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MAKE MUSIC MADISON | A CITY BREAKS OUT IN SONG

## Make Music Madison makes sure your day is filled with tunes

**Kelly Lecker**

Jun 22, 2025



Sarah Fiske performs at Chris's Front Yard at Yahara Place during the 2025 Make Music Madison festival.

JOHN HART, STATE JOURNAL

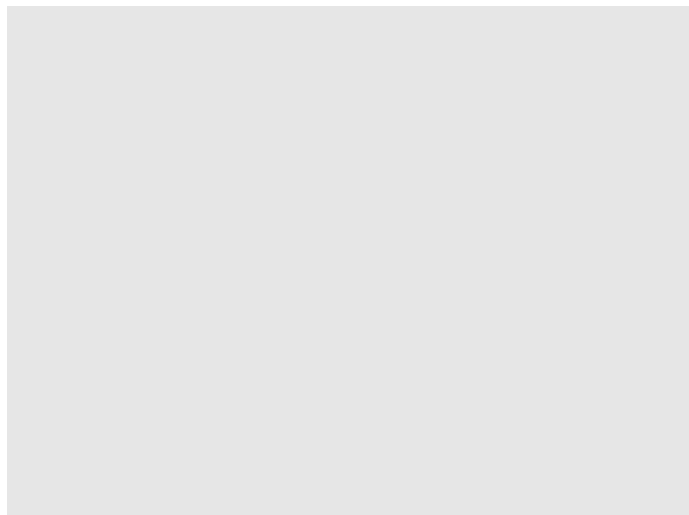
Renowned State Street busker Art Paul Schlosser was packing up his guitar Saturday. I tipped him anyway and asked him for just one more song.

“OK,” he said. “Do you want serious or funny or gospel or romantic funny?”

Well, romantic funny of course. I'd prefer two genres in the same song.

Schlosser picked up his guitar.

"I want to date your dog," he started singing.



Elliott Gilfillan, founder of the Madison band The Earthlings, performs at Willy Street Park.

