

CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

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HOLLYWOOD SPOTLIGHT

Students from the Art Institute of California—Hollywood presented their designs at a runway show complete with a sweeping backdrop of the Verdugo Mountains. For highlights from the event, see page 8.

Alena Sablan

Importers Brace for New Disruptions at Worldwide Ports

By Deborah Belgum *Senior Editor*

Last year, apparel and textile importers saw millions of dollars in profits sink as congestion at the West Coast ports kept merchandise stuck on boats for weeks.

That problem was resolved, but now another logistics storm is brewing.

Starting on July 1, new regulations make it mandatory that shippers—and only shippers—verify the gross weight of their cargo containers or they won't be loaded onto ships. In the past, weight amounts could be provided by other entities.

The ruling, issued by the International Maritime Organization in 2014 and being implemented soon, has created confusion and uncertainty among exporters, importers, port terminal operators, logistics experts and anyone else involved in the

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DENIM REPORT

McGuire Denim Expands Into Sportswear

By N. Jayne Seward *Contributing Writer*

McGuire Denim is known for its glossy take on heritage denim, and this Fall, with a foray into sportswear, the brand is poised for growth. The denim label will launch knits with **Club Monaco's** "Brands We Love" in July, and its denim and new line of sportswear will be featured this fall as part of **Nordstrom's** "Brands on the Rise." E-commerce is also on the horizon.

McGuire Denim debuted in 2013 at **Ron Herman** and is now carried in 300 stores in the U.S. as well as internationally. Worn by models and celebrities including Cindy Crawford, Mila Kunis, Emily Ratajkowski and Gigi Hadid, the line is a "go to" for the chic set. Created by President

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Where fashion gets down to businessSM

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INSIDE

APPAREL INSIDERS'

The State of Denim



Forever 21 Is Downsizing Its U.K. Retail Footprint

Forever 21, which launched a small fleet of stores in Great Britain six years ago, is taking another look at its retail portfolio after losing millions of dollars.

The Los Angeles-based fast-fashion retailer has appointed property agents **Harper Dennis Hobbs** to take a look at its four remaining stores in England to decide whether to reduce their size or close them, according to reports in *The Telegraph* newspaper in London.

Already, Forever 21 has closed its stores in Glasgow, Scotland, as well as Stratford, Essex and East London in England. All these stores are expected to be taken over by Swedish fast-fashion retailer **H&M**.

The LA retailer is evaluating what to do with its properties in Liverpool, Birmingham and two outlets in and around London, including the Oxford Street shop, which doubled in size four years ago.

In documents filed with the British government, Forever 21's U.K. branches showed a \$98 million pretax loss in 2013 and a \$27 million pretax loss in 2014.

A Forever 21 spokeswoman told British reporters that the retailer is constantly evaluating its portfolio.—*Deborah Belgum*



The Forever 21 on Glasgow's Buchanan Street, pictured in 2013, has closed.

ALISON A. NIEDER

New Sourcing, Textile Trade Show Launching in Toronto

Garment factories and fabric mills from around the world will show at the inaugural **Apparel Textile Sourcing Expo**, which will bow Aug. 22–24 at the **International Centre** in Toronto.

This will be Canada's first apparel and textile trade show, according to **JP Communications Inc.**, parent company to **TopTenWholesale.com** and **Manufacturer.com**, which is producing the trade show.

Produced in coordination with the **China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Textile and Apparel (CCCT)**, the expo will give Canadian retailers and manufacturers access to apparel and textile manufacturers from China, India, Bangladesh, Mexico, the USA, Taiwan, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mauritius, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Jordan, Peru and Myanmar.

"We are honored to have received such a distinguished and globally significant opportunity. Our brands have been connecting millions online since 2005, and now we are able to serve our growing community offline in Toronto this summer as well as with other major events we will be producing," said Jason Prescott, chief executive officer of TopTenWholesale.com and Manufacturer.com,

in a statement.

Bob Kirke, executive director of the **Canadian Apparel Federation**, said the Expo will fill a void in the market.

"Canada has needed a trade show where apparel and textile importers and retailers can learn about sourcing best practices while meeting international producers from around the world," he said. "The event offers an important new resource for our domestic market, and we are excited to support this endeavor."

In addition to the exhibition floor, the expo will feature a slate of seminars covering issues such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, industry best practices, the changing Canadian market and sourcing tips.

"This event is a new project started for the promotion of global textile and apparel trade by CCCT," said Jiang Hui, CCCT chairman. "Based on a comprehensive analysis of the international textile and apparel market, we are convinced the Canadian Apparel Textile Sourcing Expo will become an efficient and convenient trade platform for the global textile and apparel industry."

For more information, visit www.apparel-textilesourcing.com.—*Alison A. Nieder*

TECHNOLOGY

Survey: Fit Issues Affect Shopping Decisions Online and In-Store

Nearly 60 percent of shoppers say they would buy more often if they could be assured of consistent fit, according to a recently released study by **Body Labs**, a New York-based company that creates and customizes 3-D models of the human body.

Body Labs' "2016 Apparel & Footwear Retail Survey Report" looked at how fit affects consumer behavior and decision making.

According to the study, many consumers dislike trying on clothing, most blame poor fit as the top reason for returning items, and most said they will only buy brands they have purchased in the past because they know they will fit. The survey found that 34 percent of consumers say they are "unsatisfied with traditional clothing sizes," and 85 percent of apparel shoppers (and 72 percent of shoe shoppers) said they would buy more if they knew they could count on proper fit.

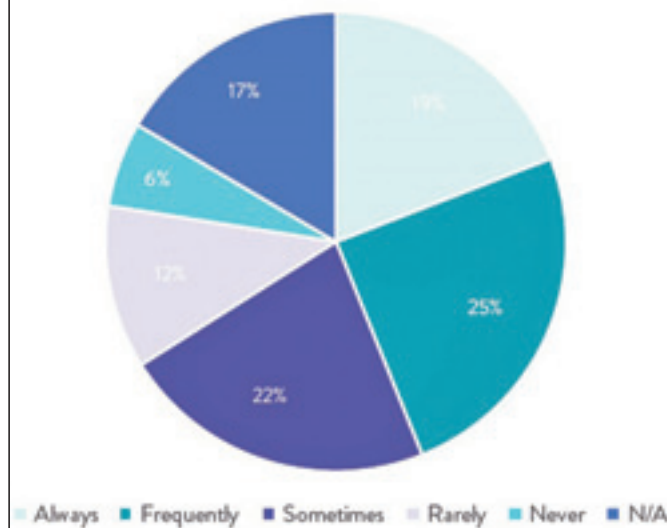
"Poor fit is one of the biggest drivers of returns for online and in-store shoppers," said Bill O'Farrell, cofounder and chief executive officer of Body Labs, in a company statement. "From our consumer survey, it's clear that shoppers are not satisfied with their experience when trying on clothes and, oftentimes, realize later that clothes don't fit and are forced to make returns. If retailers could deliver a better fit experience personalized for each shopper, it would cut costs

considerably from returns, restocking fees and logistical related costs for managing returned inventory."

More than half of the consumers surveyed—58 percent—said they would buy more "at the time of purchase" if they could count on fit.

"For retailers and manufacturers, a con-

HOW OFTEN DO YOU REFERENCE A SIZE CHART WHEN SHOPPING ONLINE?



SOURCE: BODY LABS' "2016 APPAREL & FOOTWEAR RETAIL SURVEY REPORT"

sumer pain point can be translated into an opportunity," O'Farrell said.

The full report can be accessed at Body Labs' website (www.bodylabs.com).

Founded in 2013, Body Labs collects, digitizes and organizes data and information related to human body shape, pose and motion. The company's mission is "to transform the human body into a digital platform upon and around which goods and services can be designed, produced, bought and sold."—*A.A.N.*

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Shipping *Continued from page 1*

global shipping industry.

"There will be pain associated with this," said John Butler, president and chief executive of the **World Shipping Council**, a trade group for container shipping line carriers. "There will be an adjustment period as people work this out."

Maersk Line, the largest container-shipping operator in the world, said it anticipates a bumpy six months after the rules go into effect on July 1.

In addition, a survey last December of 410 companies by container booker **Inttra Inc.** noted that 30 percent of those surveyed said they expected their company or customers will be prepared for the regulations, 48 percent said they have their doubts, and 10 percent said they wouldn't be prepared.

Sixty-six percent said they expected either a moderate or major disruption in the industry, which would most likely happen in the Asia-Pacific arena, followed by Africa.

Because the U.S. economy is so dependent on imports from China and other overseas locations—with more than 95 percent of apparel and textiles coming from foreign vendors—there could be some disruption in receiving goods in a timely matter.

"The biggest concern for retail folks is on the import side. There has been a lot of attention put on U.S. ports, but the issue is at the overseas ports," said Jonathan Gold, vice president of supply chain and customs policy at the **National Retail Federation**. "Less than two dozen of the 162 member nations [in the **International Maritime Organization**] have issued guidance or regulations for enforcement. It is very different in each country. There is no harmonization. ... With uneven implementation, that throws unease into the industry."

A weighty matter

In 2014, the International Maritime Organization, a United Nations agency responsible for setting international shipping safety standards, amended the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) regulations to make container weighing mandatory by shippers. In the past, containers have either been weighed by terminals before they were loaded on to ships or weight estimates were provided by various parties involved in transporting the containers.

This could lead to less-than-precise weights being given, which could contribute to cargo-container ships tipping over or sinking. Accurate weights are needed to figure out how to stack container ships—with heavier containers on the bottom and lighter containers on the top.

