United States, it is hustling the new fall line of teen pop idols — singers Shaun Cassidy and Andy Gibb, actors Leif Garrett and Scott Baio and... Well, the list is nearly as long as its subjects are cute.

But here's the problem. Say you answer "yes" to the second part. Does that mean you like Shaun Cassidy more than, say, Andy Gibb? You do? You mean you don't like Andy, who's ever so good-looking, whose three older brothers constitute the Bee Gees and who has a No. 1 hit right now, I Just Want To Be Your Everything? I mean, how can you not like Andy Gibb? How can you be so... so... mean?

### It's a cruncher

That may not be one of the major moral or aesthetic questions of our time, but with many young teenage girls it's a cruncher. One of many crunchers. For pop music has seen the revival of the boy-next-door teen idol in recent months, and with it the kind of intense, passionate commitment not registered since Annette Funicello dimpled her way through the ranks of the Mickey Mouse Club.

Andy Gibb, who at 19 came late to the current resurgence of the teenybopper, explained in a recent interview: "It was the Bay City Rollers who brought it all back. They were the ones who gave everyone something to scream at."

The Rollers, in a sense, created the need for more bopper idols, singers like Gibb, Shaun Cassidy, and David Soul. They established a context that

made songs like Alan O'Day's Undercover Angel possible. The Rollers replaced hip and four-minute guitar solos with cute and singable tunes. "These days if you're just starting out, you become an idol whether you like it or not," says Andy Gibb, who'll be opening Neil Sedaka's show at the C.N.E. Grandstand a week tonight. "Of course, I like it. All the screaming shows that people are responding." Rene Simard, who was at the Grandstand Wednesday night, admits getting a bit nervous when his fans come too close. "I remember once in Hull when they crashed through some gates to get to me," he said earlier this week. "I just escaped. I like the screaming, though. It shows they're listening."

Or does it? Gibb admits he gets frustrated that people don't pay more attention "to what I'm doing with my music. That's what's important." David Cassidy, Shaun's older half-brother — ancient, actually, being all of 26 — dropped out of the whirlwind, claiming "my record company didn't care about me as an artist."

Sic transit the teenybopper idol. As a child actor David Cassidy appeared on a segment of Medical Centre and hundreds of letters poured into Sixteen Magazine wondering who that cute guy was.

Soon came David Cassidy "exclusive" photos and stories, buttons and T-shirts and just about anything else a young teenage girl could buy, hold or wear. He'd arrived. But after a stint with the Partridge Family television series ("I finished at 23, playing a 17-year-old") and making \$250,000 a year, he dropped out. But not before "a couple of nervous breakdowns."

Are there still David Cassidy fans out there, those who have one of the 5.5 million copies of his biggest hit, I Think I Love You? Well, too bad for them. Who wants to have a nerve-racking booming crush on someone who just wants to live in Colorado and be serious? "As everyone knows, fantasy plays a big role in building up one of these idols," says one local recording executive. "That's why so many of them have to come from the television before they can make it big as recording stars."

So Shaun Cassidy, who appeared in

the television movie Dawn, Portrait Of A Teenage Runaway, now has two recording hits, Da Doo Ron Ron and That's Rock 'N' Roll. David Soul, of Starsky And Hutch, has an album. And Donny and Marie Osmond are still the goodiest of goodies, all because of their television exposure.

But oh-oh, here is a problem. It looks as though Donny may be pulling a David Cassidy. The most popular Osmond has just released a new album called Donald Clark Osmond — with "gutsy vocals" according to one early review. Donny gutsy? A mature Osmond? Goodbye Donny.

But weep not. It was bound to happen. The bopper idol is a readily disposable commodity. Peter McCann may have a big hit right now with Do You Want To Make Love, but if the teen magazines decide not to push him, as is apparently the case, he could be finished tomorrow. A Fabian without a Dick Clark.

"The kids who make these people idols are very, very forgetful," explains Jean Lewis, a former editor at Sixteen and still a regular contributor to teen mags. "So the people who run the magazines have to make sure they're ahead of the trend."

