



## MODA THE FIRST CHOICE FOR KIDS' FOOTWEAR

A recent CWB survey of kids' footwear independents revealed 91 per cent regularly attend Moda Footwear to source new and established brands.

This season's event, which ran on 20-22 February, featured the largest gathering of kids' footwear in the UK along with Kids' Zone, a dedicated area of the show for the sector.

Jo Place, partner and co-owner of Jump, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, attended Moda for a/w 11, placing both repeat and new orders. "This season we generally stuck to our tried and tested names, however, we were impressed with Pom Pom at the show and added it to our a/w 11 buy."

Rachel Edeson, sales assistant at Little Rascals, Driffield, East Yorkshire, was also impressed with the show's offer, especially Kids' Zone, which she reported to be busier than previous years. "We weren't after any particular styles or colours, which I think helped our buying as it allowed us to take in everything on offer at the show." The next edition of Moda runs on 14-16 August.

## STEP2WO OPENS FLAGSHIP STORE IN CHINA



Children's footwear brand Step2wo has opened a flagship store in China as part of its continued expansion programme throughout the country's mainland.

Located in the China World III Mall in the Chaoyang District of Beijing amid retailers such as Bonpoint, Kenzo, Catimini and Milkhouse, the new 125 sq m store catering for children age newborn to 16 years, replaces the temporary Step2wo store in China World II.

In addition to the extensive Step2wo own label footwear collection, it also stocks a selection of premium labels including Dior, D&G, Miss Grant, Simonetta, Cavalli, Gaultier, Little Marc Jacobs and Paul Smith.

## FASHION AND TEXTILES INDUSTRIES BOOSTED

Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for Creative Media, has joined forces with some of the UK's largest fashion companies including Mulberry and Asos.com to introduce an Apprenticeship in Fashion. The Apprenticeship is designed to open access to the fashion and textiles industries via vocational training and will also allow employers to harbour new talent and help grow their businesses.

The Apprenticeship has five specialist pathways in apparel, textiles, footwear, leather goods and saddlery, with new pathways in

tailoring, leather production, laundry, dry cleaning and textile care services being introduced next month.

There are currently over 100 apprentices involved in England, with this number expected to increase over the coming year.

"This Apprenticeship is an exciting and innovative way for young people to enter the fashion and textiles industries," says Skillset chief executive Dinah Caine. "Our hope is the Apprenticeship will make our industries more accessible to young people from a diverse range of backgrounds."



## RECORD ATTENDANCE AT BUBBLE LONDON

The a/w 11 edition of Bubble London, which took place at the Business Design Centre, Islington on 30-31 January, saw season-on-season footfall up by 26 per cent. The event also enjoyed a rise in international visitor figures, with an increase of 43 per cent compared with January last year.

The show's a/w 11 brand line-up, which was the biggest to date, featured 250 brands from over 20 countries. Seventy labels were exclusive to the show

and 60 made their show debuts for a/w 11, including Groupe Zannier brands IKKS Junior and Levi's Kid, Geox, Original Sister and Waddler.

"Post-show feedback has been fantastic, with positive comments from both exhibitors and visitors alike on the development of the exhibition," says Bubble London event director Lindsay Hoyes.

The s/s 12 edition of Bubble London will run on 19-20 June.



MD of Start-Rite, Peter Lambly, receives the Award for Best Children's Brand from Past President Michael Donaghy.

## IFRA AWARDS

The Independent Footwear Retailers Association (IFRA) once again hosted its annual awards ceremony last month at Birmingham NEC's Hilton Metropole. The ceremony took place on Sunday 20 February, and brought together the industry's key brands and buyers, many of whom were exhibiting at, or visiting, Moda Footwear.

The Association awarded accolades across eight categories, including Start-Rite as Best Children's Brand – with Clarks, Geox and Lelli Kelly taking second, third and fourth place respectively – and children's footwear retailer Peter Elliot of Hands Footwear, Stockport, Cheshire as Retailer of the Year.

There was also a one-off award – IFRA Personality of the Year – which went to the Association's past president honorary treasurer Michael Donaghy.

## BIGGEST EVER INDEPENDENT KIDS



The recent edition of Independent Kids, which took place over two days on 20-21 February at Cranmore Park, Solihull, was the biggest to date, and enjoyed increased exhibitor numbers and footfall from both UK and overseas visitors.

