

# Is that a face!

Indeed it is, and it belongs to Peggy Lipton, former disciple of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and currently in 'The Mod Squad'

There is an incontestably arresting quality to the young girl's face as it fills the large screen in close-up. The eyes are a rueful brown, touched with an almost desperate compassion. She is an ash blonde, straight-haired, perhaps too slender, her even features just this side of classic beauty. But something is clearly happening on that screen—an understated if nameless emotion, a level of tenderness plumbed from far, far below the surface. It is an emotion that touches everyone sitting in the darkened room as the unedited film known as dailies unfolds.

"Is that a face?" murmurs *The Mod Squad* producer, Aaron Spelling, chomping on his pipe. "Is that a face!"

It is indeed a face and it belongs to Peggy Lipton, a co-star on ABC's *The Mod Squad*, who could be someone very special this season. "She has a kind of mystery that got to me," says Danny Thomas, partner of Spelling in the production. Tige Andrews, a veteran TV actor and a regular in the series, sees her with a measured awe. "There's this purity of expression about this girl," says Andrews. "I've never seen it in any other actress and I've worked with a few. My teen-age daughter keeps telling me, 'Daddy, that's who we all want to be like—like Peggy Lipton.'"

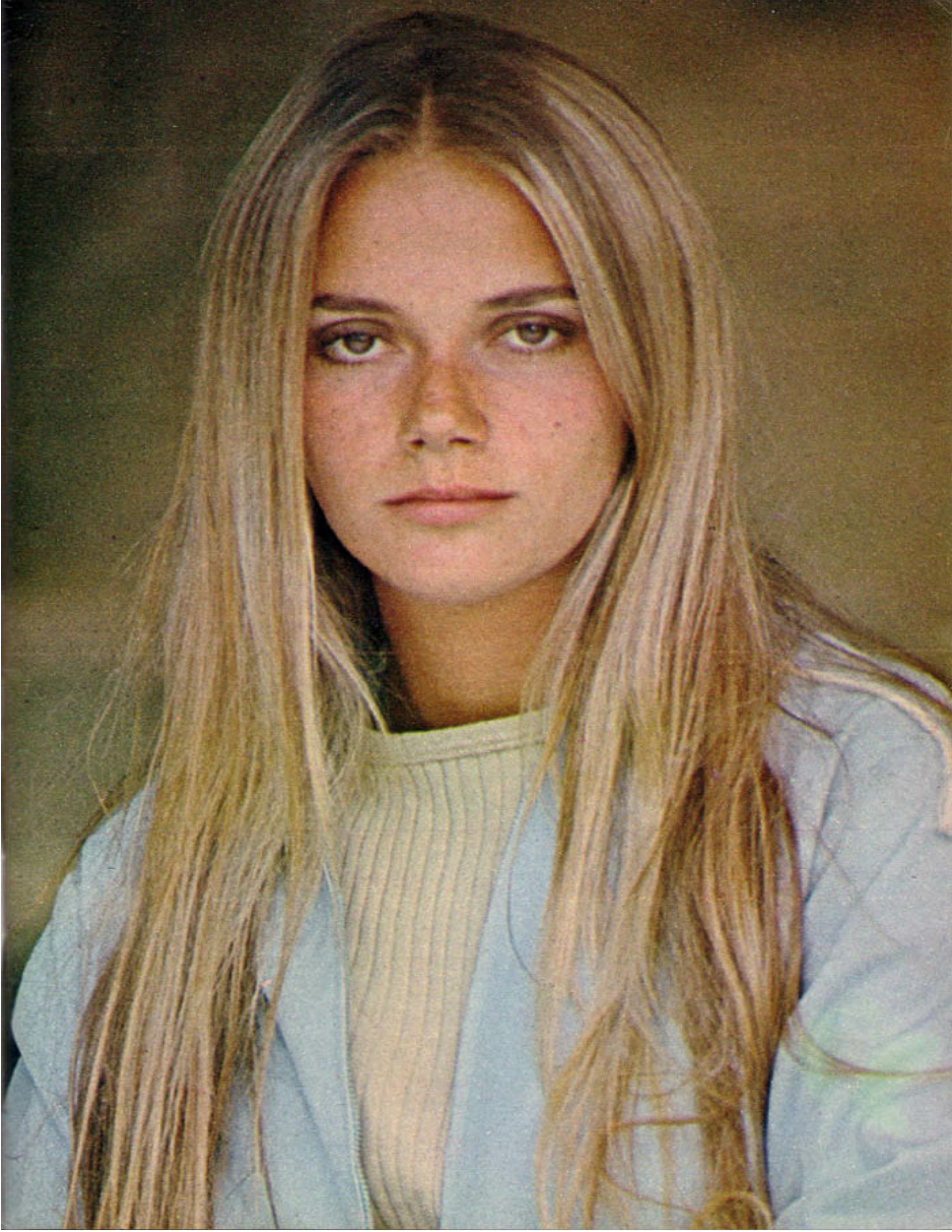
Peggy—on the set she is known affectionately as "Pegger"—was the last of 17 actresses to test for her role complementing two other new faces, Clarence Williams III and Michael Cole, as post-teen-age police operatives. "One look, even before we saw her

on film, and I knew we had our girl," says Aaron Spelling. "I had seen her only once before, at the Daisy a couple of years ago, when she was about 20 pounds heavier. What happened to her in the interim I had no idea—but I couldn't forget the face."

