



Tassimo Hot Beverage System

So, your favorite student is about to graduate and head out into the real world with real responsibilities. For the special occasion, you want to buy him or her a meaningful gift. Something useful, but different. Something trendy, but timeless. Here are some of Lighting Homestyle's top gift ideas for grads. Ready, set, shop!

Tassimo Hot Beverage System: Available for US\$170 at various department stores, including Macy's, Bloomingdales, Filene's and Marshall Field's. Also available at specialty retailers like Brookstone, Bed Bath & Beyond, and Linens 'n Things.

This new single-serve beverage brewing system is the only machine that will allow you to prepare assorted hot drinks, including coffee, cappuccino, espresso, tea and hot chocolate. This is an ideal gift for grads on a budget (no need for Starbucks) who want the convenience of enjoying their favorite hot beverage in about 60 seconds. The system uses the brewing machine and proprietary Tassimo discs (T-DISCS, available for \$6.49-\$9.99 where machines are sold or online at www.Tassimo.com). Tassimo also uses real liquid milk to create the dense foam or frothy milk for cappuccinos and lattes, eliminating the need for a complicated steam wand.

iRobot Roomba Scheduler Robotic Vacuum: Available for about US\$330 through specialty retailers, including Brookstone (www.brookstone.com).

What more could a busy college graduate want than someone or some "thing" to vacuum his or her floor? We're not talking about a cleaning service. Roomba Scheduler, which cleans floors all by itself, makes cleaning up easy by allowing you to schedule exactly when you want their floors cleaned—while at work, overnight or whenever it's most convenient. Roomba's robotic intelligence also lets the machine seek out and remove dirt from carpets and hard surfaces. Among other accessories, Roomba comes with a scheduling remote, a self-charging home base, a fast charger, cleaning tool and extra brushes and filters.



iRobot Roomba

BMW Cruise Bike: Available for US\$800 through BMW dealers nationwide. You can also purchase the bicycle by logging onto www.bmw-online.com or calling 888-269-6654.

A BMW automobile might not be within your budget, but you can go for the next best thing: a BMW Cruise Bike. This new two-wheeler

Gifts for Grads

By Robyn Parets



BMW Cruise Bike

watch is compatible with USB 2.0, allowing for quicker download time for larger files. The water-resistant memory watch is perfect for anyone on the go.

Brookstone Power NAP Pillow:

Available for US\$60 at Brookstone retail stores (www.brookstone.com) or by calling 800-351-7222.

Some recent graduates have trouble getting used to a regular 9-to-5 schedule. For those grads really having a difficult adjustment, the Power NAP Pillow is the perfect gift. The soft, ultraconforming pillow soothes

enjoyable ride. The unmistakable BMW bike is a mixture of a beach cruiser and a trekking bike—perfect for a leisurely ride or invigorating adventure. The versatile engineering also transforms riding on rough city streets into a pleasurable experience. The bike's tires are smooth in the middle, yet have plenty of traction on the outer areas to help navigate through wet riding conditions. To boot, riders can stop quickly as the BMW Cruise Bike uses an integrated brake routing system. Talk about a smooth ride!

Digital Sound Bag: Available for US\$70 through Red Envelope by logging on at www.redenvelope.com or calling 877-473-3249.

Most grads already have an MP3 player, but here's your opportunity to help them take that personal music player to the next level. All they have to do is slip an MP3 player into the Digital Sound Bag's interior pocket, plug it into the built-in speaker, and hit play. And presto: instant amplification and tunes on the go. The bag comes in red, white and blue with clear acetate windows, allowing users to see the music player's display and access controls.

Mini Memory Watch: Available for about US\$169 at www.minimotoringear.com or by calling 866-467-MINI.

Talk about a conversation piece. The Mini Memory Watch (which is also made as a BMW Memory Watch—www.bmw-online.com) has an impressive 256-megabyte storage capacity, allowing users to store files and download business presentations, as well as hold photos, music and more. The



Brookstone Power NAP Pillow



the body and relaxes the mind—allowing for productive naps. New grads will love the ultraplush NapSoft material surrounding thousands of super-fine microbeads. Users can customize the white pillows with NapSac covers in multiple colors.

