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## ARTS

# Mommy Tonk brings tunes and giggles to motherhood

By [LISA HORNUNG](#) | October 18, 2018 9:30 am



Mommy Tonk is a music/comedy duo comprised of Louisville native Shannon Noel, right, and Stacie Burrows. | Courtesy of Mommy Tonk

What happens when moms get really honest about their lives and then set their frustrations to music? If the stars align properly and the comedy gods are smiling, you get [Mommy Tonk](#).

Mommy Tonk is the music and comedy duo of Louisville native Shannon Noel and Texas native Stacie Burrows. The pair sing hilarious songs about parenting and marriage, and they're doing a mini-tour that starts in Louisville at [The Caravan](#) on Tuesday, Oct. 23. They then head to Lexington's [Comedy Off Broadway](#) on Wednesday, Oct. 24, and wrap up in Nashville at [Zanies](#) on the 25th.

They just released their first album, "[Nailed It.](#)"



Burrows and Noel performing |  
Courtesy of Mommy Tonk

Noel and Burrows now live in Los Angeles and began writing songs and performing together about six years ago, when they met while performing in "[Expressing Motherhood](#)," a storytelling show about moms.

"That particular cast, it had some heavy-hitting, emotional pieces," Burrows said. "So Shannon, of course, comes out to do this hilarious monologue wearing nothing but a breast pump and pajama pants. I was like, 'Oh, my god! Who is this woman? Holy s-t, I love her! For a woman, she's got some balls!' There was nothing under the breast pump. It was just nipples!"

Noel had a similar reaction to Burrows.

"Stacie walked out on stage and did this standup bit that had me basically bent over and peeing in my pants," Noel recalled. "She walks on stage with a baby monitor and opened by saying that she really hoped the monitor had the range it said on the packaging, because her babysitter had flaked. I full-on freaking believed her. I'm like, 'Oh my god!' Not only do I

have an almost-1-year-old at home, I also have a baby in my belly, and I'm literally pumping backstage. 'She is my hero! And also I need her to teach me everything about children, because I know nothing and now I have two, and she has two older ones.'"

Burrows didn't actually leave her child home alone, but the two became fast friends. Eventually, they began performing together and created a comedy show called "I'm Not From Here, But My Kids Are."

The friends came to realize they could sing and "that Shannon can sort of play guitar, and I can sort of play piano, but we can totally harmonize, and we're both foul-mouthed, and I thought, well, this has the makings of a great band," Burrows said.

They eventually hired a backup band — The Assless Chaps — to support their limited instrumental ability, and Mommy Tonk was born.

## Kentucky Tonk



When Mommy Tonk began, Noel knew three guitar chords. | Courtesy of Mommy Tonk

Noel is originally from the Middletown/Anchorage area of Louisville and grew up singing in her church and doing musical theater. She attended [duPont Manual High School](#) and the [Youth Performing Arts School](#).

(Full disclosure: This reporter actually studied at YPAS with Noel and knew her when she was only half as crazy as she is

now ... so, before she had kids.)

She believes her time at Manual and YPAS gave her a good foundation for her life as a performer and mom because of the amount of time she spent at school, rehearsals, performing and other activities, juggling a constantly busy schedule.

“I just feel like it was such a good base,” said Noel. “I didn’t know that by the time I was 46, I would I be completely exhausted. But then you just get up and do it again because this is your life, and that’s what you do, and that’s what you love. And I have.”

Noel got a bachelor’s degree in theater at University of Kentucky, then moved around the country performing in different children’s theater jobs, eventually ending up in L.A., where she later met her husband and had children. When she moved to L.A., she got serious about acting and studied the [Meisner Technique](#), an acting method created by Sanford Meisner that involves a lot of self-investigation.

“And that’s how I found [Second City](#), because actually when you come out of Meisner, which is some deep theory acting work, you’re like, ‘Oh god. I feel like I need to laugh. This is horrible! I don’t want to revisit all of my terrible things from the past.’ So I turned to Second City, and that’s when I was like, ‘Oh, I actually like comedy and I can take that dark thing from my past and turn it into something funny.’”

Noel did improv and sketch comedy with Second City, as well as a little standup. Burrows had studied improv with the [Groundlings](#), so that, along with their “dark, dark, dark senses of humor,” Burrows said, helped their connection gel on stage.

## Mommy Talkin’

The act and songs seem to really resonate with moms, the pair said, because moms can relate to the things about which these moms are singing.

“We’ve just found that when you’re singing a song about the most frustrating day as a mother, but you’ve got some distance from it, you’ve decided, ‘I’m going to make something funny out of it.’” Burrows explained. “When you’re singing that song and you see a woman in the audience is like, ‘Oh my god. That is the exact day that I just had,’ you resonate, and they’re grateful to you and you just have an automatic friend because you’re like, ‘Oh OK, we’ve both been to VietMom.’

So it's nice because we are all mothers, and all mothers are all part of the same tribe. We all deal with the same s—t, man. It doesn't matter where we go. If a mom is in the audience, she's on our team.”



Noel and Burrows each have two boys, which helped them form an even closer bond. | Courtesy of Mommy Tonk

The album, “Nailed It,” is out now, and it has 17 tracks on it, which was Noel’s idea. As Burrows said, “Most people put 10 or 12 tracks on an album, but most people aren’t Shannon Noel.”

“I’m so glad we did, because when you get the CD, it’s like we brought our entire show to you,” Noel added. “And then you drop your kids off — get them outta the car — then put the CD on.”

The songs and the show are definitely not for young ears, because, as Noel said, “It’s filthy.”

Noel’s “Love Song for My Husband” expresses — in too many cuss words for this outlet — how she feels about her husband’s laziness. Another song, “Mom Crush,” describes the mom who lives up to the impossible standard: *She got her nails done/ she got her hair did/ she shops at Nordstrom/ not talking the Rack. ... I want her school district/ I want her nanny too/ I want her backyard pool/ I’ll take her pool guy too.*

While the pair doesn't tour much, they do try to do shows in Louisville and the region about once a year. The Louisville shows often sell out, they said, partially because of Noel's strong family-and-friends base in her hometown. But they often meet others who find their way to the show.

"We've been (to Zanies in Nashville) a couple times, and we know 10 people in Nashville," Burrows said. "We were so happy to see people we've never met before, and we're like, 'How do you know about us?' and they're like, 'Word-of-mouth' or whatever, and you're now friends."

Mommy Tonk is making friends and fans everywhere they go, and they love that women are their main fan base.

"When you're coming to do a comedy show, you're not just doing a show. You're part of a tribe, and it's really cool because you know our tribe just gets a little bit bigger," Burrows said. "Because women are going to take over the world!"

*Mommy Tonk will begin at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 23, at The Caravan, 1250 Bardstown Road. [Tickets](#) are \$20.*

## **LISA HORNUNG**

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master's degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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