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Son Lux debuts haunting video art at Mass MoCA

The band's central gift lies in crafting sonic environments that leave you lost inside them. With 'Out Into Us (Slow Down),' it delivers a rich and metaphoric visual experience.

BY MURRAY WHYTE — SEPTEMBER 17, 2026



SON LUX AND ALEX COOK: "OUT INTO US (SLOW DOWN)," FILM HR, 2026 (IN PROGRESS).

NORTH ADAMS — An elderly Black man stares dully upward at some faraway point, his back against a wall of peeling clapboards, yellowed with age. His look is worried, but resigned. There's no way out of this. We can relate. More on that in a moment.

When the camera pulls back from this, the opening shot of "Out Into Us (Slow Down)," the brand-new, first-ever video artwork by the band Son Lux and the director Alex Cook, which opened at Mass MoCA last weekend, we understand. A weathered farmhouse perched on some unknown prairie sits bathed in gloaming light. Close behind, billows of black fog surge and expand, slowly, hungrily. Inside, two young girls and their mother sit in tranquil domesticity — brushing hair, gazing out the window — as the silty haze hangs thickly in the air, and then collects on the floor as dust. It's a scene of something more than surrender — of accepting its suffocating arrival as normal.

You may pick your metaphor here, and there's no end to options when it comes to the enveloping darkness at this moment in American life. War. Economic malaise. Election chaos. The near-horizon extermination of humanity by our AI masters. Do we really need to go on?

Son Lux — frontman Ryan Lott, guitarist Rafiq Bhatia, and drummer Ian Chang — likely didn't have anything quite so specific in mind when they conjured this quiet, slow-moving apocalypse. But remaining open to what each viewer brings to it, and then sees in it, is, like any art worth your time, its strength. Neither pedantic nor entirely opaque, its emotional force lies in its invitation: This is your world, if you allow it to be.

While that might not seem so inviting an appeal, there's more to this story, and we'll get to that in a bit. But narrative — even obscure narrative, less unfurled than hinted or suggested — is only part of the picture here. For the opening of the piece, Son Lux performed at Mass MoCA's big black box theater, the band's more natural habitat. In a 90-minute set, its dense atmospheric blend of anthemic, synth-heavy composition set against the visceral live drumming of the masterful Chang created a sonic universe all its own. (Some like to call Son Lux's world "post rock," but in their artful collision of digital manipulation and mournfully authentic pop-esque melody, to me, they're a genre of one.)

Whatever you want to call it, the band's central gift lies in crafting enveloping sonic environments that can leave you willingly — if a little uncomfortably — lost inside them. That's likely why their highest-profile output to date has been in the world of movie soundtracks. They have a couple of biggies to their credit: the Oscar-winning "Everything Everywhere All at Once," in 2022, and the vastly underrated Marvel superhero team-up "Thunderbolts" in 2025. (Another is due to be released shortly with "Your Mother Your Mother Your Mother," starring two-time Oscar winner Mahershala Ali.)



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Son Lux first performed at Mass MoCA back in 2009, when it was just Lott and his synthesizer; the band has been in the museum's family, so to speak, for years. Being film and art adjacent made a new path easy to imagine, if not to execute.

"Out Into Us (Slow Down)" has been in the works for years. But the marriage of image and sound is seamless, deepening the experience of both. With its synth-heavy dirge, the opening strains of the film feature Lott's vocals, thick and heavy, as though recorded underwater. They parallel the visual metaphor of drowning as the blackness draws slowly, inevitably closer.

In the film, the family — parents, a grandfather, two girls — brace themselves for a coming onslaught. The couple embraces, kneeling, on a bed as ash surges through the window. The old man holds the youngest daughter tight, head bowed, as the silty dust swallows them whole. We can feel their surrender. That's the point.

More important, though, is the eldest daughter. As her family huddles indoors, she's running full speed into the disaster, daring it to take her. I don't want to blow the ending for you, but let's make the metaphor clear: Surrender is death. The only way out is through. By facing up, she defeats the gathering storm, and sets those around her free. Given the tenor of the times, that's worth remembering.

"Out Into Us (Slow Down)," 2026, a film installation by Alex Cook and Son Lux, is on view at Mass MoCA through Oct. 21.



ABOVE: SON LUX AND ALEX COOK: "OUT INTO US (SLOW DOWN)," FILM HR, 2026 (IN PROGRESS).