THE DAVID CASSIDY STORY

PART 34

It's always been called The Partridge Family Show as far as TV audiences are concerned . . . Both in the States and in Great Britain. But, as you'll have gathered by now, it wasn't always going to be that way.

The guy who first dreamed up the idea for the series, Bernard Slade, had considered quite a few possibilities for the title.

At the beginning, he hadn't been too worried about fixing on any one of them, because the title was something that could be finally settled fairly well on in the schedule. What was most important was to have a good basic situation which could be developed indefinitely if the series caught on and was a success.

Of course, it had to have something refreshing and different about it — or there'd be nothing to stop viewers switching over to another channel. And it had to have a wide appeal if any of the networks were likely to take up the pilot and buy the show.

After all, TV networks have to make a living too, so they'd be looking for signs promising high ratings. And Bernard Slade had to cram as many of those signs as he could into the pilot!

Well, I don't need to tell you that he came up with a winner!

A family that seems pretty ordinary at first glance: a widowed Mom who's having a bit of a struggle to keep her family of five kids above the bread line. And the kids? Well, they're just about as nice and as nasty as the typical kids next door!

Put that way, it sounds so ordinary that it makes you wonder how anybody ever gave it a second thought!

But, of course, there's nothing to stop Mrs. Partridge being rather prettier and younger than you might expect . . . And there's nothing to stop her eldest son being better looking than any 'boy-next-door' that I've ever had the luck to meet!

Bernard Slade was quick to incorporate all these possibilities and add a good sprinkling of music and comedy as well. The music turned out to be his master-stroke.

After all, there are quite a few family shows to choose from each week in the States. But not all of these other families play up to date pop music!

Screen Gems liked the idea. They saw it could work, as the Monkees had worked a few years back. They commissioned Bernard Slade to write a pilot episode which would set out the situation, introduce all the characters and — most important of all — make folks want to see more of this family!

As you know, there were originally no plans for the actors to be real musicians. The producers reckoned that all the musical side could be taken care of by session musicians and dubbed in afterwards.

Well, how were they to know? It isn't every day that you come across actors with the talent to become chart-topping singers — even in Hollywood.

SHIRLEY JONES

When Paul Witt and Bob Claver were casting the 'family' parts, their main concern was to find actors who looked right and had enough sense of rhythm that they could mime the music scenes convincingly.

They already had someone in mind for the central part of the mother. At this stage she was called Connie Partridge. But when Shirley Jones accepted the role, there didn't seem any reason why she shouldn't import her own name into the show with her!

For a start it was a much prettier name, and it meant that Shirley wouldn't have to start reacting to a new one all over again. "It certainly makes you feel like you belong around the place," was Shirley's comment.

So there was production problem number one brilliantly solved! 'Cos with all Shirley's singing experience on stage and screen, there