

The 'good turn' that made David a Star

Behind every really big pop phenomenon is a shrewd, calculating, hardheaded and single-minded manager. The equivalent figure behind David Cassidy is one Ruth Aarons and, to be honest, she doesn't LOOK as if she fits all those requirements.

But her heart is completely, totally, behind getting the best possible deals for David; behind making sure that he doesn't overwork and ruin his health, behind ensuring that he isn't caught up in the man-made webs of the get-rich-quick fraternity who blight the whole pop industry.

To get ahead, you've got to have a manager you can trust and who will work non-stop to create tremendous opportunities for you to show your talent. Miracles, 'tis accepted, take that bit longer . . .

One thinks of Elvis Presley, who drove trucks and mowed lawns and merely dreamed about stardom until one Colonel Tom Parker appeared on the scene, having heard Elvis singing one of his "unsuccessful" discs via a gaming-house juke-box. The Colonel didn't hesitate. He watched the rapt expressions of the fans listening to that record and knew instinctively that he'd wandered into the vocal presence of a genius.

Same with Gordon Mills and the way he handled Tom Jones, Engelbert Humperdinck and Gilbert O'Sullivan. Other agents and managements had heard that trio of talent but done nothing about it, and it was left to Gordon (himself a performer, be it said, in his early days) to back his hunch and spend money to make them into stars.

Well . . . well, actually, Ruth Aarons didn't INSTANTLY think that David had the kind of talent that would create superstardom. As a matter of fact, she had grave doubts about whether she could even help him when in 1968 Jack Cassidy rang her to say that he had this lad, David, who wanted to get into show-business and could Ruth please help, even if it was to warn the boy off for ever from even thinking about making show-business his career!

Ruth had been a sportswoman in her younger days — a table-tennis player of class, but most table-tennis is amateur and only a handful get to make any money from it. But it provided a spotlight for those who were good at it, and Ruth enjoyed the spotlight and in 1951 she started her own show-business management company.

She'd done fairly well. One of her clients was Shirley Jones, star of several top Hollywood musicals, and another was Shirley's husband Jack, who had been a song-and-dance man and was also making his way up that tortuous ladder to success. And she figured that if she couldn't do a good turn for old friends (not to mention clients) . . . well, who COULD she do a favour for?

Now David was trying to eke out a living in New York and he'd done a bit of training for the stage as we've seen earlier in this story but it was Ruth's influence that got him a co-starring role in the show *Fig Leaves Are Falling*. Oh boy, was David knocked out at getting the part. In truth, he'd have swept the stage or run errands if it had meant being just a T-I-N-Y part of that on-Broadway production . . . but getting an important part was too much.

He worked every hour of the day getting his part just right. And every inch of the way he was encouraged and advised by the willing Ruth Aarons. Alas, things don't always happen in real life like they happened ALWAYS in the old

Hollywood musicals . . . and that show folded after only four days.

You could say that David was heartbroken, but that would be to underestimate his feelings. However, he did have that resolute Ruth, a manageress who believed in her clients. And she talked to David and persuaded him to try again, but this time in Los Angeles. She'd liked his personality, his fresh-face looks, his speaking voice and his obvious sincerity and enthusiasm about everything to do with the theatre.

So it was with confidence as well as hope that she started putting our hero into various auditions. He stood in line to show his face for television commercials; he queued for a chance to speak lines for television producers; and, maybe most important, he learned that you've got to take the rough with the smooth if you want to be part of an overcrowded business like show-business.

But what shook even the confident Miss Aarons was that David landed a substantial number of the parts he auditioned for. He turned up in minor roles in series like *Marcus Welby MD*, in *Bonanza*, and in *Ironside*. His name became known through the trade newspapers and fellow professionals began to talk about David Cassidy, and what a "nice kid" he was, and how he was completely natural whether in front of the cameras or in the canteen on a coffee break. He earned bigger money than he'd ever dreamed of . . . maybe 600 dollars for working a four-day week in front of the cameras.

So next, but not immediately, came the *Partridge Family* series, in which he played a lad four years younger than himself . . . but with no trouble at all, because he always looked young for his age. We know what that series triggered off, and anyway we've written about it elsewhere in this tribute magazine . . . but one can only imagine the delight of Ruth Aarons as her "superpuppy" made it into the ranks of the giants.

This is what Ruth Aarons told reporters about her attitudes on David. "He affects fans the way he does because he has that vulnerable, touchable, clean attraction. In a negative world such as the one we're living in now, where even we adults are confused and the stress is on our impending destruction, I think David offers the kids a joyous alternative.

"Or please put it this way . . . in a desperate world he represents happiness."

Ruth Aarons is now in a privileged position. As friend, confidante and manager of the world's top pop attraction, her every word is chased up and reported by newspapers and columnists.

But if she did "talk", she'd surely recall the times when David has wept tears of sheer joy at the way the fans have greeted his appearance on a stage, or the balcony of an hotel. She'd reveal the extents to which he worries about whether he's put on the best possible show for those fans; fretted if the odd note in a complex musical arrangement had gone wrong.

In her own heart, she didn't think he was big-star material when first she was approached to handle his affairs. But as she got to know him, she realised that he had a deep determination to make the grade. She also realised that determination, plus luck, were vital for one talented artist to make it over the heads of a whole lot more talented artists.

Now she's only too pleased that she did "that favour" for her friends Shirley and Jack Cassidy. It's not so much that she's merely gained another important client . . . more that she's gained another friend!

