

MASS MoCA

Announcing MASS MoCA Records

An innovative collaboration between MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) and acclaimed independent record producers Hen House Studios that provides new pathways for artist collaboration



Press images

North Adams, MA, October 1, 2025 — MASS MoCA and Hen House Studios are proud to announce the formation of a new record label, **MASS MoCA Records**. By establishing a new framework for record making that centers artistic creativity, museum residencies, and live music making, it will provide an alternative to the current commercial record label model for how independent music is heard, developed, and shared.

MASS MoCA Records is uniquely designed to build on the museum's international reach and entrusted relationships with performing artists — musicians, stage-based storytellers, and sound and sonic installation creators — by marrying the expertise of **Harlan Steinberger** of **Hen House Studios** (Sunny War, Willie Nelson, Particle Kid), who is best known for his uncommonly attuned ear as a recording engineer and producer specializing in live, studio recordings. Artists selected for the new label will be an extension of the museum's curatorial ethos and the label will not have a scheduled application process. Launched as a three-year pilot, a limited number of albums will be released each year and produced at various recording studios in the Berkshires and throughout the world.

"**MASS MoCA Records** is a recording and distribution collaboration born out of our shared love of music and the artists who make it," said **Kristy Edmunds**, Director of **MASS MoCA**. "We have a long-standing, live presenting program at the museum featuring musicians, performers, and sound artists, and have supported the creation of new works and ambitious ideas since our inception. By joining forces with **Hen House Studios** and being able to tap into the remarkable number of music studios and intimate venues in the local area – the ingredients for a hand-made record label were all around us. I see this label as an extension of how we innovate to support the mobility of artists' ideas and connect audiences the world over."

The first band to sign with **MASS MoCA Records** is **The Kasambwe Brothers**, a multi-generational band who has been making music together for almost 40 years and are grounded in the rich, musical heritage of Malawi, Africa. Through an initial collaboration between the museum and **Hen House Studios** in 2024, **The Kasambwe Brothers** traveled from Malawi to the United States for the first time to be in-residence at MASS MoCA, which included extended rehearsal opportunities, a performance with a live audience, and time at Studio 9 in North Adams, MA to record their first full-length album with Steinberger.

The [**first three songs**](#) from their self-titled album to be released on **October 24** are out now, a preview of their vision of Malawian roots music. The first two songs, “Mtima Wanga” meaning “My Heart” and “Getu” meaning “Gertrude,” are love songs, sung in Chichewa, the national language of Malawi. The third song “Ahedi,” meaning “Head Teacher,” tells the story of a student speaking out about teachers that abuse women, and how the act of speaking up puts their studies at risk. Rooted in musical tradition, **The Kasambwe Brothers** are well loved on Malawian airwaves for their unflinching and courageous take on injustices facing their community everyday.

More releases will follow in 2026 from **MASS MoCA Records**, recording predominately in-person in the Berkshires under Steinberger’s stewardship, including cutting-edge Los Angeles jazz artists **Black Nile** (release date TBA). Born and raised in the Inglewood neighborhood of Los Angeles, the brothers came up in LA’s red hot jazz scene, rubbing shoulders with elder legends as well as next gen stars like Kamasi Washington and Thundercat, **Black Nile** completed a residency in June 2025 at MASS MoCA, including both recording locally at Studio 9 and performing at the museum.

“**Hen House Studios** has been producing, releasing, and marketing contemporary artists since 2001 with a shared artist-centered ethos with MASS MoCA. By working together, the label will help artists reach a larger audience,” said Steinberger. “Though technology today can work wonders, the digital world has de-humanized us. I believe in an older-world method that emphasizes the magic of a band making music together in one room, playing off the creativity of the moment. The humanistic approach creates a deeper emotional listener experience that can not only be heard, but also felt.”

About Hen House Studios

Based in Los Angeles’ Venice Beach, **Hen House Studios** is an acclaimed recording studio helmed by record engineer and producer **Harlan Steinberger**. Known for his ability to record albums live on-the-floor and to encourage captivating performances from artists at his studio, Steinberger has made a name for himself working closely with artists like Willie Nelson, Particle Kid, Sunny War, Rocky Dawuni, and more. Since 2024, Steinberger has been traveling to Malawi to record artists across the country. Through the work of the Jacaranda Foundation, an organization that works with children and families devastated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, Steinberger was connected to **The Kasambwe Brothers** and many other rising Malawian

artists. For more information visit henhousestudios.com or follow on Instagram at @henhousestudios.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is a contemporary art museum that emphasizes bold creative exploration and fosters surprising connections between people every single day. It upholds artistic freedom and is an indispensable home for artists who stretch toward what has yet to be created. From its beginnings as the major textile mill Arnold Print Works in the mid-19th century, to its days as the Sprague Electric Company in the mid-20th century, to its current existence as a globally renowned, contemporary art museum and fabrication center, the MASS MoCA campus has a rich history of serving as an economic engine of the City of North Adams and the surrounding region. With vast galleries, artist studios and a variety of indoor and outdoor stages, MASS MoCA is able to embrace art in all forms. For more information visit massmoca.org or follow on Instagram at @massmoca.

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The Kasambwe Brothers 3-song Sampler:

<https://audiosalad ffm.to/selections-kasambwe-brothers>