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NEW BABY BRINGS 'BIG BABY' TO SCOTLAND

- **US indie film maker brings baby and business back to Bute**

An award winning US based independent film maker has turned her back on the bright lights of New York and Los Angeles to return to her roots in the west of Scotland to bring up her new baby.

Lesley-Anne Morrison (31) spent four years building up her company, Big Baby Productions, into a major force in the US independent scene with a string of awards to her name and a portfolio of projects involving such high profile names as director Tony Scott and actors Robert Redford, Alan Cumming, Piper Laurie and JK Simmons amongst others.

But with a baby on the way, Lesley-Anne decided in 2009 that it was time to move closer to home and started making plans to move her family and her business to the Isle of Bute.

“Although I was brought up in England my parents are originally from the west coast of Scotland and they moved back here a couple of years ago,” explains Lesley-Anne. “Big Baby was doing well in the States but I felt it would be best for my daughter Charlotte to grow up here, near her family. We launched the business in Scotland a few months ago and despite a daunting start things are going well.

“The big problem at the beginning was networking. I launched Big Baby in the States in December 2005 so all my contacts are on the other side of the Atlantic. I wasn't sure where to begin over here so I contacted Business Gateway and my adviser, Ann Scott, was fantastic. She started making connections for me in addition to providing advice on a whole range of business issues.”

With support from Business Gateway and others, Big Baby is now gaining a foothold in the highly competitive UK media industry with Lesley-Anne's expanding network of contacts helping her to identify potential new projects.

“Simply put, the faster we get to know people the faster we can get productions from pitch to production,” says the film maker. “In the States our focus was on music videos, short films, commercials and features whereas here it tends to be corporate videos and documentaries.

“We are just about to start work on a new documentary at the end of the month which will be great and we are also looking at bringing in a new investor in the New Year.”

When Lesley-Anne travelled to the States in her early twenties the intention was to do her time at the New York Film Academy and return to the UK at the earliest opportunity. However the young film maker's talents were quickly spotted and she soon found herself working on a string of high profile film projects involving some of Hollywood's biggest names.

Over the years Big Baby has also enjoyed critical acclaim and success with a series of short films and features. Lesley-Anne's directorial debut, a short film called 'W.M.D', screened at various festivals across America, at the 13th Raindance Film Festival in London and later in Paris.

Most recently, she has been involved with Indie films 'The Vicious Kind' and 'Dare', both of which were screened at the prestigious Sundance Film Festival in 2009. The latter has just opened to critical acclaim in cinemas throughout the USA."

It was during her time in the States that the film maker met her partner, US cameraman Gregg McNeill. Gregg's 20 years experience working on high profile projects across three continents has proved invaluable to the development of Big Baby. Following the birth of their daughter Charlotte in May, Gregg is now looking to transfer his skills to the UK market to help Big Baby grow from its base on the Isle of Bute.

"There is no doubt the pace of life is completely different and a lot slower on the island, but that is no bad thing," explains Lesley-Anne. "I love it here and there is no reason why, if we plan carefully and use the support that is available to us, we can't create a successful business."

This thought is echoed by Lesley Anne's adviser at Business Gateway, Ann Scott. "To succeed in business you need to have skills, experience and loads of drive and enthusiasm. Lesley-Anne has all of these attributes and more. I have no doubt Big Baby will be just as successful in the UK as it was in the States."

Business Gateway provides practical help, advice and support for new and growing businesses in Scotland.

To find out more about how it can help you start up and develop your own business visit www.bgateway.com or call 0845 609 6611.

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Additional Quotes

Business Tips

"It's important to have a really good idea of what you want to do and stick with it. There are lots of people who have good ideas but when they hit the first hurdle they give up. If you really believe in what you're doing keep plodding on and you will find a way to solve the various challenges.

"Also, surround yourself with as many good people as you can find. Take all the support available and learn from those around you."

What would you have done differently?

"I certainly don't have any regrets about the way I developed the company, however if there was one thing, it may be the networking side of the business. I guess I could have networked a bit harder at the start.

"I also tried to hurry things at the beginning and I think that was detrimental. When you are starting out it is natural to want to do things quickly and this can get frustrating. The thing I keep telling myself now is if something is worth doing then it's worth taking the time to do it properly."