One of the accidents that prompted this new regulation was the *MSC Napoli*, a cargo-container ship that in 2007 became grounded a mile out to sea in the English Channel. About 200 of the vessel's 2,323 containers went overboard. Of those, about 100 containers landed on Branscombe Beach, where scavengers dredged up carpets, steering wheels, shoes, golf clubs, beauty creams and motor bikes as goods washed ashore.

Cargo-container carriers and maritime unions asked that more regulation be enacted to make the shipping industry safer.

In the United States, major cargo-container terminals—including the 13 at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach—weigh containers before loading them onto ships. This is to comply with regulations set forth by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the U.S. agency in charge of enforcing health and safety legislation.

It seemed simple that this practice would continue. But shipping lines said they would not accept the cargo weights provided by

the terminals as the verified weight. It had to come from the shippers.

That changed on June 17, when 19 major ocean carriers that belong to the **Ocean Carrier Equipment Management Association** said they would accept and load containers weighed at U.S. ports and marine terminals. Terminal operators could forward the weight measurements to the ocean carriers on the shipper's behalf. Shippers using this system do not have to provide a signature to the ocean carrier for each container. This method bodes well for terminals and ports that have weighing capabilities, but many smaller U.S. ports don't have the necessary equipment.

So a new industry is popping up—weighing facilities en route to smaller ports. For example, **SalSon Logistics**, a freight forwarder in Newark, N.J., said it would be charging \$10 a unit to weigh containers at its new weight-verification location near the **Port of New York/New Jersey**.

Four terminals operated by **Hutchinson Port Holdings** at the key Mexican ports of Lazaro Cardenas, Manzanillo, Veracruz and Ensenada will weigh containers for around \$30 a container after receiving a 48-hour notification.

Those with no access to scales can use one other method approved by the International



The *MSC Napoli* tipping in the English Channel

Maritime Organization. Shippers can weigh all the packages and cargo items that will be packed into the container and then add the mass weight of the container to come up with a total weight.

Beverly Altimore, executive director of the **U.S. Shippers Association**, said she still expects some hiccups in the system when it goes into effect July 1. "The problem is that there are only a handful of countries in the world that have even acknowledged the IMO regulations. Canada and the United Kingdom have strict rules as well as Japan. China has something that is real wishy-washy. And Singapore and Panama, which have a lot of carrier-flag ships, haven't acknowledged the IMO rule," she said.

Robert Krieger, president of international freight forwarder **Krieger Worldwide** in Los Angeles, isn't worried about sending containers out of U.S. ports but is concerned about overseas terminals where cargo containers may not be loaded onto ships because they haven't been weighed before arriving at the docks. "I can't tell whether China will have a uniform standard or each port will enforce its own standards separately," he said. "I don't think ships will be delayed, but individual containers may be delayed if they don't have the correct weight information."

The good news is that the IMO recently said it would grant a three-month grace period and relax enforcement, instructing regulators to take a practical and pragmatic approach when enforcing the new rule until Oct. 1.

"The IMO is saying there will be leniency for the first three months," Gold of the NRF noted. "But if you have a carrier that says, 'As of July 1, if I don't have a container weight, I won't load,' that is different. There are a lot of questions on what is going to happen on July 1." ●

A Vested Interest: Tailored Menswear With a Twist

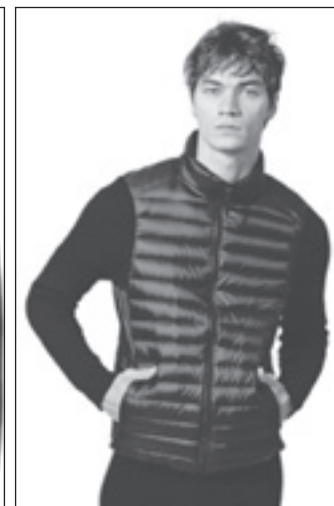
A Vested Interest, the menswear collection designed by William Beranek and Bill Beasley, features pieces that bridge the divide between tailored menswear and casual sportswear.

"We're taking something that is typically conservative and shaking it up," Beasley said.

Beasley previously co-founded **Horn Jeans** while Beranek's career includes founding and designing his own brands, **William B.** and **Nickel**, as well as designing for labels such as **7 For All**



New to the collection are scarves made with 1970s dead-stock cashmere.



Mankind menswear and **Kangol** apparel.

The Los Angeles-made collection includes shirts, vests, jackets and pants, which blend "the best of old-world tailoring" with "a unique, casual feel."

Beasley describes the collection's "Bank Puffer" vest as a "hybrid" piece, which blends the look of a wool suit vest with a puffer vest and then finishes it off with oxford fabric on the back. Similarly, a puffer coat features rib-knit sleeves, and the "Bomber" coat is made in wool suiting with contrast sleeves and rib trim.

Beasley and Beranek pack plenty of details into the subtly styled pieces. The "Tie Trim Shirt" and a version with a mandarin collar feature a narrow stripe of vintage tie fabric down the front placket. The vintage tie fabric shows up as the interior loop in the jackets as well. The collection's pants are cut like a classic chino but feature a zip detail at



A Vested Interest's "Tie Trim Shirt" features a narrow stripe on the front placket made with vintage necktie fabric.

the ankle.

The designers recently added scarves made from 1970s dead-stock cashmere to the collection as well.

"We always look for interesting vintage fabrics," Beranek said. In addition to vintage textiles, the two source high-end, limited-quantity fabrics from around the world, including wool from England and premium basics from Japan.

"The quality is top-notch," Beasley said.

A Vested Interest sells in "a handful of good menswear stores," Beasley said, including **Guerilla Atelier** and **Ron Herman** in Los

Angeles, **Odyn** in New York, and several stores in Japan.

Wholesale prices range from \$80 to \$290.

For more information, visit <http://avest-interestla.com> or call (310) 409-9077.

—Alison A. Nieder

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NY TEXTILE PREVIEW & RESOURCE GUIDE

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UBM Launching Sourcing@Coterie in September

UBM—producer of the **MAGIC, Project** and **FN Platform** trade shows—is adding a sourcing component to its contemporary **Coterie** trade show in New York.

The first edition of **Sourcing@Coterie** is slated for Sept. 18–20 at the **Javits Center** and will feature about 100 booths showcasing a VIP selection of apparel, accessories and footwear factories as well as fabric mills from the U.S., Japan, Europe and South America.

Organizers are looking at resources that specialize in high quality and low minimums. Participating factories will be admitted based on an evaluation process that will consider certifications, current customers and industry awards.

“We are thrilled to be launching a sourcing event in New York during Coterie. Our brands there have been asking for this, and now they will be able to walk over and meet

with some of the best factories in the world, all under one roof at Javits,” said Christopher Griffin, president of Sourcing@Coterie.

Manufacture New York and **DG Expo** have partnered with the new show.

“Manufacture New York is excited to represent the cutting edge of made-in-NYC design and manufacturing bridging women’s apparel and accessories at Sourcing@Coterie this September,” said Bob Bland, chief executive officer and founder of Manufacture NY.

Susan Power, founder and director of **DG Expo**, the small-minimums sourcing show, was equally enthusiastic about the launch.

“It is a natural collaboration for us at **DG Expo**—many of our fabric suppliers already work with Coterie brands,” she said.

For more information, visit www.enk-shows.com/sourcing-coterie.

—Alison A. Nieder

Benjamin Seigel Joins Greenberg & Bass

Longtime apparel-industry attorney Benjamin S. Seigel has joined **Greenberg & Bass LLP** as senior counsel to the firm, based in Los Angeles’ Encino area.

“We are very pleased to welcome Ben to the firm,” said Greenberg & Bass Managing Partner James R. Felton. “His exceptional expertise will provide a significant advantage to our clients and the business community we serve.”

Before joining Greenberg & Bass, Seigel was with the Los Angeles office of **Buchalter Nemer**, where he chaired the firm’s financial restructuring and insolvency practice group and was a member of its apparel industries practice group.

Seigel will continue to represent apparel and textile clients in both transactional and litigation matters involving corporate, labor, transportation, construction and real

estate issues. Throughout his career, Seigel has represented parties in local and national business bankruptcy cases. He also provides counsel to secured and unsecured creditors, creditors’ committees, liquidating trustees,

property owners and landlords, equity groups, secured lenders, and public retirement systems.

As a mediator and arbitrator, Seigel draws on his experience in resolving fashion and apparel-industry disputes. Before becoming an attorney, Seigel worked in the apparel industry, holding positions in nearly every facet of the field, including warehouse manager, sales manager, credit manager and chief financial officer.

Greenberg & Bass provides corporate, litigation and bankruptcy legal services to individuals, privately held businesses, corporations and public concerns.—A.A.N.



Benjamin Seigel

Calendar

June 26

Fashion Market Northern California
San Mateo County Event Center
San Mateo, Calif.
Through June 28

June 27

CALA
Denver Mart
Denver
Through June 28

“Fashion Behind the Seams: A Green Generation,” a panel discussion presented by FGI-LA
FIDM Museum Gallery
Los Angeles

June 29

Agenda
Long Beach Convention Center
Long Beach, Calif.

Through June 30

June 30

TPC Summer Networking Event
Huntley Hotel
Santa Monica, Calif.

July 4

Hong Kong Fashion Week
Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre
Hong Kong
Through July 7

July 9

Interfilère
Eurexpo
Lyon, France
Through July 11

July 10

Liberty Fairs
Pier 94

New York
Through July 12

Capsule
New York
Pier 94
Through July 12

July 12

Texworld USA International Apparel Sourcing Show
Javits Center
New York
Through July 14

There's more
on ApparelNews.net.

For calendar details and contact information, visit ApparelNews.net/calendar.

Submissions to the calendar should be faxed to the Calendar Editor at (213) 623-5707. Please include the event’s name, date, time, location, admission price and contact information. The deadline for calendar submissions is the Tuesday prior to Friday publication. Inclusion in the calendar is subject to available space and the judgment of the editorial staff.

