
Bubble London welcomed by kidswear market

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Premium kidswear show Bubble London launched at London's Olympia this week with 70 exhibitors.

Organisers said that the show, which closes today, had attracted international buyers from France, Beirut, the US and Japan as well as pulling in boutiques and stores across the UK. Attendance figures are likely to be released later this week.

Some 20 of the exhibitors were showing for the first time in the UK. Exhibitor reaction to the event was mixed with some saying it had exceeded expectations while others reported a quiet show.

Ric Ramswell, director of No Added Sugar, who helped to support the show through its launch, said that 50% of the business he had taken at the show had been new. "We've picked up two independents from Spain and seen a lot of London boutiques and store buyers so we are very happy. I think there is a need for a London event at this level of the market."

French exhibitor Rose Desbois said the show had been quieter than they would have liked. Rose Desbois' Gilles Sainte Catherine said: "We were hoping to see more people however we are launching into the UK market and are a new name so we'll consider showing again next season."

Buyers who visited the event were looking to top up their existing offer. Laura West, owner of Kenmar in Perth said: "Our shop stocks commercial brands like Miss Sixty but we came down to buy in London anyway so looked to link this show with it into that trip. We picked up a couple of labels here so it's worth checking out if you are in London for other reasons."

Erin Hook, kidswear buyer at Bentalls in Kingston said: "Although it's a small event, it is a nicely edited mix and it is possible to pick up something you haven't seen elsewhere."

Bubble has a New York show that has been running for four seasons. The next Bubble London will be on July 2-3 at the same venue, London's Olympia 2. Organiser Vanessa Boz said she hoped to expand the number of exhibitors to 100 and widen the product categories available for next season.

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Buyers hold back at Bubble

By Daniella Cagol and Sophie Bowen

Pricing issues and recession fears sparked caution among buyers at London kidswear show Bubble this week.

Exhibitors said the effects of the weak sterling against the euro meant buyers were considering purchases carefully for autumn 09.

Joanne Davidson, design and production assistant at high-end girls' brand Rachel Riley, said: "Every buyer is being much more cautious. Most came to the show for a look rather than to put down orders and went away to think about what they would buy into."

But Deborah Medhurst, founder and director of No Added Sugar, said: "We've had a fantastic show – our best ever – and the show as a whole was busy and buoyant.

"Buyers were cautious and cut down on volume, but still bought from every style. Because most of our manufacturing is done in Europe, we've been squeezed by the strong euro, so we have cut our margins."

Some kidswear indies said the kidswear market had yet to feel the effect of the downturn. Kidswear is traditionally one of the last sub-sectors to feel the pinch, with consumers said to be unwilling to compromise on the quality and quantity of what they buy for their children.

Rachel Wakefield, co-owner of Rococo in Dartford, Kent, said: "The old adage says that a recession means a baby boom, which is potentially great for us. The credit crunch has not affected the way we are buying."

The next edition of Bubble London will run from June 21-23 at the Business Design Centre on Upper Street in Islington, north London.