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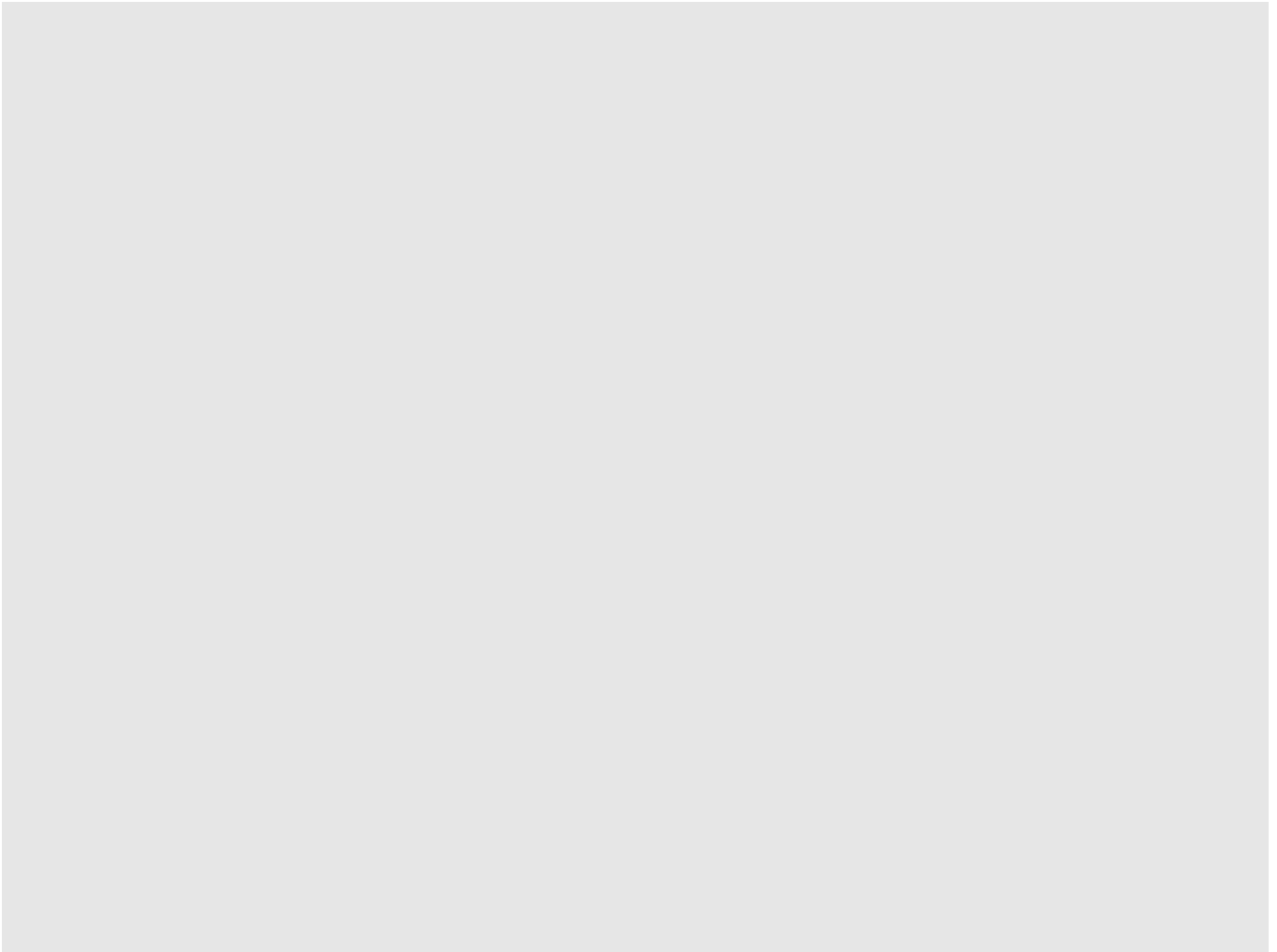
This impromptu encounter with a musician was one of many Saturday. And that's the idea of Make Music Madison — to connect you with music no matter where you're spending your day. With more than 400 artists performing at more than 100 locations, the tunes were hard to miss.

I started the morning on Capitol Square, and a performer in a cowboy hat and jeans belted out country songs as people poured into the Dane County Farmers' Market.

