

# Idol of the Pre-Teenyboppers

By CAL POSNER, Staff Writer

**I**N TWO YEARS, David Cassidy has swept tornado-like into the pre-pubescent lives of millions of American girls leaving in his wake eight million records; 44 television programs; David Cassidy lunch boxes, bubble gum and coloring books not to mention millions of teen magazines, bumper stickers, wall posters, love-beads and photo albums.

Virtually unknown in the older world of rock audiences, David is an idol to television multitudes and teen-age millions. His rise to fame began more than two years ago when he appeared in television programs like "Ironside," "Bonanza," and "Marcus Welby M.D." And when he landed the role of a dying boy on "Medical Center," he unmistakably began to capture the hearts of young viewers.

Then came the role as Keith Partridge in the weekly television series, "The Partridge Family," which is about an all-in-the-family rock group bearing a slight resemblance to the earlier but less charismatic Cowsills.

**W**HEN Partridge Family started, David was 20 years old. But with his exceptionally pretty face and tiny voice he passed as the bouncy 16-year-old son in the family of five children who live in the suburbs and make their living as a rock and roll band.

The light-hearted series also stars Academy Award winner Shirley Jones, David's real-life stepmother, as the young widow who heads the musical family.

The basic premise of the program is simple: the kids form the group and decide that they need another female voice. Deciding that Mom is "it" they recruit her and their first homemade record becomes number one on the charts.

From that point on, their lives take on a Cinderella-like quality. Incorporated into each program is a new song.

Only two years before, the show's producers had created the "Monkees." With the Partridge Family they planned to dub the singing when the band performed, but they soon discovered — to their delight — that David himself could sing. On the program and on records Shirley Jones and David Cassidy are the only members of the television family who actually sing.

Executive producer Bob Claver commented, "Let's face it, no TV program is going to make any time capsule. The show's not meant to be realistic. It's entertainment. Viewers would like to be in that family. The characters are good-looking, they're in show business, and they seem not to have the problems that plague most people. We deal in fantasy, and I can't see where that's so ruinous." Especially since, he explained, they try to instill a moral message in every program.

The show, which is seen on AFTV Mondays at 7:30 p.m. and repeated Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m., also features Susan Dey, a former New York fashion model; Danny Bonaduce, a ten-year-old, red-haired, freckle-faced imp who most people take for Irish, but who is, in reality, 100 per cent Italian, and Susan Crough as Tracy, one of eight children who, at the age of 7½, could boast of a two-year career in TV before joining the Partridge Family.

**DAVID BRUCE CASSIDY** was born April 12, 1950 in Englewood, N.J. He moved to Hollywood with his mother after his parents, Broadway actors Evelyn Ward and Jack Cassidy, were divorced when he was five.

He had a normal baseball-playing, little-league childhood in Los Angeles, until he was 14 and became a bicycle thief. "I had a bike shop in my garage.



"It's a high going out on that stage."

Columbia Pictures



With stepmother Shirley Jones in Partridge Family episode.

Columbia Pictures

I'd be walking home from school and I'd see a bike sitting there, and I'd rip it off and drive it home. I'd paint it or do something neat to it. I ended up returning a lot of them, but I sure have caused some people a lot of grief."

It was around that time that David started seeing a psychiatrist. He's been seeing one off and on ever since. Also, he started experimenting with drugs. "I didn't know who I was," Cassidy recounted in Rolling Stone magazine. "And I did a lot of experimenting — not smack, but grass and speed and psychedelics. I had some bad trips — tripping for kicks in the worst, most paranoid places. "But I wasn't taking drugs seriously, I didn't want to be a junkie. A few of my friends died, committed suicide actually."

"Then I came down with mononucleosis and spent three months in the house. No socializing, no getting high — thinking. And I found out I cared a lot about myself. I wanted to achieve something and do something with my life."

**H**E WENT BACK to school. After graduating from Rexford High School in Beverly Hills, he joined the Los Angeles Theater Group and appeared in their production of "And So To Bed."

Returning to New York, David got a job as a delivery boy in the garment district and attended the David Craig School of Musical Comedy at night. He then auditioned and won a co-starring part in his first Broadway musical, "The Fig Leaves Are Falling."

"Fig Leaves folded like a tent," recounted David's manager Ruth Aarons. "Then I told David, 'Look, you've got two ways to go: you can stay in New York for seven years and learn to act or, you can come back to Los Angeles and be a star.'"

Five weeks after returning to Hollywood he went from earning \$150 a day to television guest star roles. And then came the script for "The Partridge Family."

"When I first read the script, I thought it was terrible. I was thinking about saying these dumb lines like 'Gee Mom, can I borrow the keys to the car?' I just couldn't bring myself to do it after doing all the heavy things I've done."

And he had the same reaction to the music he was asked to perform first as part of the Partridge Family and later on his own.

"When I first got into the studio, I said to the producer, Wes Farrell, 'I don't want to cut bubble-gum records.' And he said, 'No man, we're not going to cut bubble-gum records.'"

But business is business, and considering that the average age of a David Cassidy fan is 11 years, his five gold singles and the Family's four golden albums contain songs which appeal to that age group's idea of romantic love.

**F**OR THE LAST year, pre-teen idol David Cassidy has been on concert tours. In New York's Madison Square Garden, the audience was swelled to capacity by more than 20,000 screaming, sign-carrying teenyboppers.

"It's a high going out on that stage," he told a Rolling Stone correspondent. "You look around and it's all there for you, people loving you like that. I'm doing what I love to do most, singing. And I'm singing for people who would rather hear me sing than anybody else in the world."

"There's one song I do, 'I Woke Up In Love This Morning,' and I found a place where I can sort of point to them (people in the audience). And they each think I mean them, and I do."

"Whew," he wheezed excitedly, "Let me get out there. Let me do it."