

NEWS BRIEFS

BRIGHT FUTURE

MELBOURNE: Australian-based brand SunnyLife launched into the US last week via a partnership with American retailer Juicy Couture. SunnyLife, owned by Shine Group, produces a range of lifestyle items, bags and accessories, and select items will now be sold across Juicy Couture's key flagship stores including outlets in the East Hamptons, Miami and Malibu. Shine Group creative director and founder Joel Bartfeld said this is the beginning of an international expansion plan for the brand.

BIG FISH

MELBOURNE: Ethical clothing label 3Fish has won the Sustainability Leadership for SME's award at the United Nations Association of Australia's World Environment Day Awards in Melbourne. Now in its twelfth year, the award recognises action taken to address global environmental issues. 3Fish, which is now three-years-old, was awarded the honour on 3 June in recognition of its ethical supply chain. The company manufactures a range of clothing produced to sustainability standards including fairtrade, certified organic and carbon neutral, and provides merchandise ranges for various organisations. The retail range is stocked in 80 Australian stores.

DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

SYDNEY: Swimwear label We Are Handsome (WAH) has dipped into apparel with the launch of its latest collection "The Memoirs". The new range, which will drop into stores in July/August, includes pieces such as a mini dress and leggings, in addition to swimwear. WAH plans to release its next collection, "The Vintage" to the Australian market in October. The brand, created by designer duo Indra Chagoury and Jeremy Jules, is currently sold in 26 cities and 18 countries, and also counts Net-a-Porter, Selfridges, Colette, Harvey Nichols and Barneys New York as stockists.

TWIST ON UGG'S

NATIONAL: Shoe manufacturer and wholesaler Urban Footwear has launched uggbot brand Shearersugg with the backing of a business partner. The debut collection, which launched last month, features more than 25 styles of heeled and wedged uggbots, retailing at approximately \$200. The brand has also negotiated a contract with the Miss Universe Australia to use the name, with Miss Universe Australia to endorse the product and the label going forward.

No lifeline up for Grab creditors

MELBOURNE-BASED denim brand Grab Industries has collapsed owing creditors \$2.3 million, with shareholders taking the brunt of losses at \$1.5 million.

Documents filed with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission reveal the company had just \$735,000 in total assets when it entered liquidation earlier this month. While secured creditor HSBC recouped a majority of monies owed, key trade creditors included leading logistics firm Dean World Cargo (\$203,319), Mimosa (\$64,622), Vince Clothing (\$42,515), Vogue Logistics (\$44,214) and Toll Ipec (\$11,753).

The Australian Taxation Office was owed \$251,908.

Grab Industries commenced trading in 2005 and is co-owned by Grant Moffitt and Amanda Gilham. Administrator James Patrick Downey

said while the company was a victim of toughening retail conditions, it would likely resurface in the near future.

"An independent party has purchased most of the stock and assets, so I would imagine the brand will have a life beyond this," he said.

While circumstances behind its collapse have been solely attributed to flailing retail spend, sources close to the company told *Ragtrader* it had also fallen ill to internal book keeping fraud. Grab Industries' collapse follows a significant restructure of its retail business late last year, with the Collingwood-based firm commencing the closure its network of 12 stores to focus on wholesale.

Grab Industries told *Ragtrader* it had 30 - 50 accounts in each Australian state, plus 120 New Zealand stockists at the time of its restructure. It revealed

department store David Jones would stock 50 per cent of its 150 piece autumn/winter 2011 range, with other key accounts including Edge Clothing, Maple, Loose Threads and Parliament.

The range included Japanese and Turkish denim priced from \$119 to \$179 and a "revamped" fashion offer including basics, exclusive print tops and dresses from \$49.95 to \$129 and leather jackets for \$249. A three-person design team was employed to back the creative direction of its restructure.

When *Ragtrader* attempted to contact the company head office for comment, it was advised that just two-count staff were present at the time of press and developments were being revealed "day to day". It is understood just one retail outlet was trading by the time of Grab Industries' collapse.

Assia Benmedjoub

Executive shuffle at Esprit

SYDNEY: Esprit Australia has farewelled managing director Andrew Bousie, making way for a new country manager sourced from Esprit's Asian operations.

Sophia Hwang-Judiesch is the new head of Esprit in Australia & New Zealand, overseeing both retail and wholesale operations. The appointment will see Hwang-Judiesch move from her current base in Hong Kong where she has been Esprit's country manager for Hong Kong and Macau since 2007.

Hwang-Judiesch's history with the international men's, women's and childrenswear retailer dates back even further, with stints as the country manager for Taiwan and as regional merchandising manager for Asia as well.

Hwang-Judiesch's appointment follows the departure of Bousie from Esprit's Sydney head office in early June. Bousie had been with the apparel retailer since June 2006. Prior to his

time with Esprit Bousie was general manager of the Colorado Group.

The reshuffle within Esprit's Australian office follows leadership changes at its German headquarters, as well as a drop in the company's operating profit levels from HK\$7.7 billion in 2008 to HK\$3.8 billion in 2010.

Recent appointments at the international level include former H&M leaders Jan Nord and Jorgen Anderson to the roles of artistic director and brand manager respectively. In May 2011, former Adidas Group executive Christophe Bezu joined as Esprit's new chief wholesale officer.

Esprit is also investing in a higher profile marketing campaign for summer 2011/12, recruiting known fashion faces Erin Wasson, Jess Hart, Daisy Lowe and Julia Restoin-Reitfeld.

For *Ragtrader's* full interview with Sophia Hwang-Judiesch, see the 1 July edition.



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