

# Yorkshire's hit factory



THE COMPANY NOW HAS A 80,000 SQ FT PLANT EMPLOYING 120 STAFF AND CAPABLE OF TURNING OUT 50 JUKEBOXES A WEEK

We tend to associate jukeboxes with the USA but a company in Leeds has been making some of the world's best music machines for more than 30 years

Words and photographs: Roy Hampson

The amazing sight of half-a-dozen vibrantly lit classic jukeboxes greeted me soon after I arrived at the premises of Soundleisure. But what really impressed me was that a family firm based in Crossgates, Leeds, has become a world leader in the production of these wonderful machines which evoke so many happy memories for so many people.

It's undoubtedly tough going for many Yorkshire companies at the moment, so it's nice to hear of a success story especially in the manufacturing side of business.

The popularity of jukeboxes grew especially in America during the 30s and 40s. It must have been an uplifting experience to walk into a coffee bar during those grey grim days just after the war and see for the first time those brightly lit, coin operated music machines with the familiar illuminated sides and rounded tops.

Alan Black, started manufacturing jukeboxes in Hunslet, Leeds, in 1978 along with his partner Eddie Moss. They exhibited their first jukebox at an Olympia show two years later.

Alan hit on the idea while studying electronics at Leeds Tech College and thought at the time that he was dealing with cutting edge technology - until a friend invited him to look inside a jukebox shipped from the USA. He was amazed at the advanced electronics, in fact the machine was far more sophisticated than anything he'd seen in Leeds and he became hooked. Both he and his partner decided this was the way to go.

From humble beginnings, the company has grown into a 80,000 sq ft manufacturing plant employing 120 staff and capable of turning out 50 jukeboxes plus a week. After more than 30 years, it still remains a family run firm with its founders at the helm, Alan and Eddy, and Alan's two sons Chris and Michael.

Chris, who is managing director, said: 'Originally the company aimed its product at the pub trade, but these days we are concentrating more on private individuals for home use, exporting all over the world, supplying royalty, Harrods, celebrities, and music lovers.'

He added: 'You can divide our buyers into two types. Some adore 40s and 50s music, then after saving up for a long time they at last own a jukebox, which finishes off their dream.'