

A PEEK INTO MADISON DIY MUSIC



Local band Boxing Day captivates indie music lovers

By Molly Sheehan
STAFF WRITER

In a prolifically rich musical landscape, indie band Boxing Day has managed to captivate and charm audiences within the University of Wisconsin-Madison community and the greater city of Madison.

Thriving on passion, determination and a shared love of music, band members Jan Grzywacz, Ella Scott, Shayfer Huitt, Annika Maxey and Chris Norcross encapsulate the essence of what it means to nurture talent in the indie music scene.

Boxing Day, winner of WUD Music's 2023 Battle of the Bands, got their start in the close-knit community of Ogg Residence Hall's music studio.

However, it was much more than proximity that shaped their formation, Huitt said. He remembered how band members bonded over their musical interests and their shared experiences of recording tracks and performing live.

They were all on the same page about their collective musical pursuits as a band, he said.

"We try to write for the Boxing Day sound, blending our tastes into something more unified," Scott said in an email.

The "Boxing Day sound," as band members described it, is a sonic tapestry woven with a harmonious blend of creative endeavors and emotions that transcend the boundaries of mere melodies.

The band's process in creating this unified sound is nothing if not a collaborative journey — an amalgam of perspectives — resulting in music that echoes and resonates beyond the venues they perform in, members said. However, collaboration is far from easy.

"Some of us definitely thought collaboration in a band setting meant spontaneously making a full song during a jam session," Scott said. "It's definitely more of a continuous process than some of us first thought."

Nevertheless, Boxing Day has curated a delicate balance between individual artistic freedom and collective cohesion.

The release of their first song, "Your Voice," in early July marked a poignant chapter in the band's journey. They initially intended "Your Voice" to be a quiet folksong for Chris's solo project, "Croix Du Nord."

"Bringing the song to the rest of the band made it what it is today," Grzywacz said. "With each show and rehearsal, we added more and more to it until it became a piece of our own."

Its title, inspired by the poignant first line of the chorus, "I need the sound of your voice," encapsulates the ache of longing for someone in its purest form. Norcross said he wrote "Your Voice" about his girlfriend, Ava.

Beyond the melodies and harmonies, the band draws listeners in with music that aims to express the intangible and articulate the unspoken.

Each of Boxing Day's live performances caters to a wide variety of devoted listeners, showcasing their adaptability. They tailor setlists to suit each venue and show, creating an intricate blend of older originals, covers and new material.

During their show at the High Noon Saloon on Sept. 3, the band covered "Scott Pilgrim vs. My GPA" as per their friend Arthur's recommendation. It was an instant hit with the crowd, who knew every word.

"We enjoy playing shows and playing for other people and want them to have fun and dance and sing to our music," Maxey said. "The topics of our songs are far-ranging and relatable so that anyone can find solidarity within the Boxing Day world."

Boxing Day's passion and unwavering dedication to their music, both live and recorded, is something they hope reminds listeners that music is meant to be experienced collectively — and serves as a testament to the power of shared experiences and the emotional depth of human connection.

Moving forward, the band plans on tracking and producing music themselves, including their next single, "Bluff," and an upcoming debut album.



LEFT: THE BOOBZHAUS 'BASEMENT VENUE' HOSTS MUSIC SHOWS IN MADISON FOR THOSE WITH 'THE ADDY.' PHOTO COURTESY OF LIAM HENN



RIGHT: MIO MIN MIO PERFORMS AT THE NOTTINGHAM COOPERATIVE, OCT. 13, 2023. PHOTO COURTESY OF KATY KELLY

Arthur Machado believes in Madison's DIY music scene

By Lillian Mihelich
STAFF WRITER

Music is born out of artists, but it is spread by the individuals who resonate with it.

At the local level, there is a recipe for bands' success. One of the main ingredients is people like Arthur Machado, a University of Wisconsin-Madison senior who supports musicians and is willing to carve out the necessary space for them to perform.

"If people are going to do this, they have to do it because they care about the bands and have faith that those bands are going to get big," Machado said.

Machado's apartment wall is embellished with a staggering array of album covers, some of which are produced by local bands he's met over the years. He jokes about his closet being 90% band T-shirts.

When asked about his work booking Milwaukee band Bug Moment at a skate park event, his mustache wrapped around his mouth into a toothy smile.

It would be indolent to glue Arthur to one description. He's a freelance journalist, a talent booker for local and statewide bands, a radio host, a talent buyer, the editor-in-chief of music publication EMMIE Magazine, a band member in Mio Min Mio — and a student.

Machado doesn't have his own venue to host gigs, but he has an established network and industry expertise. He's formed friendships through student music organizations and connected with others over platforms such as Twitter, making him a flexible booker. He said bands often reach out to him via social media, and he's become familiar with a noticeable community crowd at his events.