### Squeaky clean

Image, preferably squeaky-clean, is paramount for a bopper idol, as Jerry Kasenetz and Jeff Katz know well. When things were becoming too "progressive" in the late '60s the men behind Super-K Productions sensed a vast, untapped market out there, young, predominately female, that wanted something else. They came up with bubblegum music, straight, clean and simple — best expressed by the Ohio Express, Capt. Groovy And His Bubblegum Army, and The 1910 Fruitgum Co.

What was important was not the music they made but the idea that pop music, then in a heyday with the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, could still attract an audience young enough to be exploitable.

"Since the late '60s the average age of the rock fan has been getting higher," explained a local recording executive. "Before the Beatles the key record buyer was a 13-year-old girl. By the mid-'70s, though, it was an over-18-year-old male. The teeny-

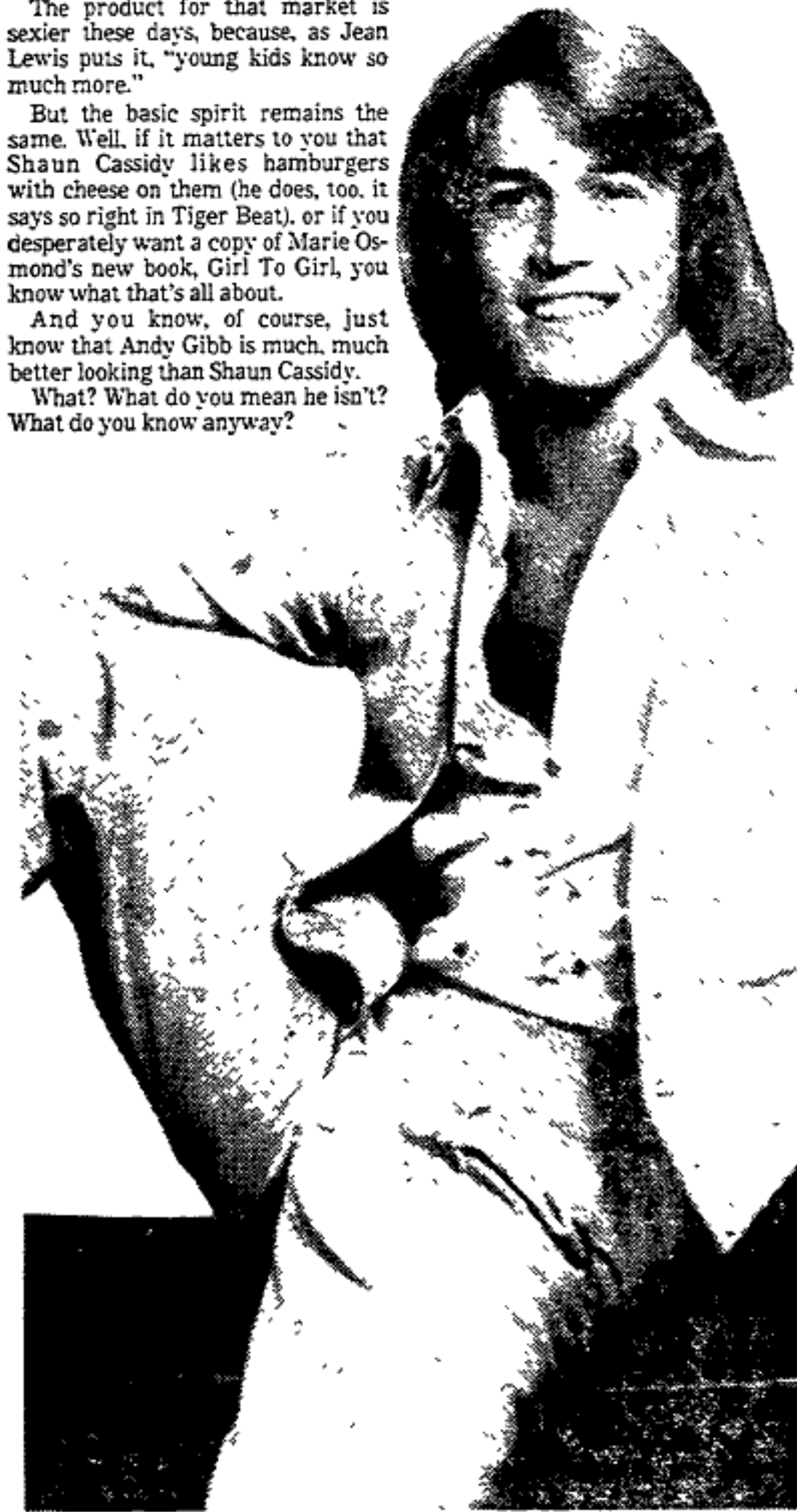
bopper idols have reopened a market we thought had been lost."

