



WHOLESALE ACQUIRES RETAIL CHAIN

Branded footwear wholesaler James Southall & Company, parent company of children's footwear brand Start-rite, has acquired children's footwear retailer One Small Step One Giant Leap (OSSOGL).

The acquisition is part of James Southall & Company's strategy to extend its distribution channels and routes to market, both nationally and internationally.

The footwear wholesaler will gain 100 per cent ownership of the shares of OSSOGL, which has eight stores and six concessions, and stocks a range of children's footwear brands.

"The purchase of OSSOGL offers our company an efficient way to add a high street presence to the existing wholesale and e-commerce arms of the business," says Peter Lambie, James Southall & Company chairman and Start-rite managing director.

OSSOGL outlets will continue to run as multi-brand outlets and current suppliers will be unaffected by the acquisition.

FIRST FOR KIDS' FOOTWEAR



B&B CUTS ALL TIES WITH KIDSWEAR SECTOR

Bread & Butter has cancelled its kidswear show B&B Youngstars along with all plans to work with the kidswear sector going forward.

B&B Youngstars, due to launch for s/s 12, was the trade fair's latest kidswear concept following its initial test of the market in summer 2010 with the launch of B&B Kids Camp. The winter 2011 edition of Kids Camp, which was not an independent show but integrated into Bread & Butter, was cancelled following weak response from exhibitors

due partly to its dates clashing with Pitti Bimbo in Florence. By launching a standalone kidswear show running on separate dates to the main Bread & Butter exhibition, organisers hoped to attract brands back to the concept. However, stand costs and issues with the show's dates have led to Bread & Butter's decision to cease all work with the childrenswear market.



NEW AT BUBBLE LONDON FOR S/S 12

Bubble London, which runs on 19-20 June at the Business Design Centre, Islington, has a host of new UK and overseas exhibitors and a new seminar programme lined up for this season's show.

New s/s 12 signings include Aya Naya, Baccha Party, Bluenose Monster, Jessie and James London and Juggle Angels.

The free seminar programme, which runs across both days of the show, features Ray Buckler,

head of business development, and Nick Pratt, managing director of Sitemakers, discussing Practical Tips for Successful Online Retailing. Craig Phillipson, founder of Shopworks, will be examining the The Rational and Emotional Elements of Store Design, while Thierry Bayle, director of fashion retail management company Management One looks at the golden rules of starting and growing a retail business.

Moda Footwear, which is part of the Moda trade fashion exhibition running on 14-16 August at the NEC, Birmingham, will showcase the largest gathering of kids' footwear brands in the UK for s/s 12.

Key new signings at the time of going to press include Pablosky, MAA, Manuela de Juan, Popsies and Memo Shoes. Key returns, meanwhile, include Agatha Ruiz de la Prada, Angulus, Bobux, Garvalin, Lelli Kelly, Noel, Primigi, Ricosta, Robeez and Umi.

Visitors will also find a business focused seminar programme addressing key retail-related topics, catwalk shows, an after-show drinks party and networking event on Sunday and the popular Moda party on Monday evening.



INDIES TO CONSIDER WEATHER

Retailers subscribing to meteorologist services are cashing in on the unpredictable British weather by introducing seasonal fashions at short notice. Provided flexible stock control and supply chain systems in place,

forecasting services such as British Weather Services can help retailers fight the competition.

"It's not so much a case of buying stock accordingly, more a case of marketing the right stock just ahead of when it's needed," says Jim Dale, senior risk meteorologist, British Weather Services. "If as a retailer you have a four week forecast, you can ensure you have a snowy window display or sandals out on the shelves before your nearest competitor has."

FABRIC FLAVOURS STRENGTHENS BRAND PRESENCE



Childrenswear label Fabric Flavours is helping raise brand awareness with the opening of a new boutique showroom on Finchley Road, North London.

