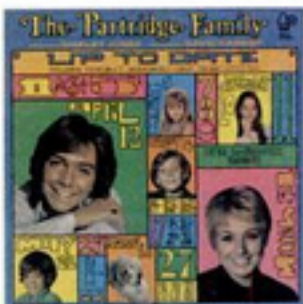


It was twenty years ago today, Shirley Partridge taught the band to play. Some words from the birds, reported by MARK BLACKWELL.

## The Partridge Family Tree

Edited by

Lauren Spencer.



On September 25th, 1970, the multicolored Partridge Family tour bus rolled across the television screens of America for the very first time. Combining elements from *The Brady Bunch* and *The Monkees*, *The Partridge Family* loosely reflected the career of the Cowsills, a musical family from Rhode Island whose hits included the theme from *Hair* and who toured in the late 60s.

On the show, Shirley Partridge played a widowed mother of five who led her clan through four years of wacky singing adventures with the help of Reuben Kinkaid, their would-be Donald Trump (if it weren't for those damn kids!) manager. Sixteen-year-old Keith was lead singer and family Casanova, while his younger brother Danny provided guitar and necessary Bart Simpson mischief. Episodes dealt with the band's adventures on the road, as well as problems that most any family could relate to (like when Laurie's new braces started picking up the local radio station).

The fictional family was a hit, off the tube as well as on, despite the fact that their songs were actually recorded by studio musicians and only "Keith" and "Shirley" sang their own vocals. The Partridges' first single, "I Think I Love You," was a Number One smash in 1970. During the course of the show, they garnered several Top 40 tunes, including "Doesn't Somebody Want to Be Wanted?" and "I Woke Up In Love This Morning." The Partridges were marketed to the max, their images appearing on everything from comic books to lunch boxes.

The show went off the air in August 1974, only to be resurrected the very next month as *The Partridge Family, 2200 A.D.*, a Saturday morning cartoon sequel that lasted one year. Recent rumblings of reunions remain unsubstantiated, although a few years ago some of the members did go as far as signing contracts for a special. Laurie was to be the only missing Partridge, written out by necessity as having "moved to L.A. and become a lawyer." However, studio red tape and a writers' strike resulted in the project being scrapped before it got off the ground. Twenty years after they hatched, here's a look at where the Partridges have migrated.

### Reuben Kinkaid

Originally an amateur magician from Indiana, Dave Madden starred in the 60s on television's *Camp Runamuck* and *Laugh-In*, and on stage as Frank Sinatra's opening stand-up comedy act, before landing his role as Partridge manager. When the show was over, he tried his hand at theater, hit the celebrity guest-appearance circuit, parlaying a 1978 cameo on *Alice* (as Flo's boyfriend Earl Hicks) into a role that lasted seven years. During this period his vocal cords became stars in their own right, as he

started doing voice-overs and announcements for radio and television commercials. Today he can be heard on ads for Denny's, Kellogg's, Pepsi, Oscar Meyer, Flintstone Vitamins, Fox Television, Bell Yellow Pages, and dozens of other products. This past spring, as David Cassidy inked his new record contract with Enigma, Madden turned up for a photo-op, comically reprising the managerial role of Reuben Kinkaid. "That was fun, but I really don't think we could all ever get back together as a group," figures Madden. "We've just scattered in too many different directions by now."

### Shirley

Shirley Jones made her motion picture debut in 1955's *Oklahoma!*, and went on to make more than two-dozen movies, including *The Music Man*, *Carousel* and *Elmer Gantry* (for which she won an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress). *The Partridge Family* was Shirley's first TV series, specifically built around the established actress; the kids were chosen according to how well they worked with Jones as mom. After the show, she continued acting, singing and appearing in commercials, eventually starring in a short-lived second series, 1980's family-oriented *Shirley*. Looking suspiciously young, she now tours North America singing Broadway tunes and songs from her musicals. "One of the funniest things about the Partridges is that we were constantly being asked to

go out on the road," she laughs. "Everywhere we appeared someone would ask us to play or sing. Even Vegas wanted The Partridge Family. The joke, of course, being that there was no Partridge Family. We had so much success you just couldn't make people understand that."

