



British designer Oliver Goldsmith has been making a name for himself in the Far East with reissues of his vintage designs

Goldsmith pictured visiting practices in Japan and Hong Kong



Big in Japan

Frame designer Oliver Goldsmith has found a ready market for his eyewear designs of the 1960s in Japan, Hong Kong and Korea, where the business now rivals that of his latest UK frame sales in terms of royalties.

Goldsmith explains that he first produced frames for the Japanese market eight years ago, starting out with 18-carat solid gold styles before his licensee Mari Vision in Osaka hit upon the idea to introduce retro designs from his archives. These styles, introduced three years ago, are the designs once worn by stars such as Michael Caine at the height of the frame company's success. To date some 12 designs have been reintroduced, hand-made in Japan for improved quality, with some minor bridge modifications.

The retro designs are currently exclusive to Asia and Japan, with Goldsmith regularly travelling to Japan to promote the range. He held a cocktail party at the British Embassy in Tokyo for 150 guests earlier this year, and is a regular exhibitor at the IOFT exhibition in Tokyo (October 27-29 2009).

'They're in a niche market as the wholesale is more expensive than my UK eyewear. I don't want it to be everywhere. The more I go to Japan, the more the opticians promote OG. They like the fact that I am British and making the effort,' he says, adding that he has been able to double the turnover, thanks to the frames being stocked in the top practices and appealing to the top 2-3 per cent of the market.

'The practices in Japan from the largest cities to the smallest towns are

really stylish, and I am sure that is why they're so busy even though there is a recession in the country,' he says.

On his burgeoning Japanese business, Goldsmith says: 'Everyone loves us. We recently did five roadshows and 27 appearances in optical practices. It's incredible – people buy two to three pairs at £200 per frame. It's mostly trendy people aged between 30 and 50, who ask for their cases to be autographed and to be photographed with me.'

'The reason it's successful is I haven't had to ask a designer to create me something retro. We have gone to the archive boxes and picked out the ones that are suitable and I have more designs than they need. I feel like I have turned the clock back to being 30 years old.'

Goldsmith, who has reinvested in a white suit similar to the one he wore to optical exhibitions in the 1960s, explains that the fastest selling of his frames in Japan is the one he wears, the Vice Consul, a heavy tortoiseshell model with rivet detailing.

Buoyed by the demand for the collection, he is now working on another line for the Asian market. 'We have more new retro designs coming out and I have been persuaded to introduce some more expensive versions of my father's designs which are ultra-retro from the 1950s. We have done the samples for these and have such a good following that opticians in Japan will buy them even if just for their window display.'

The retro styles are not currently available in the UK, but Goldsmith has four trips planned to Japan next year to keep the momentum going and work on his Japanese language skills.