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texollini.com



Rails: Contemporary LA to Global Lifestyle Brand

By N. Jayne Seward *Contributing Writer*

Rails launched with one hat at **Fred Segal** in 2008 and has since grown into a global lifestyle brand. Rooted in classic silhouettes reinterpreted with a relaxed, contemporary aesthetic, the brand takes its inspiration from the laid-back lifestyle of LA. Celebrities and models such as Gigi Hadid, Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, Gisele Bündchen, Kendall Jenner and Jessica Alba have all sported the label's refined yet easy-to-wear pieces. The brand, which was built on the concept of updating the classic shirt, has successfully evolved by applying the same concept to multiple categories.

When founder Jeff Abrams launched Rails, he observed that the contemporary shirting market was primarily utilizing stiff cotton fabrications.

"I saw an opportunity to change this, so I developed a unique Tencel/rayon blended fabric that would maintain the classic shirting heritage but that felt luxurious and draped in a sexier, more feminine way," Abrams explained. "We applied this concept to plaids, denims, solids and prints, focusing on becoming experts on both fit and feel."

Since its launch, the company has grown from a domestic, category-driven line to a global brand with a complete women's collection. It has created new categories each season, including denim, jersey and sweater knits and new shirting fabrications. Rails launched its kids' division, **Little**

Rails, last Fall and for Spring '16, Rails introduced a men's shirting collection with plans to roll out further categories each season. The line, which wholesales for \$30 to \$145, is now available in more than 1,000 retail doors globally, including **Intermix**, **Neiman Marcus**, **Saks Fifth Avenue**, **Selfridges**, **Liberty**, **Harrods**, **Harvey Nichols**, **Isetan Mitsukoshi**, **Rosebud**, **Beams** and **Magasin du Nord**.

Abrams grew up in Los Angeles immersed in the arts and

"Each season I refined the creative direction and focused on creating versatile pieces in luxe fabrications that represented our relaxed yet refined lifestyle/brand ethos," he said.

At its core, the Rails collection is a contemporary LA brand, bridging the gap between style and comfort, with effortless, refined, affordable pieces.

"We have built our reputation in the shirting category but have introduced new styles to complement our core business,

including a full collection of soft knit T-shirts, denims, dresses and outerwear," Abrams said. "We want our customers to come to Rails not only for shirts but for their entire outfit."

Each season the brand continues to expand. For Fall and Holiday, Rails is focusing on its classic heritage and elevating its fabrics. A cashmere wool sweater knit group will launch for Fall and silk prints will launch for Holiday. Tencel-blended bottom weights are also being introduced. While the brand is known for its shirtings, its signature has evolved to include the quality of its fabrics.

"We develop each new category with

our brand ethos in mind—super soft, drapery, luxe fabrications—that easily merchandise back to our core products," Abrams said.

For Fall, the Tencel denim group includes new silhouettes and treatments including rompers, ikat prints and several stripe washes. A linen rayon capsule has also been added as "buy now, wear now." Bestsellers within the group include military-inspired shapes in sage/camo. Rayon prints in matching sets have also been introduced as a nod to the casual pajama-outfit trend. In addition, Rails is also evolving the classic plaid shirt by offering a number of new shapes and adding details such as back pleats, epaulettes, tie fronts,

➔ **Rails** page 7



developed the concept for Rails while living in Europe.

"I wanted to blend the comfort of my Southern California lifestyle with the more refined sensibility I found abroad," Abrams said.

Upon returning from Europe, he sewed the word "Rails" onto a black hat and a simple hooded sweatshirt and approached retailers to get orders.

"I drove all over the United States, walking into stores unannounced trying to build the foundation for the Rails collection," he said.

It was a journey of trial and error, he explained, that led him through the initial stages of producing and building the brand.

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McGuire Denim *Continued from page 1*

and Head of Design Marianne McDonald and husband and Chief Executive Officer Coby McDonald, McGuire is born from a love for denim. Marianne McDonald landed her first job as sportswear and denim designer at **Joe's Jeans** after attending **Otis College of Art and Design** following a degree in English literature from the **University of Oregon**. She was later recruited as the design director for **Gap 1969**. But her love for denim really began while growing up in a bohemian college town in Oregon.

"I think that had a big influence on my aesthetic," McDonald said. "I have a penchant for washed-down blue jeans and feminine tops. I think you see that in the collection today too."

McDonald decided to launch McGuire after noticing a need in the market. "I felt that there was something missing in the marketplace that celebrated denim's utilitarian origins but was made with a nod to femininity," she said. "I've always loved the idea of a glossy take on heritage denim. My design team and I are inspired by the concept of clothing being able to make your life better. A bit more glamorous, a bit more fun."

To create the collection, McDonald utilizes premium denim from some of the best mills in the world, including **Candiani**, a family-owned Italian mill, and **Isko**, which is based in Turkey. Though denim fabric is sourced overseas, the designer takes a hands-on approach to producing the collection in Los Angeles.

The collection includes denim jeans, jackets and chambray shirts, and for Fall the label has added sportswear. A core silhouette is the brand's signature "Newton Skinny," which is inspired by the sexy, modern styling of Helmut Newton's iconic photos. For Fall, key looks include cropped and straight silhouettes such as the "Cropped Valetta Straight" in "Rialto," which has an uneven ripped-up hem. Shorter length flares and cropped bootcuts with taken-down hems that hit a few inches above the ankle are also fresh for the season.

Denim outerwear is key for the line, and

for Spring the brand debuted its first twill army jacket, which sold out at retail. McDonald also began adding sportswear to the collection for Spring. "I think we're in a really big sportswear cycle," she explained. "Our customers were asking for designs that go with the denim. Spring this year really announced that."

Chambray tops and linen tops that pair back with jeans were well received by buyers, she added.

For Fall, vintage continues to inspire the collection. New sportswear items in the expanded collection include T-shirts, sweatshirts, bombers, Henleys and twill motorcycle jackets. Feminine styles such as the "Hideaway" shirt is made in Spanish gauze, and the "Sorbonne Ruffle" top has flirty, ruffled details.

"Our sportswear, much like our jeans, are pretty much the types of things we'd reach for when getting dressed," McDonald said. While the designer doesn't plan to enter the athleisure market, the sportswear collection was designed as it pertains to denim.

"We have expanded into sportswear because you have people that want more than just jeans," she said. "There's that appetite for things that aren't indigo and that speak to whatever their lifestyle might be."

For example, T-shirts, which will debut at Club Monaco, are designed to wear with the brand's denim washes. And buyers are now looking

for blouses and tops to pair with jeans and skirts.

"I think people are into the whole look of a brand these days. ... That's a major seismic shift," explained the designer, who added that nearly half of the Fall orders were non-denim. "You can craft your whole wardrobe out of McGuire if you wanted to, which is kind of fun," she said.

McGuire Denim is carried at retailers including **Saks**, Nordstrom, **J.Crew**, Ron Herman, **American Rag**, **Henry Lehr**, **Club Monaco**, **Bloomingdale's**, **Shopbop.com** and **Revolve.com**. Retail prices are \$215 to \$238 for jeans, \$90 to \$220 for tops and \$322 to \$495 for jackets. For more information, contact the **Community Service Showroom** at (213) 624-0824. ●



EASTON SCHIRRA

Rails *Continued from previous page*

and buttonback and covered plackets.

"Every season, we are growing the women's, men's and Little Rails collection to become a global lifestyle collection and brand," said Abrams, who is partnering with key retailers in each market on pop-up and

shop-in-shop concepts. He also plans to open a Rails flagship/retail store in 2017.

"We'll continue to support and build our global retail network in existing markets and explore new opportunities in Europe, South America, the Middle East and Asia," he added.

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FASHION Law

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JULY 28 - AUGUST 5, 2016

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HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Pod 1:** Fashion lawyers and industry veterans will focus on fashion law basics.
- **Pod 2:** Experts will delve into viral marketing. What is it, how do you do it, and how do you maximize the results?
- **Culmination:** The program concludes with a hands-on opportunity to practice newly learned skills.
- **Instructors:** Staci Jennifer Riordan '04, executive director, The Fashion Law Project, and partner/leader of Fashion Practice, Nixon Peabody; Deborah Greaves, Brutzkus Gubner LLP; and other veteran fashion lawyers and executives.
- MCLE hours for eligible attorneys.
- A certificate of completion will be awarded.
- Classes held on Loyola Law School's downtown LA campus — a short ride from LA's fashion epicenter.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

- **July 28:** Opening night networking reception at Bloomberg LP focused on "How to make it in fashion law"
- **July 29-30:** Full day of instruction with breakfast, lunch & refreshments
- **July 31:** Half day of instruction including field trip to luxury brand flagship stores
- **August 1-4:** Evening class (refreshments included)
- **August 5:** Graduation ceremony & dinner

CLASSES INCLUDE:

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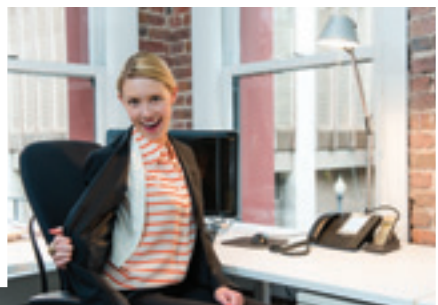
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EVENTS

Art Institute of California—Hollywood's 'Spotlight' Runway Show Highlights Award-Winning Designs

The runway show was held on the roof of the **Art Institute of California—Hollywood's** campus in North Hollywood, Calif., where guests viewed the students' designs against a dramatic backdrop of California mountains.

