

# WIRED

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RETAIL WARS

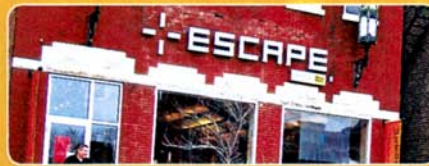
## THE THREE FACES OF BEST BUY

*Everybody loves gadgets.* But shopping for them can be a journey into a hell of clueless salespeople flanked by 10-foot-high walls of planned obsolescence. Big-box retailer Best Buy knows this – so now, like Gap and Crate & Barrel, it's opening boutiques that market to narrower demographic niches. Here's what to expect from its three new concept stores. – **Jason Daley**



**STUDIO D**  
Naperville, Illinois

**Concept:** A kinder, gentler place for Mom. Blond wood floors, mood lighting, and more women on staff.  
**Lure:** Intensive classes on how to use gadgets.  
**Coming soon:** Best Buy hasn't discussed any plans to roll out more Studio Ds but has already refocused 70 stores nationwide on serving women.



**ESCAPE**  
Chicago, Illinois

**Concept:** European and Japanese electronics, games, and gadgets in a loft-like brick-and-metal space – with a coffee bar.  
**Lure:** Two luxury boxes with plasma screens, seating for 10, and major videogame consoles.  
**Coming soon:** Likely to be deployed nationally.



**EQ-LIFE**  
Richfield, Minnesota

**Concept:** A "wellness environment"; 18,000 square feet of spa-pharmacy-yoga studio plus electronics and beauty aids for baby boomers' sagging flesh.  
**Lure:** Facial, manicure, and massage go for \$175.  
**Coming soon:** Two more EQs have opened in the Minneapolis area; spa junkies spy a trend in 2006.