The product for that market is sexier these days, because, as Jean Lewis puts it, "young kids know so much more."

But the basic spirit remains the same. Well, if it matters to you that Shaun Cassidy likes hamburgers with cheese on them (he does, too, it says so right in Tiger Beat), or if you desperately want a copy of Marie Osmond's new book, Girl To Girl, you know what that's all about.

And you know, of course, just know that Andy Gibb is much, much better looking than Shaun Cassidy.

What? What do you mean he isn't? What do you know anyway?



Cute Andy Gibb's coming to the CNE

# Dry, sly Steed gets **New Avengers'** act together

By BRUCE KIRKLAND  
Star staff writer

"It's all nonsense anyway," intones Patrick Macnee, actor proficient. He glances again at the script offering him the lines for a joke that John Steed, character extraordinary, will slip into a conversation in his classic, sly, dry fashion.

"Let me do it my way." General agreement from all hands at rehearsal. Macnee edits the joke and subtly alters his delivery. "I understand it now. This is utter nonsense, of course, but now it means something." Rehearsal continues. Macnee is now the obvious focus and not just because he is the star of The New Avengers, a TV series currently being filmed in Toronto.

The scene, set in a fictitious Toronto museum of architecture, involves Macnee and Canadian actress Suzette Couture. It will run for just 90 to 95 seconds on the screen when the episode is broadcast in January. Yet Macnee concentrates on every moment of action, every nuance in the dialogue, providing highly specific directional tips for himself and the receptive Couture.

### Firm, slick

Macnee is firm without a trace of pomposity, professionally slick without being sickening, helpful to Couture while treating her as an equal. More Macnee advice pours forth as the scene progresses. Canadian director Richard Gilbert takes it all in stride, an almost silent partner.

The consummately British Macnee (for years a resident of Palm Springs, California, though he fortunately still manages to insulate himself from typical Hollywood idiosyncrasies) has etched himself into the minds of the Canadian technicians and actors involved in the Toronto

filming after only two of the scheduled 14 weeks in town. The strong impressions have been positive, invigorating.

Not that Macnee is unknown to Toronto. As a young actor (he's 55 now and divorced twice) he was involved in the pioneer days of Canadian television working with the likes of Lorne Greene, Kate Reid, Barbara Hamilton, Don Harron, Norman Jewison and Sydney Newman. Newman, later BBC drama head, then picked Macnee to play Steed in the original Avengers, which started under the short-lived title Police Surgeon in 1960. He often credits that Canadian experience, 1952-54, as the time that made him an actor.

### Regally cool

Suzette Couture is enthusiastic about her experience playing a guide who excitedly assists the regally cool Steed on his museum tour.

"You learn from working with highly professional stars like him. You learn how to protect yourself as an actor, how you must learn all aspects of the business, how not to be satisfied simply with what you have in the script."

That is the professional Macnee. The personal man? Is he John Steed removed from a fantastic Avengers plot and operating in the real world? You hope he is — at least, if you are among those of us who grew up with the original Avengers series and marvel still at the cerebral quality of the old episodes, which have been replayed on three different Toronto television stations in the past several years.

