

David Cassidy graduates

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David Cassidy — undercover No. make that David Cassidy — Man Undercover. NBC had second thoughts about that title, lest you might think it should be "Son of Partridge Family Makes Good." Whatever, the new series debuts Tuesday, Nov. 2, at 10 p.m. on Channel 3.

Putting the former star of the popular family comedy series into the adult-formulated "Police Story" spinoff was one of those TV strokes of genius that usually spells victory in the ongoing ratings race.

The youthful, slightly-built Cassidy looks more like he should be galavanting through the countryside in a Hardy Boys detective caper which, no doubt, prompted NBC into adding "man" to that title. After all, this is supposed to be an adult series about police MEN fighting crime.

Nevertheless, David Cassidy is on his way, believable or not — Joseph Wambaugh, who created the original, realistic, factual cop series and now is producing major movies, is probably spinning in his executive chair over this turn of events — as a rookie cop who pursues criminals undercover.

Mark Rodgers, co-producer of the series, a veteran on the TV crime-writing beat — former story editor and writer for "The FBI," "Police Story," "Joe Forester," et al — has to take as positive an approach as one must making a living in the make-believe land that TV mostly thrives on.

"David is a versatile actor," he says. "In the two-hour Police Story he did, you saw some of that. We will focus on the types of crime in which it will be



DAVID CASSIDY

reasonable to use a young undercover officer or several young police officers.

This latest version of "The Mod Squad," airing at 10 p.m. on a school night, might upset the parents of the 12-to 14-year-olds who would want to stay up to see their idol in adult dress. But Rodgers doesn't think he'll be the recipient of hate mail.

"I think 10 o'clock is okay for the mature themes we will handle. We're not "Police Story" per se, but we're trying for the same kind of feel of authenticity within a series format."

Rodgers says that slim Dan Shay, Cassidy's character name, will not be a super cop who will pick up a tree limb to defend himself against a 6-ft.-4 mobster. But he is an agile, athletically inclined lad.

Officer Shay was married and had a pregnant wife in the "Police Story" pilot. For the series they've advanced time a bit so that he now has a two-year-old daughter. Wendy Rastatter takes over the role of his wife from the actress (Dee Wallace) in the pilot. Simon Oakland, in a familiar role for him, co-stars as Shay's immediate superior, Sgt. Abrams.