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NO. 21 / FALL 2023





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# FIELD TRIP

**IS IT A FAUX PAS FOR ME**, the editor of a denim magazine, to say I'm bored with denim these days? Maybe — but hear me out.

One of the few positives to come from the pandemic was the common feeling that we would emerge from it better off as an industry. For many in the game, the pause offered an opportunity to end the bad behavior between buyers and suppliers, embrace better sourcing strategies, design for seasonless wearability and shop with a conscience. The industry was brimming with ideas from building rental and resale programs to envisioning a future where jeans could be part of a modular, self-cleaning, and protective uniform easily accessible to all.

Despite the initial high that saw consumers refresh their stale wardrobes and brands roll out feel-good fashion, denim has slipped back into some pesky old habits. Buyers are squeezing suppliers to cut costs, seasonal collections (plus mid-season capsules, collaborations, and drops) encourage overconsumption and too many brands continue to treat sustainability as a novel concept siloed from the rest of their impact.

Let's face it — denim is stuck in a rut. The '90s has a death grip on designers and consumers, and we're slapping snazzy names on microtrends — tomato girl summer, anyone? — to stir up their appeal.

But I've always been a big believer that the more interesting stuff goes down behind the scenes, and that's why I'm eager to see what mills, tech innovators and fiber producers are cooking up for the supply chain. With programs like the Denim Deal coming to an end (pg. 54) and initiatives like Jeans Redesign nearing the half-decade mark (pg. 56), now's the time to reflect on industry wins and where the sector can go next. A rut also poses a ripe opportunity to hear from people who are passionate about their careers. In "Masterclass" (pg. 30), Adriano Goldschmied speaks candidly about his storied decades building some of denim's most celebrated brands. In "Collector's Camelot" (pg. 34), Sean Wotherspoon gets real about his singular success carving out a niche in vintage and streetwear as a red-hot collaborator.

I'm on a quest to be re-educated in denim this fall. I am going into this season with fresh eyes, ears open and an open-minded willingness to soak up new info and ask all the dumb questions. It began last month at Cotton Incorporated's North Carolina HQ and will continue in Italy at GenovaJeans — never will I turn down an opportunity to indulge in denim and fresh-baked focaccia — followed by the Transformers Foundation Conference, Kingpins Amsterdam and a field trip to Renewcell's Swedish production plant.

In addition to racking up the miles and bruises from dragging my suitcase around the world, I can't wait to come home recharged with new stories to tell and ideas to share — plus a few unwanted pounds from eating my weight in Italy's best-known bread.

**ANGELA JEAN VELASQUEZ**  
avelasquez@sourcingjournal.com

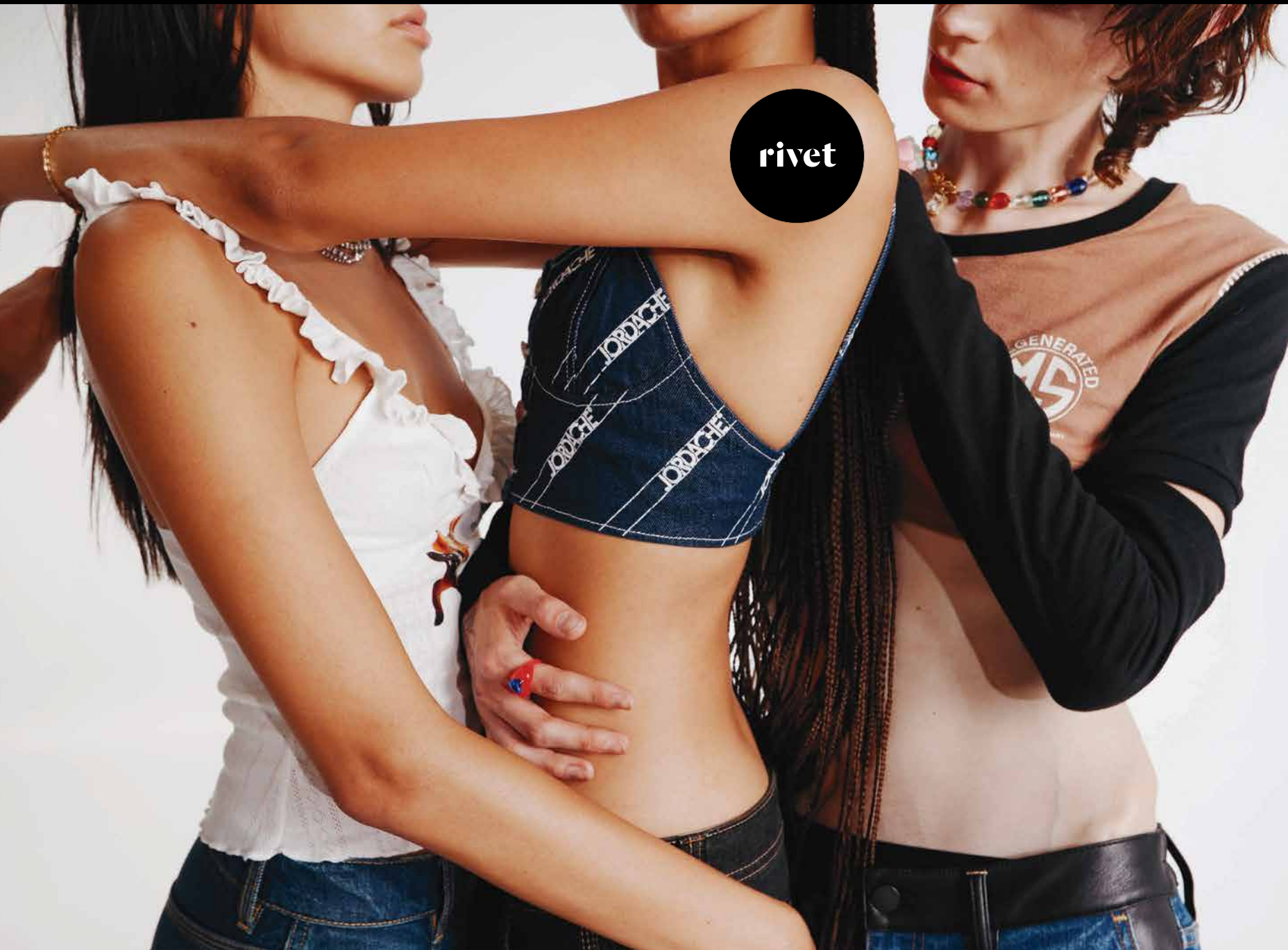
Angela



GLOBAL DENIM

Born to be circular, Bold to be different, Determined to make a change





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FROM LEFT: **FRUITY** BOOTY TOP, **ANONLYCHILD** JEANS, **SAULE** BEADED NECKLACE, MODEL'S SHOES; **LUCKY BRAND** JACKET, **HEAVEN BY MARC JACOBS** TOP, **EB DENIM** JEANS, **CHARLES AND KEITH** SANDALS, **SHOPTYLER/LAMBERT** HAT, **ELSIE FRIEDA** EARRING. PHOTOGRAPHY BY **KATE OWEN**.



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\*Cotton products are recyclable only in a few communities that have appropriate recycling facilities. †In composting tests, cotton fabric samples underwent a weight loss of approximately 50-77% after 90 days in a composting facility. Li, Lili; Frey, Margaret; Browning, Kristie (2020). Journal of Engineered Fibers and Fabrics. 5 (4). <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/155892501000500406>





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# THE RIVETING LIST

## WOVEN RUNWAY

Eckhaus Latta became the first brand to use Vega, Unspun's new 3D weaving technology, on a major runway. The robotics and digital apparel company's unveiled Vega in June to combat fashion's waste problem. The B Corp company announced the close of a \$14 million Series A funding round to support the technology implementation and said it was in the process of piloting Vega with four to five brands. With Vega, Unspun reports that it can make a pair of jeans, chinos or other woven pants in under 10 minutes. Another upside is that 3D weaving essentially eliminates fabric scrap waste from the production process. Unspun said Vega represents the "scalable potential for on-demand, zero-inventory production" and allows brands to set up micro-factories for localized