Super-agent Steed, the British government's finest and most refined troubleshooter. Composed and imperturbable. Handsome and

sensual without the cloying womanizing fever of a James Bond. A killer but not a murderer. And, most important, superbly witty in a controlled, intellectual fashion.

That was the conservatively but immaculately attired Steed (rarely without bowler and umbrella) that Macnee played from 1960 until 1969, when

British producers axed the series because of declining ratings in the prime United States market. Ironically, as in the case of another cult TV program, Star Trek, The Avengers is almost more popular now. Re-runs are available just about every week in every major North American city.

To exploit that phenomenon, the original writer-producers, Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell, bought rights to The Avengers name and revived Macnee last season in The New Avengers (a half season on CTV made inroads into the Canadian market).

The Toronto production house Nielsen-Ferns Inc. is heavily involved as the producer of the seven episodes to be set and shot in Canada this season and as distributor of all 39 episodes planned (13 last year and 26 this season). Initial sales of the program to 35 countries have now jumped to more than 70 with only the U.S. still unsold among major markets.

The new shows have yet to be as acclaimed as the old, but Steed is the same. Time to explore a personal myth and unmask Macnee — is he the Steed I admire?

No. Sadly no.

Macnee is charming, intense, friendly, a fine actor. But no Steed.

None of the humor in everyday life. Not cool at all — easily perturbed.

And Steed to Macnee? Just a character to be played professionally. Acting? Just a job, says Macnee. "I'm an actor. I interpret whatever comes along. What more is there to say? I love a normal life. This is a job. You work because you need an income."

There is no identity crisis for Macnee, either. Being known internationally solely for his John Steed role has not bruised his ego. "When an actor has been in the business for 37 years as I have been then it's no problem. One wonders why should I be doing it (The Avengers) again. The only answer is that someone asked me to do it."

Macnee believes in the program only as a device to entertain and if people enjoy it, he is satisfied. The response makes him almost seem naive about the power of television — a power he doesn't want to acknowledge or use, any more than he is willing to use his power as a celebrity to advance his own political or social views. "I don't want to be Marlo Brando saving the Indians... I have yet to see Jane Fonda do anything worthwhile politically since the Viet Nam war. She has gone back to what she does best — acting. That's what we should all do — just what we do well."

That is not to say that Macnee is without passions, just that he contains most of them in his private life. Only when you raise the spectre of violence in television, and imply that the show depends on physical violence, killings and assorted mental tortures does Macnee really take up the challenge.

He maintains the violence is a minor element in either the new or old Avengers. And, compared with that contained in such American

shows as Baretta and Starsky And Hutch, "we're not as glibly." The American shows stage "realistic violence," which Macnee considers an absolute obscenity. The Avengers violence "is, of course, the kind of violence, a controlled violence. This is a specific example of violence used as a device."

Fantasy wrapped up in a real concept. The shows are usually based on 1984 plots although Macnee notes that last season's New Avengers were too realistic for his taste. "This season has brought a return to more fantasy. Macnee is also careful to note, correctly, that The Avengers does not relate humor, death and violence in the one aspect." He says, then, that Steed's pace in the world of The Avengers is to treat the trivial as important, the important as trivial, all with a broad detachment.

### Survived ordeal

The issue of violence also reveals a cloud in Macnee's life, a pressure and horror aspect that has haunted him since the age of 26. He was a commander of a British transport boat, he saw 73 friends killed in action during one attack. Only one other colleague survived that ordeal.

"That, to me, is death... I'm simply very grateful to be alive." Perhaps this cloud is what makes Macnee, less of the witty, sardonic man than Steed is on television. The death theme, without prompting, emerges several more times in the interview. Its spectre is a passion to Macnee.

Yet you can't sense a sad man, a clown crying on the inside. Macnee seems to sail along enjoying the recognition that Steed is a villain, happy that people on the street greet him openly as if they really knew him. "As a person, I've some sort of strange relative life. It's very pleasant."



Patrick Macnee in The New Avengers: "Let me do it my way."