

Madison Music Initiatives Update

Greater Madison Music Brand Development & Madison Is Music Concert Series

Prepared for the Madison Arts Commission

Angela Puerta, July 2026

Overview

Over the past year, the City of Madison has continued advancing two music initiatives aimed at strengthening Madison's music ecosystem, supporting local musicians, increasing community engagement, and building a stronger identity for Madison as a music city:

1. **Greater Madison Regional Music Brand Development** – continuing the strategic brand development process initiated with The Creative Company and advancing the remaining community engagement, brand strategy, toolkit development, and implementation work.
2. **Madison Is Music Concert Series** – an annual downtown performance initiative designed to support local musicians, increase awareness of the Downtown Performance Space Permit process, encourage equitable compensation for artists, and promote a culture of supporting local music through community engagement and tipping.

Together, these efforts support the City's broader goals of celebrating Madison's diverse music community, creating opportunities for local artists (particularly BIPOC), and strengthening connections between musicians, residents, visitors, and downtown spaces.

1. Greater Madison Regional Music Brand Development

Background and Work Completed

In 2025, the City partnered with The Creative Company Inc. to establish the foundation for a Greater Madison regional music brand through stakeholder engagement, strategic messaging development, visual identity guidance, and public relations planning. The process included extensive engagement with members of Madison's music ecosystem, including musicians, venues, cultural organizations, tourism partners, and community stakeholders.

The Creative Company completed several foundational components of the branding process, including:

- Facilitating a Hero's Journey Workshop with music ecosystem stakeholders to identify Madison's core music story, opportunities, and challenges.
- Supporting development and analysis of a public survey to gather community input.
- Synthesizing stakeholder feedback into key themes and messaging recommendations.
- Developing strategic messaging frameworks, including brand narrative concepts, messaging direction, and potential taglines.
- Providing strategic guidance related to visual identity and future brand toolkit development.
- Developing a stakeholder communications plan to support future implementation.

Next Phase: Community Engagement and Brand Refinement

Following UCAN/GMMC's withdrawal from the project process, the City identified the need for additional outreach and engagement to ensure the final music brand reflects the broader perspectives of Madison's music community.

The City will continue this work through a new contract with Purple Unicorn, led by Morgan Burns, to support expanded community engagement and strategic refinement of the music brand.

The next phase will include:

- Reviewing previous research and engagement findings completed by The Creative Company and the City.
- Conducting targeted stakeholder interviews representing diverse perspectives across Madison's music ecosystem, including artists, venues, cultural organizations, tourism partners, and community members.
- Ensuring historically underrepresented voices are included in the process with Anthony Brown as a major player.
- Facilitating a stakeholder convening to validate themes and gather additional input.

- Developing a final strategic brand brief to guide messaging, positioning, and implementation.

The project timeline anticipates stakeholder interviews and research review during July and August 2026, a community convening in September 2026, and completion of the final strategic brand recommendations in November 2026.

The final deliverables will include:

- Strategic assessment and problem statement.
- Stakeholder interview summary.
- Community convening materials and documentation.
- Recommendations for brand messaging and implementation.
- Final Strategic Brand Brief for the Greater Madison Music City Brand.

Brand Toolkit and Rollout

Following completion of the additional engagement process and final brand direction, The Creative Company will continue supporting the City in completing the brand toolkit and rollout strategy.

The Creative Company previously provided strategic input and creative guidance related to brand messaging, visual identity direction, and toolkit development. Remaining work includes collaboration with City staff to finalize brand toolkit elements and support coordinated public-facing implementation once final decisions regarding brand identity and messaging are complete.

The completed toolkit and rollout strategy will provide partners, artists, and community organizations with consistent guidance for communicating and promoting Madison's music identity.

2. Madison Is Music Concert Series

Program Overview

The **Madison Is Music** concert series was launched in 2024 as a community-focused initiative to support local musicians, activate downtown public spaces, and build awareness of Madison's vibrant and diverse music scene.

The program has two primary goals:

1. Support local musicians by providing paid performance opportunities and encouraging sustainable relationships between artists and audiences.
2. Educate musicians and community members about the Downtown Performance Space Permit process while encouraging residents and visitors to support artists through tips and social media engagement.

The program promotes the message that Madison's music ecosystem is strengthened when audiences actively support local performers.

