

# Stephanie Niznik

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You know Stephanie Niznik as Nina Feeney, the sexy girl-next-door from the now-defunct family-friendly TV drama *Everwood*. Or maybe you don't. Read on!

Stephanie phoned SOAK from Utah amid trying to sell her home and gave us the skinny on everything from sex toys to, uh, Scott Wolf?

Intrigued?

**SOAK:** *How are you taking the end of the series Everwood?*

**Stephanie Niznik:** I'm actually pretty broken-hearted. I really loved it. It was a really great show and what do you say when you say goodbye to something you love? It was four great years of fabulous writing and a great cast, and it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I'm glad I had it. I don't think it's the last I'll have, but it's certainly very special.

**SOAK:** *The show must have such a huge base of fans.*

**Stephanie:** What's funny is that I've done a lot of different projects and every different project has a different fan base. And I have to say that the *Everwood* fans, by far, are the best fans ever, because they tend to be really intelligent. A lot of times, it's the mom's who stop me and thank me. They're all happy and proud because they like the show, and they're like, 'You know, it brings up topics we can discuss with our kids, and thanks so much for doing the show.' And it's great to be part of something like that. I don't really understand the powers that be not picking us up, but so be it. We went out with a bang, what can I say?

**SOAK:** *So you're from Bangor, Maine?*

**Stephanie:** I sure am.

**SOAK:** *So you're going out with a bang from Bangor?*

**Stephanie:** [laughs] Oh gosh, yes. I am!

**SOAK:** *I'm sure you've heard every single thing in the book about the name of your hometown.*

**Stephanie:** Absolutely. Me and Stephen King. I think we're the only two who have come out of Bangor so far.

**SOAK:** *Although the show was a hit, some people might not be that familiar with the show.*

**Stephanie:** I will admit, most of our fans...you know, strangely, I do a lot of cross-country driving because I like to drive. A couple times, I'd be at truck stops and these big, huge truckers would come over and say, [she does her best big-guy voice] 'Hey, I know you, I love your show.' So it was a pretty broad spectrum

of who would watch the show.

**SOAK:** *Although Everwood is in the past, what was your favorite part of being a part of the cast?*

**Stephanie:** The thing I liked the most about *Everwood* is that almost everybody on the cast came from theater. And the creator of the show, Greg Berlanti, is a writer. He was adamant that writers be treated well on our show. And it really paid off because every time that I got a script, it was a one-act play. The chance to work on material that held up, that you wanted to read, even when it wasn't about your character; that was a pure joy. It was four years of truly feeling and being given the chance to be an artist, and that was a gift. And also, just being in Utah—that just rocked. Just to take a little step away from Hollywood, which is great, but Utah, you're sort of isolated in a little bubble and you just did your work and hiked in the mountains.

**SOAK:** *It seems most filming is done in Los Angeles, Hollywood, Malibu, and other tropical places, but you were in Salt Lake City. That's great you were able to enjoy it.*

**Stephanie:** Being from Maine, I'm not a real clubber so I fit right in. [laughs] It was pretty special. And it really is a different culture because it really is in Salt Lake. It's a whole different speed than LA or New York or any other major city. It's a very unique town. To my understanding, it was founded by Mormons, and it's the best organized town I have ever been in. You have the temple and all the streets radiate from the temple and are appropriately named in so far as how they relate to the temple, so it's all east and west. There were strong family values there and interesting people. I was worried until I got there and then I thought it was great. Then there's Park City, which is always, and will always be Sin City [laughs].

**SOAK:** *I'm not going to say the cast of Everwood is Motley Crüe, but what was it like working in a dry city?*

**Stephanie:** You get used to it. There are a lot of little rules you don't understand right away, like you can't have two drinks on a table at any time in any restaurant.

**SOAK:** *What if you have two Sprites?*

**Stephanie:** You can have all the Sprite you want [laughs]. But as for alcoholic drinks, from what I understand, you have to finish your drink before another one comes on the table—you can't have a sidecar. So it's interesting. You get used to it and then you kind of learn to drink at home. [laughs]

**SOAK:** *It's cheaper that way, too.*

**Stephanie:** It's definitely cheaper. Although, I

think it has been getting a little more lenient lately. I think it's only like 50-percent Mormon now.

