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Fiercely independent coverage of culture and politics in Madison.

Support independent media and help us serve the most engaged audience in Madison.

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in making a gift to *Tone Madison*. With your help, we're enriching Madison with our locally focused culture and politics coverage, and we're paying journalists for their work. Most of the funds we bring in go directly toward paying our freelancers and staff. Your support ensures a vital future for independent media in Madison. Let's work together to build a publication of lasting value to the community we love.

Scott Gordon

Publisher

Tone Madison

scott@tonemadison.com

ABOUT *TONE MADISON*

MUSIC, CULTURE, AND STRONG POINTS OF VIEW

Tone Madison provides crucial, trusted coverage of culture and politics in Madison. Since launching in 2014, we've filled a void in local media, and built a trusting relationship with an audience that's looking for something different.

Our focus is on journalism that treats culture in Madison as the complex subject it is—not as fodder for promotional fluff. We champion things we love, but we also ask annoying questions and throw the occasional brick.



BY THE NUMBERS

Pageviews in Q3 2022: 93,056

Music stories in 2022 so far: 73

Highlight: [A more vivid look at Madison's live music over summer 2022](#)

Film stories in 2022 so far: 79

Highlight: [The 2022 Wisconsin Film Festival diaries](#)

Politics stories in 2022 so far: 93

Highlight: [Madison's Southdale neighborhood fights for transportation, without representation](#)

SUCCESSSES FROM 2022

DOUBLED DOWN ON INDEPENDENT POLITICAL JOURNALISM.

We hired our first News and Politics Editor, Christina Lieffring, in September. Adding even a new part-time staff position represents a huge leap for us—something we’ve been working toward for the last two years. Christina has an ambitious vision for *Tone Madison’s* refreshing local politics coverage. Look for deeply reported series on the issues that impact our city and state, uncompromising commentary, and journalism that upholds factual and ethical standards without the “both-sides” nonsense.

MADISON’S DEEPEST COVERAGE OF LOCAL MUSIC. AGAIN.

Unusual and unheralded artists are the priority in our music coverage. Through [longer profiles](#) and [shorter reviews](#), we kept readers abreast of the sheer variety of music people make in Madison. We also showed that serious reporting has a place in music coverage, [examining local venues’ attempts to recover from the pandemic](#) and breaking news about changes at Madison music institutions like [Spruce Tree Music](#) and [B-Side](#). Most years, we’re also the only Madison outlet that runs an in-depth roundup of the year in local music—look for that again in mid-December.

WE TOLD STORIES NOBODY ELSE IS TELLING.

UW-Madison officials kept it quiet for almost a year, but in June we reported about [damage to one of the ancient Indigenous mounds on campus](#). It required months of delicate reporting to put the story in context and gain the trust of multiple sources—the kind of work that’s usually left to much bigger news organizations with dedicated investigative reporting teams. No other outlet covered this story.

In July, we reported that a large Madison landlord had [banned the use window air-conditioning units](#), even during a May heatwave that pushed temperatures up into the 90s. This also took a lot of careful, tenacious work. No other outlet covered this story.

In March, we reported on [plans for a transphobic conference in Madison](#), and the efforts local activists were making to counter-program it. No other outlet covered this story.

MAJOR GOALS FOR 2023

PUBLISHING MORE STORIES OVERALL!

Tone Madison is all about quality over quantity. This means we're able to deliver coverage that has real depth, despite having very modest resources. It also means that for every story idea that gets published, there are probably a dozen more we had to leave on the table. We want to gradually build up our capacity. We're already on course to expand our politics coverage. We believe that with careful planning, we can steadily increase the amount of work we're able to publish in our other core subject areas: music, film, and art.

Before the pandemic, we also published a selective but in-depth weekly calendar of interesting music and cultural events around Madison. That part of our work is still a long way from recovering. In partnership with *Madison Minutes*, we've been gradually getting back into the habit.

And we have other ideas! A quarterly print publication! Specialized email newsletters! Developing more podcasts and multimedia! It won't happen overnight. But you can help us leave fewer ideas on the table.

IMPROVING PAY AND BENEFITS FOR JOURNALISTS.

Media jobs are drying up [at a staggering rate](#). Local news has borne the brunt of this decline. We simply must create more jobs and freelance opportunities that pay well. Otherwise, talented people will continue to burn out and leave journalism entirely, or will gravitate to national outlets largely concentrated on the coasts. Madison is no exception to this dynamic—we lose great journalists all the time, especially young people and people of color.

