

# X Factor executive accused

Alex Spence Media Editor

A former executive at the company behind *Britain's Got Talent* and *The X Factor* is facing a police investigation over an alleged £850,000 expenses fraud.

FremantleMedia has made a complaint to the Metropolitan police accusing Ian Ousey, its former chief financial officer, of defrauding the company over 17 years.

Among the claims is that Mr Ousey, 51, defrauded the company of £237,000 to cover an interim payment to the developer of two holiday homes in Portugal by submitting a false invoice and forging authorisation.

Rodney Hylton-Potts, Mr Ousey's lawyer,

said that he accepted that he received this amount wrongfully and was "desperately sorry and remorseful".

Fremantle is one of the world's biggest TV producers: in addition to the *Got Talent* franchise, which it co-owns with Simon Cowell's company, it is responsible for shows such as *Neighbours*, *American Idol* and *Grand Designs*.

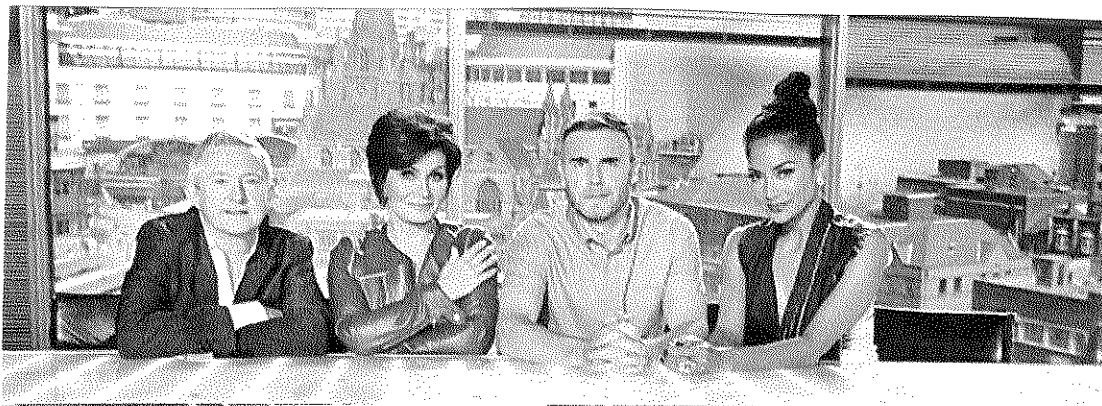
The case will raise questions for Fremantle about how some £40,000 a year could have gone undetected for so long, even in an industry where high spending is not unusual.

Mr Ousey is also accused of fraudulently claiming another £477,000 relating to credit cards, cars, mobile phones and couriers. The total amount is

Mr Hylton-Potts said that Mr Ousey did not accept that all of this was received wrongfully, but he agreed to pay it all back to Fremantle as part of a legal settlement last year. In total, he paid £1.4 million, including legal and investigation costs.

However, the settlement did not affect any criminal action, and Mr Ousey is facing the threat of prosecution after Fremantle reported the matter to the police. Mr Ousey attended Holborn police station, central London, voluntarily in January but has not been arrested or charged.

## of £850,000 fraud



Probe: Ian Ousey, the former Chief Financial Officer of FremantleMedia is said to have claimed around £850,000 from the company over 17 years

A former executive of the company behind *The X Factor* and *American Idol* could face fraud allegations over £850,000 he claimed while in the senior role.

Ian Ousey, the ex-chief financial officer of FremantleMedia, is said to have claimed extra money from the company over 17 years by submitting false invoices and payment authorisations.

The expenses allegedly include £237,000 to a holiday home developer in Portugal and £477,000 to cover credit card, cars, mobile phone and courier payments.

The company, who also produce *Take Me Out* and *Grand Designs*, are thought to have handed a complaint to the Metropolitan Police.

Mr Ousey, who left the company in March, paid back the sum as part of a £1.4million legal settlement last year, but he could still face prosecution.

His assets were frozen after Fremantle obtained a court order following his departure, but it ended when the agreement was reached in December.

He is said to have gone to Holborn police station in Central London in January, after Fremantle reported the allegations, but has not been arrested or charged.

Rodney Hylton-Potts, Mr Ousey's lawyer, told *The Times* his client was 'desperately sorry', even though he claims not all of the money was accepted wrongfully.

'He admits wrongfully receiving £237,000 as part of a larger sum yet to be determined. He was very happy to be able to make full repayment, with interest, legal and investigative charges.'