The June 10 event was directed and produced by students in the Art Institute's fashion design and fashion marketing programs. The students, who were enrolled in the school's "Event & Fashion Show Production" course, worked under the guidance of campus instructors Sarah Holmes, Kristina Krpekyan, Alina Parsons and Julia Szkiba.

Jose Ramos' "Black Crimson" collection was named "Best Marketable Showcase," Alena Sablan's "Tibetan Transplant" collection was named "Best Artistic and Creative Collection," and Patrick Kevin Francisco's "Siamese" collection—which was inspired by Siamese fighting "Beta" fish—was named "Overall Best Fashion Show Presentation."

—Alison A. Nieder



Alena Sablan

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sales@asherconcepts.com

Products and Services: To address the need for innovative temperature-regulating knit fabrics in the activewear market, Asher is introducing Cool Sport, spun on Asher's new Santoni knitting machines, which create micro gauge knits for pure smoothness and compression. In 1991, Asher Fabric Concepts, based in Los Angeles, transformed the apparel industry by offering cutting-edge, high quality, "Made in U.S.A" knits for the contemporary fashion, athletic, and yoga markets. Since then, the company has become internationally known for its premium quality, knitted constructions with and without spandex, along with its creative print design and application. Asher

Fabric Concepts provides fabric development, knitting, dyeing, and finishing in addition to fabric print design and printing capabilities based on each customer's needs. The company differentiates itself from the competition by offering proprietary textiles and by continually updating and innovating every aspect of textile design and production. With an in-house design team, new prints are constantly added to its collection, and color stories are updated seasonally. Asher Fabric Concepts' customers are leaders with strong brand recognition in the high-end, fashion-forward contemporary markets. Whether it is dress wear-knits, swimwear, active wear, sportswear, body wear, or intimate apparel, Asher Fabric Concepts always delivers.

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Ideal candidates should have 3+ year exp.

- Knowledge of pattern making, spec revision, garment construction, sewing, measuring and fitting
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 - Computer savvy with Photoshop, Illustrator, Outlook, Word and Excel
- Background in Women's Contemporary apparel
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Need 10 yrs exp. production patternmaker for a fast paced company. Gerber system experienced is a must. Must have dress and sportswear exp. in both knits & wovens. Please email resume to: eran@secretcharm.com

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The State of Denim



A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a wide-brimmed cowboy hat, a denim jacket with decorative buttons, and high-waisted jeans. She is leaning against the side of a classic car, holding the door handle with her right hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees.

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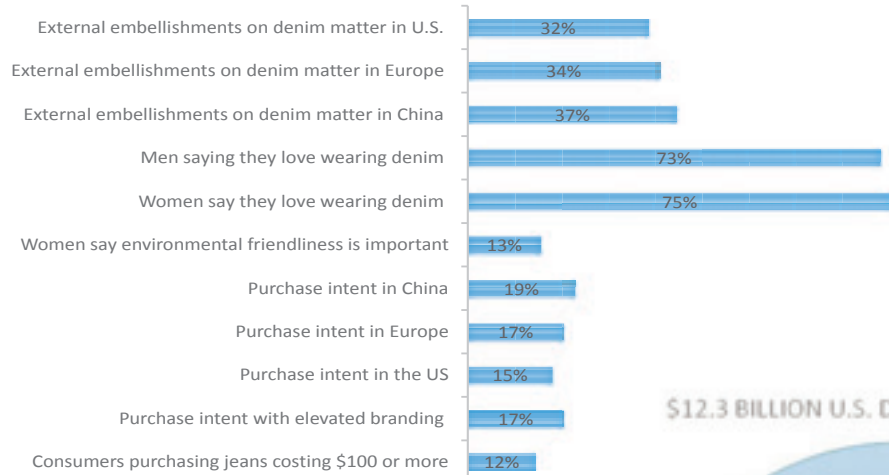
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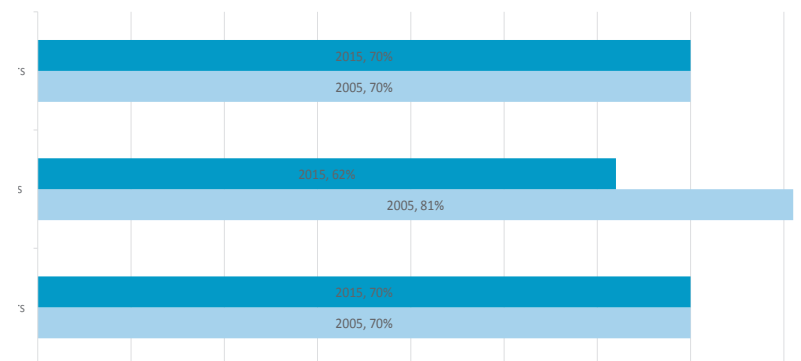
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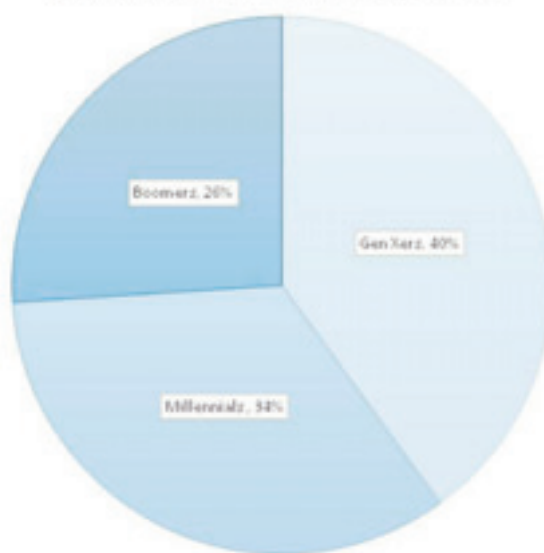
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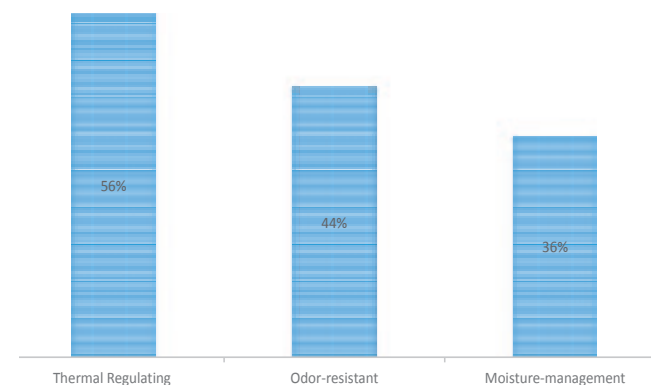
DENIM AFFINITY 2005 vs. 2015



\$12.3 BILLION U.S. DENIM JEANS MARKET

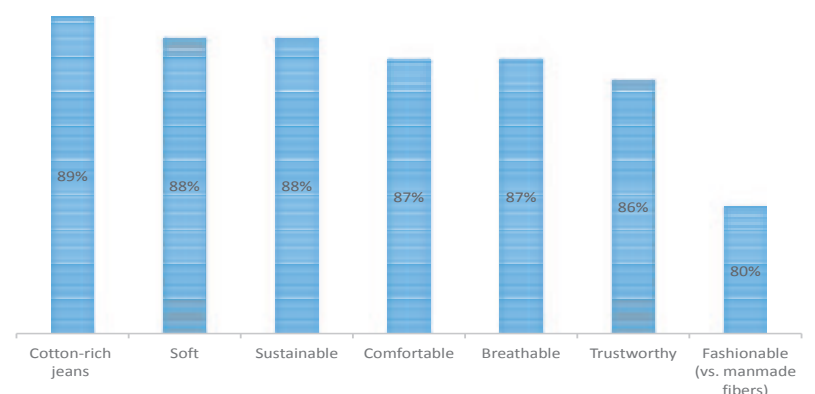


CONSUMERS PLANNING TO PURCHASE NEW JEANS IN THE COMING YEAR



- 12 percent of consumers say they have purchased a pair of jeans that cost \$100 or more.
- The global jeans market is set to top \$122 billion in 2016.
- More denim is owned per person in the United States than in China and Europe combined.
- Fit, brand, and price are the key decision criteria when purchasing jeans.
- The top five greatest pain points when buying a pair of jeans are: fit, out of stock, inconsistent sizing, poor quality such as shrinkage, fading, and fraying, and finding the right jean for the budget.

TREND TOWARDS AUTHENTIC, COTTON DENIM



Sources: Avery Dennison, Cotton Incorporated, the NPD Group

On the Record With the NPD Group's Marshal Cohen



Marshal Cohen

Marshal Cohen is a retail market-research analyst for the NPD Group. If you want to know about denim sales, he's the one to ask. And, as he sits in a knowledge tree high above the industry, his vantage point makes him not mince words. Some of the particulars he shares might cause grimaces in the denim market, but, alas, the truth often hurts. We put a few questions to Cohen and he gave us the truth as seen by in-depth market research and consumer trends and analysis.

How's the denim market looking from your point of view?

Denim is starting to show signs of life even with the hiatus it took when athleisure took over. Stores that have made a commitment to denim, buying classic cuts, have done the best. The younger segments are the healthiest, but Boomer denim spending is healthier than all of them. The denim industry focuses on the Millennial, which

ended up kicking the denim industry in the seat of the pants and shrunk the core denim business when it didn't do as well as athleisure.

How are premium-denim sales doing?

Consumers are realizing that they can wear less-expensive clothing and still look good. The consumer has yet to understand that so much of the denim they buy is from the same mill, etc., but they do know that mid- and lower price points still look good.

Are more and more people buying their denim online?

Online is outperforming bricks-and-mortar stores, but though it's growing it's not substantially more.

How about male and female denim purchases?

The growth rate for men's denim is a bit higher, but, as there are more females purchasing, overall female sales are healthier.

What are the main issues that the denim industry faces?

