



ALISTAIR MITCHELL

PREVIEW: THEATRE

'The Heat'

Drill Hall

It's nearly 20 years since Hot Peaches, the Velvet Underground of the Greenwich Village gay community, came into existence. This retrospective of their work, hosted by founder and artistic director Jimmy Camicia, caked in his Vlad the Impaler make-up, takes a leisurely stroll through the years: songs sung, lofts lived in, rights battles won and lost.

There are, however, sparks of inspiration. Amy Coleman, who joined the Peaches in '83, packs a wonderfully versatile voice that conjures café romance as easily as it descends to chainsaw raunch. Ron Jones, the drag queen with the most enormous eyelashes I've ever seen, touches a melancholic chord of authenticity with memories of the Stonewall riots — 'There are two things you don't do to a queen. Rip her dress or touch her face' — and her dying queen speech is a cry from the heart for an element of the gay community still struggling to be taken seriously. Marsha P Johnson, the original queen of Christopher Street, makes an appearance for old times' sake.

James Christopher