

The princess and the pee

Equal to you regardless of gender! Girls make a splash with a pee-anywhere device.

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PHOTO BY WASSINKLUNDGREN

A penis is portable. Or, at least, a penis makes a man and his beer more portable than a woman and her Heineken could ever hope to be. But things are about to change with the P-Mate, a cardboard funnel that promises to give women the urinary moveability they were born without, allowing them to pee while standing up—just like the big boys. No more penis envy.

You may remember the P-Mate from the classic TV moment in 1999, when Simone 'Moon' Zijp, its inventor, demonstrated it on the *Paul de Leeuw Show*. Zijp, who apparently was born without the embarrassment gene, stood centre stage in front of television cameras and a nationwide audience—and peed.

The P-Mate was an immediate hit. It won the Millennium Prize for innovation in 2000, and Zijp took her P-Mate on the road to Pinkpop, the Lowlands Festival and other events, allowing women to test it in special urinals for females. It was a sensation throughout Europe and as far away as Australia. But after the initial flush of interest, Zijp and her partner filed for bankruptcy. Last January, Port-o-Let, the largest supplier of mobile toilets in the Benelux, bought the intellectual property rights, trading names, internet site and customer files for the P-Mate for a reported €30,000. Now the P-Mate is back in business.

There is a whole world of PUDs—public/portable/personal urination devices—out there. In addition to the Dutch P-Mate there is the Canadian Magic Cone and The Whiz from the UK. (These things must be so much fun to name!) The Whiz, made of rubber, markets itself as 'eco-friendly', meaning it is reusable. Just imagine the fun when a pickpocket delves into your handbag and comes out with a wee-splashed PUD.

And even though the P-Mates are pretty—bright green, festooned with shamrocks—I can't help imagining the name placement opportunities for companies' advertising slogans on the shaft: beer, of course ('Drink more! We'll pour!'), broadband internet ('So much more than streaming audio'), and even political commentary ('We put the "pee" in peace').

But does the P-Mate really work?



There's only one way to find out. Armed with a packet of five, I set out to test them, passing a few on to friends. 'I wasn't really

sure how to squirt,' admits Shawn. 'But I did find myself kind of bending my knees into a real macho pose when I used it.'

Rosy says she adopted the same pose and adds: 'When I taught my son how to aim, I used to buy little flushable battleships for him to sink. I wanted some of those.' Her husband, who came into the bathroom mid-test, had a bit of a shock.

Noel, though, seems to have had the most fun: 'My eyes bulged out in complete fascination at watching my pee come out of my paper penis. I know I peed harder than I normally would because it was just fun to watch it go further and further.' She continues: 'I could do this in the Amsterdam street pissoirs, but I don't have the balls to join the guys at the urinals. It does beat buying fattening fries or overpriced Spa just to use the toilet.'

Finally, I get the chance to test the P-Mate myself. Putting the seat up is weird enough, but staring into the bowl is like standing on the end of the high dive. 'Go!' says my mind. My body doesn't follow. Eventually, I will myself to go. Frankly, standing there in my apartment's guest loo, it's a bit anticlimactic. Just to make it more exciting, I leave the seat up.

That night, however, as I'm walking near Leidseplein, I get to thinking. Yes, the P-Mate gives a girl a new freedom, but with it comes a grave responsibility. Now that the world is my urinal, should I use it as one? This is a moral decision I've never faced. Now that I can, will I have the sudden urge to mark my territory? Will my ability to hold it until I get home suddenly disappear? Will a walk through the city just become one big pee party?

A few days later, I'm relieved to find that I don't have some newfound attraction for public urination save for one desire. I find myself with a new curiosity—one I won't be able to satisfy until winter. Come January, with the first snowfall fresh on the ground, I am going to take my one remaining P-Mate, rush outside to the middle of Museumplein and try to write my name in the snow. Who knows? Maybe penis envy has nothing to do with sex or power and everything to do with creative expression.