

Quindar

Ground control to Major Tom



NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — Take a trip to outer space on **Saturday, January 20, at 8pm**, with Wilco’s Mikael Jorgensen and his art and music collaborator, James Merle Thomas, performing as **Quindar**. The multimedia duo synchs electronic music with historical recordings and film sourced mainly from NASA’s earliest manned missions — and packed the house at Wilco’s Solid Sound Festival at MASS MoCA last summer. They’re here again to cap off the museum’s annual Free Day.

“Quindar tones” — the ubiquitous beeps heard during NASA’s early manned spaceflight missions — let astronauts and mission control know they were still in contact with each other. “Generated by a very simple, rudimentary synthesizer,” explain Jorgensen and Thomas, “Quindar tones’ function is to say, ‘Are you there?’ ‘Yes, we’re still here. Are you still there?’ [etc.]” (*SolidSound*). Illuminating this quiet humanizing exchange within the larger scientific apparatus is Quindar’s musical mission. “Countdown, blastoff — that stuff has been well covered,” says Jorgensen, “[We are interested in the] smaller moments of what life in space might be like” (*Air & Space*) (*NPR*).

Everyone knows Mikael Jorgensen as the keyboardist in the Grammy-winning, MASS MoCA-loving band Wilco. Originally a recording engineer, Jorgensen has toured with Wilco for 15 years and played on seven of the band’s albums. An art historian and contemporary art curator by trade, James Merle Thomas specializes in the post-war era. The unlikely duo had been searching for a project to dig into since meeting through a mutual friend some years prior. Thomas first unearthed Quindar’s archival inspiration while completing a Guggenheim Fellowship at the National Air and Space Museum in 2011-12. Following a no-expectations jam-session, the duo dove deeper into the Apollo and Skylab era materials. The collaboration eventually led to Quindar’s debut LP, *Hip Mobility*, released last July, the title from a test film Thomas found that demonstrates the range of motion on a spacesuit model — though the double meaning isn’t lost on these proto-hipsters either.

Few compositions from *Hip Mobility* directly sample NASA’s transmissions, and the historical artifacts often serve as inspiration rather than ingredient. While Quindar’s sound varies, moving from spaced-out synthy jams to acoustic strumming, futuristic house beats to humorous lilting tones, a constant is the feeling of what it might be like to gaze out the space station window looking down at the earth hundreds of miles below — though it’s only during Quindar’s live performances that this feeling can come to full

fruition, when projections of archival video and images, created by Jeremy Roth, play on stage. Roth, a concert lighting designer and video artist, works closely with Wilco, as well as with Jorgensen and Thomas, triggering the projections in real time and transporting the audience up into the galaxy. During a week-long residency at MASS MoCA, Quindar, joined by Roth, will further expand its musical catalog and visual presentation while engaging with the newly unearthed archival material.

Saturday, January 20, at 8pm, Quindar will bring the golden era of space exploration to North Adams, with new work-in-progress tracks and Technicolor images. Make sure your spacesuit is tightly secured and fully stocked with enough freeze-dried ice cream to last the night, as the Hunter Center blasts off into orbit around Earth. The duo will be joined by Jeremy Roth, Quindar's lighting designer and video artist. Join us before the show for Free Day from 11am to 7pm, when MASS MoCA swings open the doors for an extensive program of art-making, gallery tours, and pop-up performances.

Lickety Split, MASS MoCA's in-house café, serves up fresh salads, homemade soup, and lip-smacking pub fare. The MASS MoCA bar is always well-stocked with local beer from Bright Ideas Brewing and Berkshire Mountain Distillery spirits. Tickets are \$5 for students and members, \$14 in advance, \$20 day of, and \$30 preferred. Tickets for all events are available through the MASS MoCA box office located on Marshall Street in North Adams, open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. Tickets can also be charged by phone by calling 413.662.2111 x1 during box office hours or purchased online at massmoca.org. All events are held rain or shine.

Sponsorship

Quindar is sponsored by the Porches Inn at MASS MoCA.

Free Day is sponsored by MountainOne, Berkshire Gas, and the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences.

Images

High-resolution images of MASS MoCA's spring 2018 events are available through this link:

bit.ly/WinterSpring2018.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making, displaying, and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. MASS MoCA nearly doubled its gallery space in spring 2017, with artist partnerships that include Laurie Anderson, the Louise Bourgeois Trust, Jenny Holzer, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and James Turrell.

Gallery admission is \$20 for adults, \$18 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under. Members are admitted free year-round. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is seasonal and will reopen in spring 2018. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.

Hours

11am to 5pm, closed Tuesdays

Open Tuesday, December 26