What happened to Peggy Lipton in that time was the flowering of a rebellion against her background that turned her into a partial recluse, an almost-skinny, health-food-eating vegetarian, a sometime disciple of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and of Herman Hesse, the German author who espoused an occult Indian philosophy. "Suddenly I knew that I had had it," Peggy says. She speaks softly, occasionally dropping into the stammer of her childhood. "I had the Beverly Hills social scene, the gossip scene, the night-club scene, the bad-romance scene. I thought it important to go out every night. I was—young. Suddenly I needed to get closer to reality. Now I date hardly at all."

She shifts her position, perching her chin down on her knees. "I could have very easily become a hippie. I'm extremely sympathetic to the hippies, for their fight against conformity, their escape from society. Sometimes I smell some incense and I think, 'Oh boy, how tempting! How easy it would be for me to split!' But the hippie scene wasn't the answer for me. I grew up wealthy. I love luxury too much. I love travel. Besides, I want to act. You can't be actress and hippie both."

As she settles into her first con- →



tinuing series role, Peggy can look back at one bitter disappointment that struck early in her brief career. In the summer of '67, with high expectations, she signed on with Paramount at about \$300 a week and was cast as one of two female leads in "Blue," a Western movie starring the English actor Terence Stamp. At Moab, Utah, where "Blue" was filmed on location, Peggy delighted in the idyllic beauty of the countryside and submerged herself in her work.

Over a period of several weeks, however, her big scenes were cut one by one as the film was continually rewritten. Finally, her dialogue was eliminated, her part in her first movie withered away into a mere walk-on. Peggy responded with uninhibited tears of anger and frustration. "I see it philosophically now, but the experience changed my life," Peggy says. "I went through something then, a reshaping of attitudes and concepts, and I knew I would never be the same. I knew a chapter had ended and I had to begin a new one." When she returned to Los Angeles, her first step was to move out of her parents' home.

Margaret Ann Lipton lives alone now in a small house she describes as "groovy," in a wooded, hilly area a half-hour's jaunt from Hollywood in the '65 red Porsche she frequently drives too fast. She has a dog, a Siberian husky named Sabrina, and she talks endearingly of the deer that scamper down from the mountains into her back yard. She has an upright piano she plays well enough to work out the songs she composes—and she sings well enough to have a record contract with Ode, a Columbia subsidiary. The walls are decorated with paintings by her mother and with flamboyant posters from San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury. Her record stacks include Dylan, Donovan, the Beatles, the Mamas and the Papas, Simon and Garfunkel, along with "heavy" rock groups such as Electric Flag and Cream.

All of this is far removed from the life she knew for 17 years in upper-middle-class Lawrence, Long Island—she was born in New York on Aug. 30, 1947—and then in the ultra-fashionable Trousdale Estates section of Beverly Hills, where her parents still live. The middle child and only daughter of Harold and Rita Lipton—he is a successful corporation attorney; she is a former model—Peggy modeled as a teen-ager and later went into acting, studying at the Professional Children's School in New York and with Herbert Berghof. For a time, after the family moved to California, she attended theater-arts classes at San Fernando Valley State College. "I suppose I could have gone to a 'fancier' college," she says. "But I despised the thought of 'campus life.' I wanted no part of sororities, which I think are evil." Her first professional part—two words—came in *Bewitched*. Bigger roles followed in *The Virginian*, *The John Forsythe Show*, *The Invaders*, and a three-part *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color* called "Willie and the Yank." When Aaron Spelling beckoned with *The Mod Squad* in May of 1968, Paramount agreed to let her do the series after she signed a new contract for one movie a year.

"If you want to act, this is the place to be—Hollywood," Peggy says, the words often rushing out faster than she can shape them. "But just living in Los Angeles is groovy. The old concept that Easterners have of 19 suburbs in search of a city, that's all gone now. We're on top of the whole world in L.A. It's where the music is happening, where life is bubbling. In L.A. people are freer, nicer, not so up-tight. New York has its museums and theaters but its old excitement is gone, its people are cold, impersonal, unrelaxed. I could never live there now. Beverly Hills? I think of Beverly Hills and I think of luxury without happiness."

She thinks now of Watts and her pretty, blonde face turns wrathful. "Watts," she says, biting off the name.

"I wish it didn't exist—I wish all misery didn't exist. Some day I hope to see Watts become a cultural center." Peggy finds herself emotionally committed to the black revolution. Recently she wrote to Muhammad Ali, *né* Cassius Clay, concerning his acute problems with his draft board. "I just wrote to him, 'Keep the faith, baby. I'm with you,'" she recalled. "He wrote back a brief but beautiful thank-you. I happen to think Muhammad Ali is fantastic. I simply don't think he should go to war. I don't believe in war."

Her voice rises and the stammer gains. She closes her eyes and shakes her head. "If I get really nervous or excited, I can't talk at all," she says with a resigned smile. When she was 8 or 9, her parents took her to a speech therapist. He said the stammer was physical. Then they took her to an analyst and *he* said it was emotional. "I still don't know what it is," says Peggy, "but some people think it's

cute, an asset. To me it's a liability, a strain. If I hear someone else stammer, it hits me so hard I have to leave the room—I know, I *know* what they're going through and I feel for them."

Peggy Lipton feels deeply about many things that remain walled within her. At work, she engages in the on-set banter that is parcel to most series filming. She laughs at the jokes exchanged by crew and cast. But there is nonetheless a gauzy wall of reserve; she is friendly but basically a loner.

Occasionally, with an odd melancholy, she will talk about religion. She was raised in the Reform Jewish faith but here, too, she rebelled in her late teens. "I'm not an atheist," she says, very firmly. "I still believe in God, but I'm looking around for something else. I'm shopping. And yet—I miss terribly the old family gatherings for the holidays. I miss the warmth of . . . Hanukkah. I miss it. How I wish I had something to replace it with." END