

Dear City Attorney,

Part of what makes Madison an important and desirable place to live, is the arts. The arts are critical to any community. As a performing musician who has done it since 1966, I have the benefit of five decades of perspective.

On one hand, music is so important, so essential, that it finds a way to survive, even if it is diminished by laws, economic anomalies like Covid, or even the ability to watch the world on our big screen TV's.

I can tell you that there are nowhere as many 'nights per year' that a musician or band can work. Example: when the drunk driving laws went into effect, the closing of just The Shuffle Inn, removed 250 potential bookings. Multiply that out across the city, the state, and the nation, and the effect was devastating. I had to move to Atlanta to work, and I watched it all happen again.

So what! I'll tell you what. Music breeds community. And when performed live, there is the potential for a sweet transfer of energy, of sharing moments with friends or strangers that can become friends. Folks come together that would never have met any other way. I'm thinking of one man that frequents The Red Rooster who treats his PTSD from his service in VietNam by dancing. He comes from quite a ways for that.

The open stages that happen on Thursdays provide playing and performance opportunities that nurture older and younger players as they share a mutual love of music. Some learn, some teach, some are their friends who don't get an opportunity to see them otherwise.

I'm blessed to still be performing at the tender age of 72. I played a new venue for my band last Sunday in West Allis. I sought out the owner before I left. I told him, "I'll state the obvious. The great show we just put on, and the shared joy that sprung from it, doesn't happen if you hadn't had the vision, the will, the tenacity, to create this wonderful venue. Thank you!"

The Red Rooster may not be where you hang out. But it is important. No, it is not the Overture, where you can potentially spend way too much to see an act. No, but it is in roadhouses like The Rooster where the intimacy of the environment reaches the audience as well as the immediate close response inspires the artist.

Should we just be left with big college or pro sports? Remember the old days when their conscience allowed them to only promote accepted 'sin products.' They sold Marlboros and Budweiser, and rolled out the Clydesdales. Now? Every commercial openly promotes gambling.

The live music venue is nearly impossible to operate, compared with what it was forty to fifty years ago. The small independent operators bust their butts to survive, to keep live musical arts alive and available to our community. The Red Rooster is one such place. A good place.

Respectfully,

Matthew "Pops Fletcher" Goodwin

Note: I played The Nitty Gritty in 1971-72. The Boardwalk in '74, The Church Key and Headliners and Shuffle Inn '79-'86. I do go back a ways.