

Pedal power

From Frazz Dazzler and the Sunny Day Delay, Vol. 1.2

WHEN RYAN AND TANYA CLARKE returned from their wedding in Tofino in the fall of 2009, the duo behind Dr. Scientist Sounds needed to find a way to up production of their boutique guitar effects pedals. After all, they were almost a year behind filling store orders.

Ryan (Electronics Engineering Technology '05), who engineers the pedals, now outsources the build of the circuit boards for two of their four pedals. Tanya (Graphic Sign Arts '02), whose designs give the pedals their unique look, no longer applies finishes, but instead has her designs printed and applied by a company in the United States.

As a result, they've largely eliminated the backlog (at most they're a month behind these days). And they are able to produce more than twice as many pedals, shipping about 120 a month to 35 stores around the world. "We're just in a lot better control of how it all goes down now," Ryan says.

The long-term goal is "to keep growing at a rate that we find comfortable," Tanya says. After all, she adds, they do this for the lifestyle of working together at home.



Building equity

From On the Brink of Big, Vol. 2.1

THINGS HAVEN'T GONE as planned for Ben Bertrand and Mark Holtom. By now, they'd hoped to have revolutionized the construction industry with their Geometric Construction System (GCS), which can automatically build floors and walls, complete with wiring, plumbing and finishing coverings. "We would have loved to have been selling our machine a couple years ago," says Holtom, CEO of Innovequity, a former novaNAIT incubator client.

Building the \$1.4-million prototype of the GCS was, at times, a frustratingly slow process. But in summer 2010 the machine built its first floor, complete with plumbing, electrical and HVAC lines. Since then, Bertrand, Innovequity's chief technology officer and inventor of the GCS, has finished a beta prototype for building walls (minus insulation, a capability soon to follow).

Without a first client, cash flow is currently the largest challenge; at times, it has the company struggling to keep its Drayton Valley factory open. But 2013 could be the year Innovequity's fortunes change. The company hopes to break ground on two projects. One involves building rental office and sleeper trailers for industrial use. The other is a residential development tied to a major refinery project now underway. The GCS would be used to build a four-storey, 20-unit apartment block in Bon Accord, 30 kilometres north of Edmonton.