

TEEN SCENE: Partridge That Laid the Golden Egg

By LEI

Every-so-often, it seems, America decides that "skinny is beautiful" and hundreds of teenagers who are not shaped like soda straws attempt to lose their appetite. The last underweight idol was an emaciated model named Twiggy, who, it was said, was so thin she had a boy for a stand-in. History is repeating itself, but this time the idol is a singer who's so thin he has a girl for a stand-in. His name, of course, is David Cassidy, and he is no relation to Hopalong Cassidy, although he is the son of Jack Cassidy and Evelyn Ward, and the stepson of Shirley Jones, all of whom are well-known entertainers in their own right.

How did David Cassidy become a teen-age idol, while thousands of other underbuilt teenage boys were trying to escape their "98-pound-weakling" status? Surprisingly enough, the fact that he looked slightly like a stringbean that didn't get enough sun wasn't the biggest factor in his success, and it wasn't the fact that he was related to three big-name entertainers, either—although nobody could say

that didn't help. No, it wasn't talent either that made the big difference. David Cassidy had two big things going for him—magnetism, and a lot of hard work and planning.

Being surrounded by show business professionals as a child, David never really considered being anything but an actor. However, he didn't just dream of performing before the cameras, of the glossy cars and expensive clothes he'd have. When most young fellows were enjoying after-school pizzas or taking their girls to the movies, David was attending acting schools which his parents' entertainment friends had helped him to choose. He didn't study music and learn to play the guitar because of any particular passion for music, but because he knew sometime he might need musical skills for an acting part. He was eager to begin performing but his mother, Evelyn Ward, urged him to stay in school at least through high school, and now he is glad he did. In fact, he believes that college would probably be an advantage to him now—that there are things he would learn there that would make him a more well-rounded actor. A higher education would also come in handy when the bubble of

being an idol bursts. David is very aware that the average idol lasts about two years, and he's got about eight months to go.

There are signs that David Cassidy may have more going for him than the adoration of the gum-popping pajama-party set. After all, his picture hasn't just been appearing on the covers of pulp fan magazines lately — stories on him have been appearing in major news weeklies, newspaper magazines, and other publications writing on an adult audience. More than once mother has remarked, looking at her daughter's Cassidy photo collection, that she wishes she had a son like him.

Of course, she doesn't really mean that she'd like a 21-year-old son who lives with two other boys, admits to having smoked pot, has a girl for a stand-in, and weighs 110 pounds. Having the real David Cassidy for a son would send many mothers up the woodwork and through the windows. However, in his teen-idol-Keith Partridge image, David appeals not only to the young teens, but also to more mature audiences. He has the magnetism that show business

—not just acting and singing, but in the technical, financial, and commercial sides of it, too.

David already feels hemmed in by the Partridge Family and the fan magazine adoration. He knows that his future success depends of people realizing that he is more than a sickly, smiling, sugar cane. He hopes people notice the increasing maturity in his records, and that soon he will be able to land a dramatic role in which he can be some sort of a meaningful 21-year-old man, instead of the going-on-sixteen-broomstick television image. For obvious reasons, though, he won't be able too step too far out of the wholesome-all-American-kid image while the TV series is still on.

It takes an actor of superb entertainment instincts to survive after their television show crumbles. Some of them have—Richard Chamberlain, Goldie Hawn, and Raymond Burr, among others. The Beatles, once, too, were regarded as "nice, wholesome boys" for a time. It seems quite likely that David Cassidy may have the necessary preparation to be a success even after he gets bald—and fat.