Digital Sound Bag

City Watch

The best places to eat, drink, stay and play

Quebec City

Where to Eat

Aux Anciens Canadiens (34, rue Saint-Louis; www.auxancienscanadiens.qc.ca; 418-692-1627)

Quebec not only features cuisine that equals the finest in France, it also offers its own Quebecois specialties, such as tourtiere, creton and sugar pie. The region produces a wide variety of fine cheeses, wines, beers and top-quality local products. This former ancestral home is the place to sample some of the best. Complete dinners start at about US\$35 before drinks, taxes and service.

Quebecers celebrate the region's renowned maple syrup at hundreds of cabanes a sucre (sugar shacks), which serve traditional maple-flavored dishes, such as ham, baked beans and tire d'erable (maple taffy.) Several are open year-round.



Quaint shopping

Where to Sleep

Fairmont Le Chateau Frontenac (www.fairmont.com; 418-692-3861, 800-257-7544)

To feel luxuriously regal, stay here. Built by the Canadian Pacific Railway over a century ago, the hotel looms like a castle over the delightful shopping area of Rue de Petit Champlain and backs onto the fabulous gardens and encompassing views of the Terrasse Dufferin. Nightly rates start at about US\$200, and packages are available.

Ice Hotel (www.icehotel-canada.com; 877-505-0423)

Sleep cozily on ice and snow at North America's only ice hotel, open January to April. Built with unique architecture each year, the Ice Hotel is a magical, luxurious experience. Prices start at about US\$600 per night—but you can take the hotel tour for only \$14.

For a bar scene like no other and the frostiest vodka ever, try the Absolut Bar at the Ice Hotel.

Where to Drink

Cidrie La Pomme Du Saint-Laurent (lapommudustlaurent@globetrotter.net; 418-246-5957)

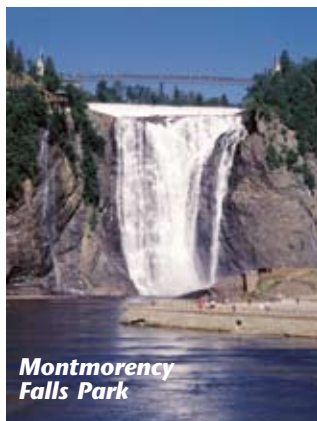
About 45 minutes from Quebec City, this charming cidrie is family-owned and operated. Try the local cidre de glace (ice cider), a sophisticated Quebec specialty, or the crisp, delicious nonalcoholic cider, fruit liqueurs, honeys and preserves.



Economuseum

Where to Shop

For an unusual shopping experience, visit a few of the economuseum workshops and boutiques, where you will see and learn directly from artisans working at historical crafts and trades. Quebec City features economusees of dollmaking, woodworking, blacksmithing, stained and leaded glass working, herbalism and more. www.economusees.com, 418-694-4466.



Montmorency Falls Park

Now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Vieux-Quebec, the old cobblestone walled city, is a picture-postcard perfect shopping area split between the Haute-Ville (Upper Town) and Basse-Ville (Lower Town.) When you tire of the boutiques, slip into one of several excellent museums or ride the funicular next to the Chateau Frontenac.

What to Do

Grosse-Ile and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site (www.pc.gc.ca/grosseile.com; 800-463-6769)

Take a ferry through the majestic St. Lawrence River to this small island where thousands of Irish and other European would-be immigrants were quarantined from 1832 to 1937. Now a fascinating memorial as well as a historical and educational site, Grosse-Ile is austere beautiful and moving.



Country church

Tour the winding cobblestone streets and town squares of Old Quebec City, a 400-year-old UNESCO world heritage site and the cradle of French civilization in America. Just 20 minutes away, spend an afternoon relaxing or hiking at Montmorency Falls Park, 100 feet higher (but much narrower) than Niagara with a magnificent panorama tumbling into the St. Lawrence. Try the cable car, panoramic stairway, suspension bridge and an excellent restaurant at the adjacent Manoir Montmorency. If you visit in wintertime, join the locals and slide down the icy 'sugarloaf' created by the frozen spray of the falls. www.sepaq.com/chutemontmorency, 418-663-3330.

