

hair flowing over her shoulders. The grace and beauty of Hula Marea was worth seeing alone in itself.

This was young love at its nostalgic best.

HAPPY ENDING

The other love affair—which was actually more important to the plot, was between Freddie Costello, who conducted it in the best French manner, and Honey Bun Monica.

It was the usual thing. Fascinating Frenchman meets girl—they fall in love—Frenchman loses girl—but it all ends happily ever after with Honey Bun Nell taking on a family of dark-skinned honeys who are the children of the Frenchman's first wife, a Polynesian woman, and pledging her life to their Papa for ever and ever.

Well, it may sound crazy but remember—Emile was a Frenchman. His voice was golden and melting and, gee—find me a girl who doesn't go for greying temples!

● If you want to see the show, incidentally, it'll have to be the matinee performance on Saturday. There are no tickets left for the last two evening shows.

THOUSANDS of theatre-goers can thank a crew of "Wonderful Guys" for a series of enchanted evenings at the Regent Cinema, Chelmsford, this week.

And I only hope that the starry-eyed people who left the theatre each night, softly crooning "Some Enchanted Evening," properly appreciate those guys.

For in "South Pacific," Rodgers and Hammerstein's most haunting musical that is presented this week by the Chelmsford Operatic and Dramatic Society, it was the men of the chorus—the sexy "Seabees" of the U.S. Marine Corps—who carried much of the weight on their broad shoulders.

And this is the first time I can remember the Chelmsford Operatic Society shows succeeding largely because of "the men of the chorus." Usually it's in spite of them.

But on Monday night, after a start that was a bit subdued by first-night nerves, it was the boys who really got things going on the beach.

Oscar Hammerstein has them as G.I.'s of the Marine Corps who are herded together on a beautiful South Seas island with very few active operations to keep them busy—either military or otherwise.

NO DAMES

So the sex-starved Marines get together to sing a sorrowful song about it. Now you might think the number "We ain't got dames" would be a nostalgic sea shanty—the pathetic dream of a few home-sick seamen.

But it ain't. It's the most lusty, blatant, zippy shanty in the book. The punch-line, "What ain't we got—You know darned well," was roared by the lusty marines of the Chelmsford Operatic Society with wolfish enthusiasm that was almost too good to be fiction.

A split-second solo was danced by Peter Smith who is, I think, one of the best untrained dancers I've ever seen. That man really has got rhythm.

But this applause of the men's chorus is occasioned by surprise. It certainly doesn't mean that the principals weren't up to their usual high standard.

The "Cock-eyed Optimist," little curly-headed Monica Gravitt, who took the lead as Ensign Nellie Forbush, had a couple of nervous gulps during her first song which was pitched a bit low for her voice, anyway. But it was the opening number. And she's a newcomer to the Society.

After a spot of flirting with Emile Le Becque, who was played with confidence and lots of reassurance for his pint-size leading lady by Freddie Costello, Nellie felt a lot better. And even better than that after retiring to a quiet corner of the stage—well supplied with Cognac by thoughtful Emile—while he sang "Some Enchanted Evening" to the audience.

Actually, as the song is intended for Nellie, I feel it should have been directed more towards her corner. But I'm not complaining. This song "sends" me—and it also "sent" the rest of the audience. So everything was fine. Freddie Costello has a mellow Crosby-type voice. And little Nell was forgotten, just for a moment.

It must have been very good Cognac she was plied with. 'Cos it was a different Nell who came out of the corner and joined her fascinating Frenchman in the last bars of the song.

ASSURANCE

From that moment Nellie never looked back. At Thanksgiving she made the cutest "Honey Bun" in the whole American

nursing service. And she got to enjoy herself so much that she rescued an awkward moment when the chorus girls were late on stage, and the orchestra didn't know what to do about it, with the assurance of a Broadway star.

Monica Gravitt was made for the part of Nellie the Nurse, down to the last detail "Honey Bun" Nell was "a hundred and one pounds of fun" . . . "only sixty inches high." Well, that's Monica too.

But it isn't all fun and games on the island. There is a tantalising, haunting magic about Bali Ha'i, the mysterious island next door that everyon wants to visit.

The Seabees are told stories of hoards of beautiful Polynesian girls who, apparently, lack native boy friends. This tale is spun to them by a character I have always regarded as the most important in the story—Bloody Mary, a hideous but wise Polynesian crone who is slyly making a fortune selling "saxy" grass skirts to sailors.

This part was taken by Beryl Manaton, who did very well. She did her level best. But in the whole show the only character who didn't quite make the grade was Bloody Mary.

It wasn't her fault—it's an excessively difficult part to play. In both Broadway and West End productions it was voluptuous Juanita Hall who created the part and made it what it is. When "South Pacific" was filmed they couldn't find anyone else possible for the part. They just had to have Juanita Hall again.

So when angular-featured, young-in-spite-of-her-make-up Beryl Manaton stepped into the part I commend her for her courage. But I missed my flabby, lewd, shrewd, really Bloody Mary and the deep throb of mystery in her dark velvet voice.

ROMANCE

When the gang finally get to the Paradise of Bali Ha'i the mood of the show changes to haunting romance.

A "very saxy" young lieutenant is lured by Bloody Mary to the island. He, incidentally, has been sent to the South Pacific for special duties (very dangerous ones, of course). The boys go along just for the hell of it—and for the dames.

The lieutenant goes out of curiosity—at first. He visits the home of Bloody Mary—but it's anything but a social occasion. For there he meets her sweet young daughter, Liat, who is as lovely as her mother is ugly. It becomes love—and lots of other things—at first sight. And then the lieutenant serenades her with one of the best songs in the show: "Younger than Springtime."

The part of young Lieutenant Cable was taken by Arthur Staniland, another newcomer to the society whose voice, once he opened his mouth, proved he was "saxy" enough to seduce the Queen of Sheba. Apart from Freddie Costello I have never heard a member of the society sing with such enchantment.

And Liat, the little Polynesian girl, made a terrific impression. Marea Jones took the part and, though she is beautiful anyway, she is loveliest when clad in a Mother Hubbard, her skin dyed velvet brown, and long loose