



**"The Partridge Family" is a new series on ABC-TV. The musical Partridges, including Shirley Jones, will combine rock music with situation comedy every Friday night, premiering September 25.**

**By BILL DUNN**

AUTUMN is different things to different people. To most it means an end to summer vacation and the kids' return to school. But to the television networks, autumn means the beginning of another season with many new shows. One of them is "The Partridge Family," which has its premiere September 25 on ABC-TV.

The theme and the characters of the series bear a strong resemblance to the real life singing Cowsill family. Like the Cowsills, Mrs. Partridge and her children join together to form a rock and roll group. The show follows a musical clan through recording sessions, road tours, and an opening at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

\* \* \*

MRS. PARTRIDGE, the group's widowed mother and girl singer, is played by Shirley Jones. The lead singer is David Cassidy, stepson of Miss Jones. The rhythm section is filled out by Susan Dey, Danny Bonaduce, Jeremy Gelbwaks and Suzanne Crough.

Each week's episode will introduce a new song by "The Partridge Family." Miss Jones describes the music as being generically rock and roll but more specifically "good time

music. You can sing the songs yourself and understand all the words."

In explaining the family situation, Miss Jones said that being a widow had certain advantages in maintaining the excitement around the musical household. A widowed mother allows for romantic interests in her life. And many humorous episodes are focused on her assuming the father's role. Psychologically speaking, the missing parent permits the viewer to assume the vacant role and develop a personal interest in the children.

\* \* \*

MANY OF the episodes have already been completed. In addition to the regular family members, there will be appearances by guest stars. The story-lines have purposely been given a current flavor. Shirley Jones says, "We've been dealing with very contemporary problems. One episode is on the feminist women's movement, another on sex education." There won't be any time lapse with the present-day happenings.

"The Partridge Family" is Miss Jones' debut in a regular television series. The project is a bit of a departure for her. Shirley's initial show business experience was as a singer in musical comedy. She won wide

critical acclaim for her portrayal of Laurie in the film version of "Oklahoma!" Similar roles followed.

Wanting to break out of the stereotyped role of "the blonde fairy princess," Shirley accepted the challenging role of an alcoholic in a television dramatic production. Three years after it was seen, Burt Lancaster called Shirley to congratulate her on her fine acting and to ask if she would play the part of Lulu Baines in "Elmer Gantry." As you probably remember, Miss Jones agreed to do the film and then went on to win an Academy Award for her excellent performance.

\* \* \*

AND SO it went from light musical comedies to the dramatic roles in major films. And now Shirley is back to light comedy. But this time she's singing with a group that plays drums and rock guitars. There are a few more episodes to be taped. As for future plans, Shirley says, "I still miss the stage. Never really got enough of it. I started in the chorus and stock." That might be the clue to the future. While the series is seen on ABC-TV, everyone can watch for a possible return to the stage and, of course, "Partridge Family" hit songs will be playing often on the radio.