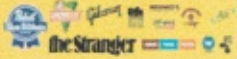


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JUNE 9 - 13 SEATTLE, WA

PROCEEDS BENEFIT

TEEN FEED**THE ALBUM LEAF DELTA SPIRIT**THUNDERHEIST VISQUEEN HORSE FEATHERS
JOHN VANDERSLICE & MARY MORE

June 8, 2010

THEATER

High Wire

Northwest New Works Festival vs. Cirque du Soleil

by [BRENDAN KILEY](#)

[Northwest New Works Festival](#)

On the Boards

Fri at 8 pm, Sat-Sun at 5 pm. Through June 13.

Performers pushed themselves past comfort zones in an entirely different way at On the Boards last weekend. The annual Northwest New Works Festival brought several familiar faces to the stage—rocker Spencer Moody, dancer and choreographer Amy O'Neal, drag-dance gender-jammers Cherdonna Shinatra and Lou Henry Hoover, Mike Pham of performance-art duo Helsinki Syndrome—and all of them were charging into new territory. Moody composed a heavy score to a stark and emotional dance by Marissa Rae Niederhauser. The music and the choreographer seemed inspired by Steve Albini in a foul mood: Five dancers, two guitarists, and a drummer gave thundering but stark performances with slamming chords and tense, contorted bodies, with breasts bound in what looked like oversize Ace bandages.

But longtime choreographer Mark Haim may have won the prize for audience favorite with his *This Land Is Your Land*, a deceptively minimal and humorous piece for 12 dancers—including local favorites Beth Graczyk, Jürg Koch, and Jim Kent—against a horizontally striped banner of different colors, set to country music from Hank Williams to Billy Ray Cyrus. Dancers simply walked downstage, pivoted on the balls of their feet, and walked back upstage at a slight diagonal, allowing one to exit behind the banner and another to enter on the other side with each rotation. Every time a dancer entered the stage, he or she had a slightly different look: carrying coffee cups, texting on cell phones, wearing high heels, or wearing nothing but a smile. The repetitive movement encouraged the audience to watch for small details, and each subtle and not-so-subtle variation provoked squeals of laughter. But the conclusion—the soundtrack dropping out for the final variation, dancers dressed in black and carrying guns, the only sound the rhythm of their marching—was a haunting punch line: a

fitting conclusion to a weekend of surprises.

This weekend's festival will star a whole new slate of acts, from the Satori Group doing something about youthful sexuality to dancer Corrie Befort experimenting with music. If it's anything like last weekend, it should be fantastic. ★

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