

The Hollywood Scene

by CHARLES WITBECK

Susan's happy as a Partridge

HOLLYWOOD— "When I watched myself in re-runs I was a bloody bore," said Susan Dey, the young New York model who is learning the television business in front of everyone, playing sister to the teeny-bopper idol, David Cassidy, Friday nights on ABC's *The Partridge Family*.

Reviewing her first season's performance as Laurie Partridge, beginner Susan Dey gives herself poor marks, contemptuously calling Laurie, "Miss Goody-Goody," an earnest soul seemingly above teasing brothers and sisters, or acting like a normal, unrestrained kid.

"I was awful the first season. The thing was I couldn't let go. All that stiffness came out on the screen," a calm Susan related, able now to look back and evaluate.

Though Susan puts the knock on herself for being a raw recruit, she fooled a TV magazine critic who was politely impressed by Miss Day's coolness. "He interpreted a case of nerves for poise," the youngster explained, refusing to let herself off the hook.

Susan's harsh appraisal of sister Laurie may be fairly accurate, but it obviously didn't affect audience approval of the show, or detract from David Cassidy's emergence on the series as a successor to Bobby Sherman, Davy Jones and those early Beatles in juvenile land. Eleven-year-old girls had found David, and sister Laurie helped the cause by feeding her TV brother lines.

The young actress is also free to criticize herself, because stiffness before the camera is disappearing and she can relax, and think about teasing her TV family more. She has passed the awkward stage, and is eager to move on "trying to make it real." Her only fear at this stage comes from being duped, of not knowing whether she has ability. This uneasiness about her work does not apply to star David Cassidy. Susan recently saw David on the concert stage, and was awed by Cassidy's growth in less than a year. "He opens up, and zoom, a whole audience is smitten. David has the talent."

Susan shouldn't lower her sights either. The wonder is that a charming neophyte fresh from a few high school plays, several TV commercials and modelling jobs for slick magazines should do so well in the series world where you do it first and talk about it later.

First of all, pure luck called the shots. Screen Gems producer Paul Witt failed to find the right Laurie in Hollywood, and went to New York for hopefuls. One look at the slim, graceful high school junior with the saucer eyes and fetching mouth convinced Witt that Susan was the right choice despite her lack of dramatic training. Though the youngster claims "thousands can do the part," she got the job.

Step number two centred on the idea of Susan, still a minor, making the family break to be on her own in Hollywood. Father Robert Dey, city editor of the *New Rochelle Standard Star*, gave permission if his daughter were accompanied by a companion. Then Susan began interviewing prospects, and selected 23-year-old Jane Joyce, a college graduate who doubles as Laurie's stand-in, and helped the high school senior finish her homework by mail and receive her diploma. Drama lessons had to come from other sources.



David Cassidy has the teeny-boppers sighing, but TV sister Susan Dey is beginning to attract attention with her splendid looks on ABC's *The Partridge Family*.