

Never in the history of capitalism have so many young people made so much so quickly. Welcome to the . . .

GOLDRUSH



Fortune-makers: Brent Hoberman, 30, left, and Martha Lane Fox, 24, turned a bright idea into a company worth £400m

Charlie Muirhead was running around "like a lunatic" on Friday, moonstruck in his brave new world. He had jetted in from visiting clients in America, was trying to buy a house in London he had not even seen, and was still on a high after securing £10m backing for his company, Orchestream. All in a day's work for a 24-year-old.

black jeans, an open-neck shirt and a big smile. He has much to be happy about. He and Fox, a 26-year-old Oxford graduate, founded the business last year; the company, not including the football table, is now worth about £400m, according to City estimates. Madness? "It's ballpark," said Hoberman. "It's possible," said Fox, the daughter of an Oxford don,

growing by 40% a month. Backers, such as Deutsche Telekom and Intel, have poured in tens of millions of pounds. If Lastminute.com floats next year, Hoberman and Fox will be catapulted into the ranks of the seriously rich. "We don't feel like millionaires at all," protests Hoberman. "Money doesn't come into it. It's not why you do it, it really isn't." He still drives

merce. They prefer to chance their luck with start-up ventures where informality is the rule and responsibility comes early; with luck it may also turn them into millionaires before they are 30. They are inspired by the likes of Michael Dell, founder of the Dell computer company, who is worth £13 billion at 34; Pierre Omidvar, also 34,

so they do not need any extra room. He intends to give a lot of his wealth to people less fortunate than himself. Pickthall makes no bones about enjoying his wealth, although he has no plans to give up work. He points out that he started the business at 19 and built it up over 10 years — while anybody else might have been off "backpacking

pany quoted on the stock market and now worth £65m. He received a payment from it of £1m in January. The hard cash, he says, has come from hard grind: he has been running companies for 12 years and only now, with two young children, does he try not to work at weekends. Charles Nasser echoes this sentiment. At 30, he owns the "majority" of Claranet, an internet service provider he

the business and drives a 16-year-old Mercedes-Benz. He points out that he was an information technology consultant, did a business MA and bounced back from two failed ventures before he found the end of the rainbow. He, too, has no intention of quitting: "If you like what you do, you wake up dying to go to work." The trend towards young millionaires making more money faster than ever before

of achievement at having taken something from nothing to where we are now." Fox said: "I have never had anything to do in my life that provides so many challenges — and there are so many things I still want to do." What would Hoberman have done if he had not discovered the excitement of running his own internet business? He thought a minute, then said: "I'd have been a party organ-

Richard Woods