**SOAK:** *They must have all thought, 'Hey Karl Malone didn't want to stick around, so maybe we shouldn't either.'*

**Stephanie:** [laughs]

**SOAK:** *Mom's would often approach you in public and tell you that it was good they could now have topics they could discuss with their kids. What kind of things did they ask you about?*

**Stephanie:** Abortion. Drugs. Infidelity... although my character was very definitely the woman next door, I seemed to have a lot of sexual paraphernalia hanging around the house like pornography and dildos that my next door neighbor's daughter kept finding. We dealt with that kind of stuff. But the thing I loved about *Everwood* was that essentially, there were two approaches [she pauses as a plane flew overhead and says, 'I seem to be over the flight pattern of the LA airport. This is a pink and white plane, I don't even want to guess who that is'], you have the adult take on a situation and the teen's take on the situation. The thing that I liked was that it gave weight to both sides of the argument. Sometimes the kids are wrong, and sometimes the adults are wrong. Sometimes both. Everybody on the show made right and wrong decisions. But more often than not they made noble decisions.

**SOAK:** *So you guys had plenty of those sappy, aw-shucks Danny Tanner/Full House moments?*

**Stephanie:** Nah. We didn't have too many of those. [laughs] It wasn't too horrible. It was real family life.

**SOAK:** *Was it ever uncomfortable talking to fans about abortion and other controversial issues?*

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Of course it was. It's a delicate topic, you know, there are a lot of different takes on the situation. As an actor, I make sure I agree with what my character is saying. I have to, or I can't act it. Occasionally, I got scripts where I thought, 'Wow, how in the world am I going to believe that?' and I find a way. But overall, the *Everwood* fans are great people. I was just so honored they watched my show.

**SOAK:** *People really think the actor is really that character in real life?*

**Stephanie:** Well, they do. I used to give life advice all the time. In fact, I have friends, doctors and lawyers, who would tell me what to do. I was like, 'You do realize, of course, this is a television show.' So I got a lot of helpful hints, from even my close friends and family,