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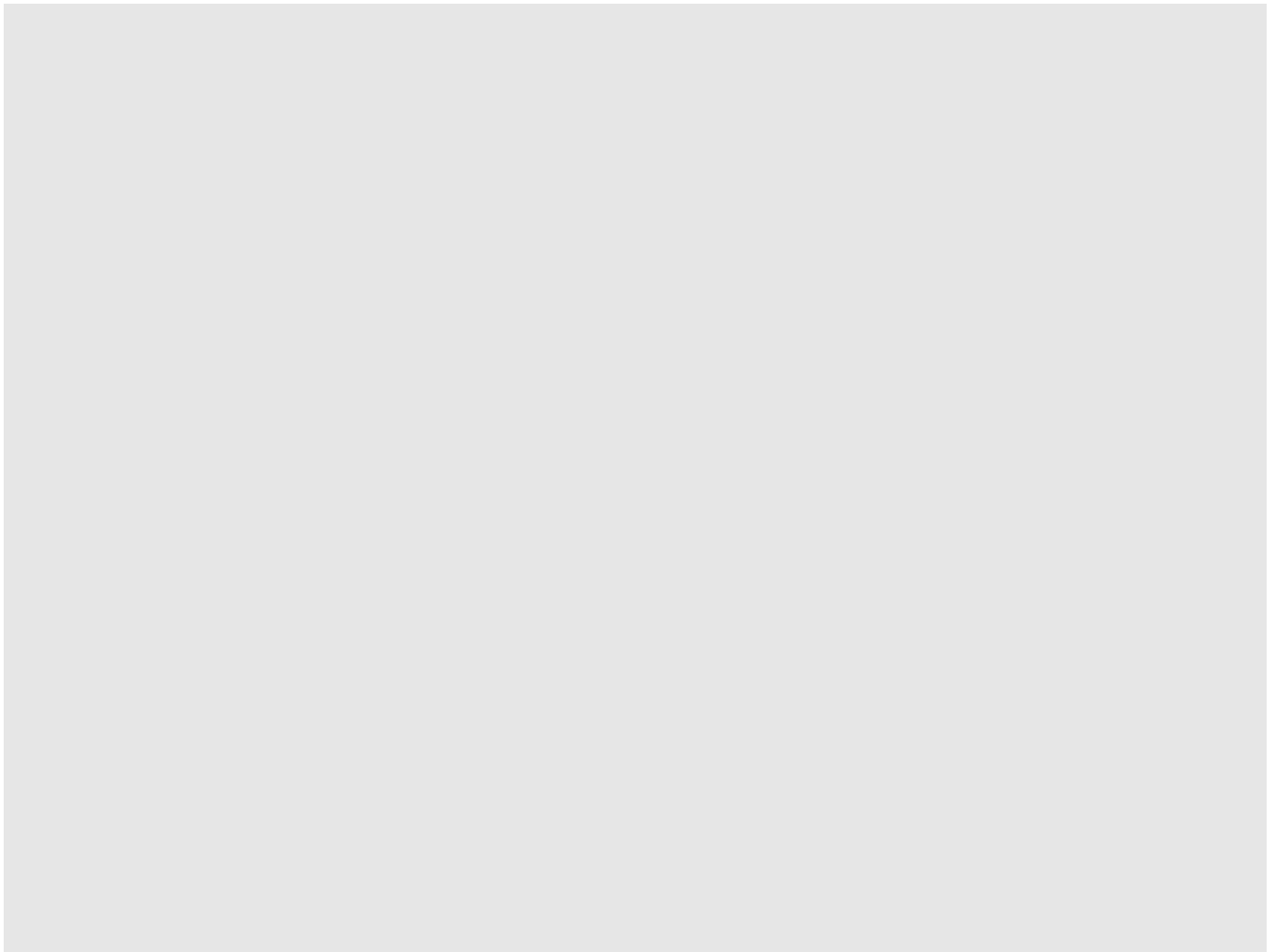
Mane Thompson performs at the top of State Street on Saturday as part of Make Music Madison.

Kelly Lecker

Two blocks down State Street, a brass band played under a tent, punctuated by the stern words of a street preacher warning people of eternal damnation. Across the street at Peace Park, a rock band played while a straggler perfected his air guitar routine nearby.

Schlosser didn't apply to be an artist this year for Make Music Madison, but he came out to be part of it anyway.

There were artists performing at libraries, on beaches, in coffee shops and on people's porches.

