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High hopes for the 'Whiz'

An Oxford firm offering the medical world a fast, easy and hygienic method of collecting urine samples from women has reached the final of the 2005 HSBC Start-Up Stars Awards.

JBOL, founded by artist and writer Orde Levinson, has beaten off stiff competition from hundreds of other young enterprises — ranging from a Yorkshire-based firm designing and constructing golf courses to a cow milking contractor in Wales — to be named one of the bank's ten finalists.

The three-year-old company, whose product is called the Whiz, is now hoping to win the title of HSBC Start-Up Star 2005.

Mr Levinson's primary aim was to find a female alternative to the urinal, but his research revealed a more urgent need by the medical profession.

Doctors wanted a device for collecting urine samples from women that avoided the contamination problems — not to mention physical gymnastics — associated with traditional methods.

After Mr Levinson secured approval for the design, a distribution agreement with



JBOL's ground-breaking 'Whiz'

Astratech secured an initial order for 350,000 devices and further licences have been signed in South Africa, Australia and the European Union.

At the same time, the Whiz technology has been applied to a consumer device which could potentially solve the age-old ladies loo queue problem and offer an alternative to the 'squat behind a tree' solution when outdoors.

All finalists receive £4,000 of consultancy and software from Croner Consulting and Intuit.

The winner will receive £20,000 at a gala dinner on October 13, at the Savoy Hotel in London. The runner-up gets £5,000