

# Ingenuity, new products return success to Boomerang

*Auto accessories firm works with GM, Land Rover*

**BY REBECCA COLE**

Business Report Correspondent

BOULDER — What happens when two young and energetic people search for a way to be creative, independent and still pay the bills? Sometimes they strike gold and discover an untapped niche ready to mine.

That's what happened with Boomerang Enterprises Inc., a Boulder company that designs and produces custom, rear-mounted tire covers for automotive dealerships and manufacturers.

It all started with a seemingly simple idea in 1995 when the principals, a husband-and-wife team, were students at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

"I had a tire cover with a painted CU logo my mom had made, and people were always asking about it," said Chris Fischer, president of Boomerang. "We kicked around the idea of making custom tire covers, and we licensed ourselves through the university, and it just took off. No one else was doing it."

Soon they were pitching their custom tire covers to other universities and, eventually, local dealerships.

"When we approached the dealerships, it was from a creative perspective. Before, tire covers were just promotions for the dealer," said Jessica Fischer, Boomerang's vice president and creative director. "By adding value in the form of good-looking, quality graphics and colors that their customers would love, it totally changed the dealers' approach."

Boomerang currently enjoys a yearly 25 percent revenue growth and is

licensed by General Motors to provide hybrid rigid tire covers in the U.S. and Canada bearing the Hummer, H2 and H3 trademarks. In addition to hybrid covers, Boomerang sells soft tire covers, after-market custom armrests for Scion and the Acura RSX, and H2 car covers.

The private company would not disclose its revenues.

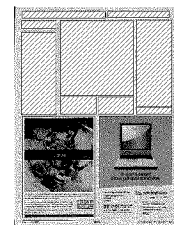
Its hybrid tire covers incorporate ABS plastic — a common thermoplastic used to make light-molded products — with a heavy-duty vinyl or steel side band. The covers go through a screen-printing process, which permanently seals graphics under a durable clear coat, increasing the quality, appearance and lifetime of the product. ↓

The covers are manufactured using thermoforming, a virtually zero-waste process where excess material is reground and recycled.

"When we introduced the rigid hybrid covers it changed the whole market again," Chris said. "We are the only company manufacturing a rigid tire cover, painting it, screen printing it and adding a clear topcoat. It has such a rich look, and our competition definitely can't match it."

Boomerang's first big break came in 1997 when it pitched local Land Rover dealerships on a line of animal-themed covers that Jessica designed. The tire covers were a huge hit with the dealerships and their customers, who had their choice of up to 25 different species.

Within months, Boomerang was selling to almost 50 percent of all Land Rover dealerships in North America. That relationship led to an OEM opportunity for Land Rover's light SUV, the Freelander,



which was generating customer complaints due to the lack of an armrest. A Land Rover dealer called Boomerang and asked if they could make one.

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"He said, 'If anybody can do this, you guys can'," Jessica said. "We developed it, created a prototype and sourced it. The same day we announced the product we had 450 orders."

Land Rover soon discovered that customer satisfaction scores were increasing because of Boomerang's armrest. After a bit of internal tussling between Land Rover and Ford, its parent company, Boomerang secured a contract with Land Rover to port-

fit their armrest in every single Freelander coming off the line, a heady experience for the small company.

Now with a dozen employees, the Fischers are excited to have more time to devote to developing new products.

"We get calls all the time asking if we want to sell, and we're just not interested in that right now," Chris said. "We've got a really good crew here. Everyone cares about the company and what were doing."

"To be innovative and creative and bring a vision to the marketplace ... and get validation that it's successful and working. That's what keeps it exciting for us."



PETER WAYNE

From left, Christopher Fischer, Jessica Fischer and Weston Williams show off one of Boomerang's custom tire covers for the Hummer H3. Boulder-based Boomerang makes hard and soft tire covers as well as armrests for Scion and the Acura RSX.