



Jonnie Blake is performing her first full show in Reno on Sunday, Oct. 4.  
PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

## Get attention

Jonnie Blake

**When she was 16, Jonnie Blake was** around a bonfire at a family gathering. It ended up changing her life when she saw guests play some songs on an acoustic guitar.

"Watching them play in front of me touched my soul, like a part of me that I had no idea existed," Blake said. "I realized, 'Wow, I really want to play guitar and sing.' I thought it was so fascinating that they knew where to put their fingers and when."

Blake, who lives in Washoe Valley, eventually turned that experience into one of her signature tunes, "Soul to Sing." In it, she sings, "Some people just know where their soul is, not including me. They're born knowing where to go, but I felt incomplete. Not 'til the night I strummed G, did I beg God for a soul to sing."

Blake plans to take that sense of soul even further when she soon starts playing and recording under the Soul to Sing moniker instead of her given name. But for now, it's Jonnie Blake you should watch for at open mics in the area as well as her first full-length Reno show on Sunday, Oct. 6, at Jub Jub's Thirst Parlor, 71 S. Wells Ave.

"I wrote that song feeling like whatever energy that is out there provided me the inspiration for it, because a lot of times it doesn't feel like the songs come from myself," she said. "It's a flow. So that's another reason why I want to go out as Soul to Sing. I don't want to take credit for the things that I've written."

The positive energy of music powers Blake through her material, which is inspired by artists like Ingrid Michaelson and Ed Sheeran. She first started playing

in her hometown of Kingman, Arizona, where she sometimes sat in with a band called the Rivals. She moved to Reno in 2015, and it took a bit of time before she started singing locally.

"I meant to get into the music scene right away, but I was just too shy," she said.

Eventually, Blake started going to open mics at places like A to Zen in Carson City and Pignic Pub and Patio in Reno. She's also a member of the Nevada Air and National Guard, performing a couple of songs at its annual Diversity Day this past May. Her gig at Jub Jub's will see her open for traveling acoustic artist Lauren Napier, who hails from Tacoma, Washington.

"I saw her play in Kingman," Blake said. "She played a local winery there and I just loved her style, so I started following her and saw that she posted about Junkee [Clothing Exchange] and playing in Reno, and I just commented and said, 'I'd love to open for you.' And, she said, 'Oh! Let's make that happen.'"

Blake doesn't want to be a stranger after Sunday's show. She's hoping to record soon with Tyler Stafford and keep playing around town. Plus, she's always writing songs—to the point where she has about 45 of her own. Blake said that being that prolific has to do with being patient with yourself.

"I think of it as getting the attention of a cat," she said. "The cat is going to come to you when it wants to, and it's the same with creativity."

With such a personal touch to her work, but also a sense of universality, Blake uses her gifts to try to touch other people's lives—and understand her own.

"It definitely puts me in a state of mind, one that's very meditative and healing," she said. □

Jonnie Blake plays with Lauren Napier and Weslemmon at 8 p.m. Oct. 6 at Jub Jub's Thirst Parlor, 71 S. Wells Ave. Get more details at [facebook.com/soul2sing](https://facebook.com/soul2sing) or [instagram.com/soul\\_to\\_sing](https://instagram.com/soul_to_sing).

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