The brand specialises in limited edition, vintage style T-shirts and babygros featuring famous retro characters from books and television. Detailing is key, with pieces finished with embellishments, multi-coloured stitching, satin appliques, flocking and embroidery. Fabric Flavours is available from independents across the UK as well as Selfridges in London, Birmingham and Manchester and Harvey Nichols in London, Leeds and Edinburgh.

CBI PREDICTS SLOW GROWTH

The Confederation of British Industry has warned the UK economy will make slow and patchy growth throughout the rest of this year.

Retailers, however, were advised to remain optimistic. Despite a squeeze on household income and public spending cuts, the CBI predicted this year's GDP growth rate would be 1.7 per cent this year and 2.2 per cent in 2012.

Business investment is expected to help drive economic growth, while UK export was also expected to perform well. "There are

some bright spots on the forecast," says CBI director general John Cridland. "But the re-balancing of the economy is going to take time to feed through, and it may not feel like much of a recovery for some time yet."

Inflation is anticipated to be higher throughout this year and into early 2012 due to factors such as higher commodity prices. However, as the impact of the VAT increase subsides, inflation is expected to fall back closer to the Bank of England's two per cent target rate next year.



INDEPENDENT SCOOPS RETAIL AWARD

For the second year running, independent babywear retailer Babe has been awarded Highly Commended Small Independent Retailer 2011 in the Prima Baby 2011 Fashion Awards.

Babe, which launched in 2004 and has two London stores as well as an online business, is owned by Liz Pilgrim, who is also board director of her local Ealing Business Improvement District Company to regenerate the town centre. As well as the Prima Award, Babe has been honoured with the title of the Most Loved Business by the Best of Ealing Directory, which is based on the shop receiving the highest number of customer testimonials.



BABYWEAR BRAND WINS ORGANIC AWARD

Organics for Kids, which was established in 2004 by Jane Shepherd, has won the Best Organic Textile Product at the Natural & Organic Awards 2011. The award, sponsored by GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard) and

presented by fashion designer Katharine Hamnett CBE, coincides with the launch of the brand's summer range.

"We appreciate how challenging the Global Organic Textile Standard is to achieve, and we were impressed that Jane has not only achieved a broad range of well designed and fun products, but also managed to provide job security to a Nottingham factory," says Lee Holdstock, chairman of the judges and trades relations manager for the Soil Association.

RETAILERS' CONCERN FOR SHOP CRIME

Retailers are fearing the worst for their shrinkage figures as government cuts and unemployment drive theft for "need rather than greed", according to a recent Retail Fraud Survey.

The survey, which polled 100 retailers with 47,000 stores and sales of £98.7 bn, found 60 per cent of retailers feared shrinkage would get worse during the lifetime of this Parliament due to an ongoing weak economy. Despite these fears, however, the survey found 77 per cent of retailers didn't prioritise the introduction and maintenance of a loss prevention system.

"For the vendor community, this report should act as a catalyst to reassess their approach to loss prevention," says Paul Bessant, managing director at Retail Knowledge, commissioner of the survey. "It's our intention to make this an annual exercise to showcase best practice and to share knowledge in a bid to reduce fraud across the sector."

Other key findings included the rise in the use of fraudulent coupons and an increased trend for return fraud and receipt fraud.

NEWS IN BRIEF

* Government plans to give community groups a first right to buy community assets identified as having community value, including shops and plots of land, could be an obstacle to retail growth, warns the British Retail Consortium. The group would be allowed time to register their intention and to compile a business plan, thus forcing a possible delay of a retail property by up to six months. The BRC argues that this could prevent retailers from realising the value of their property at the optimum time and put people off buying shops in the future.

* The Forum of Private Business is urging the EU not to cripple smaller online retailers through new consumer protection laws. Under the forthcoming EU consumer Rights Directive, web-based independent retailers could soon be obliged to sell their products to almost every country in Europe and be forced to pay the postage costs if a customer decides to return goods worth more than £35 within up to two weeks of a purchase being made.