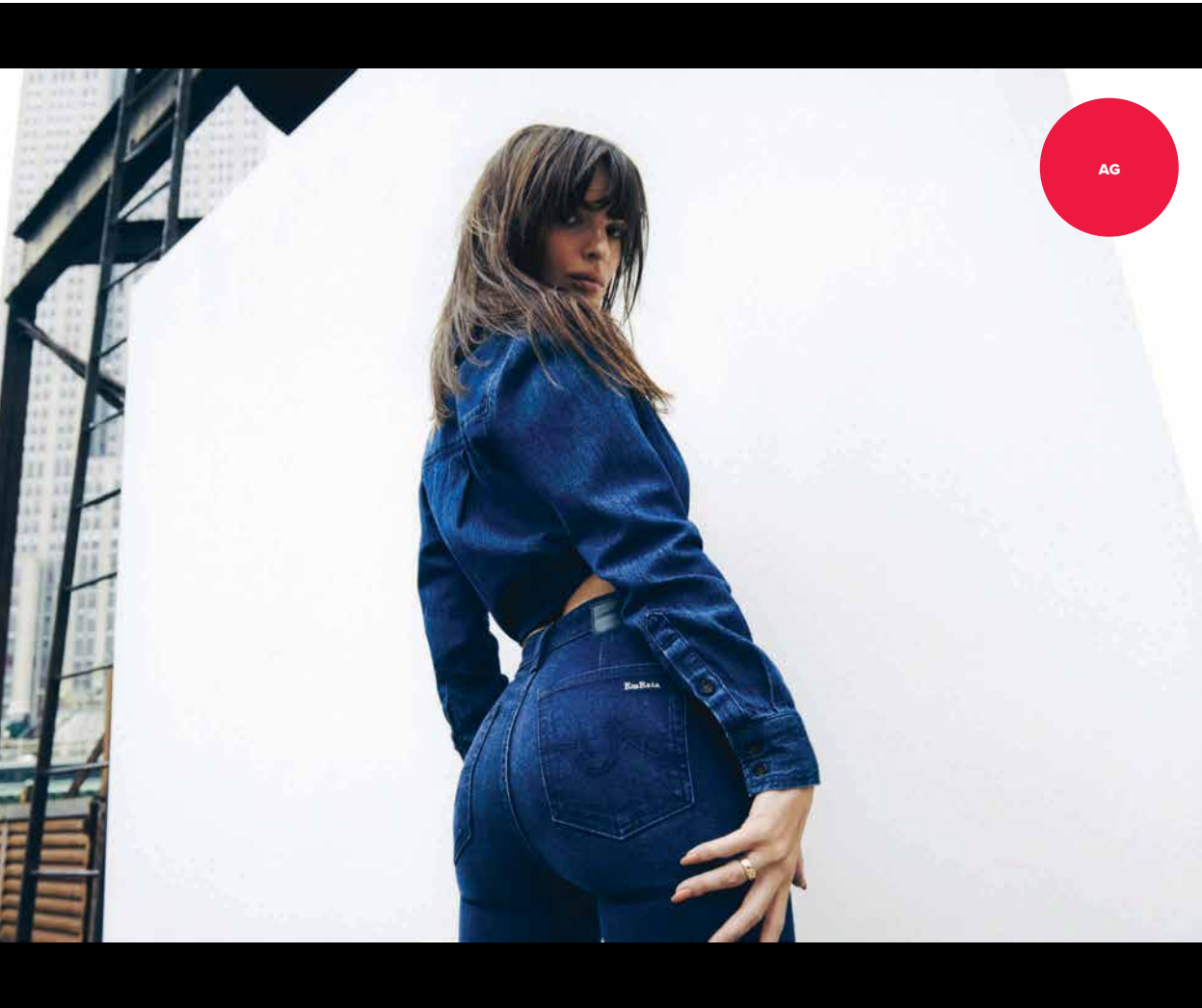
▲ Jeans made with Unspun's 3D weaving technology debuted at NYFW.

and automated production. This approach not only reduces transport costs and emissions, but also creates a short, agile supply chain that requires little or no inventory. The Unspun x Eckhaus Latta collaboration includes 3D woven frayed jeans and glittery wide-leg trousers that challenge "traditional notions of beauty and aesthetics," Unspun stated. The limited edition collection will be available for purchase on each brand's websites in Spring 2024. The pieces will retail for \$395-\$600.

## NATURAL FIT

AG brand linked up with the multi-hyphenate model, actress and entrepreneur Emily Ratajowski to serve as the creative director for the 21-piece women's collection. Centered on versatile staples that mix and match, the brand said the collection reflects the AG aesthetic as





well as Ratajkowski’s personal style. “Emily brought a positive and uplifting energy to the design process — her passion and attention to detail are evident in each item in the capsule collection,” said Glenn McMahon, AG’s newly appointed CEO, adding that the collection “provides a combination of both fashion and basic wardrobe essentials that are sure to resonate with millions of women.” AG said she has been an “organic supporter” of the brand and has worn AG throughout the years. “I’ve always been a fan of AG and was happy when they approached me about a collab that felt authentic and reflective of my personal style,” Ratajkowski said in a statement. “The pieces are wardrobe essentials that can transition from day to night seamlessly. They are crucial styling pieces that I find myself turning to again and again.” Standout items include cargo jeans, wool trousers and miniskirts, jean jackets with cinched waists and shrunken fits, split-front flare jeans and a vegan leather trench. It also includes a 100 percent cotton relaxed straight jean in a vintage wash and a high-rise comfort stretch straight jean in a dark rinse.

CLOSED BOOK

Closed is living the dolce vita. The German denim brand, which produces its jeans in Italy, explores another aspect of Italian expertise in its first ever cookbook, “Cucina Closed.” The book is a “celebration of Italy, friendship, craftsmanship and the art of enjoying delicious food,” the brand stated. The 256-page tome tells with the stories of the brand’s friends and long-standing production partners in Italy and their family recipes. It includes almost 40 recipes for classic dishes like lasagna, risotto, carbonara, and tiramisu, as well as lesser-known plates such as passatina, a creamy chickpea puree. Closed said its team traveled throughout Italy, visiting the homes of their production partners and immersing themselves in the world of Italian cuisine to develop the book. Contributors include Claudia, who works at Incom, the company responsible for sewing jeans and denim jackets for Closed. Together with her daughter Shanti and her mother Maria, she shares a recipe for stuffed pasta. Fabrizio, who works at the Green Lab denim

laundry in the municipality of Grottamare, where many Closed jeans are washed, shares a recipe for barbecued fish. Each are photographed in their home environments by Italian photographer Roselena Ramistella. “Cucina Closed” is published by Gestalten. It is available in English and German.

ALL IN

QVC is stepping into the \$262.7 million adaptive apparel market. The video commerce retailer announced the launch of Denim & Co. Adaptive, an extension of one of its best-selling private label brands, Denim & Co. Denim & Co. Adaptive includes apparel with a seamless and comfortable fit, inclusive sizing and various accessible and adaptive features designed to promote independent dressing. Items in the collection have features such as hook-and-loop closures, magnets, accessible zippers that include wider and varying types of rings, and shoulder openings. The women’s collection spans blouses, tops, dresses, skirts, pants and loungewear in sizes XXS-3X.

▲ Emily Ratajkowski co-designed AG’s fall capsule collection. ▼ Denim & Co. Adaptive spans jeans, tops, dresses and more.



QVC launched the collection with a faux suede jacket, a denim shirt with full zipper access, a zipper cardigan, and a knit ankle pant and knit jeans available in wheelchair-friendly designs. The collection retails for \$60-\$80. Additional items with expanded accessible and adaptive features will launch each month.

TWO SIDES

Two collaborations show different sides of Wrangler this fall. The Kontoor Brands-owned label first partnered with French brand Sandro on a gender fluid collection inspired by ’70s cowboy culture. A trio of jacket and trouser sets — available in tobacco, faded indigo and medium indigo — maintains Wrangler’s signature codes like flat rivets, flap seams and W-shaped pocket topstitching. The pieces also feature Wrangler-branded leather labels and a fifth pocket. A second collaboration with Staud taps into the brand’s West Coast aesthetic. Inspired by vintage Wrangler advertisements and Staud founder Sarah Staudinger’s favorite pair of Wrangler jeans, the brands describe the partnership as one that “emphasizes classic denim construction” and “feminine designs to deliver a thoughtfully curated collection that effortlessly blends classic Americana-style with contemporary design features and looks.” Comprised of elevated essentials in two mix-and-match washes, the eight-piece collection offers a flare jean, bra top, zip-up jumpsuit, vest, pencil skirt, jacket with exaggerated cuffs and chambray Western shirtdress. Garments feature both brands’ logos while the jeans belt loops spell out Staud. “The overall style versatility and uniquely designed pieces within this collaboration represents the best of

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both brands and presents today's fashion seekers with a powerful blend of classic looks and original fits," said Holly Wheeler, Wrangler VP of global brand marketing. "We have co-authored a collection that is well-timed with how denim is currently showing up as a central element in fashion and self-expression."

SCREEN TIME

G-Star Raw's future is digital. Brand management firm WHP Global acquire a majority interest in the Dutch brand. As is customary with brand management firms, the transaction will see WHP grow the label both globally and through new product categories. The transaction follows the successful transition of G-Star Raw as an online-first company.

