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## New See-All Eyeglasses: A Consumer's Report

By JOHN MARKOFF



John Markoff's innovative TruFocals eyeglasses, at right, aren't as sleek as his old glasses, left. But he says he likes using the new glasses because of how well they enable him to focus on objects at different distances.

I have long been an adherent to the “form follows function” design philosophy.

At least until I came face to face with a pair of spectacles that make me look like a creature from a Harry Potter novel, the late John Lennon, or perhaps a refugee from a Devo concert.

In the early 1990s through a mutual friend, biologist and writer Cary Lu, I met Stephen Kurtin, a physicist and an independent inventor. He was sporting an odd pair of glasses and once in a while it appeared that he was scratching the bridge of his nose between his

eyes. It turned out that he was engaged in a quest to design a pair of eyeglasses that could be manually focused on near and far objects ranging from a book to a mountain range.

At the time it seemed like an intriguing idea and I casually asked him to give me a call if he was able to commercialize it. A decade and a half later he called back. I visited his company, TruFocals, last week and wrote an article about Dr. Kurtin's work.

Dr. Kurtin made me a pair of glasses to my prescription. (Disclosure: I paid retail.) I'm a presbyope (presbyopia is a condition faced by almost everyone over the age of 40 where the ability to focus on close objects gradually vanishes) and have struggled with bifocals and progressives for more than a decade. I have now been using the TruFocals for a week, and I'm a convert, although I have to confess I'm not using them as my only pair of glasses — yet.

The problem they do solve brilliantly is where bifocals, computer glasses and progressives have all failed for me: going back and forth between computer screen, laptop computer display and books, magazines and newspapers.

I had given up on computer glasses in the last six months and gone back to progressives. They are a terrible solution for someone who sits in front of a computer display all day. You have to make do with a tiny spot which focuses correctly. For anyone with a 17-inch display or larger this is literally a pain in the neck.

The TruFocals executives argue that the hassle of constantly changing focal length becomes second nature. I'm still not sure; after a week I still think about it when I change focus. But the ability to have everything on a 24-inch display in focus and then be able to refocus to read a newspaper is well worth the hassle. (Yes, it's true, some of us still do read printed newspapers . . . )

There is the added fact that the glasses are expensive — \$895 — but I justified the expense by reasoning that I spend most of my waking hours looking at things that are between 18 and 30 inches away.

Of course that leaves the form-follows-function fashion question unanswered.