Grosse-Ile





Venice

Venice is a city of countless wonders and irresistible charm. Her maze of canals, small squares, bridges and narrow streets entice the adventurous to explore her hidden treasures. She rises from the water like a mirage, eager to impress all who gaze in astonishment at the sheer improbability of her existence. Even in her decline, La Serenissima is an awe-inspiring city with plenty of excellent sights, food, drink, shopping and accommodations to be enjoyed.

unpretentious space where one can relax after a feet-blistering tour of the city's incalculable sights, monuments and museums. Newly renovated and modern—not to mention immaculately clean—it is within a few minutes' walk to the Rialto and San Marco. A bountiful continental breakfast is served to guests every morning. The proprietors are all too happy to provide info about what to see and do, where to eat, etc. A comfortable bed and breakfast run by a wonderful couple.



the local favorite—again prosecco—as well as “cicchetti,” or “little bites” of food: Venice’s answer to Spain’s tapas. Prosecco is a light, refreshing, highly quaffable and well-behaved wine that goes down smooth and never gets old—much like Venice herself.

the Villa Foscari at Malcontenta and Villa Saranzo at Fiessa, the facade of which was frescoed by Veronese’s brother. Cruise down the canal in a traditional “burchiello,” a boat made famous by the Venetian playwright Carlo Goldoni, and experience what Venetian nobles enjoyed during the Golden Age. Take a stroll through Rialto’s La Pescheria (the famed fish market) and behold a multitude of fresh seafood, some of which will



Church of the Salute

Where to Sleep

The Hotel Gritti Palace (Campo Santa Maria del Giglio 2467, San Marco/www.gritti.hotelinvenice.com/+39041794611) is the quintessence of elegance and refinement. Enviably located in a 16th century palace that faces the Grand Canal and a stone’s throw from Piazza San Marco, this 90-room hotel is embellished with museum-worthy paintings, luxurious salons and a fine restaurant that overlooks the hustle and bustle of the grandest boulevard in the world. Pricy, but well worth the splurge.

B & B Le Boteghe (Calle de le Boteghe 3438, San Polo/www.alebotege.it/+393491974833) is an exceptionally peaceful and

Where to Eat

Ristorante Da Fiore (Calle del Scaletter 2202, San Polo/+39041721308) is a small, modern, insanely popular eatery where the fruits of the Venetian lagoon are showcased. Try the bacalà mantecato—a heavenly blend of whipped salt cod, olive oil and a smidgen of both garlic and milk—spread on crispy crostini or polenta squares.

Where to Drink

Harry’s (San Marco 1323/www.cipriani.com/+390415285777) is a legendary bar with a slightly clubby feel that serves the finest drinks in Venice, most notably the Bellini Cocktail—white peach juice blended with prosecco, the region’s less assertive answer to French Champagne—and the ultimate Martini. In order to truly “do” Venice, a stop here is mandatory. They also serve uncommonly delectable chicken and shrimp salad sandwiches.

Osteria Vivaldi (Calle de la Madoneta 1457, San Polo/+390415238185) is a pub that offers patrons—locals and foreigners alike—several varieties of

Where to Shop

Take a ferry to the Island of Murano, where Venetian glass art is created, or to Burano, where they have been making lace by hand for centuries. There are countless stores offering traditional Venetian carnival masks. Avoid the ubiquitous bogus masks that the hawkers push upon you.

What to Do

A tour of the Brenta Riviera offers lovers of Italian art and architecture—Palladio is one of the giants here—an abundance of attractions, such as



be still writhing and awaiting their imminent fate as fine risotto or pasta ingredients.

If you haven’t already done so in your lifetime, hire a gondolier to take you through the labyrinthine canals. Neapolitan love songs and opera arias are, indeed, optional. Predictable? Yes. Memorable? Absolutely!



Carnival



The Luxe Life in Malaysia

This “truly Asian” destination offers a top-notch resort scene.

By Rachel Newcombe

Sandy white beaches, lush unspoiled rainforests and a blissful atmosphere greet you on the island of Pangkor Laut, off the coast of Malaysia. With its internationally acclaimed Spa Village, it's the perfect place to go to unwind completely in tropical paradise.

The privately owned island of Pangkor Laut is situated three miles off the West Coast of Malaysia in the Straits of Malacca. The island has about 300 acres of land, but only a small part has been developed into the home of the Pangkor Laut Resort and Spa Village. The rest of the area remains untouched, in the form of natural two million-year-old rainforests. The island is only accessible to guests staying there, so it's ideal if you're looking for a private getaway, away from the tourist crowds.

