

## CULT LABEL AVALAAN RIDING HIGH IN RECESSION

GREAT FUTURE: Business partners Sam Windridge and Logan Hall

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By Maisha Frost

AFTER success selling clothes wholesale, manufacturers Logan Hall and Sam Windridge are where they really want to be — in their own high street store.

“We’re bold — not bonkers,” insist the pair. “There’s life for adaptable independent shops with the right strategy as demands and conditions change.”

In three years, and with £160,000 investment - a mix of personal savings and venture capital - former Royal Marine Hall, 26, and Windridge, 26, have built Avalaan, their cult surfing, skate, snow sports and casual clothing label.

Now a £150,000 enterprise, it has helped foster a wider community of athletes, artists and musicians.

The brand, which produces two collections a year, appeals to free-spirited 16- to 35-year-olds through independent European stores.

“Our customers don’t have mortgages and the signs are they’ll continue to spend so long as it’s special,” explains Hall. Their cult skate, surfing and snow sports clothing label is now a £150,000 enterprise

A decision to make more expensive technical outdoor sportswear a distinguishing feature has paid its way through better margins and a higher profile.

“It’s rare for a small company to compete at this level with multinationals,” Hall observes. The credibility helped the business secure a £1,100 Government export grant, to exhibit at international snow sports show Ispo.

Based in Bristol, the new shop is well placed to exploit the city’s students and arguably the recession has opened doors too, by increasing the availability of affordable leases.

Now Hall, who has weathered storms of bad debt and incorrect stock forecasting, believes he has solved the dilemma of being part of the ecommerce revolution while not harming the high street.

“We need to be profitable, but not at the expense of others such as ourselves, otherwise we all lose,” he explains.

Avalaan, which employs three, has just signed up to Shopatron, where orders placed through manufacturers’ websites are directed to retailers near the buyer.

The retailer then either delivers the order or the customer collects it. “Everyone has a stake,” says Hall. “Innovation and good management keep local alive.”

Avalaan: 01179 244 665, [www.avalaan.com](http://www.avalaan.com)