THE BIG BUSINESS BOY OF THE 'PARTRIDGE FAMILY'

Cassidy: heart throb to the teenybops

David Cassidy, new idol of America's younger teenagers, is planning an Australian tour soon.

From GUY AUSTIN in Hollywood

IN THE 15 months or so since "The Partridge Family" first hit the TV screens, singer David Cassidy has become the number one teenybop idol of girls from 12 to 17 years old.

Actor-singer Cassidy, 21, plays the 16-year-old Keith in the show.

Many Australians who have seen the program write to me asking for more details on David, and end with the plea: "Won't you please send me an autographed picture of him with my name on it. I shall treasure it all my life."

But these letters are only a dribble compared with the thousands that reach the producers of the series, Screen Gems of Hollywood.

And now, since David has been going out on personal appearances, giving concerts around the country, he has found himself facing the same mobbing, the same adulation, the same packed auditoriums that greeted some of his predecessors, like Frankie Avalon and Bobbie Rydell.

But little of all this enormous popularity and vast financial returns that are coming to David Cassidy and his sponsors has been due to him alone.

BIG BUSINESS

It has been no accidental or spontaneous thing that has happened, but the result of careful planning and careful build-up by his managers, his agents and his press relations people.

For David Cassidy today is Big Business.

Certainly his personality, his clean-cut appearance, his youthful looks started to get the younger girls interested in him when his face was picked out by them after he had appeared in some dramatic roles on television.

His personal manager, Jim Flood, says: "We had nothing to do with it in the beginning.

"It was his part in the series that really got things rolling, and his appeal came on so strong that it was obvious that David Cassidy, properly handled, would become as big, if not bigger, than any young singer of his day."

It was soon after the series started in Australia on Sydney's ATN Channel 7 that I first visited David on the outdoor set at the Columbia ranch in Burbank.

He was chatting with Susan Dey, who plays his sister in the show, and they were looking through the pages of the first issue of the Partridge Family magazine, which had hit the stands that very week.

To start with, David had wanted no part in exposure in teenybop magazines until he was reminded that three-and-a-half million of them buy and devour a dozen such publications a month.

No one knows this better than Chuck Lauter, a former high school English teacher, who publishes several of them, and now had added the Partridge Family magazine to his output.

Today, in addition to all this, there are David Cassidy love kits, bubble gum, shirts, colouring books, lunch boxes and even David Cassidy girls' dresses.

His first single record, "I Think I Love You" made soon after the series caught on, but which no disc jockey would play until a disc jockey in Seattle, Washington, was persuaded to give it a spin, has become a five million seller.

The four Partridge Family albums are not far behind. In a single day recently the four sold some 200,000 copies.

EXPOSURE

Managed, controlled and promoted by his talent agency, Aaron Management Corporation, his business manager, Lee Bush, and Jim Flood, with the Lauter organisation behind his promotion in the magazines, David Cassidy is now being booked into the smaller cities for concerts, and every one of them is a sell-out.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Amarillo, Texas, quite recently for single performance in both cities he grossed $58,000. He will earn around $250,000 this year.

In both appearances he was mobbed by thousands of young girls, and had to be protected by security guards.

His attraction to the fans, according to Jim Flood, is "a youthful, clean-cut look that is neither physically nor emotionally threatening to young girls."

Offers from promoters in the major metropolitan cities all over have come in to his management team. They have been offered huge financial guarantees from New York's Madison Square Garden to the Forum in Los Angeles.

They were turned down. It is a little early, they feel, to subject young David to such appearances before vast audiences.

But early in the New Year, they will move him from the smaller auditoriums in the smaller towns to larger crowds in larger cities.

PICTURE

If anything goes wrong in appearances on the lesser dates it is of little consequence.

But any "mistake" in the vital metropolitan centres could prove disastrous to his career.

What is planned for him now, if and when "The Partridge Family" series goes off the air, is a good part in a top motion picture to prove David's acting ability that will carry his career along after the teenyboppers have switched their loyalty (and their buying power) to yet another new face and personality.

It is more than possible that arrangements may be made soon for David Cassidy to make personal appearances in Australia.