

BUBBLE LONDON BOASTS BIGGEST EVER LINE-UP

Playing host to over 250 UK and international children's brands, including new and premium signings, this month's Bubble London on 30-31 January marks the event's biggest edition to date.

Key show debuts include Spanish childrenswear label Mayoral, footwear and clothing label Geox, Groupe Zannier brands IKKS and Levi's Kids and Pepe Jeans' Andy Warhol collection.

"Bubble has strived to develop a show, which allows key premium brands to fit within the event while maintaining Bubble's ability to identify new talent in the market and bring it to the attention of the industry," says event director Lindsay Hoyes.

This month also sees the launch of Bubble G.U.M, a new area of the show designed to offer an accessible entry level for smaller, niche brands.

For more information or to pre-register for the show, visit www.bubblelondon.com.

TOP SEMINAR SELECTION AT MODA



Providing visitors with practical advice on key retail issues, this season's seminar programme at Moda includes expert speaker Tony Scott, managing director of Retail Spa. Scott will be discussing reducing retail risk and covering topics such as effective sales and stock management, delivering an improved range to customers and increasing profitability.

Craig Philipson, managing director of international retail consultancy Shopworks, is focusing on the rational and emotional elements of store design and how and why customers shop.

Leon Bailey Green of the onlinefashionagency.com, meanwhile, has sourced four expert speakers to assist with all aspects of successful online retailing.

Moda, which runs on 20-22 February at the NEC, Birmingham, is the only UK trade show with a dedicated kids' footwear offering.

NEW SCHEDULE FOR BUSINESS LINK

Business Link has released a new schedule of free seminars for 2010, all of which aim to help retailers to improve their skills through interactive learning.

The latest schedule, which starts on 25 January, covers topics including recruitment, developing and retaining excellent staff, creating first class customer service, securing free publicity in the media and advanced eBay training.

To date, over 100,000 customers have attended the organisation's free business support events. All retailers are asked to fill in a feedback

form at the end of the half-day session, and the most recent schedule of seminars has been tailored in line with retailers' responses regarding the issues facing them in the current climate.

"We try to present useful and relevant information within an informal environment," says Elizabeth Dillingham, who hosted several seminars last season. "Everyone is welcome, whether they are in the concept stages of opening their first shop, or whether they have been established for many years." www.businesslink.gov.uk



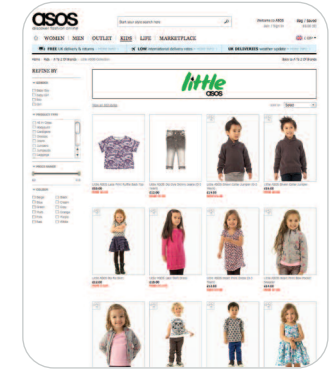
MMC INVESTS INTO ALEX AND ALEXA

Growth company investor MMC Ventures has ploughed £1.5bn into luxury childrenswear online retailer Alexandalaxa.com. The move comes following the rapid growth of the website since its inception in 2007 as a retailer of high-end childrenswear labels including Ralph Lauren, Burberry, Little Marc Jacobs and Junior Gautier.

"MMC Ventures invests into fast-growing UK companies, and Alex and Alexa is a unique business

that has demonstrated significant growth since it was founded," says Rory Stirling, investment manager at MMC. "We work in partnership with the businesses we invest in, and we look forward to driving international expansion and taking the business to the next level."

Alexandalex.com is a family-owned business, which was founded in London by husband and wife team Alex and Alexa Theophanous.



RETAILERS' SALES RISK

Online retailers are at risk of losing out on sales if they do not take inspiration from their bricks-and-mortar counterparts, according to some of the industry's key online players.

The claim that traditional retail skills – such as customer service and merchandising – are just as important when trading online was made by Asos chief executive Nick Robertson and chief executive of the Shop Direct Group Mark Newton-Jones at the Skillsmart Retail Parliamentary reception.

"When people move from high street to remote retailing, they don't see the queue at the till or wander around their store to pick a product up," says Newton-Jones. "This is why online retailers have to work extra hard at service and merchandising."

PITTI LAUNCHES VIRTUAL SHOW



Florence childrenswear exhibition Pitti Bimbo launches a virtual fair this month in conjunction with sister menswear trade show Pitti Uomo.

