



ART IMITATES LIFE: Siblings David and Patrick Cassidy, from left, play brothers David and Patrick Gallagher in 'Ruby & the Rockits.'

ABC Family's 'Rockits' sputters on liftoff

By **MARK A. PERIGARD**

A sliver of summer silliness, ABC Family's newest sitcom "Ruby & the Rockits" finds one long-lost daughter healing an entire family.

Not just any family — but the Cassidy family, sort of.

Ex-"Partridge Family" teen idol David Cassidy plays has-been star David Gallagher, who, along with his brother Patrick (Cassidy's real-life half-brother) once fronted the Rockits, an '80s hair band frighteningly similar to Hall & Oates. (Brother Shaun, who also knows a bit about being a teen idol, serves as executive producer and co-wrote the episode.)

Some of the funniest moments come in the clips of the faux music video that made them famous, '80s hair and all.

Patrick went on to marry the video's vixen Audie (Katie Amanda Keane), become a car salesman and have two sons. David's routine as a performer for an American Indian casino is shaken when a young admirer (Alexa Vega, "Spy Kids") reveals she's his long-lost daughter Ruby.

On most other shows, her tragic back story (a dead mother, forgetful grandparents) would be a prelude to a crazy stalker invading a family for vengeance. This is ABC Family, so she's adorable, wiser than the rest and no one asks for a paternity test.

David realizes his schedule is not conducive to parenting a teenager so he leans on his strait-laced brother for a favor.

TELEVISION REVIEW

"RUBY & THE ROCKITS"

Series premiere tonight at 8:30 on ABC Family.

Grade: C+

"Do you mind if she lives here?"

Before long, Ruby is calming the warring brothers and helping cousin Jordan (Austin Butler) get a spin on his own music. (This is where "Ruby" gets edgiest, as Jordan's fascination with Ruby borders on a crush. Unless ABC Family is intent on redefining familial bonds, expect that story to go nowhere.)

David is believable as the smug musician who still thinks he's a world star. (Those at home can play along and wonder if this is how his brothers truly view him.) Dropping in on his nephews, he says, "Hey guys, it's me." Pause. "How cool is that?"

Vega has an unexpectedly sweet singing voice, and it seems like a matter of time before she joins the Rockits. She's much more appealing than a certain over-exposed teen star whose show rhymes with Rannah Rontana.

But Ruby's new family doesn't seem complete. It could use an older maternal figure, maybe driving a yellow bus. How long before Shirley Jones — David's stepmother and Patrick and Shaun's mother — rolls up?

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