Accommodations are true Malaysian style: luxury wooden villas built on stilts and suspended above the waterfront. All are finished to high standards, with private balconies, large private bathrooms, windows overlooking tropical gardens or the sea and air conditioning. For those wanting a complete life of luxury, eight private estates set



Pangkor Laut beckons as a distinctly private getaway.



A resort with it all: a spa to pamper every taste, charming over-water accommodations and an easy hop to the bright lights of Kuala Lumpur.

The spa offers an exquisite range of pampering treats, designed to eliminate all the stresses and strains of daily life, drawing from Malaysian, Chinese, Ayurvedic, Thai, Balinese and Western healing influences. The options are extensive and spa visitors can either opt for individual treatments or go for a customized or “experience” package. Some treatments are offered for couples or pairs, so you can take a partner with you for double indulgence.

For those seeking the full works, the spa is happy to arrange customized extensive treatment packages lasting seven days or longer.

They’re usually designed with the idea of focusing on both physical and spiritual health and well-being.

The area around the Spa Village has been sensitively designed, with open courtyards, flourishing gardens, areas where herbs grow in abundance, lotus ponds and an intriguing reflexology path, so there’s plenty to see and explore. The island has enough to keep most travelers occupied during their stay, but the mainland is a short distance away and has lots to see and do as well.

Kuala Lumpur

If you can bring yourself to leave the tranquillity of the island for a day, or perhaps before you fly home, Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, is well worth visiting. It’s a vibrant, thriving city—a huge contrast to the peacefulness of Pangkor Laut—that represents the “new” Malaysia. Its rich history and culture is clearly evident, but the modern and engaging present dominates the striking architecture.

At 1,483 feet tall, the 88-floor Petronas Twin Towers is one of the world’s tallest buildings. It’s free to visit and offers a stunning view of the city, but you do need to get a ticket to gain access.

For a different type of architecture, the Dataran Merdeka, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, represents the work of Colonial Britons. A 330-foot





This lushly vegetated paradise also sports a pristine beachfront.

flagpole, believed to be one of the tallest in the world, marks the spot where Malaysia's independence as a nation was asserted. It was here in 1957 that the Union Jack flag was lowered and the Malayan hoisted.

Elsewhere, the art deco Central Market is the place to go for an insight into Malaysian culture. Performances, demonstrations, displays and activities are widely offered and it boasts an array of arts and crafts. At night, wander down to the center of Kuala Lumpur's original Chinatown, to Petaling Street or Chee Cheong Kai. There you'll find traditional street vendors in abundance, selling designer knock-offs and other wares; haggling is expected. The atmosphere, sights and sounds of the vendors in action are all part of the experience.

Finding somewhere to eat shouldn't be a problem, as the city is brimming with tempting restaurants serving local cuisine. There are lots of options in the main tourist areas, but for a touch of authenticity, venture off the main area of Petaling Street in Chinatown and you'll find places like Yook Woo Hin, where the locals congregate.

Seven miles north of Kuala Lumpur lie the famous Batu Caves, the sacred site for Hindus in Malaysia. Discovered in 1892, they consist of three main caves and a number of smaller ones and are reached via a set of

steps built into the limestone rock face. You're also likely to encounter some of the monkeys that live in the area surrounding the caves.

Malaysia is regarded by many as the jewel in Asia's crown. That's certainly the case with Pangkor Laut and a trip to the island, as well as the mainland, are sure to provide the traveller with a memorable experience.

Essential Information

Pangkor Laut Resort – <http://www.pangkorlautresort.com/>

Pangkor Laut Spa Village - <http://www.pangkorlautresort.com/spa.htm>

The island can be reached via several means. It's a one hour drive from Ipoh, followed by a 45-minute ferry ride, exclusive to Pangkor Laut guests. It's also possible to fly from Kuala Lumpur to Pangkor Island, where a representative will meet you and escort you by taxi to a private jetty. There a boat will take you on the final 40-minute trip to the island.

