



JULY 21 –  
AUGUST 20

# mitzi's abortion

BY ELIZABETH HEFFRON

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DIRECTED BY KURT BEATTIE



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## the Stranger

Seattle's Only Theater Section  
May 4 - May 10, 2006



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"How Hsiao-hsien suggests that time passes differently when you're deeply in love. He captures the mystical quality of that time on film, making us feel as if we're living in it, rather than simply watching it."

-Stephanie Zachare, salon.com

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## No Traffic Signal, No Problem

"Awesome" Gets a Haircut in the Middle of the Street

BY CHRISTOPHER FRIZZELLE

It's the middle of spring in the middle of the day in the middle of Ballard, and five members of "Awesome" are in the middle of the street. Evan Mosher, the trumpet player, takes a seat on a chair that's been wheeled out of the hair salon Zerene. He's about to get a haircut. He wants it cut for *noSIGNAL*, the new "Awesome" show that runs at On the Boards this weekend. The haircut—along with this interview—is supposed to be taking place *inside* Zerene, but as it happens its owner is getting married tonight and the salon is full of frantic bridesmaids. Mosher's hairstylist Sibyl and photographer Bootsy Holler and "Awesome"—minus two members: John Osebold and Kirk Anderson couldn't get out of their day jobs to be here—have been banished to the street. Which in a way is better. The guys in "Awesome" are masters of improvisation.

Basil Harris, who plays bass guitar and recently quit his job at the Space Needle, immediately takes on the role of traffic cop. A Hummer hums by. Rob Witmer, who plays accordion, clarinet, and sax, gets his hands on Sibyl's spray bottle. His first target is David Nixon, who has a PhD in philosophy and plays the banjo. Then Witmer starts squirting mandolin player John Ackermann. Sybil is running her hands through Mosher's hair. Mosher tells her, "Just take me back in time a little bit. Just take a couple chunks off the top."

Back in time circa October 2003, before "Awesome"



BOOTSY HOLLER

**"AWESOME" Minus two members, plus one stylist.**

*noSIGNAL*  
"Awesome" at On the Boards  
Through May 6.

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existed, several of its members, known to each other through Seattle's sketch comedy and late-night cabaret circuits, played together in a They Might



Be Giants tribute to raise money for Open Circle Theater. The first "Awesome" show was a fabled gig at the Rendezvous on February 6, 2004—they remember the date exactly—and since then they've: played music shows with Harvey Danger, A. C. Newman, and U.S.E; done two runs of *Delaware* (a music-saturated, plotless two-act play—which director Matt Fontaine and writer Tim Sanders collaborated on—involving water, outer space, and fresh-from-the-iron waffles, which the audience got to eat) at Re-bar; performed original songs, commissioned by *The Stranger* and inspired by Jonathan Safran Foer's novels, at Chop Suey; and released an album, the soundtrack to *Delaware*, tracks of which have aired on KEXP.

On the Boards Artistic Director Lane Czaplinski was in the audience one night during *Delaware*. He says that "Awesome" reminds him of bands like the Polyphonic Spree and Scissor Sisters—bands that "have theater in mind even though they're performing in clubs." Czaplinski saw what "Awesome" was doing and thought they could do it even better in a bigger room.

They came up with the title *noSIGNAL* during a brainstorming session when a broken digital projector kept flashing the words "No signal." "We came up with the title long before we knew what the show was about," says Ackermann. "Which was the same thing we did with *Delaware*." Unlike *Delaware*, things actually happen in *noSIGNAL*. It has a narrative arc. Where *Delaware* was largely about birds ("Fact—birds fly differently when they know they're being watched"), *noSIGNAL* is primarily about bees. It is also about "the hive mentality," computers, systemic breakdown, cell suicide, garbage collection, unrequited love, space, "memory leakage," and paranoia. Like *Delaware*, it features tons of original songs.

"It's still inscrutable," says Ackermann.  
"Nearly impenetrable," agrees Mosher.  
"I hope there'll be *some* penetration," says Witmer.  
"What are we talking about?" Harris breaks in.

Asked about the source of their subject matter, someone

**FORUMS:**

"Nice... so us dirty pollutists in our cars should expect to follow the rules of the road, but bicyclists should be allowed to ignore them because it's such an eco-friendly mode of transportation?"

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**CAPITOL HILL  
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JULY  
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2006

imitates the gurgling of a bong. "We try to use everything that comes in," Mosher elaborates, "which is also very beelike."

A block behind them, a cement truck with a green cabin and an orange-and-white-striped body turns a corner and comes barreling toward them.

"Bring it on!" Ackermann yells.

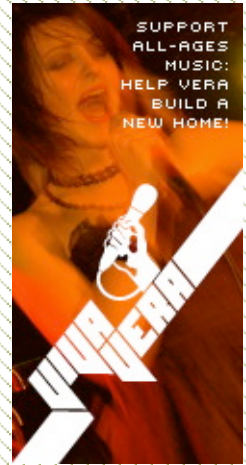
"We're going to die," deadpans Witmer.

They don't die. They don't even have to move. The cement trucks of Ballard, like the Hummers of Ballard, are happy to drive around. Sibyl tells Mosher that, considering the circumstances of this haircut, he might want to come back in a few days for a touchup. As the band walks away, Mosher catches his reflection and says, "She just gave me a bowl haircut, didn't she?"

"Yeah, you look ridiculous," Ackermann says.

"Goddamnit. I look 8 again."

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