

# newdesign

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## Mix 'n match

**Spokes people**  
Hub of the matter

**Face value**  
Stamp collection

**Going places**  
Designers  
on tour



Materials | Communications technology | Inventor | Software | Pies

# In the mix

Tanya Weaver tracks the design and development of a Kenwood food mixer for a new generation



Product	Company	Brief
kMix Food Mixer	Youmeus	Create a food mixer for consumers looking for high quality design that embodies the Kenwood Chef values for a new generation.

Most of us have some memory of a Kenwood Chef - a food mixer that has been around since 1950 and is now synonymous with Kenwood, a houseware and kitchen appliance manufacturer - whether our mothers, grandmothers or aunts used one (and is perhaps still using it 30 years after buying it). It is that multifunctional workhorse that takes pride of place on the kitchen worktop - probably because it gets used too much to go into the kitchen cupboard and is too big to be stored in the cupboard anyway.

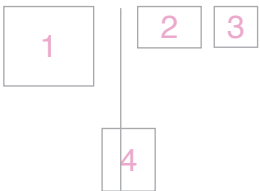
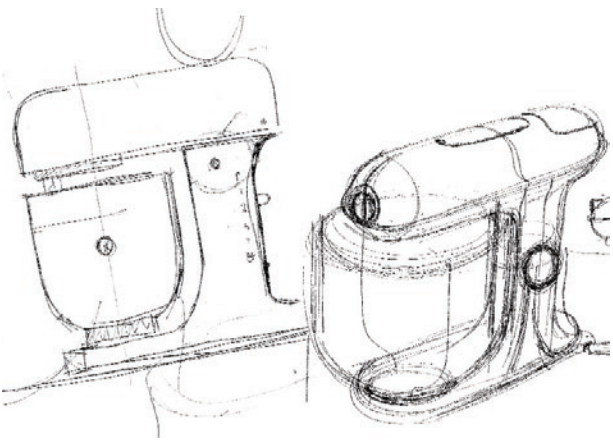
Although the Chef has been restyled over the years, most notably by Kenneth Grange in 1960, it is still recognisable from its first design back in 1950. However, in 2002 Youmeus, a London-based design consultancy, that's been working with Kenwood for over 10 years on a range of products, worked with Kenwood's in-house design team - kdo - to revamp it. "Working on the Chef was a challenge because it is a recognised design classic. We

A piece of art that makes a statement on a design level

made some evolutionary improvements and visually brought it up to date," says Chris Christou of Youmeus.

The product was launched in 2003 and during this period Kenwood was also carrying out research internally to discover whether there was a market for a new food mixer - a potentially more youthful and style-conscious consumer than that of the Chef who would probably spend a lot of money on premium branded products to decorate their homes. In 2004, due to its previous work for Kenwood and its close association with the brand, Youmeus was given a brief for this new food mixer product. "Our remit was to create a product for consumers looking for high quality design that embodies the Kenwood Chef values for a new generation," says Christou. "It has to be a piece of art in the kitchen that makes a statement on a design level."

In order to develop a product that not just competed on function and price, Youmeus initially ran workshops with Kenwood to establish how to add value and luxury to this new mixer. "Where 'Old Luxury' val-



Cooking up a treat | 1 and 3. kMix will be available to purchase from September 2. The concept stage involved a great deal of sketching 3. Youmeus were also involved in designing the product packaging

ues anchor themselves to solid production qualities, our focus on this product was 'New Luxury', which invests in intangibles. They include the magic and experience of the brand," says Christou. Out of these workshops came the kMix brand - a name that was short, snappy and recognisable - as well as 'The art of living' positioning statement.

Once the direction of the product was established, the designers then started on form studies - what the product would look like and defining those in CAD using Alias advanced surface modelling software. Models were then made to assess various aspects such as visual equity and size proportions. "Until you actually get something made tangible it is very difficult to know how it will work and feel especially because this is quite a big product," says Christou.

The end result is very different to the Chef. "The Chef is very a monolithic and weighty product. It sends the right signals to the Chef consumer that it is durable and robust, but what we wanted was something that wasn't about all of that," says Christou. "The visual language with kMix was 'industrial-chic' - creating a lighter proportion that occupied less visual space and making the bowl the hero."

Colour also played an important role in the design and was used appropriately and not throughout the product. As Christou explains, this is a product that will sit on the owner's work surface and compliment their home furnishings. "Our reason for designing a concept with stripes was about bringing back decoration and patterns to products in a more contemporary way," he says.

Although Youmeus were trying to differentiate this product from the Chef, there are still

"We wanted something that was about being elegant"

a lot of Kenwood values added. For example, on the Chef there is a big round dial on the front and this was brought into the design of the kMix too. "This is a user interaction point that is consistent in all their products," adds Christou. The designers also devised a 'K' symbol to be stamped onto all the attachments in order to tie them back to the brand.

Along with branding and industrial design, the brief also involved creating the packaging. "Companies nowadays need to offer more than just a product to differentiate and add value to the consumer experience," he comments. "Every touch point a consumer has with a company should be looked at and considered to really maximise brand equity." Youmeus didn't just want the consumer to open a box to find their kMix wedged in amongst white foam and an A4 print out of the instruction manual thrown in. So, without making the box too extravagant and oversized they set out to create a journey for the consumer through the packaging. Firstly, the lifestyle imagery proposed for the packaging itself conveyed a youthful and functional product. The consumer then opens the lid to find the instruction manual and is presented with a wooden handled spatula on the first layer, once they remove that they are presented with the three tools on the second layer which is lifted to reveal the product itself.

Throughout this project Youmeus worked hand in glove with both Kenwood's sales and marketing team and the manufacturing and engineering teams in China. As they were working in certain parameters the designers needed to understand the technology and the configuration so, even before the product was designed Youmeus were talking to the engineers. The early concepts also had to be assessed, not just from a marketing and consumer point of view but also a technical and performance point of view. As Christou explains, this was a huge investment from Kenwood and although the brief was given back in 2004 a great deal of resource and time was spent on approving budgets, achieving commercial buy-in as well as research and development.

The kMix will be in shops from September and, although it will initially be launched in solid colours, Kenwood are committed to bringing out a patterned edition. ■

