

SHOW GUIDE

**MCC
THEATER**

new rock musical

THE LONELY FEW

music & lyrics by **ZOE SARNAK**
book by **RACHEL BONDS**
directed by **TRIP CULLMAN
& ELLENORE SCOTT**



For Lila she is looking for a place where she can pursue her music career and find LGBT+ community. What are 2-3 things that are important to you in creating a life where you feel like your authentic self?

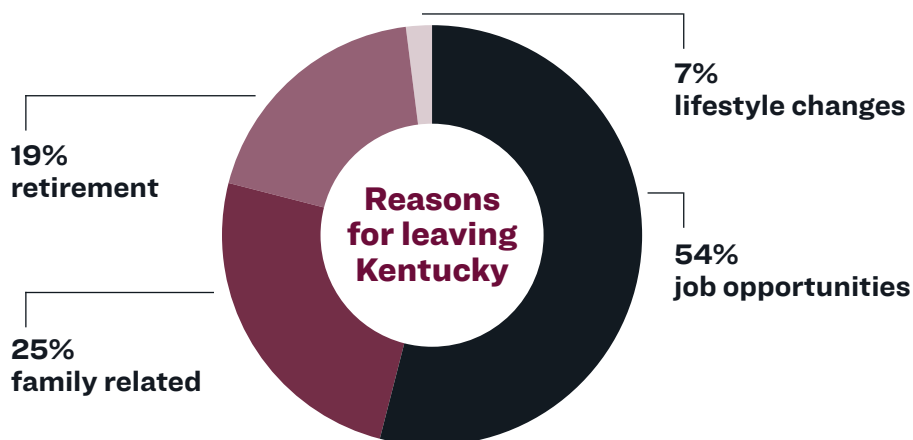
OVERVIEW

THE LONELY FEW is a new rock musical about the power of music and the pursuit of passion. It follows Lila, a young musician with dreams of getting out of her rural Kentucky town to become a full-time rocker. These aspirations feel more like fantasies until Amy, a touring musician, comes to town and turns her world upside down. Suddenly, her hopes of leaving the only place she's ever known begin to seem like a budding reality.

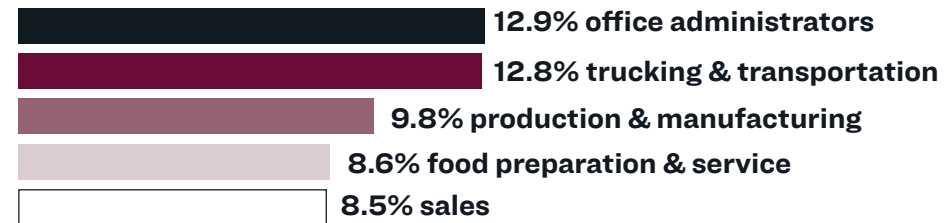
WORKING IN KENTUCKY

Kentucky consistently has one of the highest outbound migration rates within the United States. This means that there are often more people who move *out* of the state than move *into* it. Millennials and Gen Z make up a large percentage of people leaving, the main reason being for job opportunities (1). According to a 2019 report, the millennials who stay in the state do not have the economic means of leaving (1). In 2022, the US census found that 16.5% of the population lives under the poverty line, which is the 6th highest in the country.

Kentucky also has a limited job market, particularly in the arts. Within the top 40 professions that make up the labor market, there are zero that fall within the art or entertainment industry. Musicians and singers make up only 0.007% of the total workforce. With a weakened economy and limited growth opportunities, Lila must be proactive in building a career for herself.



Highest percentage of workforce in Kentucky



LIVING IN KENTUCKY

Lila is the primary caretaker for her brother, who struggles with addiction. Unfortunately, Lila's situation is quite common in her home state. Kentucky ranks in the top 10 for drug overdoses and in the top three for binge drinking. 38% of residents report having a family member or friend who struggles with prescription drugs (3).

Kentucky has also consistently ranked as one of the least queer-friendly states across America. Only 3.4% of the adult population identifies as LGBT+, compared to the 7.1% of the national average. The MAP (Movement Advancement Project), a non-profit dedicated to regional research to usher in policy change and equality for all, has given the state a score 5.25 out of 21.5 for policy around sexual orientation and a -2/23 for policy protecting gender identity, giving Kentucky a low rating of 3.25/44.5. The queer community has found refuge in the larger cities of Lexington and Covington which host the small bubbles of LGBT+ nightlife, communities, and businesses. Lila feels the need to stay in her small town to take care of her brother, isolating her further from finding a community of like-minded folks.

NASHVILLE AS A BEACON

Lila and her bandmates speak about Nashville as a beacon of hope, and for good reason. While only around 140 musicians on average make a living in Kentucky, Nashville is home to 3,000 full-time musicians, 80 record labels, 190 recording studios, and 43,000 jobs in the music industry at large (5). According to urban development research, in 2022 Nashville ranked #1 in America as the overall best music city, first in the number of full-time positions, and the highest number of intimate performance spaces. The national average of career musicians is 28 per capita, Nashville's is at a soaring 127. While Nashville ranks as the #1 best city for both country

What do you think makes a community feel safe?

We see Lila navigate a lot of big decisions in this show. If you could give any advice to her what would it be?



and heavy metal, it consistently ranks as the #2 for every other major genre according to Google Trends. The other notable genres for the city are Rock-and-Roll, Alternative, Blues and Dance (6).

Nashville also acts as one of the major LGBT+ safe havens of the south. The state of Tennessee has an overall -13/44.5 Map Score, making it one of the least safe states for queer people to live in. For context, the NY State has a 40.5/44.5. Despite that, Nashville received a 78/100 from the HRC Municipal Equality index which is well above the average as well as one of the highest scores in any southern city. While Lilia is searching for both opportunity and community, Nashville makes sense as a perfect place to start.

COMMUNITY & HOW YOU WILL BE EXPERIENCING THE SHOW

THE LONELY FEW is not a traditional musical, the creative team calls it “immersive but not interactive.” Outside of the genre-bending songs, this show has two separate types of storytelling. With certain songs and scenes, you are an active audience member within the world of the play. The seat you’re sitting in becomes a seat in Paul’s Juke Joint, and Lila’s band is performing to you directly. These are known as diegetic songs in musical theater are when the characters have an awareness that they are performing or that they are singing. THE LONELY FEW also has moments that follow more conventional musical theater structures, where the characters believe that they

are alone and that there is no audience. The songs they sing in these moments are non-diegetic, meaning that the characters do not realize they are singing, and the songs act as an expression of internal life.

The designers for this production have been intentional in making it clear when the show is switching between traditional theater and immersive theater. The lighting and set designers have been very intentional at making the diegetic performances feel like real rock concerts and the moments of internal expression through song more private.

Sources:

- (1) <https://www.lanereport.com/114578/2019/06/kentuckys-most-successful-millennials-are-leaving-where-are-they-going/>
- (2) <https://www.unitedvanlines.com/newsroom/movers-study-2017>
- (3) <https://journeypure.com/ask-our-doctors/kentucky/>
- (4) https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality_maps/profile_state/KY
- (5) <https://www.nashvillechamber.com/economic-development/relocate-or-expand/target-industries/music-entertainment>
- (6) <https://listwithclever.com/research/best-music-cities-2022/>



After seeing the show, how did it feel to be in an immersive but not interactive show? What did you like? What would you have changed?