Existing shareholders, including founder Jos van Tilburg, will retain a stake in the brand. And G-Star's current leadership team, led by CEO Rob Schilder, will continue to operate the brand's marketing and product development operations out of the current Amsterdam headquarters. They also will continue to have oversight over wholesale, retail and e-commerce distribution.

Terms of the transaction were not disclosed. WHP said it expects the deal to close in the fourth quarter of 2023, subject to certain customary closing conditions.

COMFORT CLASS

Levi's and Crocs — two of Gen Z's favorite brands — launched three clog styles that nod to denim's storied past. The collection offers two elevated takes on Crocs' All-Terrain Clog. Each pair has been updated with a denim wrapped upper with Sashiko stitching, a traditional Japanese

embroidery technique. The clogs have an adjustable heel straps and rugged lug outsoles with enhanced tread for increased traction and support. Two colorways are available — light wash uppers with bone soles and dark wash uppers with a navy soles.

Just like pairs of Levi's jeans, a Red Tab can be found on the wearer's right shoe along with button shanks on the heel strap. A Japanese version of the brand's iconic Two-Horse pull logo can be found on the footbed. Each pair also comes with three metal Jibbitz charms custom made for the collaboration that can be added to the top of the shoe custom made for the collaboration. The trio of charms include a silver feather, koi fish and a Southwest turquoise- and gold-themed bauble.

A third style in the capsule collection is a tie-dye print Classic Clog inspired by Shibori dyeing. Each shoe has a Levi's red outsole and comes with eight custom Levi's Jibbitz charms inspired by '60s counterculture and archival Levi's graphics.

RIDE OR DIE

Lee is putting an OG style back in the spotlight. The Kontoor Brands-owned heritage brand relaunched the women's Lee Rider Jean this fall. The jean is Lee's first designed to fit the shape of a woman's body. Launched in 1947, the Rider is an adaptation of the original men's 101 Rider cowboy jean from 1924 and complements the brand's iconic Rider jacket.

Available in two versions, the updated jean balances comfort, fashion and nostalgia. The Rider Classic is a mid-rise jean with a straight leg and relaxed fit. The Rider Slim Straight is also a mid-

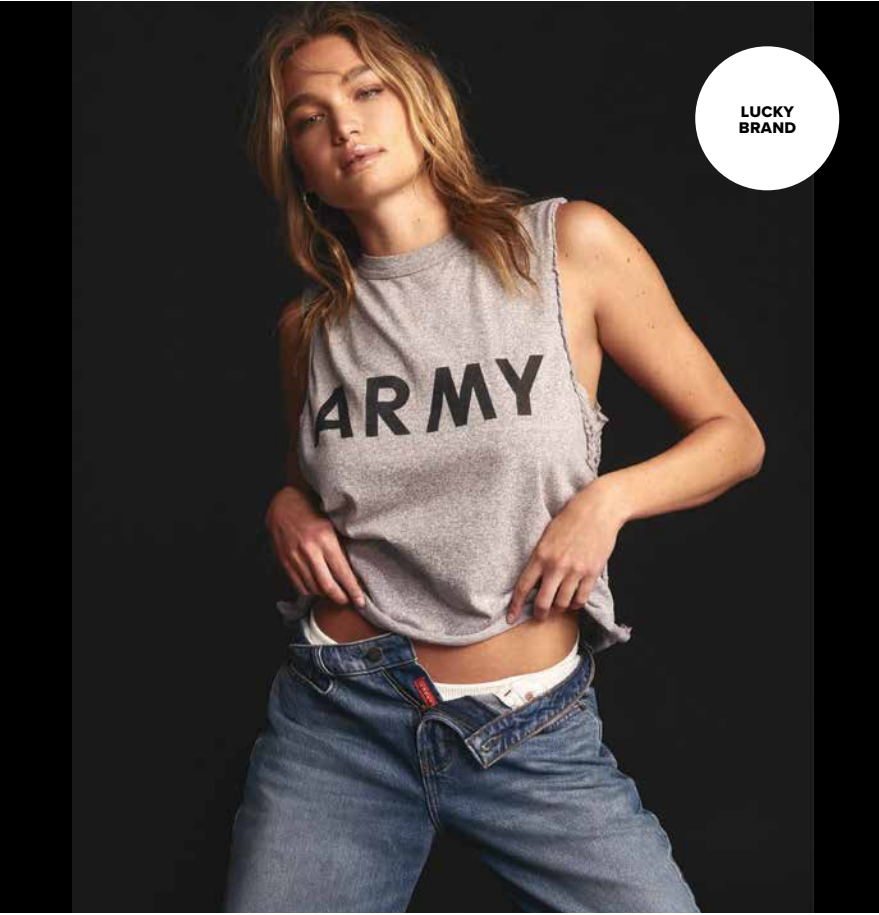
rise jean but with a slimmer leg fit. Both comfort-stretch jeans come in four washes, spanning black to light wash. Some have distressing on the knees and back pockets. "Lee has been designing denim for women longer than anyone; we have 70-plus years of expertise in creating the fit for her," said Betty Madden, Lee VP of global design. "This new iteration of one of our original jeans takes the best of our heritage — beautiful fabric, iconic details and trim — and combines it with a modern fit that we think today's woman will wear anywhere."

▲ **The Lee Rider Jean dates to 1947.**

▼ **Lucky Brand unveiled its third upcycled collection.**

HIGH RANKS

Vintage military clothing is the base to Lucky Brand's new capsule collection. The Authentic Brands Group-owned denim brand released its third Upcycled by Lucky Brand range last week, giving items like like M-65 field jackets a second life. Each style is a one-of-a-kind original piece that has been hand dyed, hand painted or crafted. The collection includes a military pant with multiple color-contrasting pockets and an Army muscle tee with hand braided details on the side. A cropped button-down shirt featured painted tropical motifs. Upcycled quilted M-65 field bomber jacket come in autumnal colors like rose quartz, purple, army green and variations of olive. The jackets are made with refurbished M-65 surplus materials. An oversized and slouchy bag is also made with patchwork M-65 surplus materials. Lucky Brand unveiled its first upcycled collection in May 2022. The collection married repurposed denim with vintage materials like silk, lace and African indigo wax cloth. A second collection dropped last September, offering women's and men's upcycled items, some of which were created from deadstock. ●



REGENERATIVE Cotton

*Regenerative cotton products will be the next step for our future collections. In 2023, as Bossa, we had started our regenerative cotton project in Aydın, Denizli and Urfa provinces of Turkey. In this project; water footprint can be measured, sustainable innovative pricing mechanisms such as price premiums that will support the livelihood of farmers will be implemented and social responsibility audits will be carried out. The regenerative agriculture, not only decreases the environmental impact, but replenishes the ecosystem with biodiversity and carbon absorption.*

*We continue to do our part.*

Bossa





# DESIGNER CHAT

A SNEAK PEEK AT SPRING/SUMMER 2024 COLLECTIONS. by Andre Claudio



**B**RANDS ARE PRODUCING designs with both quality and sustainability in mind. Here, designers and executives from leading denim brands discuss how they are addressing sustainability and what’s trending for the new season.



▲ **SARAH AHMED**  
DL1961  
CEO AND CO-FOUNDER

**On S/S 24 trends:** DL1961 has developed a collection of denim and non-denim ready-to-wear which is constructed using our innovative, functional fabrics in various shapes and silhouettes. These range from nostalgic straights, bootcuts and wide legs to slightly more trend-focused knee-length capris and shorts.

**On sustainability:** With sustainability at our core, we have invested heavily in technologies such as ozone and laser machines. This allows us to achieve our vintage and dynamic washes in a manner that is better for the planet and the people who produce our denim. We made sure to use the best materials we could, including certified cotton, Recover recycled cotton and Tencel’s Lyocell, which are all produced in our vertically integrated factory, allowing us to keep tighter control of the entire design and manufacturing process — from fiber to finished garment.

**On what customers are asking for:** Our customers love repurchasing their favorite fabric and fit in new iterations. We have passionate and loyal customers, which is why every season we owe it to them to create more of what they like while still getting them excited.

For instance, two of our best-selling women’s fits are Bridget Boot and Hepburn Wide Leg. For S/S 24, we offer those fits in multiple inseams, rises and an array of fabrications. For a customer who loves to be surprised, we took our bestselling low-rise and high-rise top blocks and adapted them to new leg shapes. For men’s denim, customers were asking for more non-denim bottoms like our blockbuster Ultimate Knit fabric, so next year we are introducing newer wear-to-work and athleisure options to complement the authentic denim collections.

**On favorite part of job:** I get to work with a global team that’s as excited about creation as I am. Whether it is a new sustainable fiber, a campaign shoot or a marketing email, our team’s passion and dedication to being better and spreading our message humbles and motivates me.