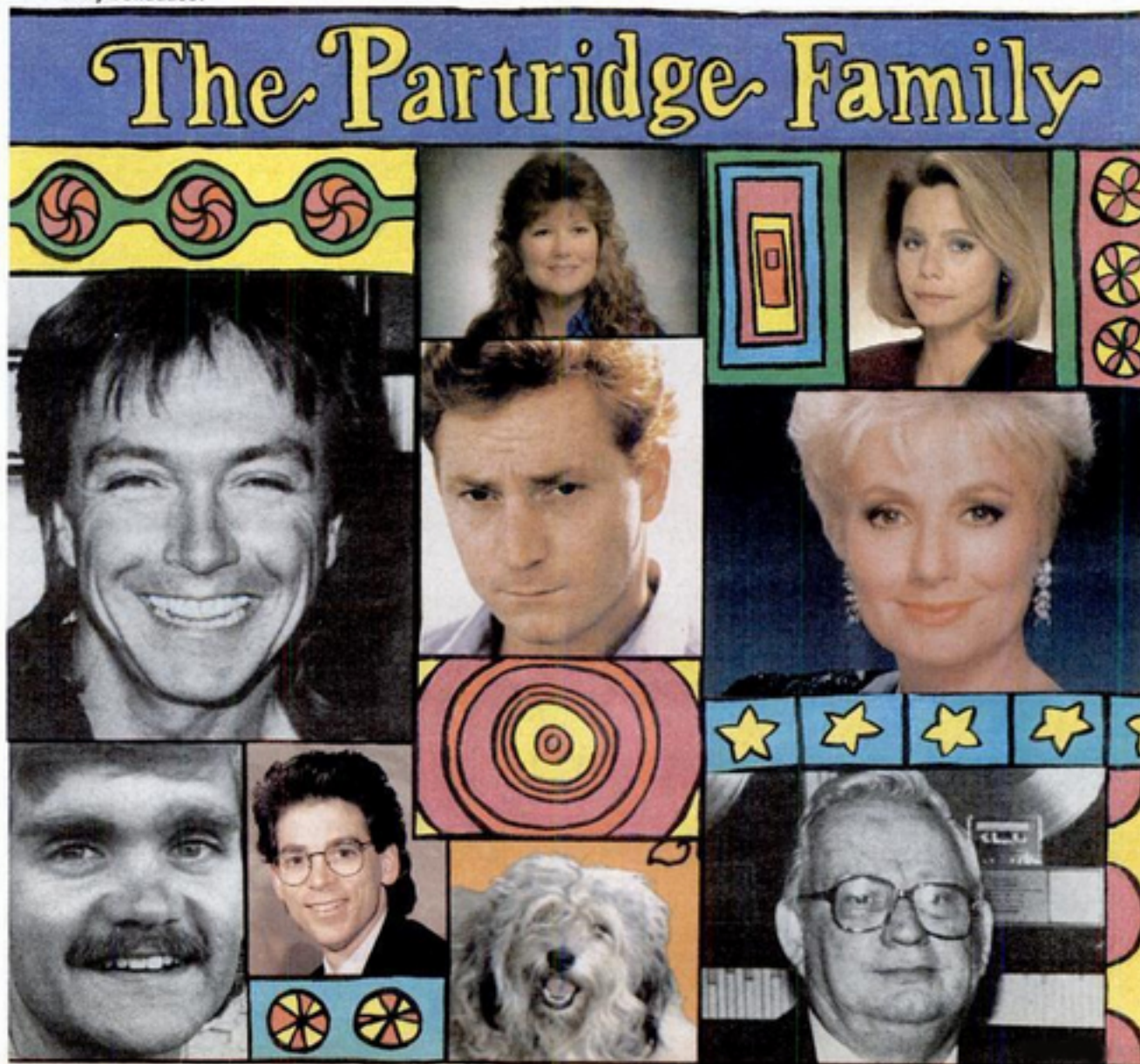
Shirley and her comedian/producer husband reside in Beverly Hills and have recently written a book about their lives, *Shirley Jones and Marty Ingles: An Unlikely Love Story*.

