

# FIELD NOTES



## ***Between Street and Stage***

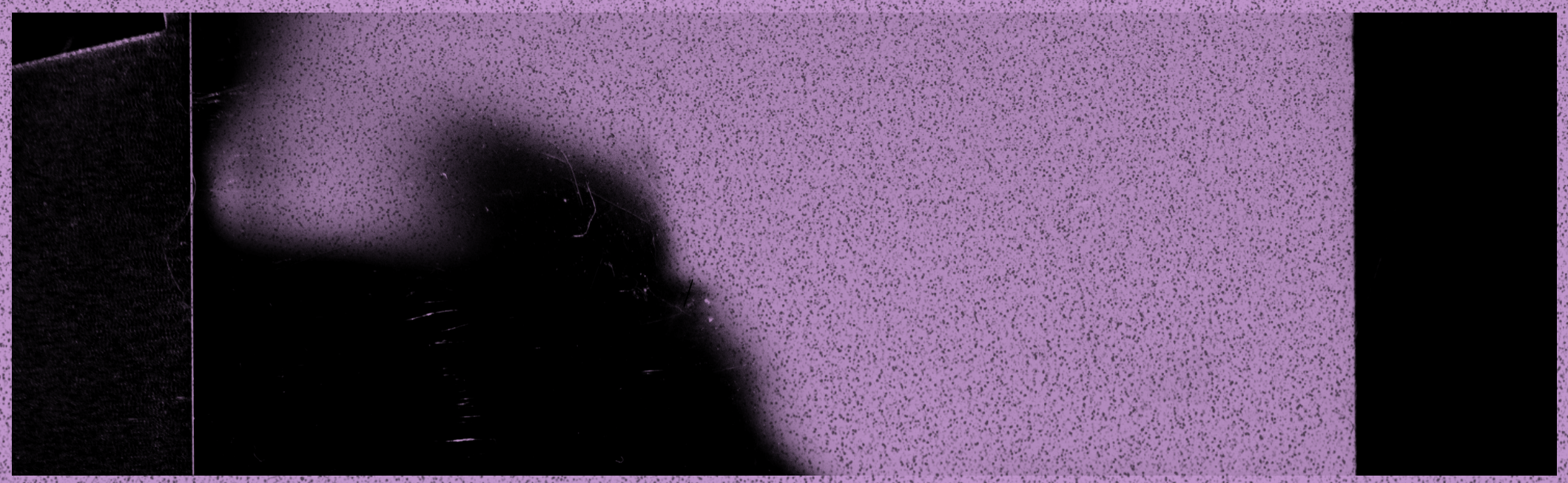
by Crissy Collins (DJ Mothafunk)

reflecting on

## ***new new***

by Threading Frames,  
Jorje and CONJAH

*Presented as part of Dancehouse  
Season 1, 18–21 Feb, 2026*



Field Notes is a Dancehouse initiative that commissions writers, academics, and artists to produce in-depth reflections on works within the Dancehouse program. Moving beyond conventional reviews, these texts aim to extend the life of each performance and contribute to a broader conversation about contemporary dance and choreographic practice.

**DANCEHOUSE D/**



There's this special and necessary thing that Efren Pamilacan, the curator of *new new*, does that beautifully bridges the gap between street and stage, giving urban dance styles the long-awaited platform that they deserve. With a background in street dance, he's the force behind the beloved City Sessions battle.

Alongside his extensive curatorial work with Cypher Culture, Efren – or Ef as many know him – has cemented himself as a leader within Naarm's dance community. Respected not only amongst local dance crews, but by formal arts institutions as well. With *new new*, Efren delivers a program that lives up to its name.

Comprised of three short pieces, they offer profound and innovative uses of waving, popping, krump, and breaking techniques alongside contemporary dance styles. By bringing these street-born dance styles into high-art institutions, Pamilacan affirms their rightful place in today's contemporary dance landscape.



The program opens with *The Seat of the Squatter Man*, choreographed by Jorje and performed by Jurnma. The dancer is hunched over two sacks on the floor, futilely attempting to transfer handfuls of sand from one to the other. Behind him a roulette of imagery shines on the wall, from nature to human innovation and destruction; symbolizing the changeability of life and humanity.

