



## IFF MAGIC Tokyo, 25-27 April 2018

### Report

Now in its third season, the IFF/MAGIC Tokyo tradeshow at the Tokyo Big Sight Exhibition Centre is an important tradeshow for the mainstream Japanese and Asian market.

**For the avoidance of confusion**, IFF/MAGIC is **NOT** the same as the Reed Tokyo Fashion World events also hosted at Tokyo Big Sight, which UKFT visited in November 2016 and concluded was not an appropriate vehicle for members.

IFF/MAGIC was originally launched many years ago as the International Fashion Fair (IFF) by Senken Shimbun, Japan's largest and most influential fashion trade newspaper. For the past decade, the show had slipped off our radar until it was acquired by the UBM group and relaunched as IFF/MAGIC. With UBM's support and knowhow, the show has the potential to be a powerful trade fair for mainstream Japanese and Asian buyers. IFF/MAGIC maintains close links with Senken Shimbun, to ensure that the Japanese fashion community is aware of the show.

Traditionally, there have always been very few tradeshow in Japan for the sector, the main reason for this being that Japanese buyers travel to the main international fairs. However, recently we have seen that assistant buyers and smaller independents have had their travel budgets cut and there is renewed interest in Japanese shows to engage them. Some UK exhibitors show at Rooms Tokyo (launched by the distributor HP France) and Mode in France, organised by the French Womenswear Federation.

IFF/MAGIC features menswear, womenswear, footwear and accessories. Most of the collections are branded. The October edition of the show (next time scheduled for the end of September) is by far the larger of the two, set out over two floors and is generally much better attended. The smaller April edition was hampered by poor dates late in the season but is expected to grow in terms of visitor numbers and attendance when it moves to mid-March next year. UKFT believes that the new dates will make the show more relevant for buyers although there is a potential clash of dates with Paris Women's Fashion Week and Shanghai Fashion Week in September. There is never a perfect time to satisfy menswear and womenswear companies at the same time.

IFF/MAGIC is generally popular with key Japanese department stores, trading houses and national independents and represents an important opportunity to meet Japanese buyers including Isetan/Mitsukoshi, Ships and, importantly, assistant buyers and merchandisers and smaller independent stores. UBM have also invested heavily in an international visitor programme, flying in buyers from around the world, including: ASOS, Matches, Robinson Dubai, Shine and Joyce Hong Kong and others. Many of these international buyers are primarily attracted to the show by new

Japanese brands and local designers, but the fact remains that they did visit the show.

The show is well laid out in one U-shaped hall with an additional section called "Edit" in the entrance lobby area. Whilst the show is predominantly mainstream, the Edit section includes designer and EU/US manufactured collections and the organisers would like to include more designer collections in future. The show included 12 exhibitors from the UK in a group co-organised by IFF/MAGIC and UKFT. There was also a supported group of French companies, a handful of Italian, Spanish,



Portuguese and US brands and a mixture of Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Indian and other Asian brands. In particular, the organisers had been careful to put the cheaper manufacturing companies (from China and India) along the outer edge of the show, leaving the inner rows feeling better in terms of quality and design.

Most of the stands are built to an international standard and the organisers offer a competitively priced shell scheme stand. The stands in Edit have a different stand package including furniture and higher walls.

Daines & Hathaway/Pittards was the only UK exhibitor in the Edit section, having taken part very successfully in the show in October 2017. In the main body of the show were 11 other UK companies, all showing as part of a special one-off deal negotiated between UKFT, the British Footwear Association and UBM Japan.

The British exhibitors were:

Cabin Zero  
Chrysalis England  
Daines & Hathaway  
David Hampton  
Fox Umbrellas  
Highland 2000  
Hymn London  
Jianhui London  
John White Shoes  
Murray Hogarth  
Oxford Blue  
Walsh

Some of these brands, including Chrysalis England, are relatively new to Japan whereas others, such as Cabin Zero, Fox Umbrellas, Hymn, Murray Hogarth and Walsh have established business and relationships in the market. All of them were invited to show as they have a strong story for the Japanese market.

Most of the UK exhibitors used a hybrid stand scheme featuring chairs, tables, shelves any no walls, lighting or signage. This was very popular as it created a very open feel to the show and some of the exhibitors in the surrounding areas liked this informal style. For next time, we have asked the organisers to look at similar options,

possibly adding in signage and lighting but without separation walls. One or two of the international exhibitors also liked the look of the British stands.

Market research is an important part of any trip to Japan. Japan works differently from most markets and not every product has its place and the market is changing. It is increasingly difficult to introduce new ready to wear collections to Japan but there is still a place for good accessories collections.