### Keith

The real-life stepson of his TV mom, David Cassidy was transformed overnight from an actor (bit parts on shows like *Bonanza*, *The Mod Squad* and *Marcus Welby, M.D.*) into a full-fledged teen idol. His popularity on the show spawned a solo career that often created hysteria among his fans, culminating in a May 1974 London performance that, because of the number of people injured, the British Safety Council referred to as a "suicide concert." (One 14-year-old fan subsequently died of a heart attack.) David's musical career after the Partridges was much less spectacular, and he briefly returned to the tube in 1978 with a detective show called *David Cassidy—Man Undercover*.

In the 80s he disappeared from the mainstream, breeding racehorses and developing a fairly successful stage career in America and London. Now David is ready to rise again, with two major movies

Upper left, then: 1970 (clockwise from top right), Susan Dey, Shirley Jones, Simone, Jeremy Gelbwaks, David Cassidy, Suzanne Crough, and Danny Bonaduce. Below, now: 1990 (clockwise from top right), Susan Dey (as L.A. Law's Grace Van Owen), Shirley Jones, Dave Madden, Simone, Jeremy Gelbwaks, Brian Forster, David Cassidy, Suzanne Crough, and Danny Bonaduce.





in the can as well as a new album scheduled to be released this month. "For a long time I struggled to distance myself from the bubble-gum cards and cereal-box photos, because nobody could possibly take me seriously," David says. "But now I have a great sense of humor about the show, because I'm far enough away from it. Finally, I think I'm ready to show people who David Cassidy really is."

### Laurie

Susan Dey was a 16-year-old model living on the East Coast when she landed the role of Laurie and moved to California. When the show was over, she moved on to TV guest appearances and low-grade movies such as *Skyjacked* and *First Love*. Her desire to prove herself in drama resulted in her taking what she now refers to as "melodramatic roles at a time when 'women in peril' scripts were the only work available." When her "tolerance level finally burst," she strove for bigger and better things and eventually became the most visible post-Partridge. In 1983 she appeared with Dennis Weaver in the TV series *Emerald Point N.A.S.*, and now stars as attorney Grace Van Owen on *L.A. Law*. Her work has earned an Emmy nomination and a Golden Globe Award, and she recently started her own production company.

"*The Partridge Family* was like a gift to me," says Susan. "It was a crash course for everything I needed to know about this business. Most importantly, I learned that TV stardom means absolutely nothing in the real world."

Susan has been married to a producer for two years and has an 11-year-old daughter from a previous marriage.

### Danny

Fiery redhead Danny Bonaduce, who got his acting start with shots on sitcoms such as *Bewitched* and *The Andy Griffith Show*, went on from the Partridges to occasional supermarket openings ("There's a blue light special in sporting goods and Danny Partridge is in frozen foods") and the standard *Love Boat/Fantasy Island* guest-star circuit. Danny also studied Japanese and karate, winning the 1980 and 1981 international karate championships in his weight class, and he worked for a while as the "worst fucking bartender in the world." One of his most memorable—and hardest to live down—jobs was his movie role as a

DJ in the late night cable T&A/cheerleader favorite *H.O.T.S.* Most recently, he was employed as a real rock 'n' roll DJ for Philadelphia's WEGX-FM (Eagle 106). This summer he left the station in search of new radio horizons.

Last March, Danny was arrested in Daytona Beach, Florida, after police observed him participating in a suspicious street transaction. (They allegedly discovered crack stashed in his snakeskin boots.) Danny regards the arrest as a blessing, and is in the process of cleaning up his act in a rehab program. "I'm one of those people whose life is so fucked up you could use me as an example of the whole 'don't put your child in show business' thing," he laughs. "But that show was the highlight of my childhood. I really dug it."

