

You Can All Love Me at Sherman

No answers to questions on role of feminism

By IFAN PAYNE

REVIEW

IT MUST have seemed a good idea to present a picture postcard of the career of music-hall star Vesta Tilley and to contrast it with the career and development of Edith Piaf.

In the event the first act of *You Can All Love Me*, currently at the Sherman Theatre, is entertaining and enjoyable in a relatively straightfoward manner.

Beverley Humphries sings the songs of Tilley with verve and a twinkle in her eye and most movingly — in the case of *After The Ball Is Over*, with considerable feeling.

Tim Hopkins is most engaging as the Chairman and deserves better than to have to cope with one of the tackiest sets I have ever seen.

The second act, depicting Edith Piaf, is a different and foul-tongued kettle of fish. With Gwenno Dafydd singing well and acting with in-

tensity as Piaf, the characterisation is as strong as the language.

(Be warned, a number of people found the explicit language and suggestive action too much to take).

Despite its stated intention, the production answers no questions about the role of feminism in these two careers. But then I am not sure that it asks any.

Yet Caroline Gawn has written and directed an ambitious production which never quite achieves the consistency of intensity necessary to make the performance really thrill, nor the parallels between the diverse careers coherent.

The singing is consistently excellent and convincing and *You Can All Love Me* makes for a provocative and highly contrasted if uneven evening's entertainment.