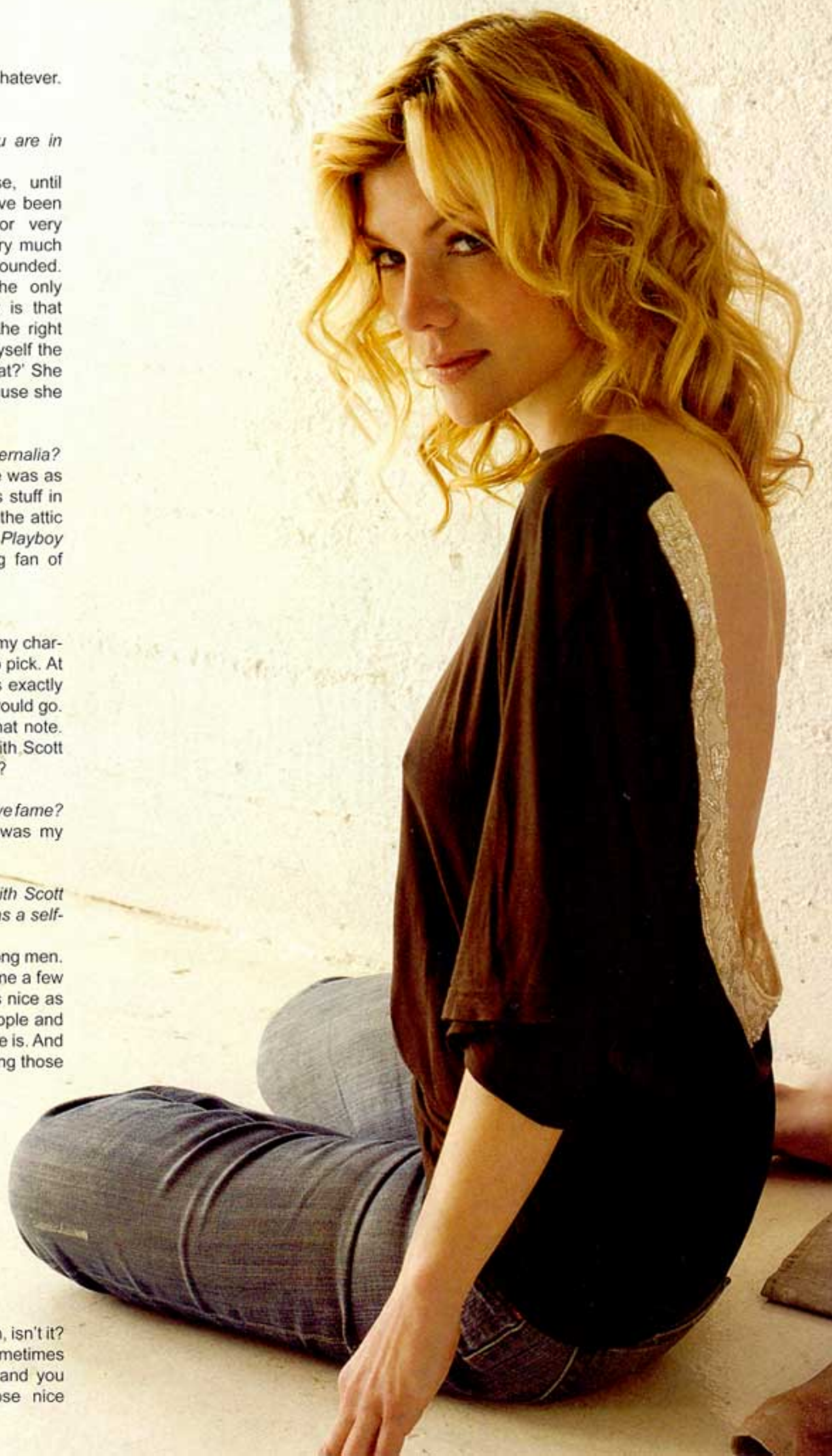




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which was kind of disconcerting, but whatever. [laughs]

**SOAK:** *Is Nina Feeney like how you are in real life?*

**Stephanie:** Yes. It's funny because, until *Everwood*, a lot of my characters have been extremists—you know very sexy or very tough or very strong. And Nina is very much the woman next door; she's pretty grounded. She's relatively sane and wise. The only difference between her and I really is that she tends to say the right thing at the right moment, where I'm always kicking myself the next day saying, 'Why didn't I say that?' She comes up with it, but I guess it's because she had a little help with writers.

**SOAK:** *What about the sexual paraphernalia?*

**Stephanie:** It was sort of hidden. She was as shocked as the kids who found it. It's stuff in her attic, and they were cleaning out the attic and they found her husband's old *Playboy* magazines and stuff. She was a big fan of addressing an issue at hand.

**SOAK:** *What was Nina's overall role?*

**Stephanie:** The whole big thing with my character was which guy she was going to pick. At the very end, I picked Dr. Brown. It is exactly where I always hoped the character would go. So I am pleased that we ended on that note. It was the big question: Would I be with Scott Wolf or would I be with Treat Williams?

**SOAK:** *Whoa, Scott Wolf! Of Party of Five fame?*

**Stephanie:** Yeah. On the show he was my live-in lover for two years.

**SOAK:** *What was that like working with Scott Wolf? A lot of people must think of him as a self-centered teen heartthrob?*

**Stephanie:** Scott Wolf is a prince among men. I adore him. I have to admit it, it took me a few weeks to really realize that he was as nice as he seemed. Sometimes you meet people and you think, 'Are they really that nice?' He is. And his wife is so amazing and just watching those two together, it makes you believe in true love.

**SOAK:** *Awww.*

**Stephanie:** I mean the poor guy. He looks so much younger than he is. I think he's finally coming into manhood on celluloid. He's such a great guy.

**SOAK:** *It has to be a surprise when that happens.*

**Stephanie:** It's a good surprise though, isn't it? I'm not going to name names, but sometimes you're shooting movies with people and you realize they really were acting those nice characters.