

# SundayStyles

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## A NIGHT OUT WITH

Diane Birch

### Downtime on Tour

By TRICIA ROMANO

LOS ANGELES

"I've never been so terrified of teenagers, ever," said Diane Birch, the 25-year-old singer and songwriter, on a recent night after opening for Nick Jonas — the lead Jonas Brothers heartthrob — and his band, the Administration.

She has been touring with Mr. Jonas to show off her soulful debut album, "Bible Belt," which has earned her comparisons to Carole King. The title is an ode to her father, a conservative preacher, though Ms. Birch says she herself is no longer religious.

Her inner goth — as a teenager, she listened to Joy Division and Christian

Death — was on display in the form of a Victorian collar. "It looks like a spider web," she said. "It's like 100 years old." But lately she has been hanging out at the apex of teen pop.

"We were discussing the fact that I will be going deaf by the end of the tour from the screaming girls," she said after the concert at Pace, an Italian restaurant in Laurel Canyon.

Her table included her boyfriend, Ariel Stark-Benz, whose Web site describes him as an "art director, producer, cultural analyst, D.J., and model." They were with her friends Raquel Allegra and Steven Johnson, who are engaged (she's a fashion designer, he's a video producer) and Eric Robinson, a musician. They are all foodies.



STEPHANIE DIANI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Good call on the kale," Ms. Birch said to Mr. Robinson.

"I will tell you the best Thai place in L.A.," Mr. Robinson offered. "Jitlada."

"We're so starved for good Thai food in New York," said Ms. Birch, who moved there after a stint in Los Angeles. The conversation turned to Miss Birch's strict religious upbringing in Portland, Ore. She is close to her parents, though

## POST-TEEN

The singer Diane Birch, touring with Nick Jonas, clubbed with friends at Bardot in Los Angeles. The decibel level rivaled that of Jonas's fans.

After dinner, the group headed to a nightclub, Bardot, where there was a party called Mr. Black, which features waiters who wear aprons, top hats and little else. Guests in leather chaps mingled with the club's usual hipster clientele.

Ms. Birch's group ogled a towering drag queen — it turned out that the cast of "RuPaul's Drag Race," a reality television show, had come by after a shoot. "That's amazing," Miss Birch said. "When I was a kid, all my friends were drag queens."

She stared at a person with a particularly large bosom. "They kind of look real — they're, like, bouncing," she said, adding, "I like this so much more than pretentious Hollywood places."

A string of Madonna songs blasted through the speakers. The volume proved too loud for the group, which voted to change clubs. After finishing their Champagne, Ms. Birch and her posse weaved through the drag queens, the leather daddies and the bare-bottomed waiters and stepped out into the brisk night.

the first time her father saw her perform was on the "Tonight Show With Conan O'Brien" in December. "My dad was crying — it was so cute," she said. "They actually are a lot more open-minded now in their older age."

Mr. Robinson said: "Yeah, devil worship — it's coming around full circle."

Miss Birch went along: "Yeah, exactly. Sacrifices."