

The expectant couple put recent troubles behind them as they soak up the sun Down Under

Joel gently places his earphones on Nicole's baby bump, but is Good Charlotte playing on his iPod?

Nicole & Joel IN OZ & IN LO

Reports of a rift between Nicole Richie and Joel Madden were put to rest last week as they arrived in Australia looking even more in love than ever.

The socialite, who's almost six months pregnant, arrived in Brisbane last week with her fiancé. The pair spent a few days relaxing on the Gold Coast before flying to Sydney, where Joel performed with his band Good Charlotte.

The couple were happy to chill in the spring sunshine, with Nicole stripping down to a yellow bikini, so

showing off her growing baby bump.

After indulging in luxury spa treatments at the Sofitel hotel, they tucked in to lunch before lying back and listening to music on their iPods by the pool. Determined to be as close as possible to each other, they even shared a sun lounger at one point.

Careful not to leave their unborn baby out of the holiday, Joel, 28, tenderly put his earphones on 26-year-old Nicole's bump so their child could hear the music.

"They looked very happy," reports one hotel employee. "Just a loving couple on holiday."

Looking healthier than she has in years, pals say Nicole is "taking very good care of her body". The starlet has further committed to her future health by signing up for an 18-month rehab program recently.

Tells one pal, "She's not smoking, drinking, not taking any medication, eating healthy. She's in a good place and everyone is happy to see that."

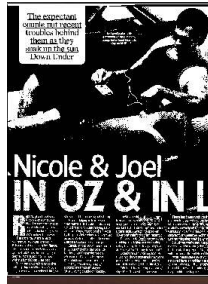
Expectant dad Joel has told pals that since they discovered they were going to become parents, they've completely changed their lifestyles.

"We're different people already," says Joel. "It's a whole new world."

There had been rumours the pair would discreetly tie the knot while they were in Australia, but insiders now believe their nuptials will take place in an intimate ceremony in California next March, two months after their baby is due.

Just three weeks ago, the pair were rocked by reports that Joel had cheated on pregnant Nicole with former girlfriend Hilary Duff.

After much soul-searching during a recent Hawaiian holiday, the couple appear to have put their problems behind them – and it looks as though they couldn't be happier. ■



Grown up

Joel has told close pals that the prospect of first-time parenthood has tamed their ways and they are now far more relaxed and responsible

LOVE AGAIN

→ Aussie pop twins The Veronicas have slammed a report in a Sydney newspaper claiming Joel and his twin brother Benji Madden hit on them at the Nickelodeon Kids' Choice Awards last week. A story in *The Daily Telegraph's* Sydney Confidential column claimed Jess and Lisa Origliasso were seen leaving Good Charlotte's dressing-room, with Lisa saying,

Veronicas tell 'Madden twins didn't cheat!'

"I can't believe he just hit on you!" to a giggling Jess. However, the girls deny anything untoward took place with either Joel or Benji, who is engaged to Australian singer and actress Sophie Monk. "It's a lie," Lisa tells *NW*. "I didn't even see them!" Adds Jess, "I didn't even see their trailer ... [The story] was hysterical. I couldn't even believe it." Says Lisa, "In LA we did some song writing with them and we can appreciate them as artists and as cool guys, but we're not interested in them like that."