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Puff review: Hiltinho Fantástico's glorious movement shows the possibilities of the human body

Dublin Dance Festival 2026: Created with Alice Ripoll, Puff is a homage to the passinho style of Brazilian urban dance



Dublin Dance Festival 2026: Hiltinho Fantástico in Puff. Photograph: Alice Ripoll

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Puff

Project Arts Centre, Dublin

★★★★☆

Hiltinho Fantástico darts into the performance space like a boxer entering the ring, clad only in black shorts, surrounded by spectators on four sides. The bounce in his step suggests a primal alertness, and when the thumping, rhythmic music begins there is a simple joy and lightheartedness in how his body matches the sounds.

Steps pour out of him, from the hip swivels of samba to break-dancing spins and tap-dance shuffles. He even bursts into a ballet pas de chat. Sensing the space around him, he intently listens to his own body, plying his muscles into beautiful shapes while traversing the perimeter. When the music stops and he continues to probe his own physicality, his breath becomes the soundtrack.

A homage to the passinho style of Brazilian urban dance, Puff was created with Fantástico's fellow Brazilian choreographer Alice Ripoll, illuminating how easily outside influences can be absorbed into the human physique. Their method for exploring Fantástico's anatomical limits feels like turning his body inside out. When he tenses and holds his breath, his muscles appear steely. When he exhales, fluidity returns. Threads of copper and silver body paint trail against his skin like sweat, marking the sacrifice of such physical exertion.

At one point Fantástico's gestures become more machine-like, as his feet move in stuttering motions and his body shakes with staccato jerks. He briefly assumes stances like a tribal warrior, or a Maori performing the haka.

Then it's as if the movement has become too much. Sounds of children chanting their school lessons waft into the air and Fantástico folds into a resting pose on the ground, remaining still.

But his instinct to move proves too strong an impetus, and he rises once again, slowly assuming a sacrificial pose, arms held out to his sides, head dropped. His glorious ability to move offers testament to the limits and possibilities of the human body.

Dublin Dance Festival

Alice Ripoll
