

TV's 'Partridge Family' Turns on David Cassidy

By CHARLES WITBECK

HOLLYWOOD — "The title would turn me off, but if I saw the show I would catch it again," reports young David Cassidy, hoping to clear the air on his first series, "The Partridge Family," ABC's new 30-minute Friday night entry Channel 27 at 7:30) about a singing family who cut a hit record in their Ohio garage, then head for Hollywood in a wildly-painted old school bus.



DAVID CASSIDY

Widow Connie Partridge (sweet Shirley Jones) and lead singer, drives the bus, and gently bosses her brood of five; oldest son, Keith (David Cassidy), the electronically-wired musical talent; Laurie (Susan Dey) and pacifist, a promoter of relevant causes; David Bonaduce, a 10-year-old con artist dreaming of deals; Jeremy Gelbwaks, a 7-year-old drummer; 4-year-old tagalong Suzanne Crough, and a dog, Simone. Nervous Road Manager Reuben Kinkaid (Dave Madden) hates kids and animals, but inherent greed forces him to put up with the troops.

IN THE CURRENT pop music field, overnight oddities such as the Partridges could, conceivably, emerge from a Ohio garage and sell a million records. Creator Bernard Slate didn't have to dig deep for true-life examples, for the Partridges could be Rhode Island's Cowsill Family, where Mom is the powerhouse voice. Besides, a series idea on a musical group touring in a psychedelic bus strangely enough popped up at the Screen Gems Studio a few years back only to become lost in the shuffle. Perhaps it

was too close to "The Monkees" at the time, a Screen Gems innovation that exploded and fizzled with frightening momentum.

"The Partridge Family" bears no resemblance to "The Monkees," and newcomer David Cassidy is quick to deny the show is any relation to TV's "The Brady Bunch."

Young David hopes to attract teenagers with his songs, while step-mother Shirley Jones holds the middle-aged set. "The show is after two different audiences," said the son of actor Jack Cassidy. "But we're not Arlo Guthrie (meaning the cast's shining faces and clean living habits won't put off oldsters). It's good times, and the people are positive and happy."

MOM AND step-son have been touring the big cities, publicizing the show and two record albums which just happen to be released at premiere time. Shirley sings lead in one, David dominates the second. "If you heard the albums you wouldn't know they had anything to do with a family TV series," says young Cassidy. "Wes Farrell

put most of it together, and I could only classify the selections as sophisticated rock — funky, right-down love songs and melodic pop."

A long, brown-haired, rather sweet looking boy, David began singing at the age of 3 and quietly dreamed of becoming an actor. The boy made his debut in Allan Sherman's Broadway musical, "The Fig Leaves Are Falling," and gained TV experience in "The F.B.I.," "Bonanza," "Mod Squad," and "Marcus Welby" episodes. He tries not to let people know he's actor Jack Cassidy's boy, and points out nepotism had nothing to do with his spot on the series. David wants to make it on his own, and attended three or four meetings on the proposed series before producer Bob Claver asked the boy how he would like working with his step-mother, Shirley Jones.

David is aware of this golden opportunity — a one-two punch of record and TV exposure. He keeps quiet and will take middle-aged writers versions of teenage dialogue except for "Golly, Mom," which went out with Booth Tarkington.

"BERNARD SLATE knows how to write for television and not offend the Bible Belt or the kids," David says. "The real trouble is that so many people are put off by youth today, so writers, by trying not to offend, do offend our intelligence. They don't write about kids like they really are. Instead, out comes a character that grownups will approve of, and the rest of us gag."