

A few of **Natalie's** favorite things

Exercise: Swimming. I think it's a really balanced way to exercise because it doesn't put stress on any one part of the body. I just went to the South Pacific and swam in the deep ocean for the first time. I was terrified—I'm not accustomed

Full name: Natalie Anne Merchant
Birthday: October 26
Residence: "Planet Earth"
Former band: 10,000 Maniacs
Solo album: *Tigerlily* (Elektra)

dig this!

to large fish in my swimming environment. I'm definitely more of a pool swimmer!

School subject: History. I'm always looking for an explanation of why things are the way they are, and studying history helps me understand that there is a precedent or a pattern.

Historical time period: The turn of the nineteenth century. People thought things were possible that people to-

day don't think are possible anymore. People actually went into the wilderness to build new societies!

Historical community: The Shakers. They were founded in New York by a woman known as Mother Ann. They practiced celibacy, all property was collectively owned, and men and women had equal decision-making power, which was unheard of at the time [1776]. They were a

Quaker sect, but the queer thing about their worship was that they did a lot of ecstatic dancing—that's why they were called "Shakers."

Pet: My dog, Gracie, who passed away a few months ago. She was a really great dog—a mixture of Border collie, Australian shepherd and Buddhist monk. [Laughs]

Up-and-coming band: Innocence Mission, who I went on tour with recently. I think that their lyrics are really engaging.

Politician: Gandhi. A deeply spiritual man as a leader is something we aren't that familiar with in our country. The fact that he achieved independence for India, a nation that had been under British imperial power—and did it without violence—is amazing.

Thing about being solo: That I can be as uncompromising and unyielding as I want!

Song on her album: "Wonder." I find it to be a hopeful song. It was written about a woman who has a severe physical handicap, and it's about what she's done to overcome it and live her life fully.

Food: Corn. It's extremely versatile: cornbread, corn on the cob, corn muffins, cornmeal mush, corn flakes. . . I just like it. —Amy Talkington

Pssst!

If you're a fan of

the book *Harriet the Spy*, watch for the movie (now filming). • Talk-show queen Ricki Lake, who used to act ▶

movie previews

The Pallbearer

Scoop: David Schwimmer, the sweet nerd on *Friends*, plays a sweet nerd with two best guy buds here, too—except he's a 25-year-old who doesn't have a job and still lives with his mom. But when he's named a pallbearer for an old pal's funeral, the death sort of helps him get, well, a life. There's just one slight problem: He actually has no idea who the guy was.

Standout: the sparks between David and Gwyneth Paltrow, who plays the girl he's had a massive crush on since junior high. (Gwyneth and David heat up the screen way more than she and real-life love Brad Pitt did in *Seven*.)

The Pallbearer



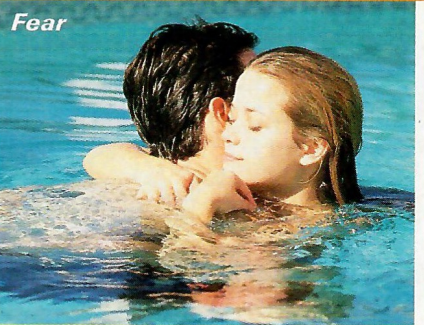
Fear

Scoop: Sixteen-year-old Nicole Walker (Reese Witherspoon) has found the perfect beau: He's a babe, he's big on romance . . . and he's Mark Wahlberg, who used to be cheesy rapper/undies model Marky Mark but has now become a hottie actor. (Did you catch him in *The Basketball Diaries*?) Problems arise when Mark's character turns totally psycho on Nicole and pulls obsessive stalker stunts.

Standout: your hair—as in, it will be standing on end. Word is that the movie started out as a low-key story about intense love, then turned into a *Hand That Rocks the Cradle*-type thriller.

The Last Supper

Scoop: In this bizarre black comedy about frustrated twentysomethings, a group of P.C. pals get together for a night of food and fun, and get all feisty over politics. They then make a plan to knock off offensive right-wingers (their first target being Nazis). **Standout:** the twisted dialogue. And the stars—from Cameron Diaz (*The Mask*) to Jason Alexander (*Seinfeld*)—are pretty hip, too.



Fear

Girl 6

Scoop: Phone-sex operator No. 6 (Theresa Randle) may spend her days cooing seductive sweet nothings, but she has a plan to break out of the biz: Move to Hollywood and become a movie star! Directed by Spike Lee (who also costars), this fairy tale with a hard edge is said to be a return to the comedic roots of earlier Spike films like *She's Gotta Have It*. **Standout:** the colorful cameos, including Madonna, Halle Berry, Naomi Campbell, Debi Mazar and Quentin Tarantino, and the cool tunes by ♪. —Heidi Parker