Machado connected bands to DIY venues like Nottingham Cooperative, Madison Manor and Dead Prairie. He's also booked bands at three University music venues: Der

Rathskeller, the Memorial Union Terrace and The Sett. Machado moved to the United States from Brazil five years ago and didn't have pre-existing ties to the music industry, but he felt entering it came naturally. He values connecting small bands to venues because he believes in giving artists platforms he feels they deserve.



DRAKE WHITE-BERGEV/THE DAILY CARDINAL

It's a hobby for Machado, one that has championed small artists and welcomed people looking for under-21 venues in Madison.

"I do think there's a lot of value in doing small-scale community work," Machado said. "If I don't do it, and if there's not people that think like me that are doing it, no one else will."

Madison has a robust network of larger venues. But Machado has noticed factors such as lasting COVID-19 capacity restrictions and percentage cuts from artist pay that make it difficult for smaller bands to perform at mainstream venues.

For example, if Arthur has a band make the trek out from Minnesota, but the venue hosting takes a large percentage of their ticket profits to cover fees, he'd be disappointed if small artists' profits were weak.

Sometimes, they need to sell out shows to move on to the next venue, a difficult feat for indie musicians.

"You don't have anywhere that focuses on booking

local bands [or] focuses on bringing smaller touring acts, so the biggest thing I've been trying to do when booking is filling that gap," Machado said.

Machado strategically fills this aperture by evaluating a band's genre, who their supporters are and where their music would meet the excitement of a crowd. If he knows a band will have a large number of friends show up to their show, he'll schedule a lesser-known opener beforehand.

Machado brings an anti-gatekeeping mentality to music. He's tired of the "cool kid" mentality that worships competition and superiority. What Machado wants is for bands to be treated equally, regardless of numbers and popularity. In the past, he's made a conscious effort to diversify setlists at the venues he works for.

"There's very much this cool kid stigma, where you go to these places with a carefree attitude, smoking a cigarette and assuming people don't know what you're talking about. That's silly," Machado said.

Recently, he saw over 150 people at his Halloween event. Machado said it was a fulfilling moment and was grateful the event gained traction.

Despite being a name in the established local music scene, Machado explained his successes with an unavoidable casualty. His imposter syndrome experience still prevailed when he discussed his work.

But Machado has been widely involved in the music scene since his early days as a sophomore at WUD Music, and he has a resume built from these meaningful endeavors. He hopes to bring all of his wisdom into the music industry after he graduates.

By now, Machado has established lasting relationships with the bands in Madison. He aids them because he enjoys supporting them. And because it's fun.

"If you do a lot of small-scale community work, I think that sets the foundation for both your fans, for yourself and all of the staff and promoters that helped you to get there," Machado said. "No one that does that successfully does that to be cool. They do it because they care."

Boobzhaus boasts underground talent for punks with the addy

By Gabriella Hartlaub
ARTS EDITOR

Boobzhaus is not your typical music venue. In fact, it's not even above ground.

A part of a class of sites called "basement venues," Boobzhaus is buried beneath the moist soil of a run-down college house. Tickets are not available in advance, and there's no barcode scan when you walk in the door.

As you go down the stairs, you enter a stage that's next door to the house's laundry room.

But all of those things melt away in the face of the music.

Gavin Uhrmacher, a Boobzhaus' creator, manager and resident, said basement shows radiate "a certain kind of energy" that draws DIY music enthusiasts and facilitates a communal culture.

If you're looking to see a Boobzhaus show, you won't find the address posted anywhere online. Their posters and Instagram posts proudly display, "Dm a Punk for addy."

Uhrmacher said the added privacy protects the owners who live above the venue and is a Madison DIY scene mainstay. It's an insular scene, and getting in is tough.

Uhrmacher not only books bands for Boobzhaus but also manages and performs vocals for a local punk band, Supercritical. He said his roommates all have professional music experience, something that gave them a unique perspective when building the venue.

"We figured we were able to accommodate artists and audiences in a way that maybe some other basement venues haven't before," Uhrmacher said.

The venue originally started as a basement practice space for those who live in the house. It only became Boobzhaus through happenstance and necessity due to a chronic lack of space in Madison's DIY community, Uhrmacher said.

"There are only a few spots that you can rely on being open year to year," he said of local DIY venues. "It's just like, 'Hey, we have a space, it might work.'"

Creating Boobzhaus required a bit of engineering from Uhrmacher and his friends.

"We [had] to snake 50 feet worth of extension cables from the laundry room into the performance area and make sure everything is rated to carry the amount of power that we'd be pulling," he said.

With two DIY Madison venues being shut down in the past year, there has been a "com-

munal need," as Tone Madison describes it, for new DIY venues to keep Madison's scene afloat. These spaces are often ones run by musicians like Uhrmacher, who are not explicitly profit-oriented but create thriving spaces for up-and-coming bands to play music and attract attention.