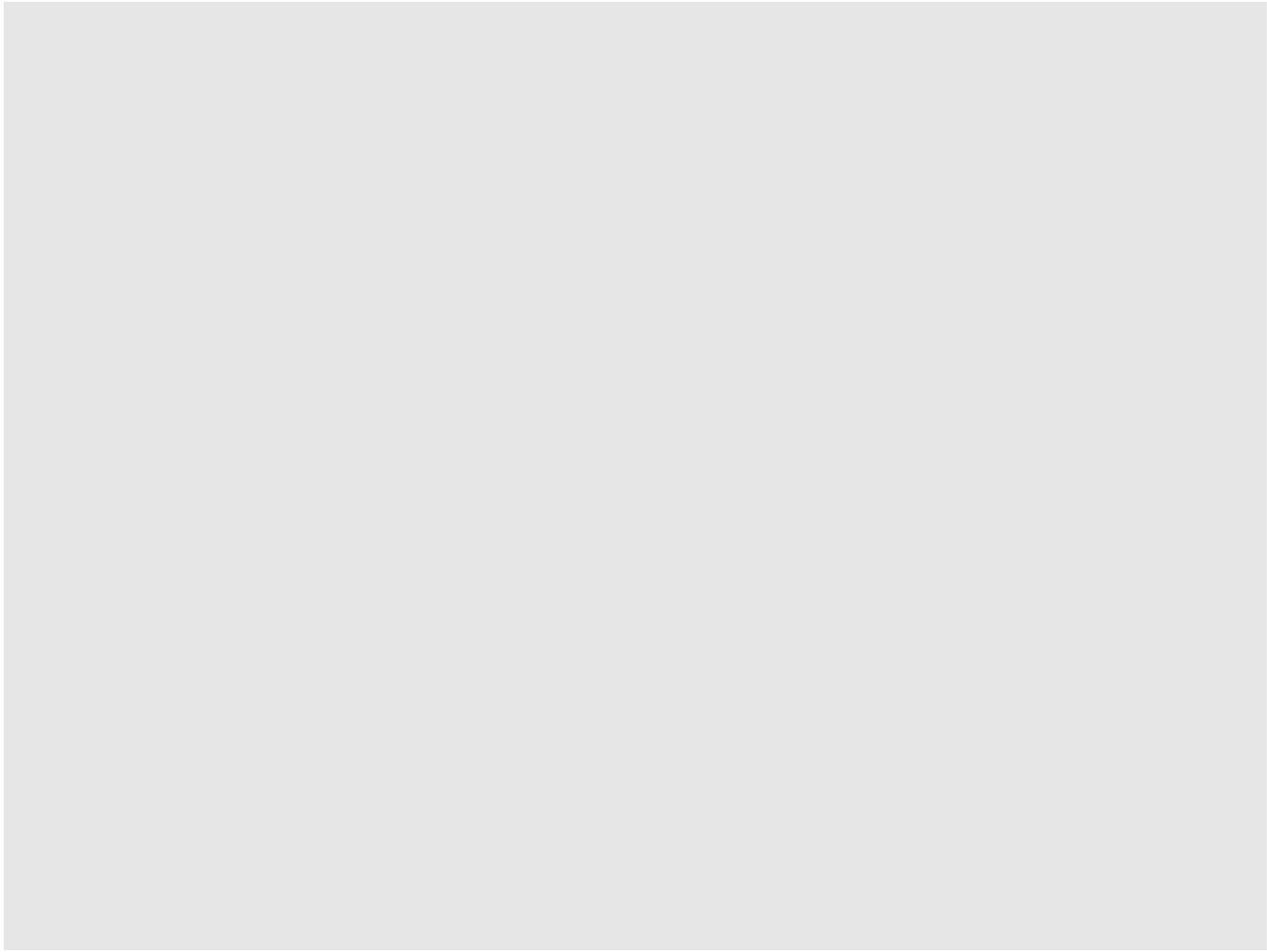


Hans and Karin Mueller listen to the music of the White Trash Blues Band at Coonen Porch on O'Sheridan Street during Make Music Madison.

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Make Music Day, always on June 21, is celebrated in more than 1,000 cities worldwide. Madison started participating in 2013. Businesses and residents sign up to host musicians and are connected with artists who want to play.

Genres range from hip-hop to country to instrumental music. Bands started by 8 a.m. and went well into the evening.