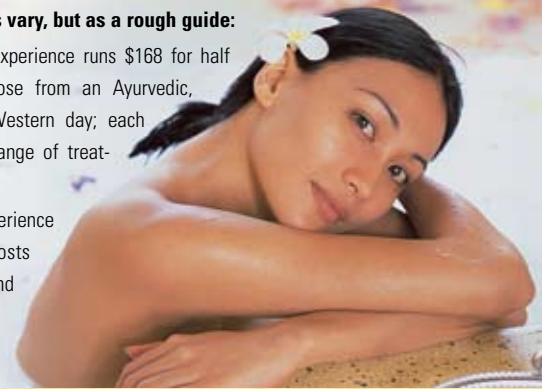
Typical temperatures range from 80 to 95 degrees; it's usually sunny year-round.

Villas range in price from \$250 per night for a villa, to \$620 per night for a top-end suite (prices in U.S. dollars).

Prices of treatments vary, but as a rough guide:

The Traditional Spa Experience runs \$168 for half a day. You can choose from an Ayurvedic, Chinese, Malay or Western day; each package includes a range of treatment options.

The Ultimate Spa Experience for two people costs \$1,025 for a full day and \$512 for half a day.



Lights, Cameras, *Relax!*

Luxurious spa bathrooms: The new star at home

By Barbara Ballinger

As more homeowners experience busier, stressed lives, they seek refuge and relaxation in the most private room in their house: the master bathroom. But it doesn't look like the bathroom of yesteryear or even the last decade.

Today's homeowners are seeking luxurious, pampering retreats that remind them of the poshest bathrooms they've enjoyed in hotels, resorts and spas.

Some plumbing manufacturers are so cognizant of this trend that they're making the products they design for commercial destinations available to homeowners, says Marshall Williams, manager of corporate accounts for Kohler Co. Gordon Gibson, who owns a general contracting firm in Los Angeles, has had similar requests. "Travelers come back and want three or four body sprays, when before a hand-held spray used to be fine."



Since most owners have space and budget constraints, they need to prioritize their wish lists. To create a spa-like environment, they should have a minimum 160 to 200 square feet for a good-sized tub or walk-in shower, says Mike Klein, chairman of Airoom, a design/build company in Lincolnwood, IL. If they have more space and dollars, they may have room for his-and-her bathrooms, as Klein does.

Besides space, an essential is a palette that connotes elegant relaxation. For most homeowners that means watery blue, pale green, soft pink, cream or white, Gibson says. Fixtures, fittings, cabinetry and extras that further the spa aesthetic tend toward the minimal and sleek rather than traditional and fussy, Klein says.

When it comes to other decisions, experts advise choosing what fits your lifestyle. If you never have time to soak, there's little reason for a whirlpool tub. If you and a spouse won't use the room together, you may not need a second lavatory—the industry term for sink. Creating a spa is about the here and now; try not to let resale considerations rule. Here's how to get started:

Materials. One of the main guidelines is to use natural materials, such as granite, marble, travertine or limestone, which suggest nature, or synthetic products that simulate it well. New York-based hotel designer Laurie Weltz favors a combination of materials for visual interest. Certain types of finishes work better in certain places, says Mark Karas, a designer with Adams Kitchens in Stoneham, MA. For instance, a honed stone is great for a floor so it's not slippery; polished—or honed—stones are fine on counters, along with concrete



A spa-like environment requires generous square footage.



and other materials. If you're debating between marble and granite, keep in mind that some think granite is less porous, but that depends on the grade, Karas says. Also, the soap and water used in a bathroom are not as detrimental to either material as are oils and wines used in a kitchen, Karas says. If you prefer tile, Klein suggests using bigger squares or a slab to avoid fussy grout lines. For a decorative border or insert accent, consider mosaic glass or gemstone tiles—mother of pearl, rose quartz or tiger's eye, says Anna Marie Fanelli, owner of Floor & Décor in Tenafly, NJ.

One of the most popular luxe features is radiant heating, which can be installed underneath most hard surfaces and warms toes. Nuheat's are fashioned in mat sizes. A shower bench is another luxurious touch that allows users to sit and shave. Designer Hope Faust of Design Coordinates in Los Angeles likes wood benches because they're warmer than stone but cautions that wood needs to be treated and periodically refinished. Walls sport change, too. Because of the popularity of steam showers, paint, tile, stone and beadboard may be preferable to wallpaper, which can peel. Mirrors aren't installed as often over entire walls; they're smaller and framed like art.

