

News Release

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Alan's Dream Machine Takes The Floor



A 30-year manufacturing dream has come true for a Leeds entrepreneur with the launch of his version of the best-selling jukebox of all time.

Making its debut at the recent Ideal Homes Exhibition, Sound Leisure's newest music machine is based on the classic Wurlitzer 1015 and is already attracting interest from buyers as far afield as Dubai.

"I've dreamt for over 30 years about re-creating the "1015" and it will now become the flagship model in our Classic Nostalgia range," says Alan. "Despite the credit crunch, our research tells us that collectors will welcome the craftsmanship and sound quality of the machine for years to come, with a good proportion of customers handing it on to the next generation."

Ian Williams, policy director at Leeds Chamber of Commerce said: "It's great to see Leeds manufacturers such as Sound Leisure succeeding in what is an extremely tough trading environment. The combination of product innovation, quality and a keen eye for the market will play an important role in seeing firms through these difficult times."

Launched in 1946, the original Wurlitzer model sold 56,000 in just one year and now there are thought to be around 6,000 left around the world, costing up to £12,000 each. It held 24 78rpm records that played only one side, but Sound Leisure's founder and chairman Alan Black's new version holds 80 compact discs and features Ipod connectivity.

It is made to exacting, hand-crafted standards in the Leeds factory, with a tailored cabinet, eye-catching bubble tubes, a cast aluminium speaker grille, “antlers” and base, with prices starting at £4850.

Electronics fanatic Alan launched Sound Leisure in the Seventies with just £60 capital. The company now leads the jukebox and associated markets with £9m annual turnover and 100 employees in Leeds alone. He is still more often found with his head inside a music machine than in the boardroom at what is now the longest playing manufacturer in the industry under the original ownership.

A far cry from 1978 when Alan asked business partner Eddie Moss for the substantial sum of £100,000 towards the launch of his first ever commercial jukebox. And light years ahead of his “Son et Lumiere Chromatic Lighting Display, boldly advertised in the Sixties. Eddie came up with the cash and, at 81, is still involved in this unique business.

Constantly improvising and innovating, the company has progressed through the changes from compact discs, to downloadable music and even collectable vinyl. The company’s Top of the Pops branded Milestones in Music compact jukebox featuring every chart hit since 1952 without a broadband connection has been a spectacular success.

The success of this resilient and innovative firm has led to six relocations, culminating in the 80,000 sq ft factory in Crossgates, Leeds. Here, time-honoured cabinet-making skills link with the latest audio-visual technology to produce an ever-growing list of products for the leisure and retail markets.

Ends

Photography: Sound Leisure’s Alan Black with his new “dream machine.”

Notes to Editors:

In Nottingham, a further 20 Sound Leisure employees concentrate solely on electronic research and development, a substantial commitment, while the company’s busy operations division continues to install and service systems including jukeboxes, big screen displays, flat panel speakers and point of sale displays in leisure outlets from Aberdeen to Land’s End.

The company’s classic 1940s American style jukeboxes remain an important product line, starting at £4250 and increasingly gracing the homes and yachts of the rich and famous. With some 80,000 of the firm’s machines in circulation as far afield as Australia, refurbishment and replacement of models provides a significant chunk of business. Newer sleek digitalised versions offer the leisure industry a host of touch-screen audio-visual features.

On the educational front, the National Library of Wales has three of the company’s jukeboxes making a vast array of archived video material available to the public and schools while the originals are preserved.

Export continues to play its part, cruise lines are also major customers and Elvis-branded models have been a big hit in Memphis.

Retail Sector Growth

Sound Leisure Retail, launched only a couple of years ago, took the firm's products from their traditional environment and literally on to the High Street. Here the product range, with sophisticated touch screen technology, includes free-standing and suspended audio visual point of sale units, "talking" swing signs and interactive shop windows. Adidas Europe is currently utilising window speakers to attract customers into its outlets.