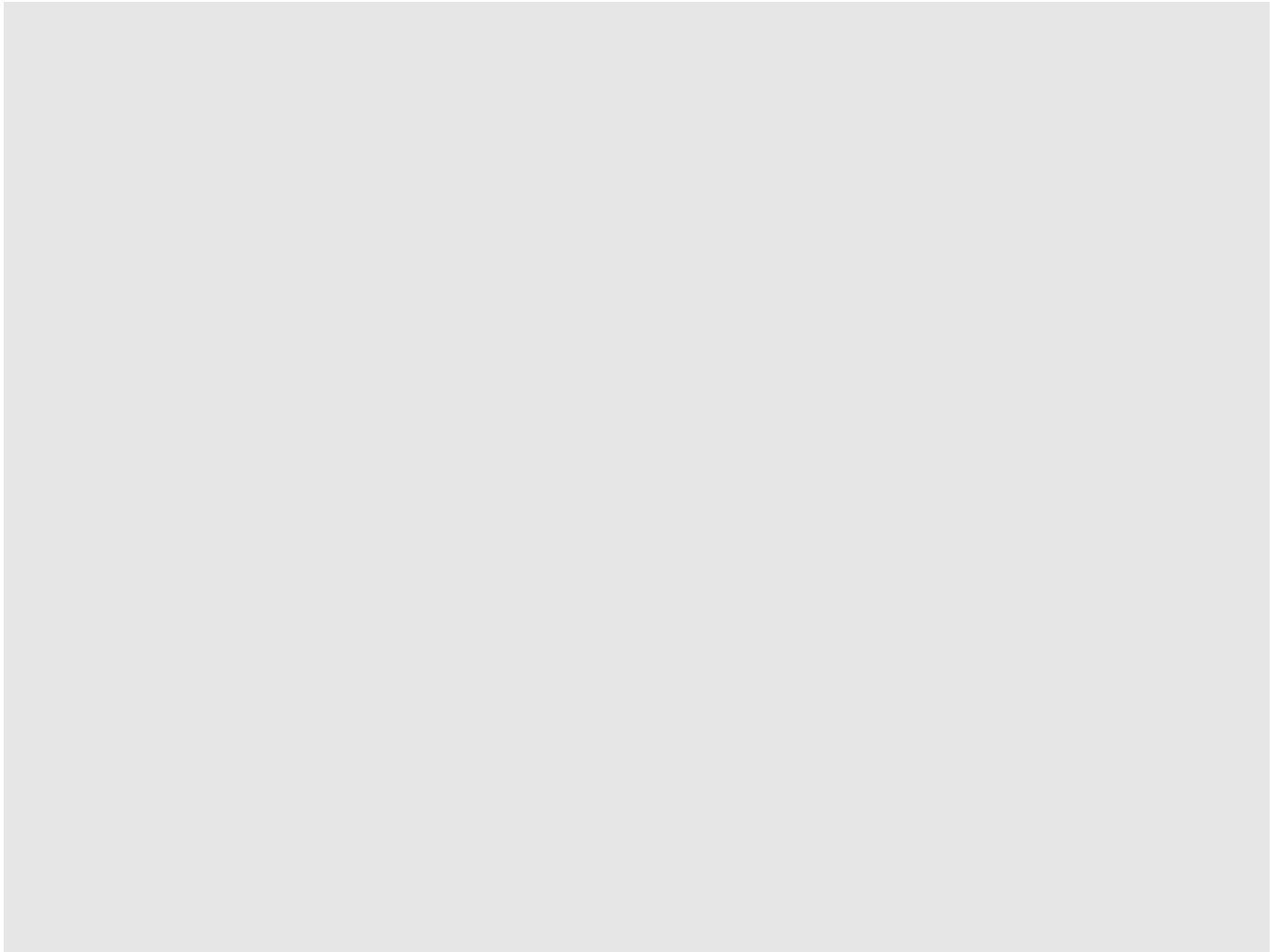


A fan of Rare Element enjoys the band's performance at the UW Terrace during Make Music Madison.

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In the afternoon, I wandered down to O'Sheridan Street near Monona Bay, to a music site listed simply as "Coonen porch." Jim Coonen and Maureen Quinlan opened their back porch for two performances.

The Madison Maennerchor, which has been performing since 1852 and now includes Coonen, sang German songs (mostly about drinking in one way or another) and a couple Wisconsin tunes.



The White Trash Blues Band entertains visitors at Coonen Porch on O'Sheridan Street.