“

**OUR CUSTOMERS CAN GET THE PERFECT FIT IN THE ‘MUST-HAVE’ JEANS THAT WILL LAST.”**

—COREY ROBINSON, ABERCROMBIE + FITCH



▼ **MARY PIERSON**  
MADEWELL  
SVP OF DENIM DESIGN

**On S/S 24 trends:** Straight-leg and wide-leg jeans are two key items we see trending. Additionally, the influence of ‘90s trends is still going strong. We pair that inspiration with our durable denim fabrics, thus creating the perfect foundational jeans. The ‘90s straight-leg jean, for example, is so versatile for styling. It nips in your waist and lifts your butt — a flattering combo on all bodies. The wide-leg jean, on the other hand, is such a cool and fun style. It’s an important leg shape to round out your wardrobe. I’m excited about every fit in this collection — there is something for everyone.



**On sustainability:** We always have sustainability on top of mind whenever we go into a new season. We partner with key vendors to ensure we are sourcing ethically grown raw materials and the most sustainable processes to manufacture our products. Everything ladders up toward our larger goal to have more than 90 percent of our denim come from Fair Trade Certified — a sustainable sourcing model — factories by 2025.

**On what customers are asking for:** Our community is asking for straight-leg, wide-leg and our kick-out crop jeans. They love the quality and fit of our jeans and want to see it translated into other fun denim dressing — from skirts, dresses, vests and outerwear.

**On favorite part of job:** My favorite part of my job is working with people who share the same level of passion about denim. Our design and cross-functional team is incredibly talented. They bring their love for denim into every project we work on. The synergy we create makes everything we do feel fun, and not like work at all.

► **COREY ROBINSON**  
ABERCROMBIE & FITCH  
CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER



**On S/S 24 trends:** We continue to be excited about wider-legged jeans. What feels so fresh about the wider and baggier fits is the use of lighter-weight fabrics that drape and don’t feel as structured or rigid. The wider-legged fits and less structured fabrics have been translating well across genders, and with looser and lighter jeans, we’re seeing increased receptivity and love for lower-rise fits.

We’re [also] excited to witness authentic details, such as destroy, paint splatter and the comeback of utility and workwear trends.

Lastly, it’s refreshing to witness the rediscovery of denim’s utility beyond jeans. We’re seeing a desire for denim expressions in skirts, dresses, jackets and tops. Having those within our assortment has helped make Abercrombie & Fitch a destination for denim dressing.

**On sustainability:** Abercrombie & Fitch has introduced sustainable measures into its denim production through our liquid indigo dying and rinse process, recently reducing denim processing water consumption by 30 percent.

**On what customers are asking for:** Our customers ask for trendy jeans, however, they come to us because our jeans have the fit, quality and comfort they expect. For example, our Curve Love fit offering is one of the key reasons the brand has grown its market share over the last four years. Our customers can get the perfect fit in the “must-have” jeans that will last.

**On favorite part of job:** My favorite part about my job is when months — and sometimes years — of hard work come together to deliver a beautiful product. It’s symphonic when our creative and design efforts harmonize in a meaningful way for our customers. ●





# UPWARD AND ONWARD

GLENN McMAHON, AG'S NEWLY APPOINTED CEO, BELIEVES THE SECRET SAUCE IS THE COMPANY'S VERTICAL OPERATION. *by Vicki M. Young*

**G**LENN McMAHON was named CEO of AG in July — the vertically operated denim manufacturer's first in its 21 years of producing premium jeans — and he's already hitting the ground running. Working closely with the company co-founder Yul Ku's son Sam Ku, who remains AG's president, McMahon is making plans to expand product categories and deliver products closer to market by utilizing its owned factories in Los Angeles and Mexico. He also plans to amplify AG's Californian roots through casual-yet-elevated designs. McMahon knows the luxury space well, having worked with St. John Knits, Dolce & Gabbana, Donna Karan, Giorgio Armani and others. "The Californian lifestyle is a key tenet of AG. Over the past several years, we've seen so many European luxury brands try to co-opt the California lifestyle because they know that that resonates with people around the globe — everybody from Dior to Louis Vuitton to Hermès," McMahon said. "So, one of the things that I'm focused on is making sure that we have a stake in the ground, and that we're first and foremost that California lifestyle brand." Here, McMahon talks about the extensive opportunities for AG in products, retail, sustainability and more.

**Rivet:** You left St. John Knits when the retail landscape was changing. What were some of the shifts at that time? And what about post-Covid?

**GM:** I finished there in 2014, and we'd just come through a global economic crisis in '08 and '09, which had its own set of challenges...A lot of the changes were rooted pre-pandemic, meaning luxury was focusing on scarcity, exclusivity, sustainability and moving to direct-to-consumer. If anything, the pandemic accelerated a lot of the trends. At St. John, we saw a lot more brands play directly through their retail stores, online and in social media. The biggest shift was luxury controlling their destiny through their channels.

**Rivet:** How did the democratization of fashion impact luxury, and specifically AG?

**GM:** Luxury has changed dramatically over the past decade. It used to be designers sitting in an ivory tower dictating what the trends would be. That reversed a while ago when the influence from what I'm calling "the street" started

trickling up. We see a lot of designer brands today being influenced by real people and how they dress.

**Rivet:** Tell me about AG as a vertical manufacturer.

**GM:** That's our secret weapon in the denim space. We've seen this trend with a lot of luxury brands, whether it's Chanel, St. John or Hermès, where they are buying up their manufacturing or they're investing in their manufacturing, so they control their destiny from start to finish. The fact that we're a vertical manufacturer is a real competitive advantage, particularly now that I'm interested in reducing the lead time from design to on-the-floor. We have that ability for our retail stores and direct channels, but also wholesale accounts. We're looking at our entire go-to-market strategy. Instead of designing products the typical 12 months in advance, we're looking to shorten that window to be more reactive and responsive to current market trends.



AG's "Jeans of Tomorrow" collection made with post-consumer recycled fibers.



“**WE’RE  
LOOKING AT  
OUR ENTIRE  
GO-TO-MARKET  
STRATEGY.”**  
—GLENN McMAHON

our third iteration. Customers love it because we give them credit to buy something new in exchange for their old pair. We take back that garment and essentially pulverize it to create a new fabric yarn to make a new garment. It's a 95 percent sustainable product. It could be something that we expand out to our wholesale [accounts].

**Rivet:** What are your retail plans?

**GM:** We have 12 full-price stores and five outlets. AG has a very healthy retail and e-commerce business. We're currently migrating over to Shopify. I'd say we're underdeveloped in wholesale and that's a big opportunity for us to continue to grow. We love our retail [doors] because we get direct feedback from the consumer and we're able to provide a level of service that is second to none. We've identified about two dozen potential store locations for the future, which are small retail footprints in market areas that our customer either lives in or travels to for vacation. I would say that the retail expansion will probably begin to materialize in the next 18 to 24 months. ●

**Rivet:** How much shorter do you think the timeframe could be tightened up?

**GM:** We're going to take a certain percentage of our line, and instead of developing it in advance on what I call the antiquated wholesale calendar, we're looking at turning goods closer to three months versus 12 months.

**Rivet:** What else is on the agenda?

**GM:** Our business is principally bottoms and we're leaving a lot on the table. We want to make sure that we're ticking all the boxes in denim by category

classification. We also have a very strong non-denim bottom made with Italian luxury fabrics done in either 5-pocket styling or trousers — it's how people are dressing to work today. The natural extensions are the things that people wear with denim: woven shirts, jackets and outerwear for men, and dresses and skirts for women. We're going to do it very thoughtfully and intelligently. We're not going to start with a full-blown collection, but we will start ticking off key categories or classifications that we know consumers wear with denim.

**Rivet:** How big is your knitwear business and what are the plans to grow it?

**GM:** It's a relatively small, currently under 10 [percent]. The company just embarked on major investments in technology and equipment. We now have a few of the Shima Seiki knitting machines, which allows us to do T-shirts and sweaters. I think, ultimately, it can be about 30 percent or more of our business. We're servicing mostly our retail stores and e-commerce, and eventually, we'll roll [knits] out to our wholesale partners. It's a big opportunity for us because it's the number one item that people wear with denim.

**Rivet:** Is the plan for knitwear to also be within the vertical framework? Where are the factories?

**GM:** We have a factory in Los Angeles and we're doing what we call "small-lot production" here, or special runs. The company invested in a state-of-the-art facility in Mexico decades ago, and that's where we do the lion's share of our manufacturing. There is some outside contract manufacturing for things that we don't have the expertise to do in-house.

