

She's "a little bit country", but they've both been on the rocks, taking a roll.

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For a while there, things were getting a bit dicey for pop stars from the seventies. Barry Manilow even had to sue a rock radio station after being made the butt of a mean-spirited promotional jingle. But those dark clouds lifted at last and now we can all watch PBS documentaries about The Carpenters, John Denver and the Mamas and the Papas without enduring snide remarks from our loved ones.

And perhaps because they weren't smelling blood in the air, Marie and Donny Osmond thought now might be a good time to release a retrospective DVD of their popular variety show from those bygone days of bell-bottoms, psychedelic wall posters and 40-cents-a-gallon gasoline.

Of course, the Osmond family has always been an anomaly within the entertainment industry. Devout Mormons born and bred in Utah, they never quite fit Hollywood culture, even after their music started topping the charts.

As a teen idol, Donny transcended the clouds, by 1972 competing with Michael Jackson for the centerfold of every fan magazine on the newsstand. He and his four older brothers played the biggest venues on the map, often



with stadium amplifiers cranked up louder than a Blue Oyster Cult concert. And how cool is that?

But time passed and the pop star faded from the limelight. His next big break would come years later when he snagged the lead role in the Andrew Lloyd Webber's smash musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. The project took off and Donny found himself back on *Cloud Nine*.

Only this time the big break turned out to be a curse. For reasons unknown (even to him), crippling episodes of stage fright overcame him before each performance. Really, six years of performing that one play night after night might of have done the original *Joseph* in.

During a recent interview on the Larry King show, both Donny and his sister spoke with surprising frankness about their emotional troubles and the pharmaceuticals they turned to for relief.

In Marie's case, postpartum depression set in after the birth of her eighth child. Adding to her travails, one of her toddlers set fire to the house, and her husband nearly succumbed to a brain tumor. She has been heard to quip that if his untimely death had transpired, leaving her alone with eight children, she would have gone up to heaven and murdered him a second time.

But the country-western performer who gave us the delicious rendition of *Paper Roses* managed to dig herself out from beneath the ashes. She published a best-selling memoir called *Behind the Smile: My Journey Out of Postpartum Depression*, and is also promoting a line of custom-made dolls.

The first batch sold out on the QVC Channel in the first 20 minutes of the broadcast.

As for the *Donny and Marie* DVD, its eight hours of vintage footage will probably give you a serious case of time warp. After airing a few clips on CNN, King asked about the designer who created those outlandish fashions they wore for their shows. Donnie sighed. "I don't know, but he ought to be shot."

And speaking of costume changes, one can't even imagine Donny committing a wardrobe malfunction on his sister in the middle of a Superbowl. Like the Carpenters' specials that preceded it, the *Donny and Marie* show provided a model of gender interaction that would probably seem striking to kids today.

The central friction driving the show was the competition between them – Marie: "I'm a little bit country." Donny: "I'm a little bit rock and roll". At times it seemed like the women's movement was being marched across a stage in the heart of Mormon country. The slogans became people and what a difference that made for all of us.

For more info: donny.com or marieosmond.com.

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