European manufacturers are looking at picking up speed on a new revolution: it’s time to ‘make do and make’

MARLON BRANDO rode one. So did James Dean. And Steve McQueen performed one of the most famous movie stunts on one. We are talking Triumph motorbikes – an iconic, achingly cool brand if ever there was one. Yet competition from Japanese manufacturers closed the company’s factory in 1983. Read how it made its own great escape on p50.

The Eurozone’s manufacturers are trying to tunnel their way out of recession and have been spurred on by a series of positive indicators. (http://eandt.theiet.org/news/2013/sep/factory-surge.cfm). Lee Hopley, chief economist at the UK manufacturers’ organisation EEF, said: “There is growing confidence that improving trading conditions will continue into the final months of this year and then accelerate through the gears in 2014.” However, latest figures from Eurostat, the European Union’s official statistics agency, showed the manufacturing base made a poor start to the third quarter, with factory output falling in July.

“We have never really lost the faith that manufacturing was alive, if ‘not well’; that it was rather broader than tended to be emphasised, and that it was important to the UK economy,” Professor Steve Evans of Cambridge University tells us in our feature on p70. Professor Evans is co-author of a report that says that manufacturing is ready for another revolution of the scale of the ‘just in time’ and ‘total quality’ revolution of the 1980s. This time it will be about energy, waste, packaging, circular resource flow, transport and supply-chain optimisation, which could save £10bn and create 314,000 jobs in the UK alone.

Are you the next Bill Hewlett, Dave Packard or James Truchard? Are you incubating the next great business success story in your shed or garage? First read our feature on how to finance startups on p78. Then turn to p24 to enter our new competition: What’s in your shed? Do you have the prototype for a world-changing invention or the master plans to solve the energy crisis? Or is it your place of quiet, a refuge from the noisy family and your workshop of relaxation? Perhaps you are lovingly restoring a Triumph TR6, trying to cover over those barbed wire scratches it got at the Swiss border. If so, take the advice of the small print in the literature of the Triumph Bonneville T100 Steve McQueen Special Edition: “Do not try to recreate any of Steve McQueen’s stunts at home.” And that means the Germans in pursuit of motorbikes as well as Hills ‘The Cooler King’ himself because one of those too is played by McQueen. Yes, the star of the movie is chasing himself.

And what happens at the end? Spoiler coming up! Stop reading now if you’ve somehow managed to escape the Great Escape every Christmas day for the last five decades. Only three make it away - and one of those is James Coburn, who plays Sedgewick ‘The Manufacturer’...