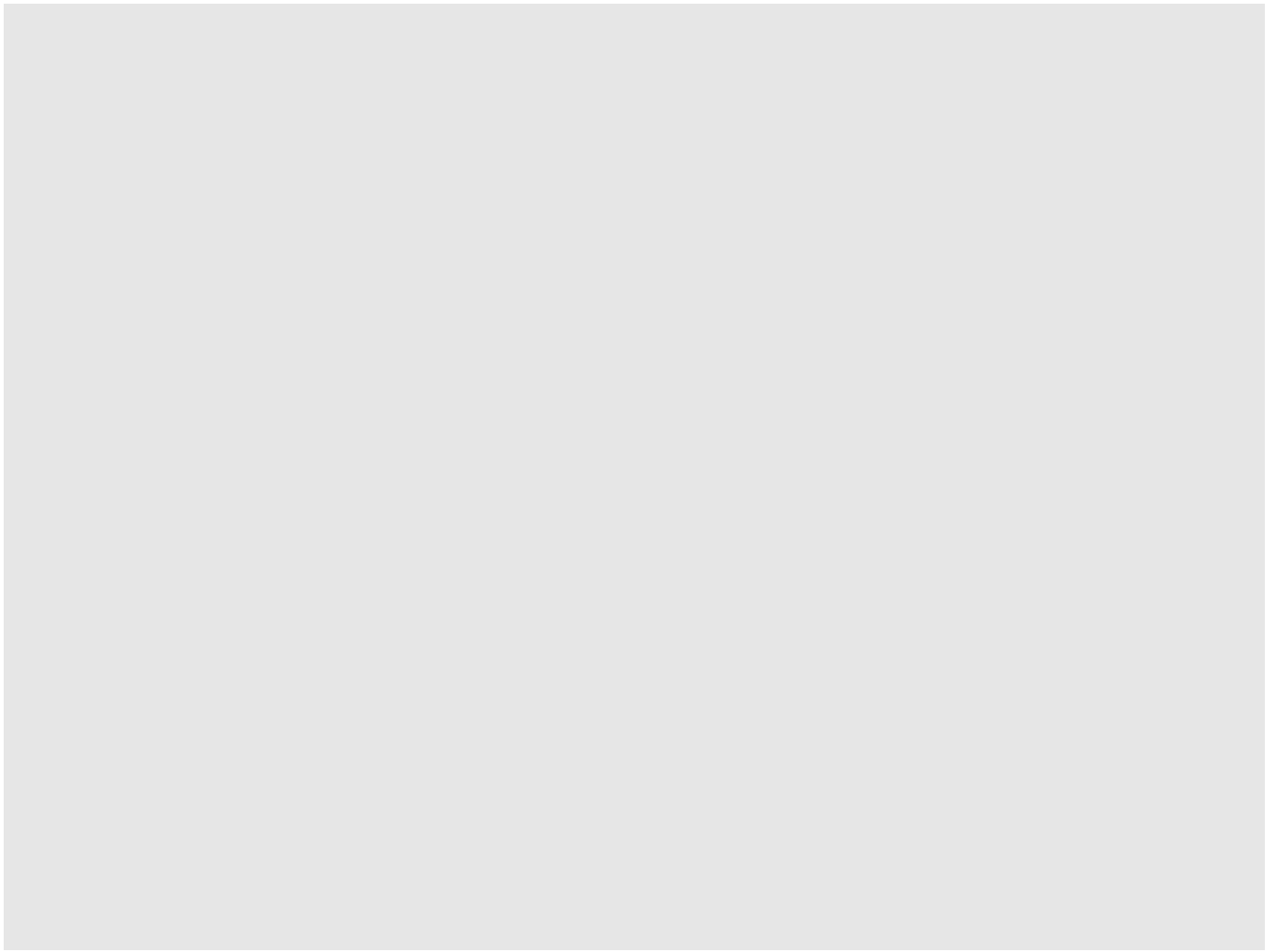
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Then the White Trash Blues Band entertained the crowd of a couple dozen people with an hour of blues and R&B. On the Make Music Madison website, they said about themselves: "These crusty legends are the musical equivalent of a Waffle House brawl at 2 a.m. — messy, loud, and impossible to look away from."

Four of the band's members — John Davis, Tom Flinn, Kirk Elliott and Roger Brotherhood — started the band 60 years ago. (Davis' son Cody is also in the band.) This is their third Make Music Madison.

