

Cassidy Carries Ball In 'Partridge Family'

By MICHAEL S. BARRETT

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SINCE RICKY Nelson made his singing debut and became a teen-age idol on The Ozzie and Harriet Show, television producers have devised ways to capitalize on music vis-a-vis the family situation comedy, with some success.

Their latest innovation, The Partridge Family, which premiered last week, on ABC-TV, may have the pizzaz to succeed where others have failed.

One reason is its youthful co-star, David Cassidy — a bright, brimming actor-musician of the Monkees group — who will carry the ball in the music department just as Ricky Nelson — now but a rerun memory — did in less sophisticated, by-gone years.

The other reason is the show's unorthodox theme: a family of youngsters ages 5-17 makes the big-time in rock-

'n'roll, and led by their mother — in real life David's step-mother — Shirley Jones, tour club dates as the Partridge Family aboard a psychedelic bus.

Like the popular Monkees' TV show of a few years back — which borrowed heavily on the success of the Beatles' Marx Brothers parody in the film "A Hard Day's Night" — the Partridges will release several youth-oriented songs during the season. Bell Records, a division of Columbia Pictures, has launched an expensive campaign to promote this music.

ALREADY their first release, "I Think I Love You," has made headway on the market charts. And an album of Partridge music was released in time for the half-hour program's debut.

No one can deny Miss Jones' indefatigable talent. The Rodgers and Hammerstein sweet-

heart of the movie versions of "Oklahoma" and "Carousel" has been awarded and rewarded for her many accomplishments in the theatrical arts — including an Oscar for her role as Lulu Baines in "Elmer Gantry."

Her stepson David — son of Broadway star Jack Cassidy — is not totally without references either. He commanded a co-starring role in the Alan Sherman Broadway musical "The Fig Leaves Are Falling," and has been seen on TV in Ironside, The Survivors, Marcus Welby, Adam 12, FBI and Bonanza.

"Partridge" studio Screen Gems feels he is destined to be the next teen-age idol in the rock world. At 20, the 5-foot-8, 130-pound star has been a prime target of teen and pre-teen magazine publishers in recent months.

Cassidy said the show is "a stepping stone" to help him in his music career, not in acting which he said is "just an experience." A guitarist since he was 11 and a drummer of sorts, he said he has become "disillusioned" by Hollywood glamour.

"The image is not a good image," he said in an interview.

"Everyone wants to be a heavy, but there are no heavies."

But he said he liked the new show because it is different, fresh and offers him the opportunity to play guitar and sing. "Whatever creative freedom I have I'd like to take advantage of," he said.