Showers and tubs. The second feature that says "spa" is an abundance of water. In spa bathrooms that means having it spill, spray and bubble from showerheads, rainfall heads, body jets, whirlpool jets, waterfall faucets and other openings. It also means being able to enjoy the water at different pressures and temperatures. To create a large enough spa-type shower you need a 4 X 4-foot or 5 X 6-foot space, says Gibson. More homeowners are adding steam. Products like Mr. Steam offer not just pleasures and health benefits but an aromatherapeutic effect, since fragrances can be added. If you want to pare the cluttered look that comes from having multiple sprays, Kohler's new "WaterTile" resembles a tile and has different size sprays for different effects. Chicago designer Mick De Giulio also recommends designing a shower with a recessed floor to avoid a threshold. In some mild climates, gardens with a water element are incorporated. In TwinEagles in Naples, FL, McGarvey Custom Homes built a master bath that opens to a landscaped garden with tiered waterfall.

For those who have room for a tub and time to soak, Klein recommends one at least 36 inches wide and 72 inches long and with dif-



More and more, mirrors are framed like art. Small saunas (below) are designed to fit in newer bathroom layouts.



ferent water treatments. Kohler's newest whirlpools offer 20 different effects and chromatherapy or light therapy. The company's new "Sok" tub is akin to a deep infinity-type pool, with a sheet of bath water spilling over the tub's rim into a water channel that is recirculated. For a different type of spa look, New York architect Evan Galen suggests a freestanding tub.

Lavatories. The simplest, most minimalist sinks are undermounted, Klein says. Fittings in a wall that spill water into a bowl like a waterfall are another spare look.

Toilets. All toilets are no longer created equal. Spa toilets pamper with heated seats, drying features and pulsating massages. Takagi's "Fresh Seat" also has a temperature-controlled front and rear wash.

Cabinetry and other storage.

Storage with simple paneled fronts and minimal hardware fit the spa mood, as does a combination of closed and open shelves. Experts advise limiting the contents of open shelves to stacks of white, fluffy towels.



For aesthetics and practical purposes, lighting should come from different sources. Features like freestanding tubs and chandeliers make an impact.

Lighting. As with other rooms, lighting should come from a combination of sources, including recessed cans or halogen spots in a cove for overall illumination; sconces above a lavatory or on side walls for task lighting; some type of lighting in a shower; and, if the layout permits, a chandelier for a dressy accent. The key is to put all lamps on dimmers, so the level can be adjusted for tasks and romance. A window or skylight adds natural light and brings in nature.

Extras. For bathrooms with extra square footage, Gibson likes a chaise to lounge, nap or talk on a phone; Galen advises upholstering it in terrycloth. If space is very luxurious, Williams suggests a massage table. Designer Gail Morse of Kansas City likes Sunlight Saunas' small saunas, which come equipped with infrared heat, a CD player, TV and MP3 circuit. Other popular extras are a mirror that defogs, plants, a coffee or juice bar and framed paintings under glass.

The biggest change is still to come, says Williams. He is encouraging builders to include a larger spa retreat in a home's public area, so it's available to the entire family. "It will be a way to avoid fights over who gets to use the parents' spa bathroom and a way for family members to connect," he says.

What's the Payback on a Bathroom Remodel?

Although resale should not be the prime motivation to remodel, the dollars recouped can be pleasant music to the ears—and the homeowner's pocketbook. According to Remodeling magazine's "2005 Cost vs. Value Report," the national average to expand and redo an existing 5- X 7-foot bathroom to 9 X 9 feet has climbed past \$26,000, but offers a 93.2 percent return on investment. The return is highest in the West and South, followed by the East, and lowest in the Midwest.





Reshaping Your View

CRT offers a no-surgery way to improve vision.

By Benjamin Gleisser

Ocular technology has come a long way since William Shakespeare invented the word “eyeball.” Today, the newest treatment in vision care is orthokeratology, which is also called corneal refractive therapy (CRT). CRT is a nonsurgical procedure that corrects nearsightedness by having the patient wear a special contact lens at night while sleeping. Doing so frees the patient from wearing glasses or contact lenses during the day.

How does it work? The corneal tissue of the eye is very elastic and shapes easily. However, CRT is not a one-shot cure-all. If the patient doesn't wear the lenses every night, the eyeball will return to its natural nearsighted shape. And sorry, you farsighted people, but CRT won't work for you. Though some companies claim to have lenses for farsightedness, Brian Kirschling, O.D., assistant professor of clinical ophthalmology, University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, is skeptical.

