

Rock/ *Partridges Dog Cassidy*

By HENRY McNULTY

David Cassidy's new album is called "The Higher They Climb, The Harder They Fall." Since the title apparently refers to his own rock career, it might more aptly be "The Faster They Climb, The Quicker They Zip Into Oblivion."

Cassidy entered the rock world as an actor-turned-singer. Playing the eldest son in a rock-'n'-roll household called "The Partridge Family," he was called upon to sing as part of the Partridge TV show — and following a pattern established during the 1960s by The Monkees, both the TV show and the records were huge successes.

Since he was virtually the only member of the cast who could sing, he cut records on his own and went on tour under his own name. In 1972, at the height of the Cassidy/Partridge success, his concerts were attended by thousands of screaming sub-teens.

By 1974, the bubble had burst. The show went off the air, the subteens grew up, the Cassidy mystique seemed to vanish. At 24, Cassidy's career had stalled.

Now he is back, Partridge-less, with a new record label, a new group of backing musicians, and — hopefully — a new image.

Like others leaving an established band, Cassidy has surrounded himself with an impressive array of backup musicians. Ex-Beach Boy Bruce Johnston produced the LP and contributed a song; present Beach Boy Carl Wilson sings; bassist Willie Weeks, guitarists Ned Doehny and Danny Kortchmar, drummers Jim Gordon and Jim Keltner, and other assorted people (Richie Furay, Dewey Bunnell) perform.



David Cassidy

Even Phil Austin, a member of the Firesign Theatre comedy group, did his bit by helping with "Massacre at Park Bench," a bit of none-too-witty dialogue about the decline and fall of a young rock star (guess who?).

As the album begins, it appears as if Cassidy has indeed carved himself a new career. "When I'm a Rock 'n' Roll Star," which he penned himself, is a wry comment on his past, sung in a gravelly moan. It's followed by the Gene Vincent classic, "Be-Bop-a-Lula," done fairly authentically but ending in an ironic chorus of screams from his Partridge days.

Unfortunately, most of the album's material is rendered in his Partridge style, a rather strained, eager,

breathy voice that lacks much sophistication. Even on excellent material like the Beach Boys' "Darlin'," one can't help but be conscious of the David of old.

Also, the LP has a curiously thin sound, despite the competent backing and filled-out choruses. It seems as if Cassidy is too busy shedding his old image to work very hard to create a new one.

(As to his popularity, I can only report that the new David Cassidy photograph, sent with the record, has mysteriously disappeared from my desk. Obviously, he still has some avid fans. The photo here is from his Partridge days.)

It is definitely a step up for anyone to shed the trap-

pings of teenybopperism. Now, if only Cassidy can go one step further, and really establish himself musically, I promise to stop thinking of him as Keith Partridge.

THE HIGHER THEY CLIMB, THE HARDER THEY FALL. By David Cassidy. RCA Records.