## An enchanted evening at 'South Pacific'

"South Pacific" will be at the Birmingham Theatre through June 16. Performances are at 8 pm. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, with matinese at 2 pm. Wednesday and Sunday, and a 7 pm. peformance Sunday euening Tickets are \$17.50 to \$29.50, depending on the performance. For tickets, call 644-3533.

From the opening strains of "Bali Hai" in the overture, "South Pacif-le" at the Birmingham Theatre pro-vides an enchanted evening of musi-cal pleasure. They literally do not write them

vides an enchanted evening of musi-cal pleasure.

They literally do not write them like this anymore, with nearly every one of the show's 15 songs instantly hummable and sounding as fresh as when the Rodgers and Hammerstein Pultiser Prize-winning musical first opened in 1949.

'As frequently happens at the Bir-mingham Theatre, some of the best productions feature players who are not "name" attractions — but des serve to be. The current show has outstanding vocalists in both lead and supporting roles, plus a very spirited, harmonious male chorus. Set on two South Pacific islands during World War II, the musical follows the romantic complications

Mazzie is a pert, exuberant Nellie and performs fine renditions of 'Cockeyed Optimist, 'I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Outta My Hair,' 'I'm in Love with a Wonderful Guy' and 'Honey Bun.'

of two very diverse couple brought together by the war.

tegether by the war.

ENSIGN NELLIE Forbush (Marin Mazzie) is a naive young Navy nurse who falls in love with Emile Descque (Ken Parks), a sophisticated, middle-aged French plantation owner and the father of two Polynesian children. Lt. Joseph Calmes Weatherstone) is a young marine who falls for the beautiful Polynesian girl Llat (Leila Florentino). Back in 1949 "South Pacific" broke new ground in dealing with intercacial love.

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Barbara Michals

AS BLOODY Mary, the enterpris-ing islander who peddles trinkets to the sailors and her daughter to Lt. Cable, Ann Harada is effectively tough and elever, but too attractive for the harpy she is meant to be. Her

"Bali H'ai" and "Happy Talk" are enormously pleasing.

Her Causasian counterpart, Stephen Berger, is delightfully funny as the Irrepressible Luther Billis, entrepeneur and con man. His "Honey Bun" in grass skirt and econut-shell bra is visually bilarious, and he leads a rousing rendition of "There Is Nothing Like a Dame."

Special recognition goes to local youngsters Sarah Evalt and Christo-pher Mythky who portray the Po-lynesian children and sing a very charming and polished "Dites-Moi Pourquoi" in French.

Director Peter Lawrence has done an excellent job of assembling a to-tally first-rate production. The chor-reography here isn't much, and ef-fective lighting helps compensate for the very simple sets. But in this show the songs are foremost, and

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Marin Mazzie is Navy nurse Nellie Forbush and Ken Parks is Emile DeBecque, the French planter, in "South Pacific" at the Birminghem Theatre.

they are presented splendidly.

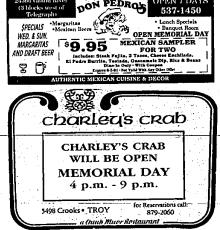
Two nice additional touches are the newsreel footage that sets the opening and the airplane headlights that rise dramatically to simulate take-off.

Barbara Michals teaches high school English in Southfield. A theater critic for the last 16 years, she is an inveterate play-goer who regularly catches up on all the New York productions.



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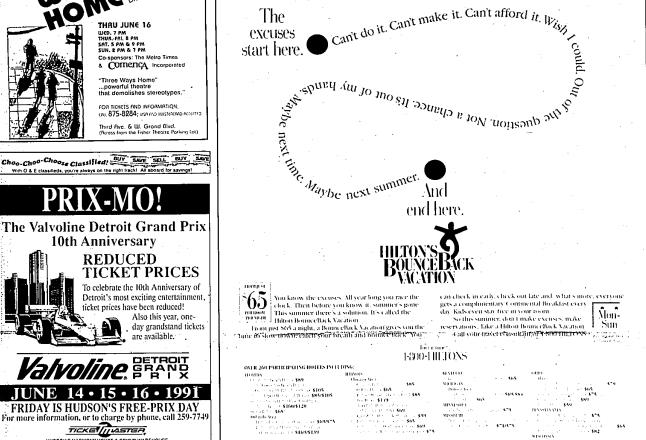
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