The Japanese market has changed a lot over the past three years. Buyers are more reluctant to consider new brands and they are also looking for exclusive arrangements and products. Because of this, there is a lot of interest in Factory Brands as they have the ability to manufacture special runs and exclusives for Japanese retailers and brands, which is very much on trend. However, the market has become more price-point sensitive and is increasingly driven by a small number of big Japanese

**UK Fashion and Textile Association**, 3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR | T. +44(0)20 7843 9478 | E. [info@ukft.org](mailto:info@ukft.org) | **W.** [www.ukft.org](http://www.ukft.org)

**President** HRH The Princes Royal



trends. It is also worth mentioning that large parts of the market in Tokyo, especially Ginza and Harajuku, are driven by sales to tourists, especially travelling from China. These consumers tend to be either luxury high-spenders or, increasingly, younger customers looking for something different to suit their own personal look with a limited budget. This and the increase of some of the cheaper online marketplaces has dented the mainstream and luxury market. There is still a market for designer fashion but there is increasing competition from Japanese and other Asian designers whose style and fit are better for the market or better established brands which have invested in brand promotion or are supported by local celebrities.

The Japanese market remains predominantly wholesale based, pricing is being held back by the internet and the ability that gives consumers to compare prices across markets. One of the IFF/MAGIC exhibitors discovered to its surprise that its products are being sold at higher prices without its knowledge on the Rakuten market place. Parallel importing and cabbage have always been an issue in Japan but this valuable information could only have been found by visiting and researching the market.

Being this late in the season, effectively long after the end of the menswear selling season and also late for womenswear, we knew that the event was going to be all about contacts and very little about sales. Most of the British exhibitors said they had made new contacts and that the experience had been positive and beneficial. Most of them would have liked the look of the show but they would (as always) have liked to see more buyers.

Those companies with an agent or distributor or who had shown before were business than those which did not. Some of the distributors said that they had also had the opportunity to widen their market contacts at the show. A number of companies were busy, especially if they had agents or distributors to invite buyers and press and use the opportunity to reach new customers. The non-represented brands also learned a lot more about the market and how their brands are perceived in Japan.

Although there were international buyers at IFF/MAGIC, the feeling was that they were not looking for European brands. Japanese and Korean buyers were in evidence on the UK stands and we believe that the show has the potential to grow into a pan-Asian branded fashion and footwear event but that this will take a few more seasons. The organisers are committed to making this happen in the long term.

The dates for the next show are 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> September. These dates are earlier than usual, putting them very close to Paris Women's Fashion Week and CHIC/Intertextile Shanghai and Shanghai Fashion Week. We do not expect that there will be DIT grants for the event but the organisers are prepared to create cost effective packages for interested exhibitors.

The new dates will make it easier for womenswear brands to sell and we also hope that menswear companies will benefit even though September is right at the end of the menswear selling season. In March, the situation should be much easier for both.

Potential exhibitors should contact Mr Hayato Ishihara e: [hayato.ishihara@ubm.com](mailto:hayato.ishihara@ubm.com) . Mr Ishihara is very friendly and professional, he communicates in perfect English and is committed to having a British group at the show for the long term.



Quotes from exhibitors:

**Stuart Divall of Highland 2000:** “The show was a bit late for our Autumn Winter sales and a bit early for our Spring Summer. The show was well organised and has the potential to be good in future but most of our customers had already placed orders directly with us earlier in the season”.

**Neil Varden of Cabin Zero:** “IFF/MAGIC Tokyo was a good show for us with some important buyers stopping by, such as Tokyu Hands department store. The key takeaway from the show for us was the need for us to invest more time in developing the Japanese market with our distributors. The show really helped us to focus on the importance of Japan to our brand and how to continue to develop and grow there”.

**Michael Gough-Allen of David Hampton Accessories:** “We would have liked the show to be busier but we did meet at least two potential customers. We are planning to show again in September in the hope that the show will be busier and to reinforce our commitment to the market”.

**Huw Griffith-Jones of Fox Umbrellas:** “We had visitors on every day of the show, a good number of whom our agents had not previously met. Many of them showed interest in our products and left cards to be contacted afterwards. We shall see if these translate into orders but our agents were certainly positive about the number of the new contacts made.” He continued: “As we know from our experience in Japan, buyers take their time to research and consider new products and lines carefully before ordering. For us, therefore, follow-up and being seen by buyers regularly at an exhibition is essential to demonstrate that we are committed to the market and not just a one show wonder.”

**Jianhui Yan of Jianhui London:** “We had a few visitors, but not as many as we were expecting. We received one small order from a new customer (an independent boutique) and were visited by one of the major department stores”.

**Charlotte Hunt of Chrysalis:** “The show looked good, very simple and lots of space to see exhibitors’ stands. The organisation and set up were very efficient, as you expect in Japan. We believe that Japan is an important potential market for Chrysalis and we are looking to invest in the market for the long term.”

**Paul Alger, director of international business development at UKFT commented:** “UKFT is immensely grateful to IFF/MAGIC Tokyo for facilitating this group of quality British brands. Japan remains a major focus of our activities at UKFT and our companies have made valuable new business contacts.” Alger continued: “I was particularly impressed at the approach our selected brands took to the show and the market. We chose the brands carefully to make sure that there was something for everyone and that the collections. They understood that the show was late and that sales would be limited but pulled out all the stops to put on a great show”.