

# NOT SO EASY FOR THE PARTRIDGE FAMILY!

FROM PETER McDONALD IN HOLLYWOOD

The battle to make the transition to other areas will probably be the toughest of his career.

Particularly, as the Monkees bitterly complained, one of the legacies of teenybopper stardom is the suspicion of the rest of music and film industries.

But one of the masterminds of David's career, Ruth Aarons, says they are well aware of all the pitfalls and they have been building plans to avoid them from the outset.

"David is not a fraud, he won't self destruct," she said. "He has a genuine talent which is growing by leaps and bounds.

"No one pretends it will be easy, but if anyone is going to sustain it, it is David."

Ruth Aarons' judgment is not to be taken lightly. In New York after a stage flop she told David Cassidy he had two choices.

"You can stay here for seven years and learn to act," she told him, "or you can come back to Hollywood and be a star."

Several years ago **This Is Your Life**, the American series which confronts unsuspecting celebrities with their pasts, set out to do a show on Shirley Jones.

Finally, host Ralph Edwards scrapped the project when his team of researchers couldn't find enough excitement and drama in her life to fill a show. But that, of course, was before the **Partridge Family**.

"Everyone was aghast when I decided to do the show," the eternally youthful blonde recalled. "I had a feeling about it, but they all laughed. They couldn't see me in it."

"Now, why, I can't take my own children anywhere like Disneyland without an elaborate disguise. The number of kids who recognise

me, at times, I feel like the pied piper. It's rather incredible."

It is what Shirley Jones, the small-town girl plucked out of the chorus line to star in **Oklahoma!** and eventually to in an Oscar in **Elmer Gantry**, describes as "my third renaissance in show business".

Now she is firmly established as one of American television's top female stars and not content just to boop-boop-a-do to real-life stepson David Cassidy's teenybopper hits.

Off the set she is about to release a single of her own, *Ain't Love Easy*, and to take a show showcasing her multi talents on the concert circuit. On the set she will be taking the romantic plunge.

"I have five children on the show, so celibacy can't be in my make-up," she cracked.

"This won't be a simple flirtation. I'll be seriously involved with a boy friend and there is even a possibility of marriage."

But indirectly the **Partridge Family** has had an impact on her personal image. Her renewed stardom has sent Hollywood back to re-examine her and this time she has become much more complex than "nice, but dull".

Some of her strength has been glimpsed in her near-famous, no-nonsense defusing of young egos early in the show's success and her depth revealed in her successful effort to reunite David with his father, Jack Cassidy.

The focus on her marriage and her estrangement, which she still calls a trial separation, although much more serious than the others which have marked their 15 years together, has emphasised the fact that not everything has fallen into place for her.

One national American



● ABOVE: David Cassidy . . . his career as darling of the teenyboppers is at the crossroads.

magazine summed up the new view of her. "She's tough, resourceful and psychologically astute. Sometimes the spun sugar is more like spun steel."

It was one night late last year when David and Shirley were in the middle of taping a special **Partridge Family** promotion spot that a figure strode from the wings to centre stage.

"Shirley Jones," Ralph Edwards beamed, "this is your life . . ."

Today Susan Dey, about to begin her third year as a

member of the **Partridge Family**, looks back to her first and can only grimace.

"When I watched myself on the reruns I was a bore," she confessed. "I was awful. The thing was I couldn't let go. All that stiffness came out on the screen."

Susan's background is modelling, while Suzanne Crough and Jeremy Gelwaks share television commercial experience and making Danny Bonaduce, with credits in shows ranging from **Bewitched** to **Mayberry RFD**, appear an old hand. #