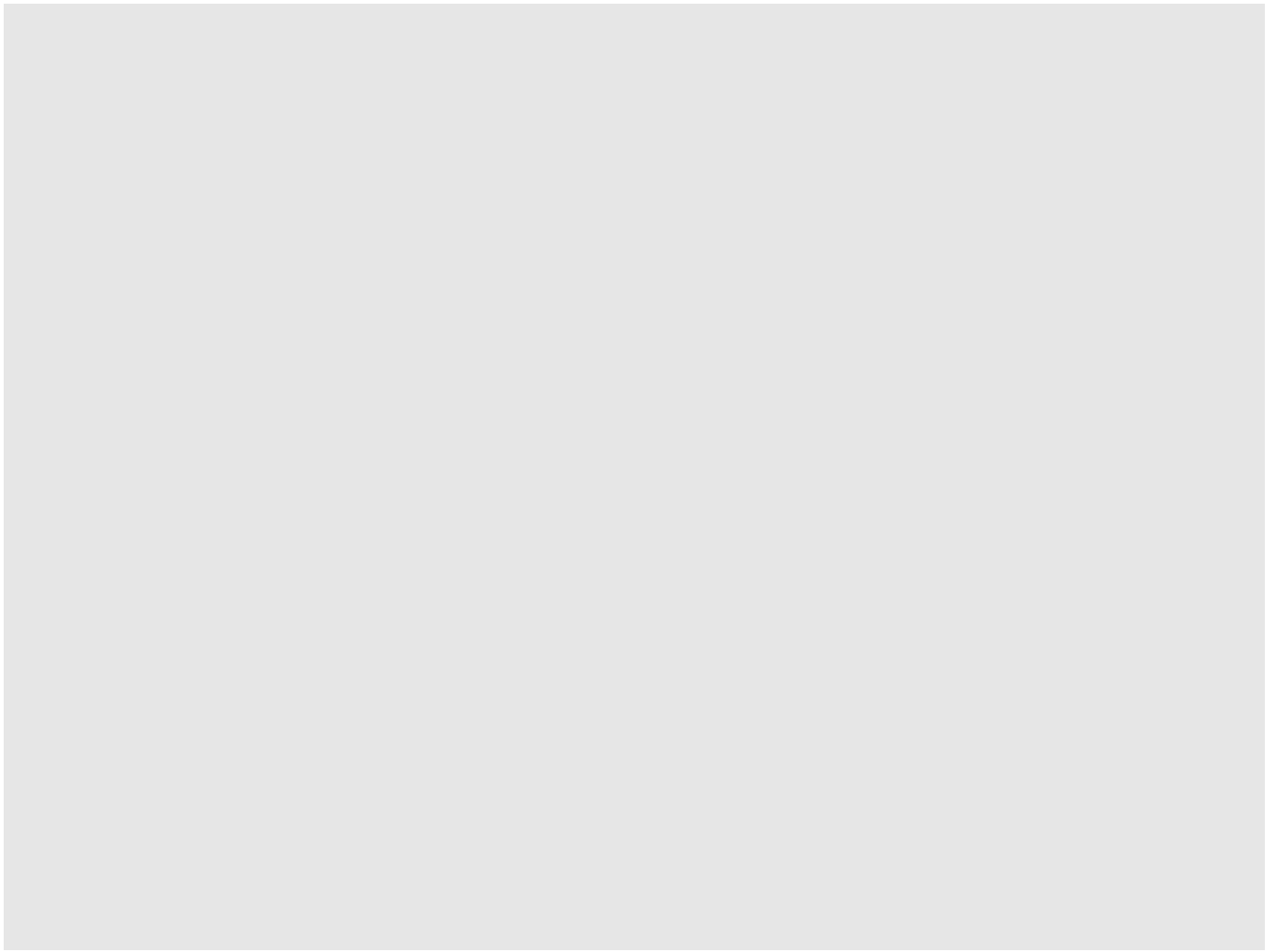
As they played, neighbors caught up and shared drinks from a cooler, and strangers got to make some new friends.

That's just what Make Music Madison was designed to do.



Fans of Rare Element dance during the band's performance at the UW Terrace.

