

THE SCENE ☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

fifteen or sixteen in his tan corduroy jeans and brown tank sweater over a natural-color, long-sleeved shirt.

What does David think about the girls outside the gate?

"After you work all day long, it's sort of a chore facing them, but it's nice, because if they weren't there I'd feel, well, gee, I wish they were there. I wish someone did care. They're really nice kids—all they want is a couple of seconds to say hello. They think they'll hug and grab me and they get so excited and scream when they can't get near me. But when they do get near me, they just get flustered and I never know what to do, either. Sometimes they throw things. On stage recently, I was hit in the chest by a roll of nickels. It nearly knocked me out. Were they telling me something?

"I think I'm a bit different from the Monkees and Bobby Sherman. I'm not hung up on being a movie star or an actor. I want to get away. I feel the pressures of the city all around me. I'm not that impressed with being a star or being in Hollywood. It's less glossy than it looks. And making movies is fun but it's not my idea of a way of life. I have a lot of other things I need as a human being. I'm not always going to be in *The Partridge Family*. And I find I have difficulty now getting people to accept just me and not a TV character.

"I haven't been living at home for about three or four years. I've been on my own. I'm not involved in causes, getting hung up saying or telling fans what is right, because I'm not a politician and I don't believe I have any right to influence anyone.

"I left home to go to New York to be an actor. I'd studied at the Rexford School. I was living with my mother at the time. She knew about it. I didn't want to set the world on fire, I just wanted to be successful. I studied at the L.A. Theater Company a year before I got out of high school.

"I'll be honest with you—I find it very difficult playing sixteen or seventeen now. Shirley is playing herself. She talks to us just the way she talks to the kids at home. David Mathews is really doing the same, playing a funny character that

is really him. Mine is much more a part for me. I'm not that boy at all and I have to concentrate a little more on what I'm doing.

"I know some people think I'm a captive of the teenybopper magazines. I don't think about it anymore. I used to get upset about things that were written about me. I suppose I've been like a figurehead but I never forget that I'm of the moment. Someday there will be another idol to replace me.

"I don't see anyone taking my place right now, but you never know. I think I'll be Keith for maybe two more years. That's fine with me. Afterwards, I really don't know what will happen and I don't want to make any commitments now.

"There are a lot of things I want to do, things that have nothing to do with my being an actor. I've even considered going back to college but I think that's a waste of time. I went to a local college and it was really very depressing because it was very difficult for people to cope with me in a day-to-day situation. Because of the show, I'm more than just a regular person."

How about friends? Has David kept the same friends?

"Sure, many of my old friends are still the closest ones to me. It's not hard to tell the difference between a hanger-on and a real friend. But I could never have coped with it two years ago."

Has the adulation of the younger kids affected David's relationships with girls his own age?

"No, I don't think so. I don't really take it that seriously. I date a couple of girls. I don't date girls in the profession because they're usually too involved with themselves and their careers—they're sort of a bore. Girls are not really that impressed with me. Usually I don't have the chance to meet many because I work on weekdays and on weekends I go away. I can't even go to a school dance like most guys.

"I hear that when the Beatles went on tour, they would look out the window and choose a girl from the crowd. That happens with everybody—the Monkees did the same thing. A performer is foolish not to do that; there are many at-

tractive girls out there he'd like to meet. I haven't done it yet—but if the opportunity arises, I will."

Does David feel that the show is a good reflection of family life in America?

"More so than any other TV family show. *The Partridge Family* takes a realistic look at people while the other sticky, saccharine shows don't. Of course it's still make-believe inasmuch as every week it's another story. Life isn't quite like that. On the show, problems are always resolved. That's what makes people tune in each week, I guess. And maybe because we have a kind of chemistry—something happens when all of us are together."

I'm tired of hearing people talk about *All in the Family*. It's just using a few words that haven't been used on TV before. And that's not stepping out very far."

Is he bothered that many adults don't know who he is despite his popularity among teen-agers?

"No, because more and more adults are becoming aware of me. This show isn't just a kid show. No show can have a top ten rating just from kids. Perhaps there's a gap because so many adults really aren't interested or don't know what's going on with their kids.

"I'm just going to keep doing what I want to do. I'm on TV and that's the most incredible exposure in the world—more so than records or movies. Millions and millions of people see me every week. A certain age group digs me. I'm not going to be hung up because another age group doesn't like me. I'm not that driven. I'd like to think that *The Partridge Family* music is for everyone. If people would take the time to listen to the albums, they'd know that."

Back to the Columbia ranch in David's new white Corvette. This time there are no "yechhs" as the car stops at the gate—only giggles and murmurs and blank sheets of paper thrust toward David who signs them happily.

"Isn't he great—just like a real person!" one of the girls whispers to her friend as the car drives away.

—A.U.