

Section Six:

THE POP SCENE

DAVID CASSIDY

The biggest pop phenomenon in this country at the moment is twenty-one-year-old David Cassidy, star of the weekly television series, *The Partridge Family*, which is all about an all-family rock group bearing a slight resemblance to the earlier but less charismatic Cowsills. The show is the number-two rated program in the United States, which certainly has something to say about television, rock and pop music, and viewers. The oldest son in the TV family and the latest teen heart-throb is David, son of actor Jack Cassidy and actress-dancer Evelyn Ward, who was originally signed for the show because he could act ... then they found he could sing.

Of course, if you ask the question which came first, the Partridge Family or David, all you have to ask is a David Cassidy fan to find out that he did! And now he's so firmly entrenched that it doesn't matter. He has so many fans that follow his activities it seems hard to believe that just over a year ago none of them knew who he was; none of them helped to sell over half a million copies of each issue of *The Partridge Family Magazine*; over a year ago, none of the 150,000 members of his fan club had ever heard of him. Just over a year ago not one of the eight million Partridge Family records had even been recorded, let alone sold. But it has all happened now, and David is a super superstar.

For the slight smiling young man named David

whose regular television career began less than two years ago, this is all something on the other side of phenomenal. But he's learned to accept being Keith Partridge. He's learned to expect all the excitement that breaks loose whenever he makes a personal appearance—whether it's outside his own doorstep (he recently had to move in the middle of the night when his address got leaked to the teen-age underground) or at a concert where thousands of fans pop Instamatics at eyeball-searing range, scream, wave, and demand to have various parts of their anatomy autographed (belly buttons were very popular at one concert in Saratoga Springs, New York).

While fans of Sinatra and Elvis were content to swoon and faint themselves out of being an imminent threat to their idols, the fans of David are all energy, initiative, and persistence. They want to get to David to give him tokens of their adoration from notes to homemade cookies. And at the press conferences that David gives . . . well, enough to say that his road manager is cheerfully expert at quick getaways.

Throughout it all, David is cheerful, pleasant, and very professional; with an occasional sideward glance at the girls trying to ooze through plate-glass doors and between the security force. Yes, the emergence of David Cassidy as a star in the fall of 1970 will certainly be compared in later years (when the panic is over) with the explosion of Frank Sinatra in the 40s, Elvis in the 50s, and the Beatles in the 60s.

But how did he get there? A good question to ask. The answer is that David was literally discovered by his fans after only a few appearances playing feature roles on a number of television shows during the 1969–70 season. He did *Marcus Welby*, *Ironside*, and *Bonanza*, among others, and soon after his episodes were aired, stations and networks were drowned in fan mail. With-

in a few weeks, David's manager had a garage filled with fan mail for him.

Then, just before the debut of the show on television, David made a two week promotional tour of ten cities across the country. In Chicago, the then "unknown" Cassidy received hundreds of gifts from fans that even he probably didn't know he had. Gifts that went from Indian headbands to love beads. In Detroit, his fans scrambled to meet him at six on a rainy morning just to get a glimpse of him entering a local TV studio. In other cities, the story was the same . . . David's future had apparently been decided for him, even before the first episode of *The Partridge Family* had gone on the air.

Despite the fact that his father is the famous Jack Cassidy and his stepmother is the lovely Academy Award winner Shirley Jones, David has achieved his place strictly on his own. He was born on April 12 in New York City. He got his grammar school education in West Orange, New Jersey. He then went to Los Angeles where he attended Emerson Junior High School and graduated from Rexford, a school in Beverly Hills. For a year after graduation, he worked with the Los Angeles Theater Group and was featured in the Los Angeles Theater production of *And So to Bed*. Then he returned to New York where he appeared in summer stock. He also took classes at the David Craig School of Musical Comedy, then auditioned and won a co-starring role in his first Broadway musical, *The Fig Leaves Are Falling*.

After the play closed, he returned to Hollywood where his manager arranged for him to read for a dramatic role in *Ironside*. He got the part and was soon featured in *The Survivors*. And that followed with more dramatic roles in *Marcus Welby*, *Adam-12*, *Medical Center*, *Mod Squad*, and *Bonanza*.

Then, in September of 1970, *The Partridge Family*

premiered on television and within days was recognized by critics as the phenomenon of the season. Not since the Monkees have any television personalities captured the public so quickly as both television performers and recording artists. Within the month, the family had sold over a million copies of their first single "I Think I Love You." Their first album followed suit. Within six weeks after the single had been released it had sold more than two and a half million copies and the album was solid gold.

In retrospect, the success of *The Partridge Family* seems inevitable. The show and its talented performers were a natural. The lighthearted series stars Shirley Jones as a young widow raising a handsome family of five who want to form a rock group and who need another female voice. The kids decide that mother is "it" and their first, homemade recording becomes the number-one song in the country. From that point on, their lives take on a Cinderellalike quality.

Like all good story lines, that of the Partridges is basically simple and flexible and it works. Incorporated into each segment of the show is a new song. And when it came to finding a producer for the show's music, Wes Farrell got the spot. Farrell has an incredible track record of success as a songwriter and record producer. For the series and the recordings of the family, he has gotten original material from some of the best known, hit writers on the pop scene today—all of which has contributed heavily to the success of the series and the records.

Besides Shirley Jones and David Cassidy, the show also features Susan Dey, a former New York fashion model who has been seen before on television in a variety of commercials; Danny Bonaduce as Danny, the ten-year-old red haired freckled imp who everyone takes for Irish but is, in reality, one hundred percent Italian; and Suzanne Crough as Tracy, one of eight

children, who at the age of seven and one half can boast of a two-year career in TV before joining *The Partridge Family*.

Of course, it isn't all as easy as it sounds. "Just because a group introduces a new song on their weekly television show, there's no guarantee that millions of people will rush out to the stores the next day to buy their record," explains Larry Utal, president of Bell Records, which is the label that the Partridges record for. "A song must be able to stand on its own away from the TV screen, and it has to be suitable for pop radio play. The record company has to give it as much promotional support as any of its other record releases. Right from the beginning, we surrounded the Partridge Family with the top behind-the-scenes talent in the record industry."

All that is certainly true, but what the fans want and what the fans know is the true secret is none other than David Cassidy. Sure the songs and the records might be hits anyway without him, but the excitement wouldn't be there. Just ask any David Cassidy fan. They'll tell you that David is the fellow they want to see and hear. He's the one with the magic key to getting folks up on their feet, yelling and screaming for more.

MR. SHERMAN IS THERE TOO

While David Cassidy seems to have the ear and the eye of all the pop fans in America, there are a great number of them who would deny that assumption. They're Bobby Sherman fans and they think as much of Bobby as David's fans think of him. And now that Bobby is on TV with his own series, well, the competition looks as if it will be pretty keen. (All they have to do is give Mark Lindsay his own show to make the competition into something that would be really remarkable to watch!)



OH DAVID: David Cassidy was the most important new star of this year, yet most rock fans from the sixties could hardly understand where he came from.

COSMIC AH ROCK AH: *The Grateful Dead*, an experience we all shared.

