



# Sunlens solutions

**M**aui Jim is cementing its place in the optical industry not just as a sunglass manufacturer but as a developer of sunglass lens solutions, with two recent additions to its lens portfolio.

As well as a new high-transmission lens, giving 25 per cent visible light transmission, it has also introduced MauiPassport, a free-form design created in partnership with Shamir.

Designed specifically for the company's frames, base curves and materials, the latter lens takes into account pantoscopic tilt, panoramic angle and vertex distance to optimise the performance of each prescription, both single vision and progressive.

'A normal prescription lens is measured through the centre, but with our 3-D ray-tracing software this measures 4,000 points across the surface of the lens. Having the prescription on the back surface brings the optics closer to the eye, giving greater accuracy without a letter-box effect,' says Sean Collins of Maui Jim UK. 'Our Image progressive is extremely good but Passport is state-of-the-art and enables us to offer, good, better and best in terms of lenses.'

He adds that, because UK opticians are very familiar with free-form technology, they are quite comfortable with the idea of Passport, which he describes as produced in the US lab on some of the best equipment in the industry. 'Our machinery is bespoke-made in Europe and includes a recycling facility, as, coming from Maui, we are an eco-friendly company.'

Currently, some 50 per cent of Maui Jim lenses for the UK are prescription, with 90 per cent of the sunglass styles glazeable, although some models have restrictions on the Rx range.

Passport can be glazed in polycarbonate, in the Maui Jim Evolution material and the new high transmission HT lens in three colour options (neutral grey, HCL bronze and Maui rose). Progressives have the fitting height options of 19mm and 15mm.

MauiPassport is in a 'soft launch' phase, and its power range is expected to broaden in the coming months. At present, it comes in +3.00D to -4.50 in 6-base styles and more in a 4-base lens.

Collins adds that at £50 over and above the cost of the normal product to the consumer, it is the difference between 'own brand and bespoke'.

'It is worth every penny. Our non-tol, which was very reasonable



Maui Jim hopes its latest free-form and high transmission lens developments will be a passport to prosperity

before is even lower with Passport.'

The other development, the HT lens, has a greenish tint, meets traffic signal recognition requirements and is aimed at wear when higher light transmission is required without uncomfortable glare. 'With HT the absorption is 75 per cent but the polarised lenses block 99.9 per cent of reflected glare and 100 per cent UV. If you remove glare you can wear them throughout the year – it's not just a sunshine product. They're perfect for cloudy days and have been very successful with professional sportspeople like golfers, fishermen and cricket umpires,' he says.

## Power to practitioners

Discussing Maui Jim's focus on lens solutions, Collins adds: 'We're different. Maui Jim is not just a sunglass product, we are a R&D company. We see the strength of the market in the future as returning the power to the optician. Sunglasses are for UV protection and eye health, which is something that should be taken more seriously. Sunglasses can be an optical product and 95 per cent of our market is in optical stores,' he says.

As the sunglass company is not fashion-first, this makes it possible to take back and rotate stock. 'We don't have to reinvent the wheel with a new collection every year, with the resulting

costs, so we can concentrate on a quality service and customer care.'

Collins explains that the promotional effort for 2009 will have a renewed focus on optical practices. 'We are not going to be involved in as many promotional activities at outside sporting events, for example the horse trials at Badminton and Burghley. We will concentrate on customers and relationships to make sure we work with practices through a very difficult time.

'Everyone who works for Maui Jim is an employee and has a defined role in looking after customers and the business base,' he says, adding that the company will have its usual presence at the Optrafair show.

Collins points out that practices can also take measures to create interest in their sunglass business, for example asking patients on the reminder letter to bring their current sunwear to the eye exam, whether plano or Rx. 'It puts it on the agenda. The practitioner can check whether the patient's sunglass is UV efficient, what they are used for, whether the person is light sensitive or suffers from migraines etc.'

This action, he says, is simple and effective, and can result in increases of as much as 15 per cent in plano and Rx sunglass dispenses. Something not to pass over in the coming months. ●