“The FDA hasn't approved this procedure for farsightedness,” Kirschling says. The FDA approved CRT for nearsightedness in 2002.

Good candidates for CRT include those who are afraid of LASIK surgery, which uses a laser to correct imperfections in the eye, and people with good hygiene habits. This is because people need to wash their hands and thoroughly clean their night lenses daily; unclean lenses could lead to eye infection and, possibly, ulceration of the eye.

“I screen CRT patients, because I want to know that a person is reliable, mature and will care for his lenses properly,” Kirschling says. “CRT is not risk-free, but following a disinfecting protocol for lenses greatly reduces the risk factor.”

That's why Kirschling won't fit youngsters who haven't reached high school age. Also, he doesn't recommend CRT for anyone over 40; studies indicate older persons' corneas are less moldable, he says.

Though the risk is minimal, some people may experience initial discomfort like blurred vision or dry eyes as their eyes get used to the lenses. However, this is temporary, and most patients achieve optimum vision 10 to 14 days after they start wearing the CRT lenses at night, according to the Child and Family Optometry website.

Kirschling says he charges about \$1,200 for the procedure, which includes fitting, the lenses and periodic checkups; other estimates seen on the Internet run as high as \$2,500. LASIK surgery, which uses a laser to correct nearsightedness, runs about \$1,000 per eye. Kirschling is convinced the procedure is safe, because he underwent CRT himself in 2003 to see what it was like. But after he discontinued wearing the lenses at night, his corneas returned to their original state within a week.

Jeffrey J. Walline, O.D., Ph.D., assistant professor at Ohio State University's college of optometry, says CRT is perfect for kids as young as eight years, because their eyes are still growing. Young athletes like swimmers or softball players who are bothered by lots of dust would find CRT especially beneficial, he adds.

And what's on the horizon for CRT? “The question is do these lenses keep kids from becoming nearsighted, or do they slow down someone's tendency to become nearsighted?” Dr. Walline speculates. “More research is needed.”



Q&A: Jamie Cullum

Jamie Cullum is a 26-year-old singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist with the skill and depth of knowledge of a musician twice or even three times his age. The British native, who majored in English in college, has populated his two albums—2004’s “Twentysomething” and last year’s “Catching Tales”—with a combination of his own songs as well as interpretations of pop standards and contemporary rock favorites by Jimi Hendrix and the Doves, as well as collaborations with hip auteurs such as

Pharrell Williams and Dan “The Automator” Nakamura. He’s channeled an eclectic background, which includes stints playing on cruise ships and at wedding receptions, into a sound that’s won praise from both jazz and pop circles, as well as a Grammy nomination and sales of more than four million copies worldwide of “Twentysomething.” Music writer Gary Graff caught up with Cullum recently.

Did you grow up in a musical household?

Cullum: It was musical in the sense that we loved music, and my brother (Ben) was a musician, too. But it wasn't like "The Brady Bunch" or anything. I kind of always played, really. I had a few lessons when I was younger, but it didn't really work out quite the way it should've, so I kind of gave up. I ended up back in, playing guitar when I was about 13, playing Kurt Cobain songs, discovering (Jimi) Hendix and Metallica and everything, the Rolling Stones, the Beatles. Then I got into '70s funk and acid jazz, hip-hop and stuff, and wended my way back to the piano, just playing songs I wanted.

What kinds of bands were you in?

Cullum: There have been a lot of them—I can't even begin to remember how many different bands I've been in. A lot of hard rock bands, punk bands, cover bands and wedding bands. We played "Car Wash" and all the Stevie Wonder songs. I was in hip-hop bands and drum-n-bass, dance, house music kinds of things. All sorts of stuff, really.

What was the cruise ship experience like?

Cullum: Oh, it was a lot of fun. We didn't work much. You had to play two hours a night, and the clientele on the cruises were quite old. They were all in bed by 11 o'clock. We'd hit the town, whatever port we were in, and end up back on the boat by 8 a.m.

And the strip club?

Cullum: That was in Russia. It was off-the-cuff, just something that happened. Hey, I'll do any gig, man, if there's a piano.

What led you toward jazz?

Cullum: It kind of filtered into my existence, through hip-hop and acid jazz and funk music. I discovered Herbie Hancock & the Headhunters and worked my way backwards from there. I like the chords and the style. It's not as confining as the other styles. It's such a weird platform; you can incorporate all these other styles in music.

