









Back to the old school

IRELAND A Regency mansion has been restored to its former glory and reborn as an all-out-luxury country-house hotel

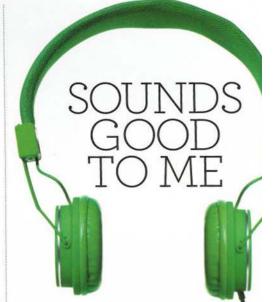
iven its recent economic woes, Ireland may seem an unlikely spot to open what is set to become one of Europe's most luxurious new hotels. But **Ballyfin** is hoping to buck the trend. Its American-Irish owners scoured the country for the ideal restoration project before settling on this sprawling, Regency mansion set on a 600-acre demesne deep in the velvety green countryside of County

Clockwise from top left: the conservatory; the Gold Drawing Room; the 28-acre lake; Lady Caroline Coote Room Laois, an hour and a half from Dublin. The house was the former country seat of a succession of wealthy families, including the Duke of Wellington's, the Wellesley-Poles; and with just 13 bedrooms and two suites, it retains the feel of a magnificent rural estate, but offers all the benefits and privacy of a hotel. The newly twinkling

chandeliers and splendidly classic style (four-poster beds and fine antiques) are a far cry from the breezy dormitories of another of its previous incarnations, as a boys' boarding school.

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Ballyfin Demesne, County Laois, Ireland (00 353 5787 55866; www.ballyfin.com). Doubles from €950, full board



Scandinavian brand URBANEARS aims to make listening to music on the move as much of a style choice as the watch you wear or the bag you carry. Its four different styles of headphone – Plattan (pictured), Tanto (1980s Walkman style), Bagis and Medis (both in-ear) – come in a wide range of colours which changes twice a year to reflect seasonal fashion trends.

All models have a remote control feature and are microphone compatible with all PDAs. From £34.99; www.urbanears.com

THINK BIG

See this
Built in 1900 for Paris's second
Universal Exhibition, the **Grar**Palais has played host to

everything from showjumping to Chane fashion shows. Since 2007 it has also be the home of the annual **Monumenta**,

of exhibiting in the 13,500square-metre space. Following
installations by Anselm Kiefer
(a collapsing house), Richard
Serra (towering sheets of ruste
steel) and Christian Boltansk
(a mountain and fields of
old clothes), the honour for th
fourth edition falls to British
artist **Anish Kapoor**, a
master of the grand scale.

LISA JOHNSC 13 May-20 June (00 33 1 44 13 17 17; www.grandpalais.fr)