

METRO HERALD

HOT PEACHES
IN "HEAT,"

By ROB BAKER

METRO HERALD COLUMNIST Jim Fouratt, off to the International Symposium on AIDS in Stockholm, had one super-enthusiastic recommendation before he hopped on his plane: "Don't miss the Hot Peaches show under any circumstances!"

He didn't really need to insist. I've been one of the Peaches' biggest fans ever since seeing *Androgyny in Ostendorf*, their third-ever show, at Washington Square Church in 1972. It was a madcap compendium of wittiness, gay political consciousness and very high camp, delivered by a brassy bunch of men and women employing the drag queen conceit to lambast everything imaginable in a production characterized by a follow spot constructed out of a Folger's coffee can.

Wonderful to report, the Peaches are just as outrageous and as bargain basement as ever, and their latest, **The Heat** (which has just been extended through this weekend at Theatre for the New City), is a kind of "best of" compilation containing bits and snippets of shows from *Androgyny* to *Concentrated Camp*, an AIDS comedy which was presented as a staged reading earlier this year.

Hot Peaches was founded by Jimmy Camicia (occasionally known as Jimmy Centola over the years) and Ian MacKay in 1972. Its alumnae include a kind of Who's Who of the Experimental and Outrageous, among them Jackie Curtis, Alexis DeLago, Paul Ambrose, Taffy Titz, Mallor Jones, Sister Tui, Wilhemina Ross, Lance Norebo, Chris Kapp, Maire D'Antoni, Tom Robinson (yes, *that* Tom Robinson), Emilio Cubiero, Clio Young and Penny Arcade.

The current company, though sadly lacking in familiar faces, is better than ever, and for those of us nostalgic for the divas of yesteryear, Marsha P. Johnston, a Christopher Street institution, gives two impeccable readings of little poems inscribed on a heart-shaped candy box—as only Marsha P. Johnson can do.

Jimmy is back, too, as a kind of sardonic master-of-ceremonies in full glitter drag (eat your heart out, Joel Gray) and leading a rousing finale for each act. The first, a celebration of sweet young things entitled "Pink Cupcakes," is such a hoot that they repeat it as the encore. The Peaches of the moment include Amy Coleman, who



Hot Peaches Marsha P. Johnson, International Chrysis, Tony "Fish" Nunziata, Amy Coleman, Julia Dares and Babs Gray; with Jimmy Camicia (front).

has a booming cabaret voice in the tradition of Garland and Piaf and definitely seems headed for the Big Time in a big way; Babs Gray, a pipsqueak actress who does a devastating Marilyn Monroe takeoff; Julia Dares, a plumpish blonde who manages wonderfully to confuse the audience completely as to her/his sex (a prime requisite for Peachdom); Tony "Fish" Nunziata, who does several of Jimmy's old bits; and newcomer Ron Jones, who at one point dons a Lamston shopping bag as part of his drag; and Ron Jones, who seems to be doing some of Wilhemina Ross's old numbers, including a delicious Bessie Smith.

Best of all—well, right in there with Marsha P. and Amy when she really goes wild and brings the house down—is special guest star International Chrysis, whose delivery of the classic "Change for a Dying Queen" monologue from *The Divas of Sheridan Square*, a first-person account of the role of street transvestites in the Stonewall Revolution, remains one of the most spinetingling experiences I've had in any theater, ever.

Camicia has always had his pulse on the politics of oppression, not only of gays but of all victims of the white Anglo patriarchy. His presentation of this message in the guise of outrageousness and camp, glamorizing such gay renegades as Rimbaud and Oscar Wilde, has always been unique and dynamic. No subject matter is sac-

rosanct to this tart's tongue, and Jimmy has steadfastly refused to be typed, even as (or perhaps especially as) gay-politically "correct." And surely no one else in creation could come up with lyrics like "I like my men big and brawny/Boots and Saddles, *Leaves of Grass*," introducing, as it were, Walt Whitman to one of New York's sleaziest leather and western gay bars.