### Christopher (1970-71)

Jeremy Gelbwaks, the Partridge drummer, was the first to leave the clan, moving to Virginia when his father was transferred from his space program job in California.

In the late 70s, his family bought a dairy farm in upstate New York, setting up an organic garden that lasted six years. Jeremy studied science and business at a local college, graduating in 1982, and worked with computers for a while, yet soon found showbiz calling again. He dabbled in acting through "off-off-off-Broadway" theater, but eventually decided it was the business aspect of the entertainment industry that most interested him.

Jeremy is now establishing himself in the production and locations department of a feature film company, and has recently worked on *Bonfire of the Vanities*, *Q&A*, and *Enemies: A Love Story*. Ideally, he sees his role as a "liaison between the fantasy world of the film and the real world of the people and places [involved in the production]."

"One reason I feel more at home in the entertainment industry is that my past isn't such an issue," Jeremy explains. "It becomes a real obstacle when you're trying to sell a computer system and the person is getting all excited that you were a TV star as a kid."

Jeremy got married early this summer and is now living in New Jersey.

### Christopher (1971-1974)

After the departure of Jeremy Gelbwaks,

Christopher's role was taken over by Brian Forster, an 11-year-old veteran of commercials—including a Nestle's Quik ad that won the prize for Best Children's Commercial of 1967.

Though acting was obviously in his blood (his grandfather Alan Napier played the butler Alfred on TV's *Batman*) Brian gave it up after the show went off the air. A later attempt to get back into the business was unsuccessful, although he almost scored a guest appearance on an episode of *Eight Is Enough*. Brian graduated from Humboldt State College with a degree in zoology in 1985, abandoning his earlier plans to become a physical therapist for auto racing. These days he road races and works as a senior instructor at California's Bonderant Racing School, teaching everything from basic highway driving to corporate chauffeur antiterrorist tactics.

"The Partridges were a lot of fun," reminisces Brian. "We had problems like any real family, but I'd love to see a reunion happen." Meanwhile, Brian plans to extend his road racing to the stock car oval circuits, à la *Days of Thunder*.

### Tracy

The youngest member of the cast was five-year-old Suzanne Crough, who continued her career after 1974 in commercials, TV, and film. Her post-Partridge work, in which she "actually acted," included the 1977 series *Mulligan's Stew*, and the Taylor Hackford film *Teenage Father*, which received an Academy Award for Best Short Film.

Suzanne's last flirtation with the Partridge image came just a few years ago, when she participated in a variety stage show that featured such fellow former sitcom stars as *Leave It to Beaver's* Wally (Tony Dow) and *The Brady Bunch's* Bobby (Mike Lookinland). The show was designed to travel across the country, but never made it past its first weekend at Magic Mountain Amusement Park.

Suzanne, who was once pals with Janet Jackson in a special reduced-time high school, moved away from acting in the late 80s when she began taking business courses, married a highway patrolman, and had a baby girl. She now manages an acting workshop for kids, runs a bookstore in the San Diego area, and is planning to resurrect her acting career.

"I'd love to do something like *Knots Landing* and play the so-called bitch," she confides. "I'm not a little girl anymore."



They don't make teen idols like they used to. I thank God I was seven in 1972 and just old enough to worship, at the heels of my older sister Bibi, the silky-voiced, sandy-shag-haired, green-speckle-eyed, bell-bottomed, thoroughly delicious pop-god and lead singer of *The Partridge Family*: David Cassidy, aka Keith Partridge. Not only was he blissfully lovely, but almost all of the songs they had him sing were about him loving a girl (i.e., one's self) to pieces but not being sure she loved him back, which ultimately led him to sing, with that creamy-yet-tough voice of his, astonishing things like: "Believe me, you really don't have to worry, I only want to make you happy / but if you say hey go away I will (gasp!) but I think better still / I'd better stay around and love you / Do you think I have a case, let me ask you to your face—DO YOU THINK YOU LOVE ME? I THINK I LOVE YOU . . ." My sister and I nearly ruptured our intestines jumping up and down on our beds each night howling, "I THINK I LOVE YOU" into a flashlight, while David beamed down at us from life-sized posters on the wall.

