

Airwave Topics

—by Fred H. Russell

A family comedy show with a beat—that's "The Partridge Family," new half-hour series premiering on ABC Television Friday, Sept. 25 (8:30-9:00 p.m.). It's about the Partridges, a family from a small town, who form their own vocal-instrumental group and almost overnight find themselves in show business. Shirley Partridge, the mother and a widow, is played by Shirley Jones, who combines singing and acting ability and good looks in one very attractive package. Although she believes in family conclaves, Shirley is not "one of the kids." She is head of the family and as such, the one in authority.

There are five children, ranging in age from 16 down to 5. The eldest, Keith, is played by David Cassidy, Shirley Jones' stepson, whose appeal will undoubtedly get a strong reaction from young feminine viewers.

Danny, 10, is played by Danny Bonaduce, a bright new talent who is responsible for much of the comedy. Young Danny has the instincts of a con man and this, combined with a flair for the stock market, make him a formidable figure when it comes to money.

The other youngsters are Laurie, 15 (Susan Dey), Chris, 7 (Jeremy Gelbwaks) and Tracy, 5 (Suzanne Crough).

The Partridges' manager is Reuben Kinkaid, played by Dave Madden, a "Laugh-In" alumnus. One of Kinkaid's functions is being a foil for Danny.

Music, of course, is a major part of every episode. The songs will be integrated into the shows, but never stop the action to do one. Music is used to further the story or help set a specific mood; occasionally as a bridge over an action montage.

The comedy is neither soft or ingenuous. The show is steering clear of the overly sentimental and is aiming for a much more sophisticated kind of program.

Children, like adults, are more aware and hip today and the Partridges' exchanges are fast and funny.

The family's home base is a fictitious town in northern California, but their singing engagements take them on the road much of the time. They travel in a wildly painted bus which is almost like a member of the family, too.

Many situation comedies are two-set shows — usually in the living room and kitchen. But this show is doing a lot of shooting outdoors, in and around Los Angeles. One episode, for example, has 18 different sets. That's not the rule in the average 30-minute show.