

continued

chuckles. "Hi-C also surrendered. They wanted to know what would make an interesting premium. I promised to give it some thought. Then it hit me while swimming 20 lengths of the pool. A life-size picture of David Cassidy on a towel which every boy and girl should be carrying to the beach this summer!"

Honey Ed clicks off a few things: How he never had any luck merchandising Jay (Dennis the Menace) North and can't understand why. How sweet those PF cereal deals are. How one of 12 PF paperbacks sold 1,000,000 copies (Popular Library pays 5 per cent of the cover price). How Kate Greenaway had to be persuaded but will soon be yielding \$10,000 a month. "We have to be careful not to cheapen with too much merchandising. If we could grab every buck we were offered we'd kill those *Partridge* kids."

Art Frankel, the vice president in charge of studio business affairs, cavalierly dismisses the advantages of the money machine. "They're add-ons," he says. "Sure, Eddie does a fantastic job exploiting what there is. It's nice to find a show with real merchandising potential. But it's a subsidiary area." He denies that merchandising makes it possible to offer the show to the network at a reduced profit margin. "A network won't buy a show if they don't believe in it. A few thousand bucks won't make any difference." The network has an interest in the show but not in the merchandising.

To producer Bob Claver the mere mention of such matters is painful. "I fought this licensing thing. I don't mind the lunch bucket. I guess what I'm really disturbed about—well, say there's a doll [Patti Partridge, \$12.95]. I absolutely won't use it—or anything else—on the show."

Claver's weekly budget is still \$120,000 a week, including David's raise from \$600 last year into four figures this year. (Shirley Jones still commands the show's highest salary.) Are

there any production advantages at all? "None," says Claver. "I don't see a dime. Unless you consider the music on the show. All the songs are paid for by Bell, which might amount to as much as \$6000 per episode. Bell makes the records; on the show we just lip-sync." The irony is that for David Cassidy, the money machine's most spectacular adornment, the TV show itself has become a necessary, though not unpleasant, evil. Without it there is no teenybopper singing idol, as Bobby Sherman found out when his show was canceled. The apparatus and the energy required to keep 13-year-olds wanting to tear headlights off limousines is enormous. Cassidy carries a more or less permanent entourage which includes two personal managers, a business manager, a road manager, an assistant road manager, the regular services of a law firm, two William Morris agents (one East, one West); an equipment manager, a conductor, 13 key musicians, two singers, a concert merchandiser, a stage manager, and enough security officers, publicists and hangers-on to make up a good-sized audience all by themselves.

It is scrupulous attention to detail that underlies most successes, says Jim Flood, Cassidy's personal manager. Special care must be taken, for instance, with David's road costumes, not too tame and not too tantalizing. "No outfit costs less than \$500 and David carries 25 of them," explains Mike Bales, who designs them. "David's very funky by nature, so we go in for antique beads a lot, porcupine quills, ecology-minded materials. For movement, a lot of fringes and tassels. The open space down the front, that's for ventilation. I tend to dress him in white. It makes a suitable virgin sex symbol for the pubescent audience."

It also makes for profits, and is another dramatic illustration of the versatility of *The Partridge Family Money Machine*. (END)