



DANNY FELD/ABC FAMILY

From left: David Cassidy, Alexa Vega, Katie Amanda Keane, and Patrick Cassidy star in "Ruby & the Rockits."

Easy to get happy with 'Ruby & the Rockits'

By Matthew Gilbert
GLOBE STAFF

David Cassidy and half-brother Patrick Cassidy camping around in fake MTV videos looking like Duran Duran and singing a fake synthesizer-heavy song called "Chunnel of Love"?

No, you're not in the grip of an ugly postmodern flashback, with the 1970s and 1980s merging into some kind of spandex nightmare. You're on a new ABC Family sitcom called "Ruby & the Rockits" that has no right to be as likable as it is. The show, which premieres tonight at 8:30, seems like its going to be a "Han-

nah Montana"-type thing, with Alexa Vega ("Spy Kids") as the musical Ruby and David Cassidy as her single father. But "Ruby & the Rockits" turns out to be a warm intergenerational comedy that never pushes life lessons in your face. The scripts are made of familiar parent-child ribbing and hugging, but they're given a nice buoyancy by all involved.

David Cassidy plays an aging pop star (conveniently named David) whose orphaned teen daughter, Ruby, shows up unexpectedly looking for a place to live. She's delightful, and she sings; he's obnoxious and irresponsible, pathetically clinging

TELEVISION REVIEW

RUBY & THE ROCKITS

Starring: David Cassidy, Alexa Vega, Patrick Cassidy, Katie Amanda Keane, Austin Butler, Kurt Doss

On: ABC Family

Time: Premieres tonight, 8:30-9

to his long-gone fame. David sets her up with his former bandmate and brother, Patrick (conveniently played by Patrick Cassidy), who has settled into a more stable life as an SUV salesman. Patrick's wife and two sons

roll their eyes when Patrick talks about his early MTV days, but musical teen son Jordan (Austin Butler) has his own fantasies about becoming a brooding emo star. When Ruby moves in with them, she and Jordan make beautiful musical together, literally, and I'm betting the kids will be performing with their uncles before you can say "The Partridge Family."

Ruby makes everyone's life a little happier, as she continually reminds them of the importance of family. And Vega plays Ruby as a believably and never cloyingly cheerful teen who loves music more than status. She's

easy to take. Also, the Cassidy brothers appear to be enjoying themselves, mugging a little bit and sacrificing their vanity in the name of comedy. Clearly, they are comfortable teasing each other and glad to be on this show.

Two other Cassidy brothers, Shaun and Ryan, are also involved in "Ruby & the Rockits," as executive producer and set designer, respectively. The show is a family affair on every level.

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