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LIFESTYLES

SHOPPING: If you like the Gap, you'll like the shoes at Piperlime

October 29, 2006

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FREE PRESS SHOPPING COLUMNIST

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Gap has gone into the shoe business, launching a fun and festive e-commerce site called piperlime.com

The site features about 100 brands of shoes for men, women and kids -- Kenneth Cole, Via Spiga, Dr. Martens -- though Gap plans to add more.

The selection includes everything from flip-flops to evening pumps, and it's extremely sharp and current. Prices start at about \$20 and go past \$300.



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Spreaders are perfect for cheeses. Jacarandany.com, \$44 and \$48. (Jacaranda)

"The main difference between Piperlime and other shoe Web sites is that we're not looking to have the biggest selection of brands; we're looking to have the best selection," says Alex Clark, spokesman for Gap Inc.

"We're constantly looking for the latest trends and styles ... It's what our customers told us they wanted."

So if you're a fan of the Gap's fashion sensibility and the lifestyle the store promotes, piperlime.com may be just the place for you. (If you want to buy shoes made by Gap or by its sister store, Banana Republic, you'll need to hit those stores or their Web sites; Piperlime doesn't carry them.)

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Speaking of shoes -- and really, can one ever speak too much about shoes? -- how sumptuous are these?

Black satin. Platform sole. Peep toe. Stiletto heel.

They're \$280 -- a lot, but your feet will look lovely and you'll feel even lovelier! -- at the new Stuart Weitzman store, which opened in September at Somerset Collection South (Big Beaver and Coolidge) in Troy. Call 248-458-1147.

Save with the Capuchins

Here's a way to help Detroit's Capuchin Soup Kitchen -- which has been feeding the hungry for 75 years -- and get a few discounts in return.

Buy the Little Savings Book, which has coupons for about 50 businesses -- including Kiernan's Steak House in Dearborn, Mexican Village in Detroit and local Rio Wraps.

The book is \$10 and 35% of the proceeds from the sales will go to the soup kitchen. The goal is to raise \$175,000.

To buy the book: 313-282-1166 or 313-282-1032.

Click on Contempo

Contempo Home in Ferndale, which is among my favorite stores because of its fresh collection of housewares you can't find just anywhere, has opened online at www.contempohomestore.com. To visit the store: 255 W. Nine Mile, Ferndale. 248-547-6398.

Spread the wealth

I am in love, love, love with these festive little spreaders for cheeses, spreads and the like from Jacaranda, a Web site that sells handmade -- and highly functional -- art from South Africa.

One dollar from each item sold -- \$2 from each serving set -- is donated to a school for disabled children in South Africa.

The silver-plated spreaders are hand-forged from brass. A 6 1/2 -inch spreader is \$48; the 5-inch is \$44.

To shop: jacarandanyc.com

Plus sizes, plus bucks

Last week I wrote about a great deal on a down-filled vest from Lands' End.

Reader Susan Eagan of Northville noticed that the women's plus-size vest costs \$5 more than the misses and men's vests.

She writes: "It seems that you have mentioned the pricing differentials of plus sizes before -- logically, more fabric, more cost, I get it.

"However, it became somewhat more muddled and glaring in my mind with this particular item because the men's version does not cost more than the women's! Aren't men generally larger than women?"

"If the logic is more fabric more cost, then why doesn't the men's version cost more? Or, why shouldn't a larger-sized woman just buy the men's version and save \$5? Is this an issue of 'stick it to the fat ladies'? Or some sort of we've-always-done-it-that-way tradition?"

A Lands' End spokeswoman says it's charging more for plus sizes because making them requires different patterns and different proportions than regular-sized clothing for women.

Now, here's what I know: Making a plus-size piece of clothing is more complicated than just adding a few inches onto a regular-sized clothing pattern.

Women's plus-size clothing is proportioned differently than regular-sized women's clothing. It's usually more generous in the belly and hips and is cut to accommodate a lower bustline, which means it requires a different pattern than those used for regular sizes.

More patterns and more time means shoppers end up paying more.

As for buying a men's vest, if it fits, buy it.

Contact **GEORGEA KOVANIS** at 313-222-6842 or gkovanis@freepress.com.

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