

Nice little learners

Times are tough for students. Funding cuts mean many are taking on ever-bigger debts to finance even the bare necessities. But there are ways of easing the strain without resorting to dead-end jobs. **Stewart Maclean** meets four young entrepreneurs with bright ideas

Pictures: HOWARD BARLOW/NEWS TEAM INTERNATIONAL/SOLENT NEWS

THE STREET TRADER

Thomas Garret, a second-year law student, lives in Llandudno, north Wales, and tops up his bank account by working as a street trader, selling novelty items over the Christmas period.

"We started last year," he says. "A friend and I went to the cheapest part of town and spent £200 each on novelty Santa hats, cheap remote-controlled cars and other Christmas stocking fillers that we knew people would buy when the festive mood got the better of them.

"Once we'd invested the cash, it was a matter of working out the best way to sell the stuff to Christmas shoppers in the high street. Standing outside pubs was a sure-fire way of selling the stuff. The cars sold well. Other things, such as the hats, went down a treat, and we ended up buying another batch of singing reindeer.

"We worked the high street for just over three weeks from the beginning of December and made about £200 each. It was hard work, but it's good to do something off your own back and it was great to have some cash for Christmas. We'll be out again this year, with fewer cars and more hats."



THE SHOPKEEPER



Lauren Clarke, a 21-year-old fashion student at the University of Salford, uses her creative talents to supplement her student loan by making and selling her own brand of designer clothing in a central Manchester shopping arcade.

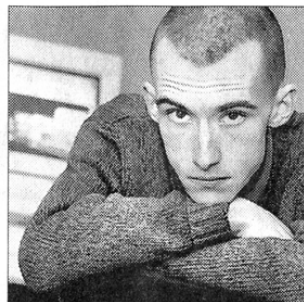
During her first two years at university, Lauren spent much of her spare time designing and making bags and clothing. She decided to open her own shop, Peep Show (07742 255727), as a way of showing her designs to a wider audience.

"When I first opened the shop, I invested all my birthday money in a tiny stock of plain T-shirts that I customised by sewing in names before they went on sale," she says. "I was surprised how well they sold, and with the profits I've been able to fill the shelves with all sorts of vintage T-shirts, shoes and bags."

"I staff the shop myself most of the time, because it's my own business and I want to make sure that things are done properly, but I do pay another student to stand in for me when I've got lectures.

"The money's not bad. Once I've paid my rent for the premises and all the other costs, I reckon I'm earning about £300 a week. I'm saving it for a deposit on a house when I graduate next summer."

THE WEB AUCTIONEER

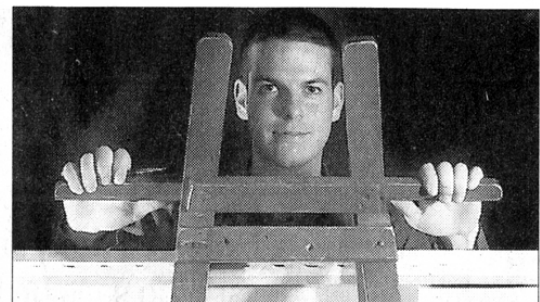


James Glossop, a 19-year-old English literature student from Worksop, supplements his loan by marketing and auctioning equipment for New Age activities.

"The idea's quite simple," says James. "I go to the local health foods store, buy a variety of herbs and spices, and auction them with thematic package titles such as Witches' Protection Kit and Psychic and Dream Kit. It's amazing what people will buy when you tap into specialist niche markets such as paganism.

"Each package usually costs me about £3 to put together, and I generally manage to sell them in an online auction for nearer £13 each. It's not a massive money-spinner, but I reckon I make £40 a week on average for doing very little. It means that I don't have to get a horrible part-time job."

THE ARTIST



Peter Aylott is in his final year of a computing and management degree at Bournemouth University and uses his creative talents to produce artwork that he sells from his own website and ships to customers throughout Europe.

"I always saw myself as an artist and fancied a career as a painter," says Peter. "But I decided at the last minute to study computing because I wasn't sure that I was good enough to have a career in art and design. I kept doing my painting alongside my course and last year, when I was on an industrial placement in a large office, I organised a small exhibition with about a dozen of my pictures.

"To my amazement, people started to ask about buying the paintings. I didn't have a clue what to charge at first, but sold a couple for about £20 each. Over the summer I had a bit of time on my hands, so I set up a website (www.paintaylott.com) to showcase my artwork and see if there was much interest.

"It's been amazing. I'm now taking orders from all over the country and as far afield as Holland. I sell every picture I make for about £60 apiece, depending on the medium and how long it took me to do. It's flattering to know that people want to buy my work."

■ Stewart Maclean is editor of Manchester University's 'Student Direct' newspaper.