

Help is in the bag as company benefits from funding support for exports



In these difficult financial times, one West Yorkshire company is defying the credit crunch and is making a name for itself in the international music business with help from UK Trade and Investment. Fusion is fast becoming a household name for musicians across the globe with an exciting range of colourful musical instrument bags, which have even received the seal of approval from a top jazz legend.

The Cleckheaton-based company, founded and run by four business women, is just a year-and-a-half old, but already has a strong international client base. Its stylish product range has impressed many musicians, including saxophone and flute musician Ronnie Laws, who is best known for his part in '70s soul band Earth, Wind and Fire and for penning the classic jazz-funk hit, *Always There*.

The Fusion range covers stylish bags for acoustic and electric guitars, cellos, brass and woodwind instruments and keyboards. The company is now striving to become the number one musical instrument bag company in Europe. And with the help of funding from UK Trade and Investment, it looks set to achieve its goal.

Designer, musician and one quarter of the Fusion team, Amanda Wheatley says: "In the short time we've been up and running we've been amazed with the response. We've had a lot of positive feedback from our customers, including Ronnie Laws, which we're thrilled about.

"We are four women who run the company and in a male-dominated field such as the music business this, too, has attracted attention. Doing our first trade show in Shanghai in 2008 took a lot of nerve but it paid off. We had such a great response to our bags and we got plenty of orders."

Amanda is now encouraging other companies to take advantage of the help on offer from UKTI's International Trade Advisers. She added: "With help from the UKTI advisers we received funding under the Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP), which enabled us to attend the Shanghai music exhibition and go to follow up shows in America and Germany. Although we only had a small, basic stand, our product stood out and created quite a stir. We also joined UKTI's



SUCCESSFUL TEAM: Fusion founders – Wendy Caldwell, Nicole Szekeres, Amanda Wheatley and Theli Renwick.

Passport to Export programme in May 2008 which gave us some great exporting tips and valuable master classes on things like agents, distributors and doing business in the USA.

"We've now received additional funding from Yorkshire Forward's Targeted Export Support Scheme (TESS), which we will use to take our products abroad to future trade shows. The funding and support has been invaluable in allowing us to continue taking our products to new audiences and will help us to fulfil our dream of becoming the market leader in Europe, if not worldwide."

The team at Fusion has worked hard to get away from the basic black gig bag. Having identified a gap in the market, they also launched the unique Fuse-On range, which allows the customer to choose from five attachment bags, all of which are designed to

fit on to the Fusion guitar, brass and woodwind gig bags.

"Having had a great 18 months, we are extremely optimistic about our future. We've just returned from China, having designed our latest bag range, which we will launch in January 2010".

Heather Guile, International Trade Adviser for UK Trade and Investment, said: "In what are difficult financial times for many companies, the team at Fusion has done remarkably well, securing new business in countries such as Germany, France, Switzerland, Taiwan and Japan.

"As well as the recent funding from Yorkshire Forward's TESS programme, we've also been able to point Fusion towards funding programmes such as the Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP). They have also benefited from UKTI's Export Communication Review (ECR), which helps firms take a closer look at their marketing tools, branding and image.

"They've worked extremely hard to make a name for themselves both in the UK and abroad and with help from various UKTI funding and training programmes, they can continue to go from strength to strength."

■ For more information about Fusion's musical instrument gig bag range, go to: www.fusion-bags.com

■ To find out more about Passport to Export, Export Communication Review, Targeted Export Support Scheme and other UKTI services call 0845 6048 048 or visit www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk or www.tradeyorkshire.com



TOP NOTE: Musician Ronnie Laws with a Fusion gig bag.

IRISH billionaire O'Brien has ended month truce with O'Reilly family, call showdown over Independent News & Media newspaper titles, strategy, chairman expenses.

Core IN&M shares Mr O'Brien's interest comes as the loss-heavily-indebted group negotiates a refinancing deal with holders over a 200 (£176m) senior note was meant to be repaid in May.

The future of the based group, which radio stations and others from Auckland

LIVESTOCK

HOLMFIRTH

Tuesday: Stores. Forward 12 store cattle, 1 dairy and 10 ewes and tups. Cattle: cow to £1540 from RP & N Eastfield Farm, Thurgoland. BB bulls to £240, heifer Blonde bulls £289, Fr bull Lim bulls £240, heifers £245, heifers £220. Top calf from D Dodson & Son, Hall Farm, Scissett. Store heifers to £630, Lim steers heifers £475, Sim £755, £755. Top price from IR Fletcher House Farm, Alms Sheep: Ewes to £76 (£69. price from RM & EA Payne Head Farm, Stocksbridge.

SELBY

Forward 904 head of stock including 236 cattle including 10 and 125 bulls, 264 sheep including 53 ewes and 404 pigs. Steers medium to 199.5p (heavy 193.5p (156.7p), medium to 197.5p (172p), 193.5p (168.6p). Bulls medium to 184.5p (146.1p), heavy (150.6p). Sheep: Lambs 147p (137.8p), medium (143.9p), heavy 144p (112p (104.5p). Pigs: 112p (104.5p), cutters (111.5p), baconers (111.11p), o/weights (107.1p), sows 75p (73.8p), 64p. Top price cattle per steers to £1173 for 718kg heifers to £1025 530kg Bl bulls £1278 for 798kg Lim price per kg - steers to 195.540kg Lim X, heifers 197.5. Blonde X, bulls 184.5p 542. Top price lambs per head £70.50, Ch X £66, Suffolk X Per kg - Texel X 156p, 152.4p, Suffolk X 150p. Top pigs per kg - 126.5p, 124p.

SKIPTON

Forward 342 cattle comprising young feeding bulls, 212 steers and heifers, 13 breeding. Young bulls ave £688, locks ave £674.53, heifers - Top prices young bulls Lim (£738), BB £805 (£644), (£703), Blonde £770 (£707), £775 (£668), Stab £715, Ge

Yorkshire Post Sept 3rd 2009