The denim industry is suffering from an absence of a full range of styles and no innovations. What the industry says are innovations the consumer does not see as innovative, sustainability included.



Danielle Scott



Anna Boyer



Micaela O'Connor



Jake Hooper

Buy the Way

All hail the purchase power of the Millennial

By Mara Elise Koval

Millennials constitute the largest portion of jeans sales, valuing quality over quantity, opting for premium-denim brands over their less expensive counterparts. Many Millennials also look for jeans that will stand out in a sea of denim, driving sales with their preference for uniqueness. Denim brands have been forced to innovate on the longstanding fashion mainstay by incorporating more stretch into their jeans to combat the popularity of yoga pants and joggers, introducing trendy new styles like ombré and distressed denim, and keeping the stores stocked with a large range of cuts to appeal to a generation with diverse tastes. However, the instability of the denim market has left us to question whether these sales tactics are actually reaching the coveted Millennial market. In order to answer that very question, we interviewed 12 fashion-forward Millennials to hear their denim preferences and buying habits.

Name: Danielle Scott

Age: 16

Owns: Ten pairs.

Focuses on: Comfort.

Favorite: Flying Monkey in a light-wash denim with rips on both legs.

Spends: \$100 if it's a great pair.

Wears: To school, on a date, or to dinner.

Styles with: A plain, loose white tee and really fun heels.

Go-to cut: High waisted.

Name: Anna Boyer

Age: 21

Owns: I have 25 pairs of pants currently in my closet and, of them, about 13 are jeans.

Focuses on: Something different. I have a pair of white Rag & Bone skinny jeans that fade to a charcoal ombré at the bottom that I love.

Favorite: My blue Joe's Jeans Icon Ankle. Joe's is definitely one of my favorite brands because they fit me well and the denim isn't stiff.

Spends: Up to \$200.

Wears: Everywhere and all the time.

Styles with: My favorite thing to do is pair a super-casual pair like ripped jeans or boyfriend jeans with heels and a nice top.

Go-to cut: Skinny jeans.

Name: Micaela O'Connor

Age: 20

Owns: Ten with five in current rotation.

Focuses on: A comfy, snug fit, so I look for jeans with a slight stretch to them.

Favorite: I could wear my black flared Hudsons every day. I'm also really into 3x1 jeans right now.

Spends: No more than \$100 on a good pair.

Wears: Every day.

Styles with: A T-shirt that hits slightly above where the jeans hit my hips or a T-shirt that I can knot on the bottom.

Go-to cut: A low-rise, ankle-grazing style or a relaxed boyfriend fit.

Name: Jake Hooper

Age: 18

Owns: One trusted pair.

Focuses on: The wash. I prefer a darker wash that complements the rest of my wardrobe. I also look at details like color of stitching and appearance of back pockets as I have found that they greatly affect the overall look.

Favorite: My favorite is a pair of Lucky Brand selvedge denim jeans. I love how soft and comfortable the material is.

Spends: I will spend up to \$100 on a really good pair of jeans.

Wears: I wear jeans almost every day and in most situations.

Styles with: I typically wear my jeans with a T-shirt, sweater, button-down, or some combination of the three.

Go-to cut: Slim straight.

Name: Alex Bass

Age: 20

Owns: 30 pairs, circulating among five. I'm thinking of re-doing/cutting some of my old jeans to wear them again in an updated way.

Focuses on: Basics like a skinny jean or something new and trendy.

Favorite Rag & Bone jeans. They stretch but never lose their shape and don't go out of style.

Spends: No more than \$200. Jeans are meant to be something you wear every day, not a luxury item.

Wears: Most days of the week except for when I'm feel-



Alex Bass



Megan Marlatt



Michelle Robbins



Chris Ehling

Curve
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CALIKDENIM
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Raina Wong



Courtney Kates



Tracy Keyser (yellow jacket)



Garrett Stewart

Buy the Way

ing lazy and then it’s a pair of stylish sweatpants or athletic wear.
Styles with: Something simple.
Go-to cut: Cropped for the summer and boyfriend jeans. In the winter, a skinny leg to tuck into boots.

Name: Megan Marlatt
Age: 29
Owns: 20 plus.
Focuses on: Wash and feel, but it’s all about fit.
Favorite: BDG black.
Spends: More than I’m willing to admit.
Wears: Everywhere.
Styles with: Simple shirt and a printed heel, maybe a textured jacket or a hooded sweatshirt, and leopard slip-ons.
Go-to cut: Skinnies, but rigid denim is what I’m looking for, still in a slim fit. And a mid-rise is ideal.

Name: Michelle Robbins
Age: 23
Owns: About six pairs.
Focuses on: Fit, comfort, and style that allow me to wear them with as many looks as possible.
Favorite: Topshop high-waisted, distressed black jeans.
Spends: \$150.
Wears: Every day and everywhere.
Styles with: I either wear them casual with a loose-fitting tee tucked in the front or I’ll wear a cute top and heels with them.
Go-to cut: Skinny high waisted or regular distressed. I also like boyfriend jeans.

Name: Chris Ehling
Age: 30
Owns: Six pairs: one maroon, one light blue, one gray, and three that are various shades of dark blue.
Focuses on: I look for a color that stands out to me first,

something I don’t have yet and I think would make a few nice outfits. Fit is also important. Even if the color and style are great, I won’t buy jeans that are uncomfortable.
Favorite: Levi’s.
Spends: \$50.
Wears: They’re my go-to pants.
Styles with: A T-shirt, polo, button-up, or sweater.
Go-to cut: Slim straight.

Name: Raina Wong
Age: 18
Owns: 15 pairs.
Focuses on: Versatile, well-cut investment pieces.
Favorite: The Kooples, Rag & Bone, and Frame Denim.
Spends: If I find a perfect pair, I’m willing to splurge, knowing I’ll get a lot of use out of them.
Wears: Part of the charm of a solid pair of jeans is their versatility, so I tend to wear them as more of a casual, everyday piece.
Styles with: Lately I’ve been pairing minimalist ribbed bodysuits with mid- or high-rise denim.
Go-to cut: Mid-rise, cropped cigarette jeans.

Name: Courtney Kates
Age: 36
Owns: Twelve pairs plus one pair of overalls. Only four are on constant repeat.
Focuses on: Fit and fabric quality.
Favorite: Acne.
Spends: In the \$300 range for a good pair.
Wears: Everywhere. If it’s a nicer setting, I’ll wear black denim with a silk blouse and heels.
Styles with: Some denim I roll at the bottom and with others I tuck in my shirt. My favorite thing to wear with my denim is a great T-shirt.
Go-to cut: Vintage boyfriend fit.

Name: Tracy Keyser
Age: 38
Owns: Having come from the fashion world and selling denim for LF Stores for years, I used to have over 23 pairs. Now I have 14.
Focuses on: J Brand, because of the fit. I could sleep in them. But for a cheap and cheerful version, I run to the Gap for the 1969 style.
Favorite: Higher-waisted jeans and skinny legs because I feel thinner. Tie-dye from Rag & Bone at Barneys.
Spends: Up to \$300.
Wears: Literally almost every day.
Styles with: A tight tank and business jacket in a bold color with sexy heels. I also rock the sandals/denim/blouse look often.
Go-to cut: J Brand skinny jean in a tie with Gap 1969.

Name: Garrett Stewart
Age: 19
Owns: Six or seven pairs. They’re all black.
Focuses on: Well-made denim can last forever.
Favorite: I’ve been possessed by a pair of Saint Laurent D02 jeans since I bought them. They have a rad zipper detail on both front pockets that make them stand out. I think they’re my favorite brand as well since their jeans are skinny without being skintight and fit me well as narrow as I am.
Spends: It’s worth it to spend whatever they cost. It pays off in the long run. I’d rather have a few pairs of nice jeans than 10 pairs of cheaply made ones.
Wears: I always wear jeans, even if it means combating the California heat. I’m not too keen on shorts.
Styles with: I think jeans go best with boots, but that might just be a personal preference since I always wear boots. I like the slim look of that combination.
Go-to cut: I like to wear low-rise skinny jeans. They sit low on the hips and make tucked-in looks more edgy.

