

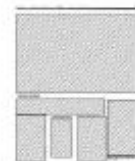


THE OBLIGATORY (CHEAP) HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

BY DAVID THORPE

Never buy music for anyone unless you know exactly what they want — there's a 75 percent chance that you're actually Clueless Costco Grandma. Don't risk it.

Is the anxiety of seasonal consumer obligation weighing heavy upon your soul? Lay your head in my lap, gentle reader, for I have been editorially obliged to compile a list of perfect (cheap) gifts for every member of your family. Bonus feature: since I am a sensitive liberal guy, I've left out all the specifically Jesusy gifts, so these should work even if you celebrate one of the Weird Ethnic Christmases.



FOR THE MUSIC LOVER

Years ago, I was browsing a big-box store when an older woman approached me for some holiday shopping advice (this happens a lot, since I have a trustworthy face and the defeated posture of a retail employee). She held up a 3 Doors Down CD and posed a horrifying question: "Do young people still like music with loud guitars?"

She was trying to find a gift for her grandson, whose taste she seemed to know nothing about. Imagine being that poor kid, sitting there on Christmas morning in his Cure T-shirt, looking at the CD-shaped package from Nana with mounting dread, knowing it couldn't possibly be anything but the lamest shit ever. It broke my heart; I steered Grandma toward the sock aisle and gave her the same advice I'll give to you: never buy music for anyone unless you know exactly what they want. If you're looking for advice in a Holiday Gift Guide, you shouldn't be buying music. Even if you impeccably curate a selection of thoughtful music for the people you know best in the world, there's a 75 percent chance that you're actually Clueless Costco Grandma. Don't risk it.

Then again, CD box sets make perfect gifts due to their easy-wrapping rectangular shape, so I'll steer you toward something everyone can enjoy: please consider **THE RIGHT STUFF DUCK OR GEESE CALLING INSTRUCTIONAL CD BOX SET** (\$39.99 from amazon.com by way of Mack's Prairie Wings — please note that you must choose either duck or goose). Each box set includes four CDs, taking you from the basic "Fundamentals of Success" all the way through the "Advanced Techniques." Whether or not your loved one is the sporting type, what could be more amusing than four solid hours of some guy explaining how to make goofy sex honks at wild fowl?

FOR THE KIDS

Ohio preschool teacher Pete Kaser made headlines last month by stripping his classroom of name-brand toys and replacing them with common materials like cardboard boxes and egg cartons. "The children were actually not asking for their toys back or where the toys were at all, which is kind of shocking," Kaser told the Huffington Post. Instead, the boxes unleashed the youngsters' imaginations, leading to a very healthy feel-good story for everyone to nod smugly at.

So why spend tons of money on flashy toys when kids won't really care about them anyway, and you don't really care about the kids? Just throw a bunch of boxes at them and tell them to make their own fun.

Consider picking up a few classic **34 x 18 x 14 CORRUGATED CARDBOARD SHIPPING BOXES** (\$3.25 each from uhaul.com). You'll save hundreds of dollars on their goddamned Nintendo Marios, and your kids will benefit from the intellectual stimulation of having to figure out how to play with a box; plus, they'll get lifelong satisfaction from telling hilarious stories about how cheap and heartless you are.

Please note: consider buying larger boxes for children 15 years and older.

FOR THE MOVIE BUFF

It's been a big year for blockbusters, but your movie-loving relatives might already own the Blu-rays of **BATMAN**, **THE AVENGERS**, and **PROMETHEUS**. If you're going to impress them with a cinematic gift, you should dig a little deeper. There's a rich back catalog of not-quite-classics to comb through, and in some cases you can find B-movies every bit as cool as **THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN** for just pennies on the dollar.

For example, what action fan could resist 1992's **DEATH RING** (about \$5 used on amazon.com), which features the big-suriname star power of Mike Norris, Chad McQueen, and Don Swayze? Not only will you get a rip-roaring action romp, you'll get a powerful statement about the value of family: even the world's weird-looking brothers (Swayze) and disappointing sons (McQueen, Norris) can grow up to be weird-looking, disappointing action heroes.

Maybe you've got a creepy brother who's always lived in your shadow; in Don Swayze's beady eyes, he'll see that even a monstrously shitty version of your genes can survive a deadly game on Billy Drago's private man-hunting reserve. Maybe you've always been a letdown to your handsome, successful father; when he sees Chad McQueen in a sleeveless denim shirt, he'll finally understand that your failures are too insignificant to tarnish his legacy.

FOR THE BOWEL NOVICE

I know it seems laughable, but you may know someone — maybe even a close friend — who still sits on the toilet. Even though the intestinal benefits of a healthy squat have been known for decades, there are millions of medieval types who treat the commode like a common chair. If you look closely, it's easy to spot the signs of a toilet-sitter: the careful gait betrays a nervous colon; the constant trips to the washroom suggest an inefficient technique; the surreptitious "shawshanking" of little rabbit-poops out the pant-leg reveal a disgusting commitment to outdated methods.

For these people, consider the **SQUAT-TY POTTY** (\$39.99 from dailygrommet.com), which provides a simple, attractive footrest to promote the healthy knees-on-chest posture practiced by all civilized peoples. "The benefits of using Squatty Potty include faster, cleaner, and easier bowel movements," reads the entirely obvious description. "Proper bathroom posture also can help prevent colon disease and alleviate ailments such as constipation, hemorrhoids, and pelvic floor issues."

You may think it rude to use holiday gift-giving to passive-aggressively point out the inferior bathroom methods of friends and family, but consider this: wouldn't it be ruder still to let them stumble through the rest of their life with pants full of barbaric bathroom ignorance? @



