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## Sandals rope in world markets

By Linda Miller  
Fashion Editor

[Bryan Pease](#) isn't concerned with what clothing celebrities wear. He would like a peek at their feet, though.

[Pease](#) owns Gurkee's International, a Tulsa-based company that sells lightweight rope sandals in 10 countries and from beach to border in the [United States](#).

It's the company's latest coup that has [Pease](#) wishing magazines would show more celebrities' feet.

Gurkee's is the footwear sponsor of the Silver Spoon Beach House in Malibu, where parties, tabloids and gifts attract the pretty and the rich.

Already [Kate Hudson](#) and [Matthew McConaughey](#) are stepping out in Gurkee's, often called Jesus sandals, and [Pease](#) is eager to see who's next.

His business isn't dependent on celebrities, though.

Gurkee's are a natural for beach and lakes, or just hanging out in the back yard. Made from soft carpet fiber spun into rope and welded together, they're durable, lightweight, machine washable, saltwater and chlorine resistant, and color fast.

Plus they're comfortable, [Pease](#) said.

"They're actually very soft and the pattern of the rope, the way the foot bed is welded together, it's almost like it massages the bottom of your feet as you walk. It doesn't rub blisters and it's not coarse between your toes," he said.

[Pease](#) bought Gurkee's in 2001 from [Tom Murray](#) and [Ike Grenz](#), who started it in the early 1980s. He expanded the line from two styles to four and took the company worldwide.

### Related Information



Bryan Pease, owner of Gurkee's International in Tulsa, shows off the different styles and colors of rope sandals. He bought the company in 2001 and took it worldwide three years later. **By DAVID MCDANIEL, THE OKLAHOMAN**

"I just have always had a thing for a niche market product," he said. "The sandals are really unique. There is no other sandal company in Oklahoma and just a handful in the [United States](#). This was an opportunity to do something unique."

Gurkee's isn't without competition, but it's minimal.

"We are the world's largest producer of rope sandals," he said.

The sandals sell for about \$35, are handmade in [Mexico](#) and difficult to knock off.

"Due to the complexity of making them, they can't be stamped out like rubber flip-flops," [Pease](#) said.

Shipping takes place from a 17,000-square-foot warehouse in Tulsa. The bulk of the business happens seven months out of the year, with fall being the slowest. Four employees handle sales, marketing and distribution. Between 48,000 and 70,000 pairs of sandals are sold each year.

"In December, we've had as many as 45,000 pairs going into spring," he said. "Now we have 20,000 to 22,000 pairs on the floor right now."

This fall, shipments will start to [South Africa](#) and the company is pushing to get its products into [India](#).

"The sandals have universal appeal," [Pease](#) said.

Gurkee's originally were designed for fishermen and people on the beach or at the lakes. Marinas around the Midwest and dive shops were the first markets.

The design hasn't changed, and Gurkee's continue to be sold in beach shops, specialty stores and resorts.

"We sell to the little guys," [Pease](#) said. "We're not in any of the mass markets."

In Oklahoma City, the sandals are sold at Firefly in Bricktown.

When it comes to his sandals, [Pease](#) walks the talk.

"I love to wear them," he said. "I wear them every chance I get and every weekend."

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