2026 Concert Series Implementation

For the 2026 season, performances are being hosted at Frances Plaza, 600 State Street, with concerts scheduled from 6:00–7:00 p.m. (see flyer and social media posts attached).

The series features a diverse group of local and regional performers representing multiple genres, including:

- R&B and hip-hop.
- Latin music.
- Reggae.
- Japanese drumming.
- Latin ska.

The program intentionally highlights the diversity of Madison's music community and creates opportunities for artists from different cultural backgrounds and musical traditions.

Community Engagement and Promotion

The Madison Is Music initiative extends beyond performances by encouraging the public to actively participate in supporting musicians.

Community engagement strategies include:

- Encouraging attendees to share performances on social media using #MadisonIsMusic.
- Increasing online awareness of local musicians performing in public spaces.

- Building a culture of tipping and direct support for artists.
- Connecting residents and visitors with Madison's diverse music offerings.

The program helps reinforce the message that Madison is a community where music is created, performed, and supported.

Madison is Music



UPCOMING SHOWS AT FRANCES
PLAZA - DOWNTOWN
600 State St. Madison
All Shows from 6-7pm

03
SEPT

JAY DAY
R&B and hip-hop



04
SEPT

SON DE JAS
Latin Music

05
SEPT

SISTA SENSE
Reggae



10
SEPT

**MARCUS
PORTER**
R&B and hip-hop



11
SEPT

**JUNKO
YAMAUCHI**
Japanese drumming

12
SEPT

LOS MESKALES
Latin Ska

Enjoy great music,
and tag your favorite
band using
#MadisonIsMusic



MADISON
Arts
COMMISSION



**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA**
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703

**SEPT
03
6PM**

**JAY
DAY**

Jay-Day is an independent R&B and hip-hop artist from Jefferson, Wisconsin, and the founder of S4 Records LLC. His music blends heartfelt storytelling, melodic vocals, and uplifting messages that inspire hope, perseverance, and personal growth. Drawing from real-life experiences and his faith, Jay-Day creates music that connects with listeners through authenticity and positive energy.



**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA**
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703

**SEPT
04
6PM**

SON DE JAS



Son De Jas is a vibrant Latin music ensemble led by vocalist and entertainer Jasmine Ballesteros and musical director Alex Ballesteros (Alex B.). Jasmine began her musical journey in Madison more than 20 years ago with Fuego Latino before relocating to Florida over 16 years ago, where she successfully pursued a career as a solo artist and entertainer. Having recently returned to the Madison area, she is excited to reconnect with the community where her passion for music first began.



**SEPT
05
6PM**

**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703**

**SISTA
SENSE**

Sista Sensi and the Buds are a 4-7 piece Reggae band based in Madison, Wi. Springfall and Negril, Jamaica winters. Sensi has been singing reggae and performing/recording with many of reggae's biggest stars for over 40 years. She boasts collabs with King Yellowman, Josey Wales, URoy, Cutty Ranks, and many more. She is also popular for including children from the audience and letting them play percussions.



**SEPT
10
6PM**

**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703**

**MARCUS
PORTER**

Marcus Porter is a two-time WAMI Award-winning hip-hop artist, producer, engineer, educator, and founder of Born To Dream, based in Madison, Wisconsin. Recognized for his authentic storytelling, commanding stage presence, and genre-blending sound, Porter fuses hip-hop, R&B, soul, and blues into music that inspires resilience, self-discovery, and community.



**SEPT
11
6PM**

**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703**

**JUNKO
YAMAUCHI**

Beni Daiko is Madison's premier mainland Japanese taiko drumming group. The name Beni means "deep red" in Japanese, representing Madison, while Taiko means "drum." Founded in November 2012, Beni Daiko was established to introduce and share Japanese culture through the art of taiko drumming.



**SEPT
12
6PM**

**#MADISONISMUSIC
AT FRANCES PLAZA
600 STATE ST. MADISON WI 53703**

MESKALES

The Latin ska band that burst onto the scene in 2015 Formed by a group of local musicians and friends with a shared love of ska, Meskales wasted no time captivating audiences and quickly gained recognition for their high-energy performances.

Their infectious blend of ska,punk,surf and reggae is impossibly catchy and guaranteed to get you moving.