

Lincolnshire Echo 2008 Business Awards

Ted's violin business is pure electric

HELPING a friend led Ted Brewer into a new career – hitting all the right notes with the music world.

Now he has a thriving business producing electric violins which, though sacrilege to many classical perfectionists, are going down a storm with rock and popular musicians all over the world.

And as just one example of how highly regarded his 21st Century instruments are, leading international violinist Vanessa-Mae has three of them.

Judged on a completely different type of performance, the venture is also a contender for the SuccessMatrix-supported Lincolnshire Echo's Lincolnshire Enterprise-sponsored Most Innovative Business of the Year Award.

In a big – and highly successful – break with tradition Brewer's unique instruments are made with acrylic and polycarbonate bodies.

That has the advantage, among others, of being far less susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity and, being electronically amplified, can hold their own with any other instrument in a line-up.

"I began experimenting 15 years ago when a friend was complaining about his 'awful' electric violin and saying how much he would like a good one," said Brewer.

"When I suggested he make one he said he wouldn't know where to start and I volunteered to have a go."

Nothing if not practical he experimented with various materials before settling on acrylic.

Then he also moved into polycarbonate from which bodies can be moulded, rather than laboriously constructed piece by piece.

All Ted Brewer violins – www.tedbreweriolins.com – are assembled by hand in the company's premises in The Terrace, Lincoln, which houses a small staff.

"It was at least five years before I had a saleable product and it was very much a part-time occupation in those days," he said.

Things have really taken off over the past five years. Last year he sold more than 200 instruments and, such has been the effectiveness of his globetrotting sales efforts, that number could easily double during the current year.

Eastern Europe, the Netherlands, Australia, the USA and Turkey – particularly the latter two – are currently among his most successful sales territories.

Having Erica Nockalls – who plays one of his violins with the Wonder Stuff – as a consultant and live demonstrator also helps.

ted@tedbreweriolins.com

Come on and enter

DON'T miss out by hiding your company's light under a bushel, come on in – the water's fine.

Enter the Lincolnshire Echo Business Awards 2008, supported by Success Matrix, and your enterprise could feature in the Echo's business pages in the weeks to come... even if you don't eventually turn out to be an award winner.

To register your interest write to the address below and you will be sent an entry form and a brochure detailing the information required in your written submission.

Or call freephone 0800 289 076

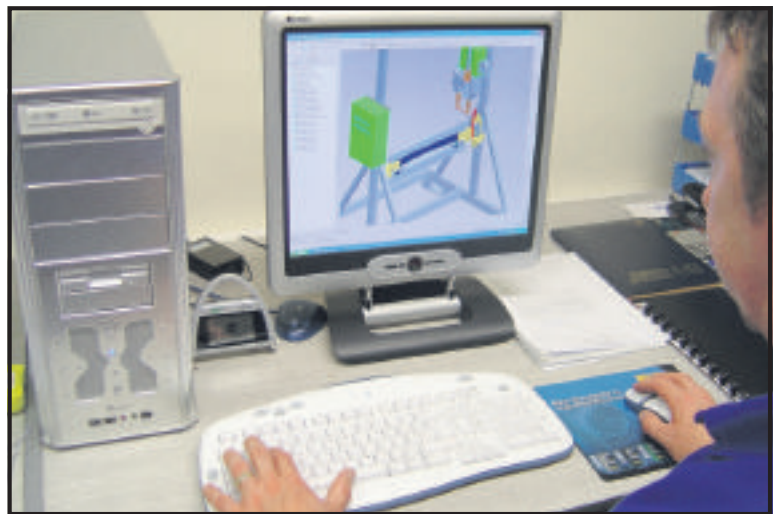
Or e-mail businessawards@successmatrix.co.uk with your details.

All award winners will be presented with commemorative trophies and will also benefit from a starring role in a full-page promotional feature – worth around £3,000 – in a Lincolnshire Media publication of their choice.

To submit your entry coupon, or to apply for your awards brochure and entry forms by post, write to: The Lincolnshire Echo Business Awards 2008, Success Matrix, Welton House, Limekiln Way, Lincoln LN2 4WH.



Company looking to expand again



KEY TO SUCCESS: Pentangle Engineering director Nigel Rivers designing at the computer.

Trio engineer a sales boom

AMBITIOUS engineers are setting their sights on hitting the magic £1 million sales mark over the next 12 months.

And that's just three years after starting their venture in a director's conservatory.

Grantham-based Pentangle Engineering hasn't looked back since its three founders – Nigel Rivers, Mark Paterson and Andrew Kennedy – left another Grantham area company to set up their own venture. Since then the trio, who have 60 years' experience between them, have really started to make their mark.

And a year after using a Business Link refurbishment grant and moving into premises on the Alma Park Industrial Estate, they are looking for fresh avenues in which to use their expertise.

The firm, which employs a team of eight, including its directors, is also hoping it will need to take on at least one extra pair of hands within the next six months.

Pentangle started life in the conservatory of production director Nigel Rivers, but within weeks it needed a commercial base and moved to the Witham Brook Industrial Park, swiftly expanding again into a neighbouring unit.

But demand for his expertise – the firm designs and makes automated machinery and tooling for engineering, auto-

Hot tips to move forward

- Treat periods of rapid growth with caution. They are good for the balance sheet, but they can lead to knee-jerk reactions, which are sometimes risky if the market hits a quiet spell.
- Keep a tight rein on finances.
- Think carefully before borrowing money.
- Talk to Business Link – it can point you to help you didn't know existed.
- Put everything in writing, even if this seems petty.
- Be prepared to work weekends and nights to stay on schedule.
- Don't leave anything until the last minute. As with a lot of problems encountered, it will be too late to correct them.

motive and other firms, including robotic equipment for new production lines, forced another relocation to Alma Park.

Mr Rivers said that move has really paid off and opened the door to much more business for Pentangle, which also supplies laser and laser marking equipment and offers a repair service.

"We have since become a strategic partner to a Coventry firm, Fanuc Robotics, which means we can build its equipment into our machines and it can also sell our expertise to its customers."

Mr Rivers said that gave the Grantham business an even higher profile.

Managing director Mark Paterson said: "Business Link gave us a hand when we set out, with start-up funding and

advice about business basics.

"But as we progressed and needed support to grow, the organisation was able to tell us about grant funding we could qualify for so that we could expand into premises that have given us a more professional edge."

Electrical systems director Andrew Kennedy added that the company, which currently has sales of about £750,000, is also having an impact overseas as well as in the UK.

"We export to countries ranging from Russia and Romania to Sweden and France," he said.

"We have also completed an agreement to become the sole UK agent for a respected American welding machine company which supplies equipment to the aerospace industries," added Mr Kennedy.

Search for innovative designs

FURNITURE designers with bright ideas have the chance to pick up £4,000 of prizes which could make their dreams come true.

The Sleaford-based not-for-profit Design Factory is giving entrepreneurs with a creative streak a superb opportunity to get their work noticed by a much wider audience.

Last year its competition

to find the East Midlands Designer of the Year proved a massive hit. Now it has become an annual event in the agency's calendar.

Design Factory director Clare Edwards said: "We will be looking for designs that are innovative, commercial and that demonstrate a real flair for contemporary design."

The winner gets a year's

free membership to Design Factory, which will give it the chance to exhibit at top national and regional events, be promoted in an online directory, get research into international markets and commission opportunities.

The winner will also get their work showcased at the '100 per cent' exhibition.

☐ To apply click on to www.designfactory.org.uk