

David Cassidy's having a blast

By **RICHARD HUFF**

David Cassidy hit it big years ago, then gave up on Los Angeles and the TV business.

Now he's back, in ABC Family's "Ruby & the Rockits," a comedy series produced by his brother Shaun and co-starring brother Patrick.

"This is the dream job of all jobs I've ever had," said Cassidy, who became a TV and recording heartthrob in the '70s, thanks to "The Partridge Family."

"I can't wait for people to see it," he said of the show, premiering Tuesday at 8:30 p.m. "It's been a long time since I've felt this way."

"Ruby" is about a former '80s pop star (Patrick Cassidy) who is living a quiet life with his wife and two children. Their world is upended when his brother and former bandmate David (David Cassidy) shows up with his newfound teenage daughter, Ruby (Alexa Vega).

The rub is, David is unwilling to abandon his rock 'n' roll lifestyle and wants Ruby to live with his brother's family.

"Ruby & the Rockits," which Cassidy feels is edgier than "The Partridge Family" or "Cosby," marks his return to the medium that catapulted him to fame.

"The Partridge Family" premiered in 1970 and quickly launched David Cassidy as a sex symbol and chart-topping singer.

He suffered the usual highs and lows that come with sudden fame and the craziness of having parents in show business.

The highs included a run on Broadway with brother Shaun ("Blood Brothers") and a hugely successful 10-year stint in Las Vegas.



The cast: (l.-r.) David Cassidy, Alexa Vega, Austin Robert Butler, Patrick Cassidy, Katie A. Keane and Kurt Doss

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"My father [actor Jack Cassidy, who died in 1976] ... said to me, backstage at Madison Square Garden, 'Some day this will all be gone and it's going to be difficult for you. You're so famous, you have the burden of this albatross, of being a sex symbol, a teen idol,'" said Cassidy.

His father related what it was like living in the shadow of his wife (and David's stepmother), Oscar-winning actress Shirley Jones, then a huge star.

"He said, 'The reason I know you will carry on is because you have the character,'" Cassidy continued. "'Most of all, talent will survive. It's the only commodity that survives.'"

While Cassidy said the transition at times was painful, he has survived where others have fallen.

For Cassidy, part of the appeal of "Ruby & the Rockits" is working with his family.

"My brothers are my best friends," he said. "It's such a love fest to go there."

The family ties don't end there, either. Brother Ryan is a set decorator on the show. His sister-in-law is a choreographer. And David's wife, Sue Shifrin-Cassidy, wrote one of the songs they recorded on the show.

Cassidy, 59, realizes that a portion of the audience — the moms of ABC Family viewers — will be tuning in to see how he's aged, looking for the guy they swooned over in the '70s.

"I'm good with the mom part," he said, laughing. "It's the grandmother part I'm having a little trouble with."

**"Ruby & the Rockits" premieres
Tuesday night at 8:30 on the
ABC Family Channel.**