

A whole lot of grimacing is what we'll be doing: *Come On Get Happy*

By Hal Boedeker

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A movie that flagrantly goes against its title, *Come On Get Happy: The Partridge Family Story* is comparable to finding a wad of dirt in your bubblegum.

Whatever fond memories you have of *The Partridge Family*, the fluffy ABC series that ran from 1970 to 1974 (it only seemed longer) will be tested by this grim ABC movie.

The film focuses primarily on Danny Bonaduce (Shawn Pyfrom), who plays wisecracking, 10-year-old Danny Partridge. "This is no kid," one insider says of Bonaduce at his audition. "It's a 40-year-old midget in a kid's suit."

At home, Bonaduce suffers taunts and slaps from his jealous father, Joseph (William Russ), a struggling writer. Embarrassed by his son's success and the insipid sitcom, Joseph asks, "Who's the writer this week, Ibsen or George Bernard Shaw?"

This latest "Daddy Dearest" story amounts to more showbiz voyeurism. Indeed, it suggests that the pop-culture recycling is getting out of hand

when *The Partridge Family*, the story of a peppy widow and her family rock band, can inspire two TV movies. NBC will offer *The David Cassidy Story*, about the Partridge teen idol, later this season.

Great. Dueling Davids.

"Come On Get Happy" is not as cheesy as many movies of its type, though it wallows in backstage gossip. As the Partridge mama, Oscar winner Shirley Jones (Eve Gordon) demands professionalism from everyone, even the child actors.

Cassidy (Rodney Scott), Jones' stepson who plays her son Keith, bristles at the "stupid TV show" even as it boosts his concert career.

Susan Dey (Kathy Wagner), who portrays daughter Laurie, suffers through a terrible crush on Cassidy.

The co-stars close ranks around Bonaduce to protect him from his abusive father. Dave Madden (Michael Chieffo), who plays the Partridges' agent, acts as a surrogate father and teaches Bonaduce about the fleetingness of fame.

In daffy sequences, girls mob Cassidy, and the Partridges meet the Brady Bunch, with Jones squaring off against Florence Henderson. Yet the Bonaduces' household turmoil dominates the movie, making "Come On Get Happy" unsettling nostalgia.

"We'll make you happy," the Partridges sang. Yet "Come On Get Happy" offers a long and often unpleasant journey into the past.

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THEM

The whereabouts of cast members of the original Partridge Family and their ages. Most live with families of their own.

Shirley Jones (Shirley Partridge)

Age: 65

Residence: Beverly Hills

David Cassidy (Keith Partridge)

Age: 49

Residence: Las Vegas

Susan Dey (Laurie Partridge)

Age: 46

Residence: California.

Jeremy Gelbwaks (Chris Partridge 1970-71)

Age: 37

Residence: New York

Brian Forster (Chris Partridge 1971-74)

Age: 39

Residence: Northern California

Suzanne Crough (Tracy Partridge)

Age: 36

Residence: California

Dave Madden (Reuben Kincaid)

Age: 65

Residence: Las Vegas