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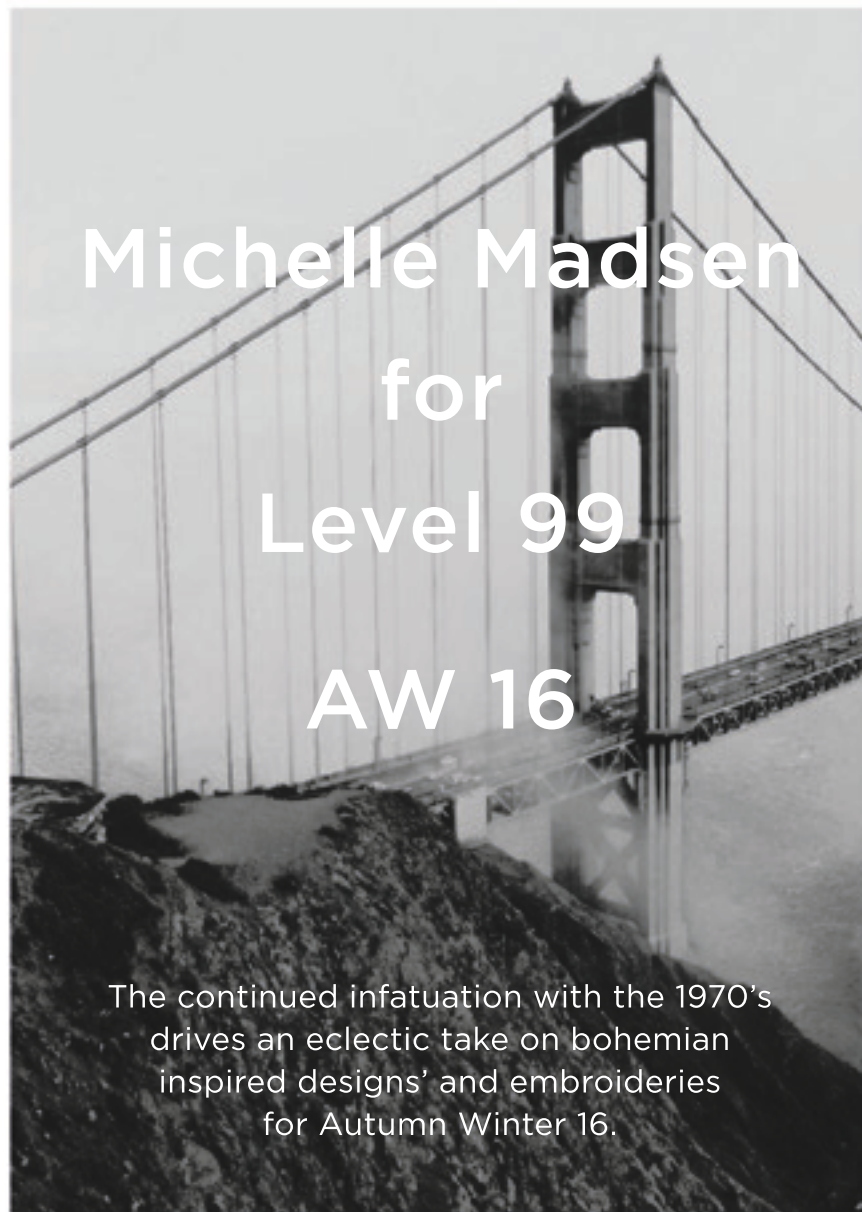
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Where Is Denim Heading?

*Denim has had rough patches before and lived to tell the story.
What's next for the tenacious blue jean?*

By Rebecca Cringean

The good news is that the denim industry tailspin seems to have leveled off. The bad news, however, is that things aren't necessarily picking up with gusto. Denim has seen bad days before and the ever-stubborn blue jean has still survived. Does denim's future rest with innovation or a return to the jean's rebellious roots? Is stretch here to stay or is high-end fashion design the next wave? What is the consumer really looking for? We asked leaders in the denim market to share their thoughts on where the denim industry is headed. Their answers are insightful, thought-provoking, and, fortunately, quite optimistic.

Peter Kim, Hudson Jeans CEO

Our Takeaway: *Denim needs to be less preoccupied with innovation and more in tune with its true revolutionary spirit.*

"Denim is a commodity. Premium denim used to be considered high fashion, but, the reality is, premium is a commodity, too. In any other area of fashion, no one would be talking so much about innovation. At Saint Laurent do they talk about innovation? We're not an athletic category. I have no idea why everyone is so focused on innovation. Denim is denim. A yoga pant is a yoga pant. We don't desire to be anything but denim. After all, denim is the most badass piece of clothing you can own, and, at Hudson, our jeans are a reflection of the culture of our company, a delivery system for our message. We are a denim brand unlike all these other companies that started calling themselves sportswear or a contemporary collection. They're not rebellious enough to make denim."

Michael Silver, Silver Jeans CEO

Our Takeaway: *The athleisure market has pushed denim to be its best and not rest on its laurels.*

"If I knew where denim was headed, I'd share. It's been a 40-year guessing game for me, and it's always had its peaks and valleys. Everybody points to the athletic market, but we were a stale market with dark, simple jeans and the level of technology did not catch up to athletics. But the level of technology has changed, and the average customer can have comfort now. In fact, what we call comfortable has changed, too. Thirty years ago, Levi's that you had to wear for a week to break in was considered comfortable. Now comfort means four-way stretch. With a denim market that requires and delivers performance, we can stem the tide of black leggings. When everyone looks the same, and with leggings becoming so mainstream, fashion leaders will break off. Denim will come back and look more fashionable than athleisure, as those two worlds collide. Ripped and torn and boyfriend jeans have been helpful from a trend perspective. Plus, we'll lighten up the colors for a more vintage feel. And there's optimism in the men's market. After all, in middle America, men aren't wearing yoga pants or cuffed-bottom knit pants. These guys are just warming up to stretch in men's denim and embracing that feel. And though fast fashion breaks trends before they develop, there's a ray of hope because cheap and cheerful aren't coming up with new looks in denim, and the consumer will start to see that a \$29 jean wears out. We need to wait it out. The consumer will begin to embrace the value. Part of being successful is merely surviving."

Ersin Akarlilar, Mavi Jeans President

Our Takeaway: *It's all about performance and continued innovation.*

"The premium-denim market continues to grow, and we are experiencing increased sales because the right product sells. Mavi's sales are up Y/Y by 20 percent, and we expect this momentum to continue, specifically with the introduction of our performance-denim collections. Consumers are asking for products that have the aesthetic of denim but perform better, and we have responded. We are designing products that offer the look of denim combined with great stretch and comfort, strong recovery, and that maintain their shape. The future of denim has always been reliant on a constant evolution in innovation and technology to meet the changing demands of the consumer. Brands and mills are working together to collaborate on fabrics that offer this level of performance while maintaining the look and feel of true denim. Product development

is key. Through the latest advances in fabric and wash technology we are creating products that offer the consumer a stylish, premium look they desire combined with comfort and performance qualities."

Andrew Olah, Kingpins Founder

Our Takeaway: *Change is coming. You're either on board or you're drowning.*

"We are in what I consider a normal state of affairs in the 'new economy,' which means fast fashion is giving attentive shoppers lots of opportunity for cool stuff, while online shopping offers a whole other array of goods for smart shoppers, and conventional retail outlets try to keep up. The onus on brands is to sell to the right retail outlets, to get in touch—seriously in touch—with their clients on both social media and through their online offerings. This, of course, assumes brands have the right merchandise. The dip is caused—and everyone has their own valid point of view—primarily because products being made are not compelling and the same product is found elsewhere at lower and lower prices. Compelling products drive business. I think the industry is doing fine. The issue is only who is getting the business and who is losing the business. The dollars are not gone, they are merely redistributed. Innovation or creativity is absolutely the driving and most important element of success. Consumers have indicated they care about price and fashion. But there is a small and growing segment of consumers who are online and probing brands' ethics and behavior. Change forces new ways of thinking and acting. The only answer to our industry is to create amazing products and do it without harming the planet. We are headed towards implosion for all those companies that believe their historic large retail outlets will be here in 10 years. The way consumers will buy their products in the future is being totally altered."

Jason Denham, Denham Jeans Founder

Our Takeaway: *Denim's design elements will prove it fashionable once again.*

"We are in a good place. Denim is firmly back on trend. This is mainly influenced by two drivers. One is the spotlight on denim by the luxury brands. Denim is a key focus category on all the runways this season. The second is the advanced technology in denim manufacturing by the mills. The Italians are leading this and Candiani is at the forefront in technical performance and sustainability. In both Europe and Asia we are seeing demand for design, although the iconic five-pocket jean will outlive all of us. We see our customers looking for new, innovative design, new silhouettes, new concepts, and improved technical performance in their denim. It's something that we support and actively put in our collections every season."

Jimmy Taverniti, Siwy Jeans Creative Director

Our Takeaway: *It's about innovation and sustainability, and we're nowhere near there yet.*

The denim industry faces two challenges. The digital revolution has had a decisive impact on the crisis in the sector of clothing in general, leading changes in consumer spending. The changes have had an impact on the cost and on access to information, but it has also changed buyer thinking, the distribution of products, and the way to communicate. With digital, everything must go immediately, and mass industry has not yet found an adequate response. One may recall the slogan 'see now, buy now.' Fast retailing has become the trend. Now, the denim industry, beyond these technological fabric developments, will have to transform these processes to consider sustainability. The generations to come are very receptive. However, the industry is struggling to turn because the consumer of today is not educated. New ecological processes will result in a new generation of jeans because it stimulates the creators that we are in new directions. It has not happened yet. Then and only then the industry will adopt the new green technology. I experimented with Siwy washes without any chemical products and met with very positive interest from our customers. Lately, innovations in stretch fabrics carry the denim industry, but that is not enough.

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Denim & Soul Boutique



Standard & Strange



Sunset Clothing



The Denim Lounge Chicago

Denim's Rise

Retailers get real on denim sales—what's working, what's not.

by Risk Castinado

First the bad news: It is not the dawn of a denim renaissance. The good news? Denim is in it for the long haul, and retailers are adapting, showcasing denim as a wardrobe staple or a luxury good, and using it as a catalyst for further sales.

Four denim retailers across the country were recently asked about the zeitgeist in their stores. On some topics they agreed, on others they varied; each had strong opinions about how to approach this changing, challenging marketplace.

David Shelist, owner of the Denim Lounge in Chicago, has more than 20 years' experience in the business. "I'm not a hundred percent convinced that being known as a denim store is the best idea right now in this economy and with the way the denim industry is. I almost think our name could hurt us, unfortunately."

Juan Plasencia, owner of Sunset Clothing Co. in Miami Beach, has been in the denim industry since 1980. "It's all been done," he notes. "Sometimes I think it's too creative; how much can you do with two arms and two legs?"

Amanda Womack manages Denim & Soul's Dallas location, one of five stores that were recently purchased and re-branded by Marcus Lemonis as part of the TV reality show "The Profit." "It's actually a really exciting time for us," says Womack. "All our stores have been remodeled." Previously denim was about 80 percent of the stock; now it is half the merchandise.