I interpret the sand to represent time. The more Jurnma tries to capture and transfer it, the more it slips through his fingers—a struggle most of us can relate to. The harder we try to harness and hold onto moments, the more they evade us. The passing of time is inevitable.

As the piece progresses, the energy escalates. What begins as slow, methodical movements evolve into explosive choreography deeply reminiscent of breaking, while also weaving in elements of hip hop and contemporary dance. Gradually his shapes grow larger, his presence expanding to claim the full performance space. As the work draws to a close, Jurnma returns to the same sacks of sand, now trying to transfer the grains back to the original bag. But just as before, he is met with the same Sisyphean challenge. The sand evades his grasp, each grain a symbol of time lost.

Jorje's work speaks to the cyclical nature of humanity. Though time marches on and technology evolves, we are perpetually confronted with the same universal challenges of existence. Yet this shared humanity is also what unites us across time and space, often with the aid of music and movement. It was refreshing to see breaking used in such an artistic and narrative way — a style rarely showcased within a theatre setting. This work helps to set a precedent for its artistic validity and storytelling potential.



The second piece, CONJAH's *DARK!2*, begins in darkness, just as the name would suggest. A faceless figure crouches low in the middle of a black reflective floor. As it begins to move, the reflection of its angular limbs creates a haunting, spider-like effect. The dancer pulls the audience into a transfixing world that is both chilling and captivating.

The figure moves as if learning to walk for the first time. Soon, another dancer, ooshcon, emerges from behind a wall, stoic and draped in a long, cloak-like garment. They begin to move in tandem, but their interaction is a struggle. The faceless figure attempts to stand up, but is continually held down by ooshcon. There is an audio monologue that is performed as the figure tries to grasp the cloaked dancer. In the end, ooshcon is left alone, crawling on his belly to a light, positioning himself in the centre of the stage. Then comes what can only be described as mesmerizing: a display of facial isolation and animation. The dancer's ability to contort and manipulate his features was astonishing. ooshcon swallows the light, plunging the theatre in darkness.





The piece suggests that in our attempts to suppress the darkness within, we risk becoming the very monster we seek to evade. ooshcon's character pushes away their memories — personified by the faceless figure — the more the monster inside him takes over, ultimately consuming his inner light. As with the opening piece, we witness a unique interpretation of animation dance, that again brings the vocabulary of street dance into the theatre.



The final work in this triple bill is *While We Wait* by Threading Frames, a beautiful duet featuring Joshua Faleatua and Tyler Carney-Faleatua. The dancers are positioned on opposite sides of the stage in what looks to be a living room, speaking to one another across the space. A large, cloud-like white structure sits at the centre of the set a ways behind them. Their fluid movements traverse the lines between modern, hip hop, krump, and waving. One of the dancers eventually climbs inside the cloud-like structure and emerges a fluffy, ethereal white figure — as if to say the dream had finally consumed her.



The three works that make up *new new* each tell a unique story, unified in their use of dance styles that remain non-traditional within institutional contexts. These are styles with origins in Black & Brown communities, styles which have been overlooked by the formal arts world. A show like this charts a course for where contemporary dance is heading, utilizing modern street dance vernacular to create something both fresh and familiar. Let me not forget to mention the sound design in all three works, which perfectly matched each theme and mood that the pieces were trying to convey. The music helped to transport the audience even further into the world of *new new*.

I hope to continue seeing work that pushes the boundaries of what contemporary dance can be. By opening up a new arsenal of movement, these artists showcase the profound potential of dance forms once looked down upon by formal institutions. From the streets to the stage, these dance styles are deserving of respect and recognition, and thanks to shows like *new new*, are finally getting their flowers.



*new new* (2026), by Threading Frames, Jorje, and CONJAH. Photo by Nam Chops.

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Crissy Collins, also known as Mothafunk, is a DJ/writer from Chicago who has called Naarm home for the past six years. She approaches both her music and writing with the intent of showcasing, preserving and analyzing dance music culture and its origins in Black America.

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