**Rivet:** What are some of the efficiencies and sustainability measures that are in place at the factories?

**GM:** All the washing and dyeing are environmentally responsible. We recapture the water, we reprocess it [and] we're reusing it. We recapture steam and heat from dryers and reuse it also. This is something that [Yul] has been doing for decades. On the circular front, the Jean of Tomorrow [collection] is where we are repurposing old AG jeans and creating new fabrics and products. We are on



# BY THE NUMBERS

DAMPENED DENIM SALES CALL FOR DIVERSIFICATION AND INNOVATION. *by Sarah Jones*

LATELY, the denim market has been on a rollercoaster. After a sharp sales decline early in the pandemic, consumers scooped up denim in 2021 and 2022. But this pent-up demand has since subsided, ending this upward trajectory. In the first half of 2023, Circana data shows a 5 percent drop in denim sales. Women’s denim is performing better, with sales dipping 3 percent in H1 compared to 9 percent for men. For the entire year, Coresight Research projects a 1 percent denim decline. The industry is competing with its own recent strong performance. As Levi Strauss & Co. president and CEO Chip Bergh noted during the company’s second-quarter earnings call in July, the denim category in the U.S. over the last 12 months was 12 percent larger than it was in 2019. “Since the pandemic, there have been wild swings within the category — extreme downs, extreme peaks, lots of volatility,” he said.

Partly accounting for the recent slowdown is the inflationary environment and resulting consumer price sensitivity. “Based on the first two quarters of this year, we’re actually seeing softened consumer demand for denim products, largely because of the overall softened consumer demand for discretionary products,” said Sunny Zheng, senior analyst at Coresight Research.

Consumers are also prioritizing other fashion purchases, including dressier styles such as clothing for the office and occasion wear. Through April 2023, tailored and dress apparel sales grew 5 percent year-over-year and 8 percent over the same period of 2019, according to Circana.

## COST CONSCIOUSNESS

Price is the leading consideration for denim purchasers, mentioned by 60 percent of respondents in a September 2022 survey from Coresight Research. With cost on consumers’ minds, mass-market prices are currently winning out. In Coresight’s survey, 54.7 percent of consumers who bought denim in the last year said their total spending was between \$0 and \$110. Budgets were most concentrated between \$30 and \$70, with 27.1 percent of respondents. A Cotton Incorporated Lifestyle Monitor survey from March 2023 found the average price consumers say they pay for jeans is \$53.

Centric Software’s analysis also shows that lower prices are moving more jeans in the U.S. Denim with an initial cost up to \$50 had the strongest sell-out rate in the 30 days ended Aug. 14 (21 percent), followed by \$51–100 (14 percent).

There are also pockets of positivity for designer and luxury denim, with Centric noting that sell-out rates trend higher in more expensive women’s denim, particularly in the \$151–\$300 range.

American Eagle relaunched its AE77 premium brand earlier this year as a sustainable capsule collection with men’s and women’s styles. “It’s a small test, albeit, but these jeans are not cheap,” said Jen Foyle, chief creative officer and Aerie global brand president, during a May earnings call. “They’re a premium price point, and we like what we’re seeing early on. And definitely, that would entertain an older customer.”

Levi Strauss’ value brands were down double digits in the U.S. in the second quarter of 2023 ended May 28. However, Bergh said there was “strong demand” from consumers earning \$100,000 or more, supporting more premium mainline sales. Whereas “surgical price reductions” were conducted on certain Red Tab products in the wholesale channel, mainline full-price stores were not lowering prices.

“So far, average discount penetration and average discounts are trending slightly higher than

\$53

the average price consumers say they pay for jeans

59%

of consumers do all or most of their jean shopping in store

84%

how much searches for “denim dress” grew from July 2022-2023

2022,” said Elizabeth Shobert, director of retail market intelligence and research at Centric Software. “However, the back half of the year will be crucial, and in July 2023, both discount penetration and average discounts were actually lower than the same month last year. Notably, we also see higher sold-out rates compared to last year, in part due to more discounting as well as better inventory management by brands and retailers.”

## RETAIL STRATEGY

Consumers’ search for value is also boosting denim performance in lower-price channels. Per Maria Rugolo, apparel industry analyst at Circana, mass brand men’s denim sales declined 3 percent, less than the overall market, while women’s off-price denim was up 3 percent. Multi-brand pure-play e-commerce platforms have also grown denim sales 15 percent in the first half of 2023.

Physical stores are still capturing a significant portion of sales. Cotton Incorporated’s survey found that 59 percent of shoppers do all or most of their jean shopping in store, while 25 percent split their purchases between online and in-store and 17 percent favor online shopping.

Per Coresight’s consumer survey, the top retailers that shoppers have bought denim from in the past 12 months were Walmart (35.7 percent), Amazon (24.1 percent), Kohl’s (21.6 percent) and Target (20.1 percent), all of which have their own private label offerings.

In general, Rugolo noted that manufacturer- or brand-owned channels have declined. However, Levi’s and Kontoor have bucked the trend. Kontoor’s direct-operated e-commerce and brick-and-mortar revenues rose 15 percent in the second quarter ended July 1.

While Levi’s overall net revenues declined single digits in the second quarter of 2023, direct-to-consumer channels — including its mainline and outlet stores — grew 13 percent. E-commerce was up 20 percent in the quarter. During the earnings call, Bergh spoke about the brand’s “DTC-



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THEIR WALLETS HAVE SHRUNK, BUT THEY’RE STILL GOING TO SPEND AND THEY’LL NEED APPAREL.”

— MARIA RUGOLO, CIRCANA

first strategy,” calling its direct-operated mainline channels “the most premium expression of the Levi’s brand globally.” In the first half of 2023, DTC represented a record 44 percent of sales.

Bergh added, “Why that’s a strategic focus of ours globally is, we’re in control of the brand, we’re in control of the consumer experience, we’re in control of what we focus on in our stores, we’re in control of the assortment in the stores, and the consumer comes into the store wanting to buy Levi’s.”

Levi’s has been expanding its NextGen store concept that focuses on experiential retail, with customization through a Tailor Shop and larger fitting room areas that encourage interaction with stylists.

Zheng noted that opening physical stores could be more challenging for smaller denim brands in 2023 or 2024, since they must compete with the industry leaders and mass merchants. For them, DTC online services may be a better fit. “They could start to build a niche market, do some marketing on social media and... gather certain consumers that are loyal to their products,” she said.

## DENIM DIVERSIFICATION

What denim styles are hot, and which are on the way out? In men’s denim, straight legs are the leading fit and have seen a 3 percent increase in H1, said Rugolo. Straight and skinny — the top two styles for women that together make up over half of sales — were down a respective 3 and 14 percent. The number three style, bootcut, saw an 8 percent increase. And in an overall declining market, flares — which are approximately 9 percent of the market — have been flat and maintained sales.

Looser fits are still popular. Per Centric, between July 2022 and July 2023, searches grew for “flare jeans”



(9 percent), “baggy jeans” (7 percent) and “wide leg jeans” (2 percent). A 37 percent uptick in searches for “cargo jeans” nods to the utility trend. On the decline is “low-rise jeans,” for which searches fell 12 percent.

Denim is also no longer solely about the five-pocket jean. Edited found that in Spring 2023, bottoms had a 2 percent smaller share of the denim product mix in the U.K. compared to Spring 2022. At the same time, tops and outerwear gained share, reflecting the “double denim” trend.

Centric found searches grew 84 percent for “denim dress” and 82 percent for “jean skirt” between July 2022 and 2023. Per Edited, these products also moved more in Spring

37%

how much searches for “cargo jeans” grew from July 2022-2023

Abercrombie & Fitch has diversified beyond being a “jeans and T-shirt business,” including with non-denim bottoms and “cleaned up” denim that can be worn to work. CEO Fran Horowitz said during the retailer’s first quarter earnings call in May, “The consumer for Abercrombie has many different wearing occasions. And now that many of them are back to the office, they’re coming to Abercrombie to help...service them for that need as well.”

In its “Data Driving the Denim Boom” report, Edited pointed to denim as a “lucrative middle ground” between casual and occasion wear as the lines between the two blur. “Creating and promoting multi-wear garments

is key, from multi-way straps to convertible lengths,” said Byrne. “Furthermore, merchandising add-on accessories and including day-to-night product shots and website edits such as ‘jeans and a nice top’ will also help drive sales of casual-leaning items. We also predict the growth of embellished and coated denim for ‘dressier’ casual options.”

DRIVING DEMAND

As denim brands must compete for consumers’ discretionary dollars, the optimal strategy combines calculated merchandising, consumer engagement and innovation.

Zheng suggested that brands lean into “evergreen styles” by making core merchandise 60 to 70 percent of their assortment. This enables them to carry merchandise into another season without discounting. The remaining portion can be used to respond to consumer demand, especially the fast-changing preferences of Gen Zs.