Neil Berrett and Jeremy Smith cofounded Standard & Strange in 2012. The Oakland, California, store offers higher-priced specialty and niche raw denim. "Most guys come in expecting a selvedge denim jean," Berrett explains. "Which we learned when we tried to get in really high-quality non-selvedge jeans just to bring the price down and no one wanted them," he notes. "We tried to explain why it was still good denim, but they weren't interested."

Plasencia notes that athletic wear took "a huge bite out of denim," which impels stores like Denim & Soul to offer "really great patented fabrics that don't stretch out on you, that feel really comfortable, that don't squeeze you and make you feel fat," says Womack, who reports customers are "blown away by how comfortable denim is now."

"We are still selling tons of the new, very stretchy, almost yoga-type of jeans," concurs Shelist. "Personally I think the trend is coming back to a heavyweight, less-stretch fabric. I think this is gonna turn back to the way denim should feel."

For Standard & Strange, one answer is cut. "We recently

started stocking a medium-high-rise cut with a roomy thigh but tapered at the knees. It's for the CrossFit guy who wants a slim jean but can't fit his thigh into it," Berrett notes with a chuckle. Another option is organic Zimbabwe cotton, the choice of many of the store's brands. The longer-staple cotton "gets a lot nicer hand. It also stretches a lot more," Berrett explains.

Regarding marketing, the retailers are unanimous: word of mouth. Berrett's selective email lists "are worth every ounce of effort that we put into it and then some," and Womack notes that Denim & Soul's employees "are constantly calling and emailing—not in an annoying way—our customers love hearing from us. It's just us always staying on top of it and letting people know when new stuff is in the store."

Social-media accounts are omnipresent but produce moderate results. And except for the rare ad in a local weekly, none of the retailers currently pay for advertising. So what works?

"Alcohol helps," notes Shelist, who counts after-hours parties including the Denim Lounge's full bar as "probably 30 percent of our business." Shoppers are given 10 percent off, and the Denim Lounge donates 10 percent back to the school, church, or social group. "The women sell each other. We're just assisting," he notes. "That's big business for us."

To reach the dressing rooms at the Denim Lounge, women have to walk through the men's department. "We always have sports on," Shelist explains, and "women say, 'I've got to bring my husband here.' We tell them, 'And we can give him a cold beer, too.'"

Standard & Strange often invites customers to meet vendors, and the store hosts one day of Denim Bruin, a local gathering of vintage and workwear enthusiasts. Sponsoring a thread on online forums for denim geeks connects buyers to "the day-to-day of the shop, but, more important, we're able to go deeper" into the topic of denim, says Berrett. "They really know their stuff, and they're fun to talk to."

"We will argue for pages, about thread," deadpans Smith.

Standard & Strange also sells online, accounting for 20 percent of its business. Womack notes that Denim & Soul "definitely plans to sell online again."

"Online is not as important to us as the in-store service," says Berrett. "We'd like to grow it, but online changes really fast. I mean, we have a hard enough time trying to understand what's changing with our bricks-and-mortar retail."

Shelist recalls that the Denim Lounge "used to do over \$600,000 online. Now we do zero. I had three full-time people dedicated to the website," Shelist explains. "And it was harder to have merchandise out that I could have sold in the store. I couldn't do both things as well as I wanted, so I decided to stick to my core, which is retail."

"Everyone says the Internet hurts us. Well, more than the Internet, it's the manufacturers opening up their own stores," says Plasencia. "They're giving the customer one product and either you fit that product or not. And the service that they give is not good. Period. Most of us are being squeezed out. Every day there's less of us."

Shelist considers price points "the most difficult thing for a retailer to manage right now. We've brought in two or three of those lower price-point companies, and we do well with them, but it's obviously taken away sales and space off my shelves from premium denim."

Denim & Soul "just started carrying a few brands at \$290," says Womack. "If the fit is amazing, they're willing to do that, but it's easier to load up on a jean that's around \$200."

"The denim industry right now is oversaturated; there are too many brands in the marketplace," says Shelist, who attributes half his sales to denim. He notes a consumer return "to brands they liked a few years ago; they are not really interested in the latest and greatest celebrity-endorsed jean," he says. "We're very, very cautious when we bring a new brand in."

Plasencia believes that "the denim retailer should accept and work around" the current dip in denim, so he allocates 65 percent of Sunset Clothing Co. to other clothing items and accessories. "If you're trying to make your numbers so that it's not just about denim, you have to carry other things that go with denim and put some thought into it," he advises. "The jeans are \$200, but so is the shirt."

"I think retail in general is headed toward either a high-convenience experience or a high-service experience," says Berrett, noting that people want "an emotional connection to what they're buying. And they're okay with spending more if they trust that it will be worth it to them in the long run."

That attachment a man or woman has to a favorite pair of jeans is one advantage retailers always have in their back pocket. As Smith puts it, "If you buy the one that fits and wear it, it's gonna treat you well. Sometimes that's what they want to hear."

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Stretching the Point

Innovation in the denim industry consists of stretch, performance, and more stretch

By Rebecca Cringean

Despite what a jaded, fast-fashion culture might slur, a pair of jeans is not just a pair of jeans. In fact, the very storied history and evolution of denim is of cultural significance. When dry-goods salesman Levi Strauss was approached by tailor Jacob Davis in 1872, the two had no idea that their work-wear staple would mature into a rebel without a cause, or a high-waisted, bell-bottomed hippie protest statement, or a hustling disco diva, or a rhinestone-bedazzled costume for tabloid-favored heiresses and then, one day, some sort of six-way, stretchy sweatpants rival.

To Strauss and Davis, innovation in denim consisted merely of their 1873 patent for the metal rivet, referred to back then as an “improvement in fastening pocket openings.” Little did they realize their little cotton, breathable creation would lead a million different fashion lives. Strauss and Davis’s ingenious spirit of innovation started denim on a path through form and fit enhancements, ups and downs on the runway, and the rise and fall of not just the zipper but also retail sales. Innovation and progression of the look and feel of our little beloved jean have endeared denim to fashion and made it our most beloved closet essential.

Necessity being the mother of invention, leaner financial times now push mills to innovate feverishly. In fact, never before has denim been presented with such a nemesis. Chinos posed no particular threat. Corduroy was just a red-headed stepchild, easily defeated. But then, along came athleisure. The yoga pant that turned itself into a fashion darling brought extreme comfort and shape and signaled literal and figurative black times for the denim industry.

“Denim is a beautiful fabric,” says Simon Giuliani, marketing director of the Italian mill Candiani Denim. “Therefore, we love the faded vintage look of the original 100 percent cotton workwear jean, but the tightness of a rigid, 100 percent cotton jean is no longer what the majority of consumers are willing to wear today. They are simply not willing to renounce the comfort for the look. Instead, they want them both.”

To that end, Candiani has developed Sling technology combined with Shaper finishing to make superior stretch and dimensional stability. This brings what Giuliani calls “an authentic denim look but with added sophisticated performance and high comfort.”

Isko, too, is mixing its denim with sport, promising 360-degrees freedom of movement and four-way holding performance. Isko aims to make old-fashioned denim part of contemporary life. “We have to start from the axiom that

consumers love denim, the authentic indigo fabric that is woven with the history of fashion,” says Marco Lucietti, global marketing director of Sanko/Isko. “But they also need a fabric that can follow them through a busy day. For this reason, we need to combine the functions of the fabric, comfort, and a real denim look.”

Meanwhile, the people over at Invista are busily fixing some of the issues that come along with pushing more stretch into what was normally a cotton-only playing field. “If you look back even five years ago, the vast majority of denim fabrics were either 100 percent cotton or 98 percent cotton with 2 percent Lycra fiber,” says Jean Hegedus, global director for Invista’s denim business. “Then, as the super-stretch trend emerged, consumers and, subsequently, brands and retailers began to have issues with denim fabrics having high growth and shrinkage, resulting in jeans that felt great initially but didn’t keep their shape.”

Hegedus says it’s not so much stretch as recovery that consumers demand, along with cooling and warming properties, another Invista advance. “At Invista, we develop our innovations based on consumer insights,” she adds, referring specifically to Invista technology such as Lycra Hybrid, which adds the dimension of “a multifunctional garment that can go from the gym to the grocery store and still look fashionable and appropriate.”

Cone Denim boasts that its version of stretch, in the form of the S Gene, won’t leave baggy knees and has an unparalleled body-contouring effect, setting an industry standard for stretch fabric. “Our goal is to always preserve the integrity of what makes denim and jeans so special and the reason why consumers create that special bond with their favorite pair of jeans,” says Kara Nicholas, vice president of Cone’s product design and marketing. “We feel the fashion market will continue to embrace these types of performance technologies.”

In Turkey, over at Calik, there’s Elastech, which eliminates seam puckering by preshrinking the fabric before use. The company’s Curve “supports a slender figure with no signs of puckering, giving a push-up effect like a makeup concealer, covering flaws,” says Ebru Ozaydin, head of Calik’s sales and marketing. Meanwhile, the company’s T-Power overcomes elastane yarn breakage and promotes a soft feel rather than a polyester yarn hand. Lastly, Calik’s Circular Elastech gives multi-angular movement for natural flexibility.

The mills are making it their business to raise consumer awareness of the painstaking technology that goes into the creation of their products. “It is necessary to communicate

with consumers the importance of the ingredients,” Lucietti continues. “The effective expression of the technology that is behind our favorite brands creates powerful knowledge that can help consumers choose their denim and perceive the ‘premium-ness’ of the products.” After all, a lot goes into creating all this stretch and movement, and it seems a pity that the customer doesn’t appreciate it. But it’s not entirely apparent that the customer even cares. While men are getting more and more used to stretch in their jeans, women might become more and more jaded.