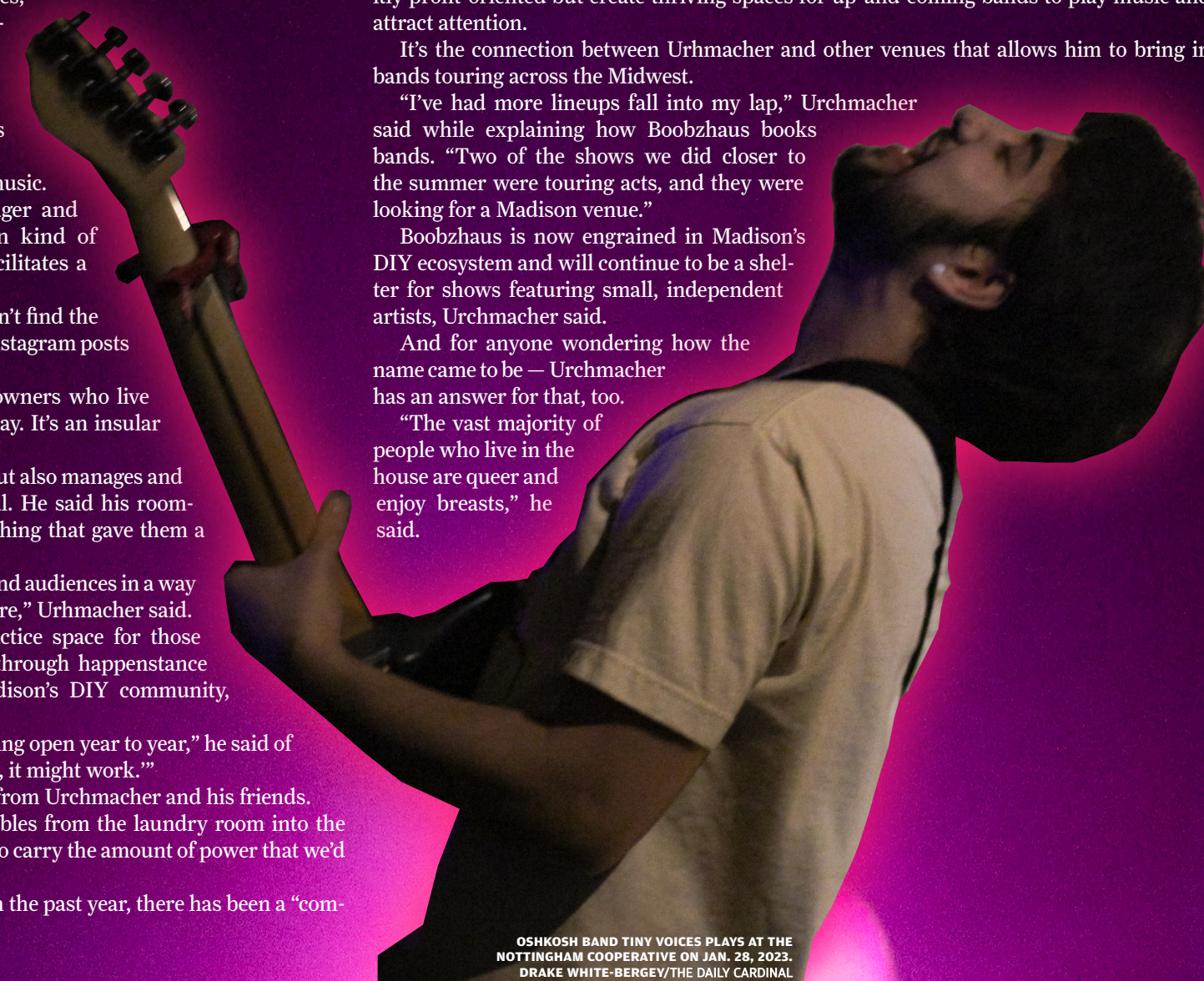
It's the connection between Uhrmacher and other venues that allows him to bring in bands touring across the Midwest.

"I've had more lineups fall into my lap," Uhrmacher said while explaining how Boobzhaus books bands. "Two of the shows we did closer to the summer were touring acts, and they were looking for a Madison venue."

Boobzhaus is now engrained in Madison's DIY ecosystem and will continue to be a shelter for shows featuring small, independent artists, Uhrmacher said.

And for anyone wondering how the name came to be — Uhrmacher has an answer for that, too.

"The vast majority of people who live in the house are queer and enjoy breasts," he said.



OSHKOSH BAND TINY VOICES PLAYS AT THE NOTTINGHAM COOPERATIVE ON JAN. 28, 2023. DRAKE WHITE-BERGEV/THE DAILY CARDINAL

KATY KELLY OF MINNEAPOLIS BAND BASKETBALL DIVORCE COURT PERFORMS AT THE NOTTINGHAM COOPERATIVE ON OCT. 13, 2023. DRAKE WHITE-BERGEV/THE DAILY CARDINAL