FieraDigitale, which goes live one week after the conclusion of the show itself, will enable exhibitors to open their own B2B showrooms, enabling them to negotiate and book orders from buyers certified by Pitti Immagine, the organiser behind both Pitti Bimbo and Pitti Uomo.

"The virtual fair's main goal is to expand, prolong and render the experience of the physical fair by multiplying opportunities for contacts," says Francesco Bottigliero, ceo of FieraDigitale. "This will allow exhibitors to reach new markets and new buyers, as well as facilitating research."

The launch of FieraDigitale is the first of its kind in the industry. A pilot edition of the online show will go live in January for 30 days, following Pitti Bimbo, which takes place on 20-22 January 2011.

RINGSPUN LAUNCHES KIDSWEAR

Contemporary UK apparel label Ringspun will launch its debut childrenswear collection for a/w 11 under its Offspring label. Established in Italy, Greece and Japan, Offspring has also been trialled in Selfridges, and will now be rolled out to stockists nationwide.

Taking inspiration from its wider apparel label, the debut childrenswear collection features a mix of details and textures inspired by wartime and 40s collegiate. College-inspired logo overlay tees, polos,

sweats, military quilt jackets and preppy cardigans are all prevalent throughout the collection, which targets children aged four to 14 years.

Ringspun was established in Manchester in 1994 and was originally based upon the philosophy of producing clothing inspired by the contemporary music scene and the icons within it. Icons influencing the debut children's collection include Bob Marley and Jimi Hendrix, and the collection will be distributed through Vida Kids in the UK.



PEPE EXPANDS WARHOL COLLECTION

Pepe Jeans London has expanded its Andy Warhol childrenswear collection for a/w 11. The brand, which launched its first Andy Warhol by Pepe Jeans London for s/s 11, will once again turn to the artist's pop art archive for its latest designs for boys and girls.

Dresses, sweats, jerseys, leather and skinny jeans are all featured within the range in iconic prints such as Campbell's soup cans and Eddie Sedgewick photo-prints.



EMU RESPONDS TO DECKERS LAWSUIT

Sheepskin boot label Emu Australia has responded to a trademark infringement lawsuit brought against it by Deckers Outdoor, owner of the Ugg Australia trademark.

In response to allegations that Emu was "misleading consumers into believing they are buying a genuine Ugg product", the brand has contested that Ugg is a generic word in Australia, and that there are over 70 registered trademarks including the word.

"Emu is more interested in investing into the innovation of its products than its lawyers," says Paul Neate, Emu's managing director. "Customers accessing our website are looking to buy Emu products; superior products that are clearly the envy of our competitors."

At the time of going to press, the legal battle between the two companies was still ongoing.

RETAIL LANDLORDS SLOW TO CHANGE

Retail landlords are making too little progress in shifting away from the traditional practice of collecting rent upfront on a quarterly basis, according to the British Retail Consortium.

The organisation has been campaigning for landlords to collect rent on a monthly basis for four years, condemning quarterly collections as a "throwback to a bygone era".

Its most recent data however, collected as a result of a survey of 13,400 BRC members, indicated that the percentage of retail landlords who had shifted from quarterly to monthly collection had risen from

three per cent to just 12 cent over the past two years.

"While it's clear that some landlords are offering retailers a more flexible regime, there's a significant proportion that have not," says Stephen Robertson, British Retail Consortium director general. "Some retailers have even told us they've had a hostile reaction when they've tried to renegotiate rental terms."

"The best landlords recognise that it's in their own interests to have properties occupied by thriving businesses, and monthly rental terms can help achieve that by easing cash flow pressures."

NEWS IN BRIEF

* Childrenswear trade show Independent Kids has announced further new signings ahead of its latest edition, which will take place at Solihull's Cranmore Park on 20-21 February. New exhibitors include Animal Tails, LCKR and Rock-a-bye, while Balloon Accessories, Carodel, Ruth Lednik, Sheldon, Seva and Trespass have also confirmed.

* Online apparel sales are set to be boosted significantly by the entry of Google, eBay and Amazon into the internet retail market, according to a report by business information company Textiles Intelligence. Google recently launched Boutiques.com, a site which enables customers to run their own boutiques, taking style inspiration from celebrities.

* Fashion retailers are at risk of losing sales if they fail to keep up with evolving consumer buying habits, according to a national survey conducted by European Smart Buying Club Glamoo. The survey found that half of all Smartphone users have bought – or would consider buying – through their phones, equating to seven million potential customers throughout the UK.