



HALF HOUR WITH...

# DONNY OSMOND

Ahead of his UK tour with sister Marie, the original teen pin-up talks of comebacks, sibling rivalry and boyband One Direction

**As one member of** the family boyband the Osmonds and later as a solo artist, Donny Osmond had girls around the globe swooning. Now 54, he's about to become a grandparent for the fifth time, along with his wife of 34 years, Debra, with whom he has five sons.

Donny has been starring with his little sister Marie in a sell-out show at the Flamingo, Las Vegas, since 2008. The siblings initially signed a six-week contract but were overwhelmed by the public interest in them. They're now preparing to bring the show to the UK.

But life hasn't always been so good. There was a time when he was so out of favour, he had to release a single as a "mystery artist"...

**Donny, you've been performing since you were five. What's your earliest memory?**

Sitting on my dad's lap watching my brothers perform on *The Andy Williams Show*. Suddenly, Andy called me up on stage to sing with them. We sang *Yes Sir, That's My Baby*. I don't recall being scared, but that was because I didn't realise millions were watching.

**If there had been talent shows like *The X Factor*, would the Osmonds have auditioned?**

Without a doubt, but in those days it was very different. I looked at the Osmonds on YouTube the other day and the harmonies we did. This was before autotune and lip syncing. We did it live and we danced. We worked so hard – I wish people did that now. Certain people get it and are great, like Kelly Clarkson. Shows like *American Idol* do open the door for you, but it's about how hard you work once that door's opened, and people don't understand that.

**You were 14 when your song *Puppy Love* hit the charts. What advice would you give your younger self now?**

I met One Direction recently and I said to them: "Enjoy it while you can." I did enjoy it – the screaming and adulation. I had a lot of fun. I'd also

say: "Put your seat belt on because it's going to be a bumpy ride." In my 20s, I hit some low points.

**What happened?**

I came to the UK in 1988 and did some work with Peter Gabriel. We released a few records but no one wanted to know Donny Osmond. I went home really depressed. Then my manager called to say: "I've got some good news and some bad news. You've got a hit record in New York City, but nobody knows it's you." We released it as a mystery artist.

**What was it called?**

*Soldier of Love*. It got to No. 2 in the US. It was a turning point.

**How did you cope through those low periods?**

My wife was the one who saved me. There were times when it was very tough: I'd been selling out stadiums and then went to half-filled gymnasiums. But you have to believe in yourself and keep fighting. Sometimes this well of self-belief runs dry and then you need something or someone else, and that was my wife Debra.

**How has Debra coped in a household of six males?**

She's amazingly clever. She respects my position as the father and when I leave, she takes over. She admits she needs me, and I need her. I think I've found my perfect soulmate. But you have to work at it; you can't take anything for granted.

**And what of Marie? Is there rivalry between you?**

Yes, and not in a friendly way! That's why I did *Dancing with the Stars*. She'd done it and came third, so I did it and won. But when we work together we almost have a sixth sense. There have been moments in the Vegas show where there has been a technical hitch and we've just known exactly what to do.

**What's the biggest lesson you've learnt in your career?**

To enjoy every moment, don't take anything for granted and protect your home life. It's the relationships with your friends, your spouse and your family that really count. ■

INTERVIEW: FRANCINE COHEN

*Donny and Marie will be touring the UK from 20 January to 2 February. For tickets, tel: 0844-871 8803 or visit kililive.com.*