SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Good show even without actors

By STEVE THORPE

If you found yourself offered the largest diamond in the world and it had some smudges of grime on one face of it, would you refuse it?

It really is sort of a silly question, isn’t it? Well, every once in a while you get a play like that and Theatre, Inc. has come up with the latest case in point.

“My Fair Lady” is a good show even without actors—but this latest production has once again proved that the real test of a good show is its ability to turn brilliant when brought to life. In this case it’s brilliant.

Magic World

When the curtain rises, you enter Lerner & Lowe’s magical English world where poor flower girls are raised to the station of duchesses to the tune of “The Rain In Spain Falls Mainly In the Plain,” and June Terry as Eliza Doolittle is equal to the part. True, her voice lacks the clarity of Julie Andrews, but the Terry Eliza is not the Andrews Eliza and she still comes out convincingly.

Her father, Doolittle (Jack Bell), is considered by many to be the favorite character in the production, and at Theatre, Inc. he rewards this faith by making the most of his role and being the best in a good company of actors. “Get Me To The Church” was the best number in the show—even beyond its obvious comic advantages. But more importantly, Doolittle managed to carry off the comedy with a finesse and aplomb that had no trace of the triteness that an incompetent would have fallen into.

Higgins Weak

Oddly enough, the weakest character was Higgins, not so much for what he did, but for what he was. Steve Tanner was a good Rex Harrison, but every actor should be able to put some of himself into the style. True, the Harrison stereotype in this role is a hard one to shake, but no matter how you slice it, you can’t beat Rex Harrison at portraying Rex Harrison.

But aside from this criticism, the show was good. The supporting roles were all excellent with especial laurels thrown to Freddy Einsford-Hill (Harry Hopkins) for his beautiful voice and his almost flawless performance.

But, as I said, this diamond does have some grime in spots, but with a little more polishing, these should disappear. First, makeup and especially haircuts were most deplorable in certain instances. Even the Rice Players (and here I mean no defama-tion)—even the Players know that you don’t have your hair cut before a performance. Under stage lighting you look bald; and above all, crewcuts are out of the question!

Muffed Lines

Moreover, the makeup people should remember that the theater is only fifteen rows deep, there was no need to be so obvious when pencilling on side-burns. These problems should disappear with time, though, along with a few muffed lines from the less confident members of the cast and some sloppy set changes.

So all in all, it was beautifully played. If you go, watch the “Ascot Gavotte” scene—perhaps the hardest to play—it really is beautiful.

As I said before, why refuse such a gem? If you can pay the admission price you can see “My Fair Lady” — a musical that people are swearing beats the last Theatre Inc. hit, “Bye Bye Birdie,” all hollow.