

tv previews



Living down the past ... the Partridge Family at the height of their fame.

C'mon Get Happy: The Partridge Family Story

Ten, 8.30pm

 Danny Bonaduce is an unlikely candidate for best-adjusted ex-member of the Partridge Family, what with the coke busts and that run-in with a transvestite prostitute, but that's the impression you get from this entertaining look at a '70s bubblegum phenomenon. Described here as "the original Milli Vanilli" (although this doesn't do justice to David Cassidy's contributions), *The Partridge Family* was a cynical industry creation, a kind of pro-family values *Popstars*. And while it ran for only four seasons (1970-'74), it has dogged the former stars ever since.

Shirley Jones, an Academy Award-winning actress before she took on the role of the singing widow, blames the show for putting an end to her film career. David Cassidy, a spunky pot-smoking party boy who became a teen sensation on the back of the show, still seems slightly damaged by the experience. Susan Dey, who battled with bulimia but went on to become a certified star in *LA Law*, simply refuses to talk about it. And the two youngest cast members are happy to talk, but no-one seems remotely interested in their stories.

Only Bonaduce seems comfortable with it all. As chubby, red-faced Danny Partridge, he played the smart-arse little brother to perfection and got most of the show's best lines. From an abusive background, he found in the show a surrogate family

and abundant temptation for a boy hitting puberty. He lost his virginity on the show's set and developed a taste for substance abuse. These days he works as a talk-show host and looks back on it all with a cheerful lack of self-pity: "The transvestite thing I might not do again, but otherwise I have no regrets."

At two hours, this probably overstates its welcome, but it's an infectious combination of Hollywood Babylon and bubblegum pop.