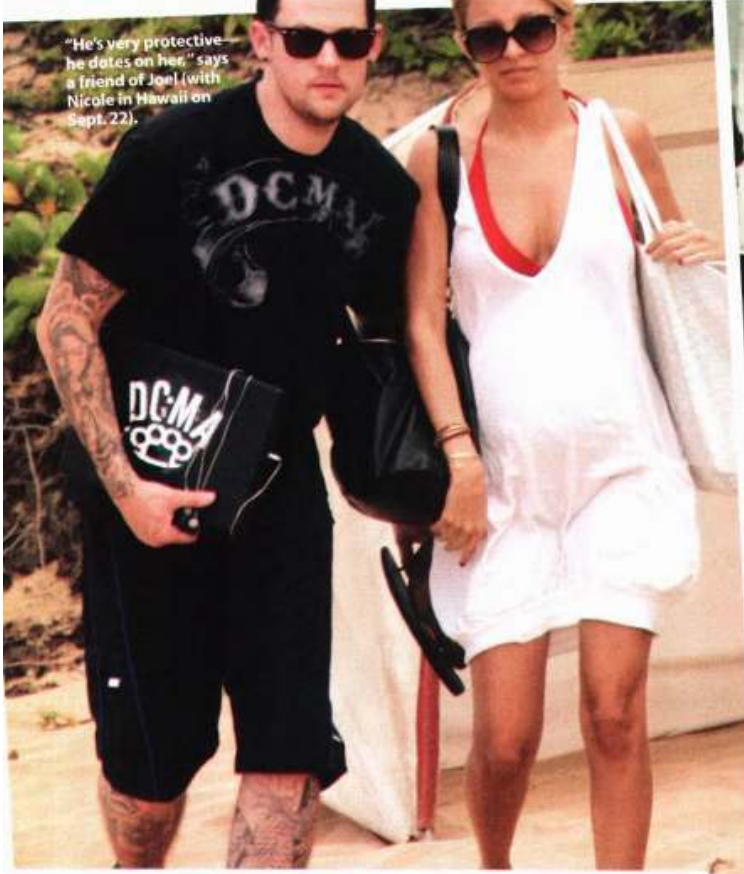
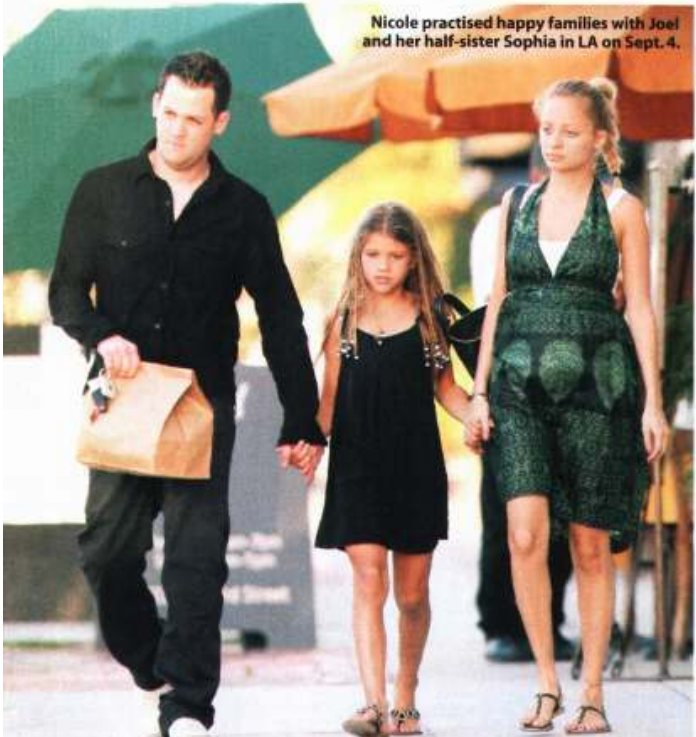




# 10 HOT TOPICS *this week*



"He's very protective - he dates on her," says a friend of Joel (with Nicole in Hawaii on Sept. 22).

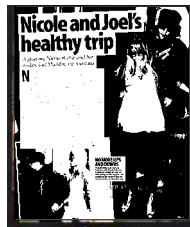


Nicole practised happy families with Joel and her half-sister Sophia in LA on Sept. 4.



Joel gave Nicole (in New York on Sept. 6) "a new lease on life," says a friend.

CLOTHING: FROM BOTTOM LEFT: X17, BIG AUSTRALIA; FLYNET; BIG AUSTRALIA; DAVE ALDO/CA/STARTRAKPHOTO.COM; SHAPPER MEDIA; PAUL MCCONNELL; SHAPPER MEDIA; G-ENTR; IN FIVISION



# Nicole and Joel's healthy trip

*A glowing Nicole Richie and her rocker, Joel Madden, hit Australia*

**N**ICOLE RICHIE AND JOEL Madden needed a little R&R after flying halfway around the world on tour. So after a quick visit to Stephanies Spa Retreat at the Sofitel Brisbane on Oct. 8, the two lounged by the pool, cuddling and listening to music. At one point, Joel lovingly held his earphone to Nicole's growing belly. "They looked very happy," said a spa employee, "just a loving couple on holiday."

Since they became parents-to-be, Joel tells WHO: "We're different people already. It's a whole new world." Now about six months pregnant, Nicole, 26, "is taking very good care of her body," says a friend. "She is not smoking, not drinking, not taking any medication, eating healthy." Her sudden transformation began soon after she and Joel, 28, started dating. "She wanted to be sober on her own, but

he definitely contributed," says a friend of the rock star. "If someone loves someone, they're not going to let the other person hurt themselves."

Contrary to reports, Nicole, who underwent rehab after an arrest for heroin possession in 2003, is not in outpatient rehab, says a source close to her, but she is in a court-ordered alcohol-education program.

Instead of late nights out on the town, Joel now often cooks for Nicole at their home in California. He has also gained sympathy kilos: "They eat a lot! Joel's friends were teasing him about his belly," says the pal, adding that they have put off planning for a wedding so they can focus "on the baby."

Joel is proud of Nicole's new lifestyle: "Everyone had preconceived ideas [about her]—my friends are guilty as well—but they're blown away," he says. "She is the coolest girl on the planet." ■



## NO MORE UPS AND DOWNS

Friends credit Joel (leaving Brisbane with Nicole, left, and arriving in Sydney on Oct. 10) with giving her the support she needed to get healthy and the determination to stay that way.