



M.O.D. Media Productions

PHILOSOPHER'S PASSION PROJECT

SIDE HUSTLE: Red Rooster Madison

OWNER: Jesse Steinberg, Associate Professor/Assistant Chair,
Dept. of Philosophy, UW-Madison

ADVICE: Know what makes you happy.

Associate Professor Jesse Steinberg is as comfortable behind a guitar as he is behind a desk at UW-Madison. In addition to his teaching position and assistant chair role in the department of philosophy, Steinberg plays about 60 gigs a year with the blues band Madtown Mannish Boys.

After learning that one of the band's performance venues — the Knuckle Down Saloon — was closing, Steinberg and a few band members decided to purchase the bar, rebrand the business, and support live blues and traditional American music.

One partner purchased the property and three others, along with Steinberg, plan to run the bar and restaurant. "I love making people happy with food, and music has been a major influence on my life," says Steinberg, who will handle bookkeeping and live bookings.

Other band members will take on additional business tasks, he shares. "I think we each bring a certain skill set that will make this work out."

A nod to Blues artist Howlin' Wolf's song, "Little Red Rooster," the new establishment will be named Red Rooster Madison and feature live music three to four nights a week. After renovations and securing permits are completed, the owners hope to open the business by the end of the year. It will have a neighborhood bar vibe and serve homemade dishes with locally sourced ingredients. "We're trying not to go too high-end," Steinberg says. "The food ethics class I taught helped me meet local farmers, so we've got some good partnerships already."

As far as balancing the tasks of his UW position with the side hustle, Steinberg doesn't seem to be worried. "It'll be tough, but I'm pretty good at compartmentalizing and managing my time."

Still, he admits, he'll probably be grading some papers at the bar. "People know me, and they know how passionate I am about this. They know I can get my normal job stuff done and do it well."

Steinberg believes self-reflection is key to making a passion project successful. "Maybe this is just the philosopher in me, but knowing yourself is really important," he explains. "You need to know what you care about and what you're willing to devote your time to. If you line these things up correctly, you'll be happy and thrive."