



A passion for fashion

Cyclodelic designs and makes cycle clothing and accessories just for women. **Jo Caird** spoke to founder and boss Amy Fleuriot

Amy Fleuriot did her degree in Product Design and set up Cyclodelic in 2008

Amy Fleuriot was 'fed up of feeling like a complete scruff'. A keen cyclist, she was frustrated that her choice of transport seemed to be incompatible with her London fashion student lifestyle. Addressing this issue led to the birth of Cyclodelic, which specialises in stylish cycling accessories and clothing for women.

When she started her degree course in Product Design at London School of Fashion four years ago, Fleuriot says: 'There were hardly even any women cycling. I wanted to do something to make it cooler and more acceptable and also make a product that was intensely practical as well.'

She began thinking about this niche in the market during her second year at university. She took part in a project that involved attracting inner London schoolgirls

to cycling via cycle fashion shows (run by the transport charity Sustrans and sponsored by Transport for London and the London cycle shop Velorution) and found that other people also wanted stylish cycling gear.

She teamed up with textiles graduate and print-maker Sarah Buck (now taking a break from the company to look after her baby son) and created a range of cycling products for women. Business took off. While Cyclodelic has been up and running for little over a year, it has already attracted media attention thanks to the launch in the spring of a limited contract



concession at Topshop's flagship Oxford Street store.

Cyclodelic's products are available from online retailers such as Tokyo Fixed Gear and Chain Reaction Cycles, and the company recently received its first big order from a new cycle shop in Dublin. Fleuriot is thrilled. With many companies suffering as the economy contracts, Fleuriot has more orders than she can fill. As a result, she recently hired a full-time designer, Alice Binns, to help her with this autumn's clothing range.

Beating the recession

Fleuriot acknowledges that Cyclodelic's success also owes a great deal to timing. 'We really hit on a trend and could see that there was something happening here, a big social trend that was just going to boom. Really it's been in the past six months I'd say that it's just tipped.'

Market research that Fleuriot undertook while writing her dissertation revealed that cycling was one of the only industries set to benefit from the recession. Her own experience supports this. 'The only people I know who are taking stuff on are other cycling businesses. Bobbin Bikes, Rapha... they're all doing really well.'

Fleuriot runs Cyclodelic out of a home-office-cum-factory in Hackney, east London. The designer is a petite blonde turned out in trendy but elegant clothes, in marked contrast to her somewhat ramshackle surroundings. Bikes are crammed into the hall, the garden is full of spare parts and the basement has been transformed into a workshop filled with equipment, materials and finished products.

Everything they sell is manufactured by hand on the premises, and Fleuriot and the home that she shares with her boyfriend have had to adapt to the business's expansion. 'I started off in a very small room – which is now going to be my office – with one machine. I've now got four industrial machines, I've got Alice, and we have a series of interns and work experience people to help out.'

Manufacturing costs

The decision to produce Cyclodelic's range in London rather than exporting the manufacturing process to factories overseas is bound up with Fleuriot's commitment to British industry, one she shares with many of her peers. 'We're all really interested in bringing manufacturing back to the UK. It's something that's been lost...'

The difficulty is that manufacturing on home ground is vastly more expensive than exporting materials for manufacture abroad. Ultimately it is the consumer who picks up the bill. Fleuriot accepts that this is an issue for the company, but hopes that the quality of Cyclodelic's product is high enough to reassure shoppers.

'People have got so used to stuff that comes in from abroad. It's so cheap that it's really hard to explain to people how much stuff costs to produce when you're doing it on this scale. I think people really have to realise how much work does go into something. If it's handmade, that is something quite special.'

The journey of an accessory or item of clothing from drawing board to shop floor takes around six months, which includes great swathes of time spent sourcing fabrics and setting up agreements with retailers. Depending on the piece, Fleuriot and her team can turn out up to four or five handmade items per day, but some take much longer. One of their neat black and pink



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Cyclodelic's products are handmade at Fleuriot's home-cum-factory in Hackney. Fleuriot and her small team produce four or five items per day

saddlebags, each lined with Buck's hand-printed limited edition fabric, retails at £55. Fleuriot is adamant that the price is fair: 'There's a helluva lot of work gone into it.'

Getting bums on bikes

Cyclodelic is not Fleuriot's only cycling-related business. She is also a qualified National Standards cycle instructor, doing around one day a week of one-to-one cycle training. In the week before our interview Fleuriot 'taught my second woman to ride from scratch. She'd never ridden a bike before. It was a really good feeling.'

She originally became a cycle trainer because of her work in cycling fashion. Fleuriot did her cycle instructor training during the Sustrans schools project that led to the launch of Cyclodelic.

'We [Fleuriot and Buck] got the teenagers to design their dream cycle clothing, then had it made for them,' she says. 'Then we realised what was missing was the cycling itself. We did our cycle training so we could teach it in schools.'

'The girls designed stuff, they learned to ride their bikes, and if they completed their Level 3 Bikeability they then got the clothes. And we went on a nice little bike ride. It was such good fun and all the girls loved it. I really do believe they're going to keep it up. I think fashion can have a good part to play.'