Maybe all this stretch is just becoming too much of a stretch? Which brings us full circle—to good old cotton, the heart of that stuff Strauss and Davis created back in the 1800s. Is all this stretch pushing out cotton? Mike Tyndall, Cotton Incorporated vice president of product development and implementation, says not necessarily. “Stretch is not new, but whether it is achieved mechanically using 100 percent cotton or through the addition of a synthetic percentage, it’s here to stay.” As for cotton, Tyndall touts the special properties of on-trend garment washes, laser technology, and the blending of cotton with silk, wool, and linen for a more sophisticated look.

Tyndall also forecasts, perhaps selfishly, a return to all cotton. “What we’re hearing is that consumers have been dissatisfied with the higher synthetic fiber percentages in recent denim offerings,” he says. “From a trend point of view, there seems to be a growing interest in authentic denim, not only the classic fabric but also more-classic silhouettes and cleaner looks.”

That prospect is not lost on the mills. Candiani, in fact, sees “denim going back to its roots, abandoning elasticity in favor of an original denim look,” says Giuliani, “especially for consumers who follow the rough romantic denim inspiration or the clean urban streetwear aesthetic.” Ozaydin at Calik agrees: “Millennials have just discovered the iconic ’90s look with open-teeth, grin-through, and marble looks and the ’70s’ beautiful blues, which reference their parents’ youth.”

Maybe all this demand for comfort and stretch on the part of the consumer is just another version of the McDonald’s conundrum. There, the consumer demands healthier choices but is then turned off by a salad at the place where they would normally order a Big Mac. When asked, the denim consumer might shrug and say they want comfort, like a pair of yoga pants. But a pair of jeans that is as comfy as a yoga pant doesn’t seem much like denim. The answer seems to evolve the jean but make certain it’s still a pair of jeans. Perhaps finally suffering again for beauty isn’t such a bad idea.



Candiani Denim



Cone Denim

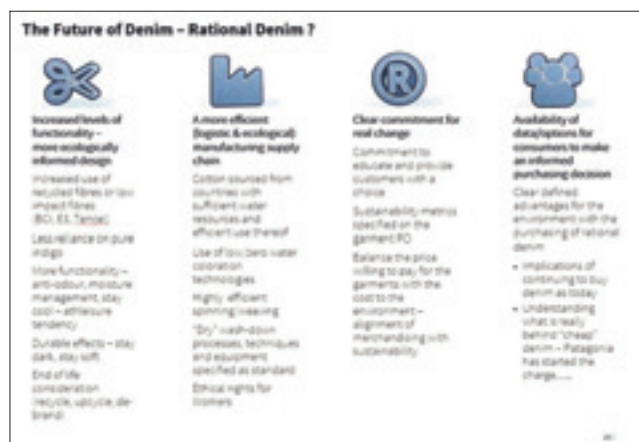


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Avery Dennison

Can Blue Go Green?

*Producing a pair of jeans is murder on the environment.
Can the industry really change, and does the consumer even care?*

By Rebecca Cringean

You've been told that you look damn good in your jeans, but did you know that they're killing the planet? And, as long as your butt looks good, do you even really care?

Please allow Paul Cowell, global head of brand marketing at Archroma, the innovative color and specialty-chemicals company, to break it down for you.

"The coloration of yarn with indigo is a far from an optimal process," he says. "Indigo is an insoluble pigment that must be transformed into soluble form by the addition of strong chemicals called reducing agents. These reducing agents add large amounts of sulfites, sulfates, and other salts to the wastewater, which usually ends up in landfills. In addition, because oxygen is present in the atmosphere, the dye quickly re-oxidizes into the insoluble form, meaning a repeat of the reduction process. This means you literally have to paint the dye onto the surface of the cotton. This painting process involves dipping in reduced indigo and skying to oxidize, redipping and skying to build up the color on the yarn. In addition to this inefficient process, the final wash fastness and wet/dry rub fastness of the indigo-dyed denim is poor because all the dye is sat on the surface. Also, the usual process for brands is to create a dark denim fabric and then treat the denim to a multitude of washing processes and chemicals to achieve different styles. In many cases the laundry will take a deep-dyed denim fabric and wash almost all of the indigo back off to give an aggressive wash effect, wasting the time, cost, and resources spent on the original dyeing process."

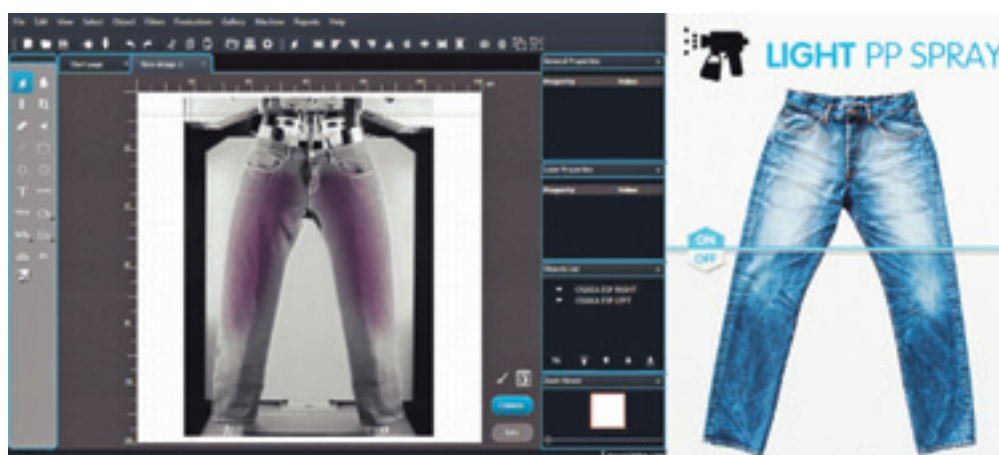
It's not a pretty picture, and, until quite recently, this sort of thing was a dark secret in the entire textile industry. But denim has been, by far, the biggest offender. In the premium-denim heyday, sustainability took a backseat to burgeoning brands, styles, and sales.

"We were in the creative phase and we were trying out all sorts of chemical combinations to create new and exciting looks," says Sheila Foreman, director of product development of continental colors at Garment Industry Laundry, a business she co-owned with her husband along with other prominent industry laundries. "We simply weren't paying attention to what we were putting down the drain. Today we finally are and we must."

There are a number of reasons for that "must," one being a greater global consciousness but the other being quite practical: We are going to run out of these resources and anyone who has any intention of keeping their business alive must change. This involves paving the way,

ironing out more green-manufacturing practices, dealing with the cost ratio, and deciding whether to force forward thinking onto the often blasé consumer or simply slip them more-sustainable goods in the guise of a nice pair of pants.

At the heart of the matter lies transparency. Jeanologia, a Spanish company specializing in sustainable textile finishing technologies, has numbers to back up its commitment to the environment. In fact, its combination of laser, ozone, and something they call G2 eFlow nano bubbles has reduced 90 percent of water and 50 percent of chemical and energy consumption in denim production. Impressive, though perhaps a mere start when one considers past abuses. The company even recently produced a trade show demonstration of a process it claims guarantees zero pollu-



Jeanologia

tion in the production of denim.

Other mills have reduced the number of indigo baths from seven to two, cutting down the usage of water by 33 percent and chemicals by 50 percent. There's all this, plus a focus on more-efficient cotton growing, using less water and pesticides. Ozone treatments, which used to be a somewhat smelly inferior alternative, let's admit it, are now rivaling traditional methods and winning converts along the way. And now, even embellishments can be mimicked in a more sustainable way. "We have heat transfers and woven fabrics, doing creative designs in a new way," says Helen Sahi, director of sustainability at Avery Dennison. "For instance, the bleached look used to be a chemical process, but now we can achieve the same thing with a heat transfer."

Just as meat eaters don't have to watch cows be slaughtered and can therefore better enjoy their steaks, all this sustainable technology seems like it would be expensive

and create resentment in an already tepid denim consumer. Sheila Foreman talks of a startup cost that "shouldn't be exorbitant" while, over at Avery Dennison, Sahi enthuses, "It's cost-neutral or even costs less." To her way of thinking, "the entire industry is changing, and every brand is asking for it, both high and low price points."

Archroma's Paul Cowell puts on his professor cap for us again to delve a bit deeper into the elusive denim industry pricing structure.

"Pricing is always a difficult topic to address, especially in terms of denim. Indigo is an exceptionally strong dye, and, being a bulk commodity, the price of this dye is low. These factors create issues when comparing directly the price per kilogram of indigo versus the price per kilogram of advanced denim dyes. However, when we take a holistic look at the total cost of production and incorporate the water, energy, and chemical savings, in addition to the reduction required for wastewater treatment and more 'on shade' production, we can quickly close the price difference."

"In reality," Cowell continues, "the cost of dye on a pair of jeans is about 0.40–0.60USD. The cost of advanced denim can be lower, equal to, or a little higher depending on the depth and final effect, but if we are talking about premium denim that retails above 60USD, then you can imagine if the cost of the dye is 0.50USD or 0.70USD it really isn't an issue. However, the fact that we can save more than 90 percent water, there is the true savings."

While Avery Dennison's Sahi says "consumers are looking for a conscious, trusted brand," Marshal Cohen of the

consumer market-research group NPD counters that research proves buyers simply do not care about sustainability. Take sales of Tesla Motors, for instance. Are car buyers trying to do the right thing by the environment or are they looking for a high-end status symbol and less spent at the gas pump?

With resources quickly being used up and costs eventually starting to level off, it's not certain that it really matters all that much if the consumer is on board with sustainability. Change seems an inevitability, but if the industry can get the consumer on board, all the better. Cowell says the younger the consumer the more informed they are and the more they care. He thinks it's in the hands of the brands, who need to give consumers a chance and a choice to do the right thing. "This is a big challenge," says Foreman. "We must be more informed about our footprint. The consumer hasn't been educated and they don't understand the difference. This is where we need to begin."



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