No one's getting rich off of *Tone Madison*. Instead, we are focusing our resources on creating better opportunities, carefully and sustainably. To keep attracting excellent journalists, we need to increase our freelance rates—which are already better than those of many established local and even national outlets. Each of our five staff editors make the same hourly wage, and we'd like to be able to offer health benefits and paid time off. This is about doing great work for our audience, but it's also about valuing people and making our community a better place. As we seek to hold other institutions accountable, we also hold ourselves to high standards.

EXPANDING OUR AUDIENCE AND REACH!

We have a great audience. We know that there are more people out there who would value what we're doing. Even though we are a niche publication, we know we haven't reached our full potential. Getting there will take time and effort—holding more events, building up deeper partnerships with other publications, conducting more audience surveys, and of course the crucial challenge of growing our email list. But the most important part remains the same: Sustaining and expanding quality independent journalism that matters to people in our community.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

1. Sign up for our email list!

It's the best way to keep up with our work.

- **Tuesdays:** A simple rundown of all our latest stories, bringing you everything from event previews to in-depth criticism and political writing.
- **Thursdays:** Our Microtones newsletter, featuring a subscriber-first column that brings you some of Madison's most unusual stories, and curated links from around the local internet.

2. Make a one-time gift!

- During November and December, the national NewsMatch campaign will double your donation.
- It's easy to give at tonemadison.com/donate.
- If you're thinking of making a larger gift (\$500 or more), please reach out directly to Publisher Scott Gordon, scott@tonemadison.com.
- **Larger one-time gifts help us plan confidently for the future**, giving us a solid basis for expanding our team and taking on more ambitious coverage.
- Your \$2,000 gift funds a part-time staff editor for two months.
- Your \$5,000 gift funds a full-time staff editor for two months.

3. Become a monthly sustainer!

- NewsMatch will **double the full-year value of new monthly donations** during November and December. So if you sign up to make a \$15 monthly donation, you've effectively raised \$360 for us in a snap.
- **Monthly donations form the backbone of *Tone Madison***, giving us the stability we need.
- **Over the course of a year, the impact adds up:**
 - Your \$15 monthly gift pays for a freelancer to write an opinion piece.
 - Your \$25 monthly gift pays for a reported feature from a freelancer, and some staff time for editing.
 - Your \$50 gift pays for four original editorial illustrations.

4. Join us in person to talk with our staff and freelancers!

- **November 5:** NewsMatch Kickoff Party at Imaginary Factory, 7 to 11 p.m.
- **November 16:** Tone Madison fundraiser nights at State Line Distillery.
- **December:** We'll be announcing at least one more in-person event for December soon!

RAISING FROM YOUR NETWORK

Tell people why supporting *Tone Madison* matters to you!

We've put together some draft language that will help—feel free to use any of this and put your own spin on it!

Hi _____,

There's no other media outlet that covers our city the way *Tone Madison* does. I'm supporting *Tone Madison* during a crucial year-end fundraising campaign, and I'm asking you to do the same. During November and December, a national program called NewsMatch will double readers' donations up to \$15,000. And if we all contribute to an additional, local matching fund, we can triple our impact.

If you want to contribute to *Tone's* matching fund, please reply to this email or contact their publisher, Scott Gordon, directly: scott@tonemadison.com.

Tone's an independent website that's been publishing since 2014. The journalists there have filled a void in local music and culture coverage, going out of the way to spotlight the lesser-appreciated bands and artists in our community. The publication's voice is sharp, inquisitive, funny, and sometimes harsh—but it's never dull, and always challenges Madison to do better with what it has. Over time *Tone Madison* has grown from a passion project into a successful, reader-supported publication, branching out into news and politics coverage along the way. Today it has tens of thousands of readers and even a small staff.

I've still found out about a lot of artists and events from *Tone Madison's* coverage. That's because they prioritize the stuff that gets short shrift everywhere else. They look where others aren't looking, and find extraordinarily valuable information and insight. This includes deeper reporting and commentary on the arts. *Tone Madison* isn't afraid to ask pesky questions and poke the bear.

Tone Madison is also doing exactly the kind of political coverage we need in Wisconsin right now. They take care with the facts, but also don't pull their punches and avoid wishy-washy "both-sides-ism" that afflicts so much of American media. With all the political challenges we face in our state and country, I want *Tone Madison* to be able to do even more hard-hitting, inventive, and adversarial journalism.

Help *Tone Madison* out and get in touch at scott@tonemadison.com if you have more questions. You'll be making our community a smarter, better, more connected place.



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

SCOTT GORDON
SCOTT@TONEMADISON.COM



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