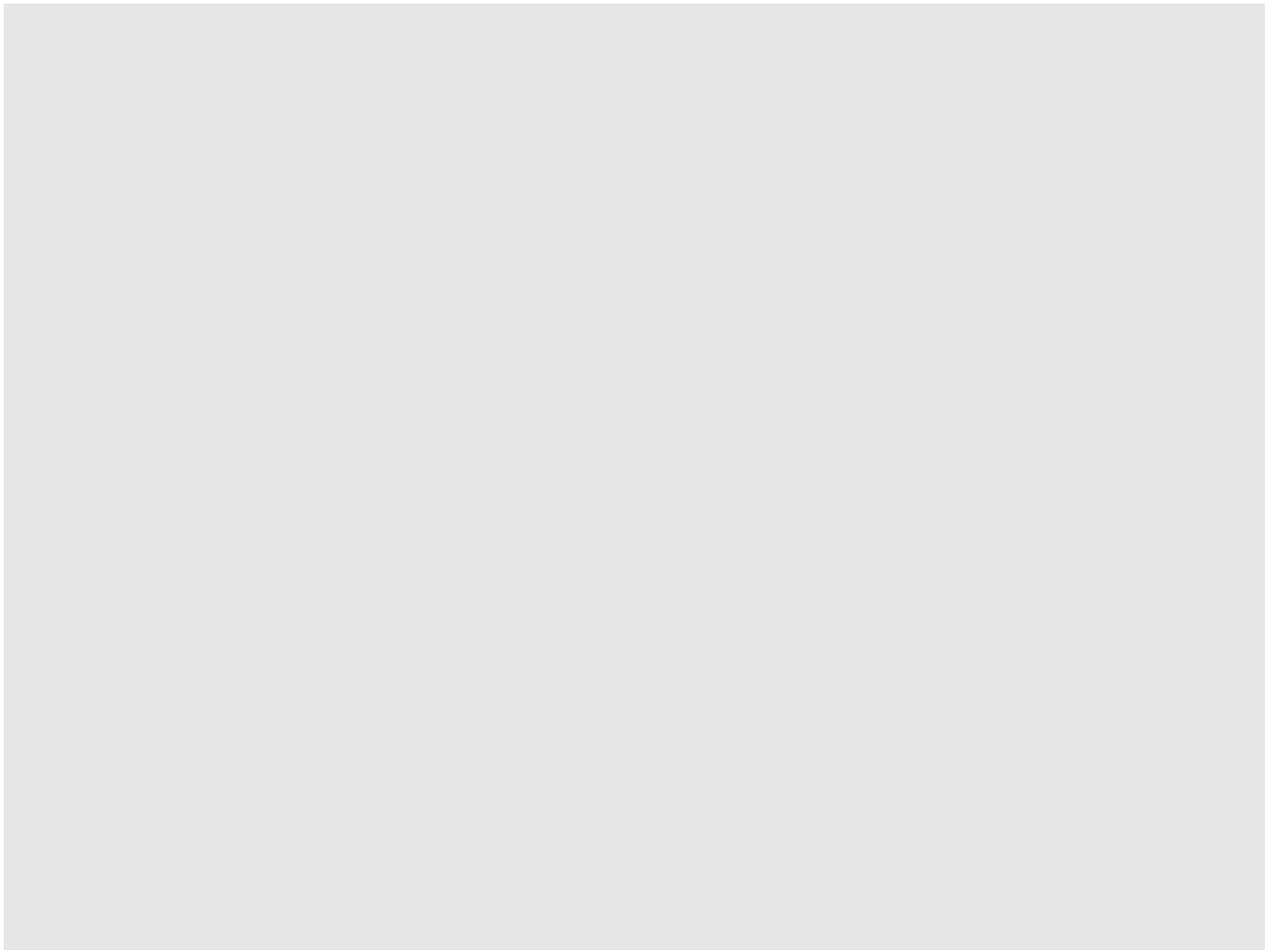
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Ensemble Shamaali perform Middle Eastern music outside the Willy Street Co-op.

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Autumn and the Trinkettes get ready to take the stage at Brittingham Park for Make Music Madison.

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Kelly Lecker is the executive editor of the Wisconsin State Journal.

**By Kelly Lecker**

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