Key brands which exhibited for a/w 11 included Aden & Anais, Angel's Face, Animal Tails, Banner, CAT, Country Kids, D'Arcy Brown, Lilly + Sid, Little Linens, Mayoral, Uttam Kids and Yumi Girls.

Independent retailer Deborah Thorpe, of Buttons & Bows, Leicestershire, found the brand mix and the location of the show to be ideal for her needs. "As always, the show had a good mixture of suppliers in a lovely location," she says.

The s/s 12 edition of Independent Kids will take place on 10-11 July at Cranmore Park, Solihull.

## REPORTED INCREASE IN NUMBER OF VACANT SHOPS

A recent Local Data Company report has revealed an increase in the number of vacant shops and a widening of the North/South divide.

Regional variations show the northern and midland regions are above national average at 16.5 per cent vacancy, and southern regions are below average at 12.3 per cent. The North East, North West, East Midlands and West Midlands show average vacancy rates for large centres at approximately 19 per cent. Yorkshire and Humberside is higher at almost 21 per cent while London, the South

East, the East and the South West all average around 14 per cent. Scotland, meanwhile, has the lowest regional rate at 12.6 per cent.

"These figures show the number of small shop owners holding vacant property continues to increase – raising serious questions about the Government's decision to increase its tax on empty shops from April," says Liz Peace, chief executive of the British Property Federation.



## RUKKA RAINWEAR RELAUNCHED TO THE UK

Sunproof Limited, the established Somerset distributors of baby and childrens' accessories, sun protection products and footwear, has been appointed to relaunch Rukka rainwear to the UK market.

Established in its native Finland for over 60 years, Rukka is part of Finland's largest clothing consortium, L-Fashion Group, and will be relaunched in the UK for s/s 12.

"I'm very pleased to now be working with Rukka, a strong brand with a long heritage and a great product range," says Sunproof Limited managing director Jouko Nykänen. "We look forward to the work ahead to build the brand in the UK kids'wear market."



## B&B YOUNGSTARS TO LAUNCH FOR S/S 12

B&B Youngstars is the new international kids'wear platform of trade exhibition Bread & Butter, set to launch for s/s 12 on 15-17 July at Tempelhof Airport, Berlin.

This new, independent trade fair concept follows the exhibition's initial foray into childrenswear in summer 2010, when it launched B&B Kids Camp. Due to weak response from exhibitors and overlapping dates with existing kids' trade fairs, Kids Camp, which was not an independent show but integrated into B&B, was cancelled for the winter 2011 edition.

The a/w 12 edition of the show will take place on 27-29 January.

## RETAILERS URGED TO PRIORITISE

New research from database software company FileMaker suggests the majority of UK retailers could be living in the short-term and not prioritising insight for business strategy and planning.

The Insight Awareness Report examining the attitudes of 100 UK SME retailers revealed 65 per cent are focused on gaining insight that aids customer service, 62 per cent on sales and marketing, while risk management only accounted for 23 per cent and strategic business planning for 22 per cent.

Other key findings included 41 per cent of retailers spend more time

retaining than attracting customers but only 26 per cent have any kind of loyalty scheme in place. Fifty per cent believe social media provides a useful source of customer and market insight. However, 46 per cent are not using any of the major social media channels.

"With the focus placed squarely on gathering marketing and sales information, it looks like UK retailers are treading water to some extent – prioritising tactical survival techniques over strategic business planning," says Tony Speakman, director of FileMaker Northern Region.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

\* Independent technology and market research company, Forrester, predicts online sales in Western Europe are set to increase by more than 13 per cent to €92bn in 2011, having grown 18 per cent to €81bn in 2010, with a 10 per cent year-on-year increase up to 2015.

\* WM Morrison Supermarket Plc has acquired multi-channel baby and nursery online retailer Kiddicare as it works to build its online non-food business. The company will continue to trade separately as kiddicare.com.

\* Research by Textiles Intelligence predicts strong growth for clothing retail demand in Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Turkey up to 2015. Rapid growth is also set for a selection of smaller, emerging markets including Colombia, Peru and Poland.

\* London's Regent Street is promoting its offer of children's fashion and lifestyle product to attract a new generation of consumers. Highlights from the Mile of Style include Burberry Kids and French Connection Kids, the latest junior products from the Apple and flagship stores selling children's ranges.