Lord, that guy had us pulverized. Our grandmother took us to see him at Nassau coliseum in 1972 and all I remember is that we had matching ankle-length purple dresses and cried through the whole concert. I cried because I was too short to see and everybody was screaming so loud I certainly couldn't hear anything—and Bibi cried because she could see him, but couldn't touch him.

Bibi had it worse than I did. She would get violent if anyone tried to get between her and the TV on Saturday nights at 8 P.M. when *The Partridge Family* was on. Out of pure spite I once tried to watch something else and she jumped me like a Sumo wrestler and nearly broke my arm. A girlfriend of mine reported that she once whacked her little sister over the head with an unripened banana — so hard she fainted for a similar offense.

We had no idea what had hit us, but whatever it was, it was more fun than anything before or since. The egg cracking open and all the multicolored partridges scuttling across the screen, the keyboard, the drum fill, and then—pure bliss—David's voice in the theme song: "Hello world here's a song that we're singin' / to make you HAPPYYYY / A whole lotta lovin' is what we'll be bringin'

to make you HAPPYYYY . . ." By the time they came out in their little red suits and did the song at the end, we were numb with joy. "I remember the whole world standing still when they did the song," Bibi recalls. "It was just perfect euphoria."

Bibi used to sit in this big swivel chair listening to *Sound Magazine*, as loud as the little plastic record player would go, and just spin around and around until she got so dizzy she'd collapse on the floor. She thought "One Night Stand" was about a lemonade stand.

"I still listen to that record," she confesses. *I do too!* The songs are great. The production is great. And David—yes, we think we loved you, all of us—every red-blooded female who was on the American continent and old enough to watch television between 1970 and 1974.

You were the first David and we'll always love you but you did fool us. We thought we'd grow up to meet men like you with silver boots and hip huggers and drop-dead looks who sat in Ferris wheels and sang songs about kissing pillows and meeting us halfway and loving us forever. Girls, if any of you have salvaged any of your David posters, send me one, will ya? I'm bored.

—Celia Farber

## David: We Think We Love You



## Rockin' with Dick Tracy

Disney/Touchstone Pictures

All I can say is, "It's the most colorful movie I've ever seen." As an appetizer to *Dick Tracy* comes *Rollercoaster Rabbit* starring Roger Rabbit and Baby Herman, who is the most undisciplined child next to Bart Simpson. Yet the visual effects are just a tease compared to *Tracy*. The film only cost \$30 million to make. Amazing when you see the list of characters and cast: Dick Van Dyke as D.A. Fletcher, Dustin Hoffman as Mumbles, Al Pacino as Big Boy Caprice, to name a few.

*Dick Tracy* has many similarities to *Batman*: a kidnapping; a nutcase/villain; he even jumps through glass to save his girl, Tess Trueheart. My compliments to Disney and Touchstone Pictures for making every building look like a gingerbread house. Yellow, baby blue, and green cars. Whoever did the

scenery for the city skyline did the best I've ever seen and should be working with SPIN. The gold cobblestone bridge is a graffiti writer/artists orgasm. The dialogue is even more entertaining than my writing style of toasted English. I never liked Madonna or Warren Beatty, but I've developed a new sense of respect for both, especially Madonna. I had the same attitude about Michael Keaton doing *Batman* as I did with Warren Beatty doing *Dick Tracy*, and you know what? They both pull it off. *Tracy* rocks a tough guy because of a piece of chicken, and yellow trash cans and gang names like 88 Keys are all a part of this plot. Whatever doesn't warm your heart, the orange-ball sunset and original score by Danny Elfman will. Until the next release. . . .

**Bönz Malone**