During Gap Inc.’s first quarter earnings call in May, the company’s chairman and then-interim CEO Bobby Martin explained that Gap had driven further growth in women’s denim by pursuing best sellers such as its Baby Boot and High Rise Stride styles. He added, “Gap brand’s focus on amplifying its icons is truly resonating, as the team focuses on reintroducing the most modern versions of its iconic styles.” For instance, Gap’s Cheeky Straight got a silver faux leather update.

Although price comes first, consumers also look for comfort (52.3 percent), fit (45.2 percent) and quality and durability (30.7 percent) in their denim, according to Coresight’s survey.

Activewear’s ascent has pushed denim brands to be more innovative with aspects like stretch and flexibility, said Rugolo. Across apparel, Circana’s research has shown consumer interest in performance properties such as breathability, moisture wicking and stain and odor resistance. Denim can also be a “confidence booster,” borrowing sculpting ideas from shapewear and activewear. “There’s definitely a need to make sure that there is innovation in the space because it’ll warrant people spending more,” she said.

Denim brands are widely addressing sustainability, but just 5.2 percent of consumers told Coresight that they consider environmental friendliness before buying jeans. Although it may not incentivize purchases, sustainability remains important. “From an investment perspective, denim brands and retailers must invest in

sustainability — not only because they want to attract conscious consumers, but also for their equity and brand images,” said Zheng.

Denim brands are also driving demand through influencer collaborations. Kontoor’s Lee has a Los Angeles stylist showroom that engages with influencers and celebrities, and Wrangler’s sponsorships align the brand with the Country Music Awards and Dallas Cowboys. American Eagle Outfitters also benefited from an influencer boost, as an organic TikTok post from Alix Earle made its new Dreamy Drape style go viral.

Brands can also try partnering with key opinion leaders (KOLs), such as pop stars, said Zheng. For instance, Calvin Klein’s “Calvins or Nothing” Spring campaign featuring Kendall Jenner, Michael B. Jordan and K-pop sensation Jennie Kim from Blackpink as well as the debut campaign with new ambassador Jungkook of BTS boosted global site traffic 39 percent and sales 150 percent compared to the weeks ahead of launch. A denim shirt worn by Jungkook in the ad sold out on Tmall in a mere 30 minutes. As part of PVH’s “influencer engine” plan, the brand also collaborated with Kim on a capsule collection, for which 65 percent of the shoppers were new to Calvin Klein, expanding its audience.

Denim is largely cyclical, since shoppers’ primary reason for purchase is to replace old or worn-out jeans, mentioned by 58.5 percent of consumers in the Coresight survey. Over a third (37.3 percent) cited buying jeans to replace denim that no longer fits. Although the replenishment cycle is currently favoring fancier attire, it will pivot back to denim. Rugolo noted that men tend to rebuy denim every two to three years, which would mean a rebound in 2024. For women, keeping up with trends serves as an additional purchase driver.

Looking ahead, Coresight forecasts that U.S. jean sales will grow 2.2 percent in 2024, totaling \$17.3 billion. However, it does not expect denim to regain the full apparel market share it held prior to the pandemic as faster growing categories like athleisure gain share. Still, denim remains a key part of consumers’ wardrobes, and respondents in Cotton Incorporated’s survey most commonly said jeans are their most worn bottoms, with 34 percent choosing them over sweatpants, leggings and casual pants. “Denim will be a staple, everyone needs a pair of jeans,” said Zheng. “But consumers are looking for new ideas, looking for something different.” ●



2023 than 2022, with sell-outs for denim maxi skirts up 564 percent and long denim dresses up 827 percent.

Edited expects that silhouette options will continue to expand. Aoife Byrne, senior fashion and retail analyst at Edited, noted the Trucker jacket’s return at Pre-Spring 2024 shows like Erdem, Ganni and Moschino. “The success of non-traditional silhouettes is set to persevere for the coming seasons as consumers continue to embrace the denim revolution and seek out unique items,” she said.

Consumers are also seeking denim that can serve more functions. Rugolo noted the appeal of “hybrid usage” clothing that can be worn at home, at work and for going out. “Their wallets have shrunk, but they’re still going to spend and they’ll need apparel,” said Rugolo. “But where they’re going to put those dollars are going to be in the areas where they see the most use out of whatever it is that they’re buying.”

60%

of consumers name price the leading consideration for denim purchases

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THE SUCCESS OF NON-TRADITIONAL SILHOUETTES IS SET TO PERSEVERE FOR THE COMING SEASONS...”

—AOIFE BYRNE, EDITED

5.2%

of consumers say they consider environmental friendliness before buying jeans

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# FITS IN

ONE-SIZE-FITS-MANY COLLECTIONS ARE PROVING TO HAVE STAYING POWER. by Kate Nishimura

**G**EN Z declared the skinny jean dead two years ago, but their resurgence shows that not everything the youngest generation of shoppers declares is gospel.

After a pandemic-driven shift to looser-fitting styles — the boyfriend, the wide-leg, the denim jogger, to name a few — consumers have circled back to the body-hugging silhouettes once central to every wardrobe. But there's a key difference, denim brands say. Covid changed the way people shop, most notably that they're not willing to sacrifice comfort for style, even as they head back to in-office work and social events. As such, they prioritize versatility, and demanding denim that evolves with their changing needs.

In recent seasons, brands have debuted one-size-fits-many denim programs that accommodate shoppers of

different shapes and sizes with a limited number of SKUs. Not only do the styles fit more individuals — they're designed to adapt to a wearer's changing body.

NYDJ's SpanSpring line, which launched in January 2021, was made with an ultra-expandable power-stretch denim formulation that stretches up to three sizes, while recovering with ease to its original shape. The jeans also feature a proprietary inner panel with a patented criss-cross design that flattens in the front and lifts in the back, known as "Lift Tuck" technology.

More than two years later, the program is among the brand's more successful, with new styles debuting. "Our customers loved this one-size-fits-many jeans concept and reacted well to it," director of consumer experience and NYDJ host on QVC Mark Peters said. Storytelling on the brand's website has helped introduce shoppers to the line. "Our ladies had no problem grasping this concept," Peters added.

Currently, NYDJ offers six fits, including straight, slim bootcut, super skinny ankle, capri, cropped and slim flare ankle, and it plans to expand the range of silhouettes due to the SpanSpring line's success. "Our goal when designing our new

SpanSpring styles was to offer a jean that adapts to a woman's changing body," the brand's design team told Rivet.

The specialized team of denim experts, including members of its design and technology departments, worked in concert to develop and test the concept on many different body types. While other labels are cottoning onto the trend and launching their own versions of the one-size-fits-many jean, NYDJ said it is confident in fit R&D it has conducted to arrive at the current offering. The proof is in the returns — or lack thereof. The brand reports that it "seldom sees returns" from the SpanSpring collection.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles-based luxury denim label Frame has seen its fits-many philosophy evolve through the years. The brand launched the Le One skinny jean in 2020 with a "revolutionary adaptable stretch fabric that evolves with your body." The jean debuted with just two sizes — Size One for sizes 23–28 and Size Two for sizes 29–34. Since then, the brand has added other silhouettes to the mix, including a Le One flare.

But Frame has taken the concept of versatility even further with The Jetset, a line of jeans designed without hardware, seams or pockets — the ideal "travel day denim."

"They're not a legging — rather, they're Frame's stretchiest pair of jeans yet," providing "elevated ease and comfort without sacrificing style," the brand stated.

After launching a year ago, The Jetset became Frame's best-selling style for 2022, having received "an amazing response to the style from customers" who "have noted how flattering and comfortable The Jetset is." Since its launch, the program has expanded to include six silhouettes, including flare, slit flare, wide leg, wide crop, mini boot cut and skinny crop. "There are up to five different washes depending on the style," the brand said, with plans to introduce new silhouettes and washes seasonally.

"We have found that customers have picked up on this style easily," Frame added. The Jetset styles are available in three sizes — Size 0 fits consumers who wear a size 22–24, Size 1 fits shoppers who wear size 25–29, and Size 2 fits those who typically wear size 30–34. "They are stretchy but return to their previous shape," Frame said, and the denim fabrication lends itself to easy wear.

Canada's Silver Jeans Co. unveiled its "Infinite Fit" range of denim in December 2021, launching with three sizes that encompassed size 25 to size 36. Today, the line has five sizes — extra-small (22–24), small (25–28), medium (29–32), large (33–36) and extra-large (37–40).

"We were emerging from Covid and recognized the changing needs and attitudes of the consumer who was just transitioning out of wearing her pajama bottoms or sweatpants or shorts every day," said CEO Suzanne Silverstein.

