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## 'Players Exude Enthusiasm'

By WALTER LAZENBY

Players in Eastern's Summer Theatre '74 company exude enthusiasm as they gyrate through their first show, "Bye Bye Birdie," and you will likely be infected by their contagious good spirits if you attend one of the remaining performances at 8 p.m. Friday or Saturday or at 2 p.m. Sunday.

This musical comedy, revived from the early sixties, has two major lines of interest. One, a rather thin boy-gets-girl story, provides a framework for the other, episodes satirizing taste and behavior in the early Rock-and-Roll era.

In the frame story, a determined secretary maneuvers her talent-agent boss toward the altar, despite the protests and counter-maneuvers of his clinging mother. Forced to devise a stratagem to make his agency solvent, she decides that together they will stage a profitable publicity stunt.

Their main "talent"—an Elvis Presley-type rock star—will descend on a little midwestern town to honor a lucky teeny-bopper by giving her "One Last Kiss" just before reporting for induction into the Army.

Quite naturally, the presence of this "Normal American Boy" in Sweet Apple, Ohio (but it might have been Charleston, Illinois), discontents the youngsters and, because of his uncouth behavior, un-

nerves the parents. The complications yield gleeful entertainment.

Among the lyrics, "Put on a Happy Face" and "Kids" ("Why can't they be like we were,-Perfect in every way?") will likely be familiar. "How Lovely to be a Woman" leads up to a cute sight gag.

The cleverest number is "The Telephone Hour." In it teen-agers, scattered over the attractive abstract set, adopt contorted positions and presumably tie up all the lines in Sweet Apple with their chatter.

"Hymn for a Sunday Evening," far from being a religious number, affords a satiric surprise.

The most interesting character in the show is, curiously, a caricature of a Jewish mother who turns herself into a monster of self-sacrifice in order to hold onto her son. Her language, filled with the hyperboles of self-conscious martyrdom, elevates the role above mere stereotyping. Jan Lamos fills it ably.

Nancy Bitters performs with noticeable spirit in a demanding role (Rosie), and Nancy Crabill sings pleasantly.

Well cast as Conrad Birdie, Jim Kleckner gives his best performance to date on an Eastern stage, as does Clyde Fazzenbaker in minor role.

Delbert Simon's orchestra gives lively support, and Director E.G. Gabbard has established good pace.