Jazz is as much a state of mind as a style, really.

Cullum: Absolutely. I'm a jazz musician; I just don't always play jazz. But a lot of people would disagree with that. I know how to play jazz, but it doesn't always mean an improvised piano solo over chords inspired by John Coltrane, although you have to understand John Coltrane and those chords. If you really listen, there's a lot more jazz in the pop music I make than there is in some music that calls itself jazz.

What role do the standards and covers play in your music?

Cullum: It's funny, because to me reinterpreting another person's song and writing a song are very similar experiences, really. Doing a standard in a new way is like writing a song to me. But I wanted to establish some kind of identity by doing a mixture of the two. Sometimes when you're a new artist it's easier to establish your identity in that way.

So is the goal to one day record only your own songs?

Cullum: Not necessarily. There's never a plan or anything to what I do; I just get a bunch of songs together and decide what I like best. My next album is as likely to be an entire album of Willie Nelson covers or Iron Maiden covers. It could be anything. That's quite a jazz musician's way of approaching it, actually.

What's home like?

Cullum: I live in London. I'm obviously not home a great deal, but I have a flat with a couple of bedrooms and a little room for a studio. I had a party at my house the other day; there were about 50, 60 people, so it was pretty crowded. That will tell you how big it is.

What do you do when you're not touring?

Cullum: I play bad football with some very bad footballing friends. I've always played a little bit, and earlier this year I got back into a few five-a-side games, which is pretty fast. And I love video games; at the moment I'm playing Grand Theft Auto on my PSP portable. We've been playing a lot of poker on the tour bus recently.

What did you study in college?

Cullum: I studied film and English literature. I got a good degree—of course, I haven't used the degree in any way (laughs). I did a degree because it was fun. I wanted to party more and didn't want to get involved in real work too quickly. I wanted to hang out and meet girls and enjoy myself.



Where Is That



Whatchamacallit?

By Wendy Revell

Once upon a time, my husband and I shared equally in all things domestic. Then we had children. Plural. Outnumbered three-to-two, we quickly recognized that division of labor equated to survival. In practical terms, our divide-and-conquer-the-home-front strategy meant I did the grocery shopping while he tackled the yard work. When someone needed to go to the doctor, I took care of it. And when a household item needed repairing, it fell to him.

Generally speaking, the system worked well, but there were occasional blips. When I went away for the weekend, the newly designated cook couldn't locate the frying pan. I teased him mercilessly upon my return—after all, how could he live here and not know where we kept the frying pan—not realizing that my comeuppance would arrive camouflaged as an air conditioning repairman.

Given my flexible work schedule, it appeared wholly logical for me to wait at home for the daytime service call. My mistake came in thinking this assignment simply entailed letting the guy in. On the drive home from the office, I envisioned a glorious 30-minute chunk of uninterrupted time perusing the newspaper while my “Mr. Fix It” ensured we continued enjoying the uninterrupted flow of cool air.

Once the doorbell rang, my delusion met with reality. Before I could read his embroidered nametag, I was already down 2-0. It seemed there were things the repairman needed to know and he considered me the source. He didn't understand that I was a pinch hitter who couldn't hit. I didn't know that a return air grille existed, much less where ours would be located. “Never mind,” he said, as he marched off, his eyes scanning our ceilings with the intensity of a dermatologist hunting down a cancerous mole. “Here it is,” he soon called. I shrank three inches as I followed his pointed finger to a metal grate above our television, but perhaps he could now undertake his mission and I would be free to read as planned.

Instead he turned to me and asked, “Where do you keep the filters?” It was clear he wasn't talking about coffee. Under his gaze, I could feel my face conforming to that of a caught-in-the-headlights game show contestant. As much as I wanted to move to the winner's circle, “I don't know” seemed to be my only available answer.

Determined to halt these nonproductive exchanges, I rallied. “Doesn't really sound like I live here, does it?” I said, forcing as much lightness into my voice as I could summon. “But ask me anything about the kids,” I continued, returning to my full height, “and I promise I'll know the answer.”

Being a nice repairman, he smiled. Perhaps it had something to do with his assumption that I'd be the one writing the check for his services. And he'd be right.

My husband has no idea where I keep the checkbook.