"The team believed that people would still want the comfort and ease that they'd become accustomed to," she added. "Infinite Fit provides the function of loungewear with the authenticity of real denim and a

“  
OUR LADIES HAD NO  
PROBLEM GRASPING  
THIS CONCEPT.”  
—MARK PETERS, NYDJ



sizing concept that makes it very easy to buy online, but more importantly, very easy to wear." Silverstein said the denim's "secret sauce" is its denim recipe. Made with an uneven warp and a combination of cotton, elastane and polyester, the jeans combine softness with stretch and high resilience. Upon launch, the brand sought to provide options, including skinny jeans, straight legs and boot cuts in multiple rises and light, medium and dark washes. "It has been a strong launch, with a pretty broad SKU assortment," the executive said. While the Infinite Fit range currently represents a relatively small percentage of the brand's sales volume, Silverstein said the return rate on the collection has been less than half of the standard rate for Silver Jeans Co. Informing both retail customers and end consumers about the features and benefits of both lines will play a critical role in furthering growth. Silver Jeans Co. is working to provide retail collateral, like signage, as well as informative hang tags that speak to the denim's unique properties. "We're always acquiring new customers, which is every brand's ultimate goal," Silverstein said. "We need to continue to evolve and educate — you can never assume that you've educated the consumer enough." ●



# OPENING ACT

MUSIC, SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIY-ING ARE COMING TOGETHER TO REINVENT HOW YOUNG CONCERTGOERS GET READY FOR THE BIG SHOW. *by Angela Velasquez*

**T**ICKETMASTER fiascos and throwing foreign objects at musicians are not the only ways concert culture has changed since the pandemic. The big show outfit is now just as important as the main event. “2023 has quickly become the year of the ‘tourdrobe’ thanks to Harry Styles, Beyoncé and Taylor Swift simultaneously performing world tours, creating hype over summer,” said Venetia Fryzer, a retail analyst at Edited. “Fans have taken to social media and planning outfits and sharing looks have become a major part of the concert experience.”

As Styles, Swift and Beyoncé crisscrossed around the world this summer, fans prepared for their stop on the tour by DIY-ing and shopping for dupes of their high-end designer stage looks, or in the case of Swift, outfits that reference one of her many eras. Despite killing the element of surprise at concerts, TikTok clips of Styles hamming it up in colorful Gucci tracksuits, Swift strumming her guitar in ethereal Etro frocks and Beyoncé voguing in chrome bodysuits by Fendi served as blueprints for what to wear to the shows.

Planning outfits and sharing looks on social media via hashtags has become the norm, Fryzer said. Fans share their concert shopping hauls, trade style advice and post GRWM (get ready with me) videos in the lead-up to shows. Afterward, they post their favorite looks. This sense of community created online carries into the stadium stands. Fryzer noted how Swift’s fans are trading homemade friendship bracelets at concerts, and TikTok has become a space for them to share videos of the designs they have swapped with other Swifties. “Social is critical as so many of us watch ‘Get Ready with Me’ TikToks for entertainment,” said Winnie Park, Forever 21 CEO, adding that some of the it’s best collaborations have been with leading voices in the GRWM sphere. Indeed, fans are consuming concert fashion content. TikToks tagged #loveontouroutfit, which has over 157 million views, reveal a fandom painting and bedazzling Styles’ initials to the back of jeans and wearing feather bows. Viewed



► **A concertgoer pays homage to Taylor Swift’s “Reputation” album with her outfit.**  
▼ **Fans wear silver to Beyoncé’s Renaissance World Tour.**

over 1.2 billion times, the videos tagged #erastouroutfits show Swifties combining their antihero’s penchant for cowboy boots, pastels and iridescent sequins. Videos tagged #renaissanceoutfit, viewed 36.8 million times, show Beyoncé Beehive fanning themselves dressed in silver-coated jeans and disco ball cowboy hats. The outfits caught the attention of Queen Bey, who often thanked her audience between opening numbers for dressing to the nines. She even doubled down on the unofficial dress code by asking fans to wear their “most fabulous silver fashion” to her Renaissance World Tour shows during Aug. 23–Sept. 22 to create a “shimmering human disco ball each night.” The request led retailers like NastyGal to curate a selection of silver fashion on its website and for TikTokers like @cydsimone to post videos of last-minute silver fashion ideas like Zara’s assortment of silver-coated and crystal-covered denim. As TikToker @camilleviviana\_ put it: “If Beyoncé wants a house of chrome, we’re gonna give her a house of chrome.”

COSTUME DEPARTMENT

Beyoncé’s request for an all-silver audience also sent fans who had been DIY-ing non-silver items for weeks and months into an uproar on TikTok. Re-creating the fashion worn by artists, and taking followers through the DIY process on TikTok, is one of the big shifts in post-pandemic concert culture. The trend emerged in August 2022 when Styles kicked off a 15-night Love On Tour residence at New York City’s Madison Square Garden. Attendees turned out in feather boas and watermelon-printed garb — nods to the green boa Styles wore for his 2021 Grammy performance of “Watermelon Sugar High.” Fallen feathers filled the gutters outside the show each night. The copycat looks continued in Los Angeles where Styles performed 15 sold-out shows at The Forum,





and it went global as Love On Tour landed in 28 different countries. By the summer of 2023, fans were making dupes of the EgonLab jumpsuit covered in 250,000 Swarovski crystals he wore to the Grammy Awards earlier in the year, painstakingly gluing tiny crystals to tops, jeans and denim skirts.

Beyoncé fans made the effort to re-create the custom flesh-tone Loewe jumpsuit she wore during the Renaissance tour. Fans ironed on Cricut cutouts and sewed gloves onto one-pieces to mimic its trompe l'oeil hands print. Meanwhile, Swifties have gone to great lengths to make copies of the bejeweled Versace bodysuit Swift wears to open shows.

Others are turning to platforms like Etsy for one-of-a-kind concert looks, including custom denim.



“Denim is certainly having a moment within concert dressing because of it’s easy to DIY and customize,” said Kendall Becker, Trendalytics fashion director. “We’ve seen quotes, patches and decorations added to oversized denim jackets and pairs of denim to help achieve a cool, desired look.”

Social media is how Micah Thompson’s custom denim jacket business on Etsy got off the ground. “It’s truly incredible how fast word can spread and how much a simple tag from a well-followed customer can grow business,” she said.

The founder of Made by Micah Mae started painting custom jackets mostly for the wives and girlfriends of college and professional athletes in 2020. In early 2023 a friend asked

her to paint a jacket for the Eras Tour, and she’s created four Eras Tour jackets since. “Every customer who has ordered a jacket for the Eras Tour has been so kind and fun to work with during the design process. I always love getting excited messages when their jacket arrives in the mail and pictures when they wear it to the concert,” she said.

Thompson uses jackets purchased from Old Navy or Amazon as the base for her custom designs. She has also found a few gems at thrift stores and customers are welcome to provide their own. The painted jackets retail for \$200 and up.

Though she’s not a Swiftie herself, Thompson said the Eras Tour orders bring a new energy to her designs. “I love the colors, the bling and the creativity that goes into each one,” she said. “Every Taylor jacket has pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me learn new techniques. I hand-glued more than 1,500 individual rhinestones on one of them. It’s been such a welcome change from my typical athlete jackets.”

#### OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Traditional retailers and brands are leaning into “tourdrobe” demands as well. Revolve launched a “Chrome Concert Moment” curation spanning faux leather silver maxi skirts and corset tops to aluminum mesh tops and dresses. Silver sequin coordinates, harnesses and cutout catsuits made up Dolls Kill’s Renaissance category online. In addition to silver fashion, Nasty Gal has “The Eras Collection,” an assortment of fringe miniskirts, denim coordinates, dresses with heart cutouts and cowboy boots.

“Concert dressing presents a massive opportunity for retailers to push current stock to fans through style edits,” Fryzer said. Edited’s visual merchandising tool has tracked several retailers promoting “get the look” and “what to wear” edits within recent email communications for fans. For example, Fryzer said Flannels launched a Renaissance Flagship pop-up store and experience in London, offering official merch to celebrate Beyoncé’s world tour. Tiffany & Co. also collaborated with Beyoncé on a collection of Y2K-inspired charm necklaces, with 100 percent of profits going to her About Love Scholarship Program.

Park said Forever 21 has noticed concert fashion become more thematic to the artists. She added that its customers view music as an important moment for escapism where they can have fun experimenting with their fashion

## “FANS HAVE TAKEN TO SOCIAL MEDIA AND PLANNING OUTFITS AND SHARING LOOKS HAVE BECOME A MAJOR PART OF THE CONCERT EXPERIENCE.”

—VENETIA FRYZER, EDITED

and beauty looks. “They embrace every trend, and more importantly, a great theme [or] costume party,” she said.

