

could be no doubts at all that she was the ideal choice for a musical Mom! And, of course, her name on the credits would attract big audiences who'd watch just because one of their favourite stars was in the programme.

The next headache was to discover the right guy to play her eldest son who was lined up to be the lead singer in the family group.

According to the script, this kid was only sixteen. But the producers hoped to be able to find a suitable actor over eighteen, so they could avoid all the problems of chaperones and limits on working hours.

The day David came for his first interview, Claver and Witt had already seen quite a few guys. But so far, none of them had been absolutely right. There were one or two 'possibles'. But this series had to be a big success, and they were reluctant to make do with second-best — no matter how good a second-best it might be.

Then David Cassidy had come in and said 'Hello'. They looked at each other . . . Could this be the boy they'd been searching for?

Most of the guys they'd seen so far had looked too old for the part. But they figured David could easily pass for sixteen on the screen — in fact, they found it difficult to believe that he'd soon be twenty!

It didn't take a casting genius to see that he'd got the sort of looks that any programme could do with and that any audience would go wild over . . . He'd got a pleasant voice and an easy, relaxed manner — allowing for nerves of course.

In fact, by the time David said goodbye and left their office, Bob Claver and Paul Witt were very, very interested. There was only one hitch: David Cassidy was Shirley Jones' step-son.

Would it work?

Bob and Paul hadn't a clue what sort of relationship David and Shirley had in their private lives. But they didn't figure on it being too good.

They'd heard all those stories about wicked step-mothers too, you see! They knew that working on a TV series would involve plenty of tensions in any event, without introducing a whole load that already existed!

So they still kept looking for someone who could measure up to David but who wouldn't bring family politics into the show. But they couldn't get it out of their heads that David really was ideal for the part of Keith.

Meanwhile, David was spending the next couple of days in a state of nail-biting nerves with a little bit of depression mixed in.

"I was absolutely convinced that I'd blown the whole thing," he explained. "They'd

been so cool about it all, and it seemed like I'd only been in their office a few minutes. So I figured that they'd taken a quick look, they hadn't seen what they wanted, and they'd just kept me there long enough for it not to be too obvious!

"Sure, they'd said they'd call me. But I knew what that meant too! I'd been through the whole ball-game before."

David laughed and then continued: "So I spent the next couple of days telling myself that those two guys were pretty useless anyhow . . . They'd never knew Keith Partridge if they saw him! And anyway, I didn't want a part like that, did I?"

"Of course, I felt mighty stupid when they proved just how useless they were by calling me up for a second interview! But deep down inside of me, I'd known I wanted the part all along and that I'd only been trying to fool myself so the disappointment wouldn't be too bad."

On that second occasion David remembers his heart banging against the inside of his ribcage — he was so nervous. "I knew that they must be interested to call me again, so I was in the running. And it made the whole thing seem so much more important somehow."

SECOND READING

This time he had to read some lines from the script for the pilot show. That made him feel better, because he could sense that he was reading them well.

But when he'd finished reading, the response was just the same as before. Bob Claver thanked him very politely and promised to call him next day.

David tried to read in his face whether he'd got any chance of the part or not. But he couldn't find any clues in Bob's friendly but professional smile. He knew that he'd have given him that same smile even if his performance had been lousy.

He was probably right. But that just goes to show that Bob and Paul are pretty good actors themselves . . . Because that reading had convinced them.

They knew for certain now . . . It was David they wanted.

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