Sequin embellished crop top and skirt sets, studded denim, crystal-encrusted cowboy boots and body jewelry have been popular items at Forever 21. “We are also seeing a lot of head-to-toe monochrome dressing, [like] lots of hot pink for Taylor Swift,” Park said.

Trendalytics reported that Swift’s tour “is arguably playing a hand in boosting economies across the world with remarkable spending from the tickets to accommodations and outfits.” Searches for ruffle dresses are up 23 percent to last year, with 24,000 average weekly searches. Sequin tops and pearl mesh tops have seen double-digit growth and pair with metallic pants, which is up 118 percent compared to last year. Metallic accessories, rhinestone cowboy hats and cowboy boots have also become concert must-haves.

#### STAY TUNED

There are many crossovers between the “tourdrobe” and festival trends, such as Western themes and sequined looks. However, Fryzer has seen a “more pared-back festival look” emerge this year, fueled by influencers like Kendall Jenner and Hailey Bieber moving into their quiet luxury eras. Basic tank tops and denim pieces were favored for Coachella this year due to their versatility, she said.

Interest in versatile staples tracks with what Pacsun has seen for festival garb. Addie Rintel, Pacsun’s VP of women’s merchandising and design, said denim shorts, crop tops, corset tops and cargos have been important as well as romantic satin

styles from the Beverly & Beck by Pacsun collection. Richard Cox, VP of men’s merchandising and design, named cargo pants, oversized boxy fit graphic tees, woven short-sleeve shirts and looser knit and crochet fabrics as concert and festival must-haves for men.

The main difference between concert and festival fashion, Becker said, is that festival fashion is about overarching aesthetics that are driven more by fashion trends than music. In comparison, concert fashion is an effort to align with an artist’s community.

Whereas the merch shirt craze of 2018–2019 felt like a status symbol for super-fans, Becker said the rise of concert fashion reflects a shift in social currency. “We used to see limited edition or only accessible apparel at concerts that created a hype outside of the main attraction,” she said. “In recent years, this notion of developing a ‘brand’ — whether that be a celebrity, influencer or everyday business owner — has increasingly taken off and is crucial for making a name of yourself online.”

In turn, Becker said showgoers have begun to lean into their own iterations of an artist’s “brand” rather than opting for merch. “This also gives showgoers creative freedom to translate the art in their own way — may it be dressing up as the overall aesthetic of the album or wearing a go-to style cue of the artist,” she said.

Though Styles’ and Beyonce’s world tours have wrapped up, they proved that the “tourdrobe” has gone global. Concert outfit ideas and hauls for Swift’s Era Tour are just getting started, however. The 12-time Grammy Award winner will kick off the international leg in November, allowing brands and retailers in South America, Australia, Asia and Europe opportunities to cash in on the fandom. It will continue through November 2024.

Given the amount of fan-generated content and buzz for these tours, it’s a safe bet that other artists going on tour soon will try to recreate the hype. To stay on top of the trend, brands and retailers must plugged into future album releases and tour dates and the aesthetic the artist builds around the album.

And with concerts becoming a hub for creative self-expression — be it dressed in a chrome corset, cowboy boots or feather boas — don’t expect fans to become wallflowers any time soon. “Concert dressing creates a sense of idolization and community among fans, letting them pay homage to these big stars in a fun and playful way, creating a night to remember,” Fryzer said. ●

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# SHHHH, IT'S FASHION

THE QUIET LUXURY TREND PROVIDES DENIM A MOMENT TO BREATHE. by Angela Velasquez

**T**HE CONSUMER Confidence Index fell eight points in August to 80.2 — a hair above the level that historically signals a recession within the year. Data confirms that employment gains have slowed, overall wage increases are less generous compared to a year ago, and the average number of weeks of unemployment is ticking upward, Dana Peterson, chief economist at The Conference Board, reported.

“Consumers may be hearing more bad news about corporate earnings, while job openings are narrowing, and interest rates continue to rise — making big-ticket items more expensive,” she said. Consumers are not interested in dressing the part, however. Despite uncertainty looming over the health of their bank accounts, shoppers are co-opting the high-end yet understated style of old money.

Enter “quiet luxury,” a blanket term to describe all things simple and timeless, be it gold jewelry, ballet flats or wearing hair in a bun, and the latest narrative used by brands and retailers to sell fuss-free classic denim. In May, Frame described its assortment of “well-tailored jeans,” shrunken cardigans and silk midi skirts as the “Summer of Quiet Luxury.”<sup>7</sup> For All Mankind leaned into the look this spring with linen coordinates and suiting that paired with denim and Nordstrom marketed its Anniversary Sale as “quiet luxury for less.”

“

**YOUNG CONSUMERS ARE EXPERIENCING A MOMENT OF MICROTREND FATIGUE AND NEED SOLACE IN ROOTED TIMELESS TRENDS.”**

— MARIA COLEIRO,  
FASHION SNOOPS

A confluence of factors has fueled the trend. In April, following the start of the final season of HBO’s “Succession,” the sartorial comedy-drama that introduced the Roy family’s stealth wealth aesthetic to the 99 percent, Google searches for “quiet luxury” skyrocketed 373 percent month-over-month. It had a halo effect on searches for “stealth wealth” and “old money style” with both seeing triple-digit increases. In addition to making “ludicrously capacious” designer handbags a faux pas, the show’s costume department magnified the craftsmanship of Brunello Cucinelli, the tailoring of Alexander McQueen and the cashmere basics of Loro Piana — including \$1,375 cashmere-cotton denim trousers.

Simultaneously, Oscar-winning actress and Goop mogul Gwyneth Paltrow won praises (and court cases) for the monochromatic polished outfits she strategically wore to her ski collision trial.

And then Gen Z got into the action when Sofia Richie Grainge’s minimalist aesthetic went viral following her April wedding to Elliot Grainge on the French Riviera. The 25-year-old daughter of singer Lionel Richie took her 3.2 million TikTok followers along for the ride by sharing in real-time her sophisticated pre-wedding outfits by Khaite and Proenza Schouler and her three bespoke Chanel wedding gowns.

The popularity of Richie Grainge’s ladies-who-lunch aesthetic has triggered a shift in how other influential personalities dress like Kylie Jenner, Hailey Bieber and Alix Earle as well as consumers. “We’re seeing younger consumers latch on to the idea of securing their classics — a Chanel ballet flat, a Cartier bracelet, a Prada nylon piece, a Burberry trench, a handbag from The Row — when they have funding to make those investments,” said Leslie Ghize, executive vice president of Donager-Tobe, a New York-based retail and fashion consultancy with expertise in trend forecasting and merchandising.



▲ Quiet luxury street style in Paris.





SOCIAL CURRENCY

On the other hand, quiet luxury is about buying into invisible details. Amy Leverton, the founder of Denim Dudes, said the trend relies on consumers to be knowledgeable and appreciate fabric choices and obscure branding, but that isn't always the case.

"Google the \$690 Loro Piana jeans [and] you'll find there is nothing about that jean that looks any different to something a tenth of the price. Sure, it's made and washed in Italy, but so are jeans from AG, Frame and Denham. They say their jeans are crafted with the same attention to fit as their tailoring but it's hard to tell from a flat garment shot," she said. "What you're mostly paying for, in my opinion, is the association and the social signaling."

Consumers are finding ways to work around quiet luxury's price points. Videos tagged #quietluxuryoutfits have over 387,000 views on TikTok, with many offering tips on how to get the pricy look without breaking the bank.

"There's been a lot of talk about how the trend excludes those who don't have the funds to play in the luxury arena and even associating the movement to roots in colonialism and white supremacy," Leverton said. "The very concept is about excluding 99 percent of everyday people, so turning to fast fashion goes against the ethos. But what are everyday shoppers meant to do?"

Indeed, fashion loves a good contradiction. At times, the terms "quiet luxury" and "recessioncore" are used interchangeably as both stress versatile investment pieces.

"While recessioncore emphasizes intentional dressing and quiet luxury exudes aspirational elegance, these two trends initially diverge in their sentiments," said Maria Coleiro, youth senior strategist for Fashion Snoops, a

“

**WITH GEN Z AT THE HELM THOUGH, THE SHIFT IS DRIVEN BY THE DISCOVERY OF OBSCURE BRAND NAMES, MEME CULTURE AND MORE THAN A TOUCH OF IRONY.”**

— AMY LEVERTON, DENIM DUDES

New York-based consumer insight and trend forecasting company. "However, as we delve deeper, we find a compelling convergence within their shared aesthetic foundation. Rooted in 'practical minimalism,' both trends embrace muted tones and emphasize the use of high-quality fabrics. Furthermore, they lean towards inconspicuous branding and gracefully avoid any hint of overly extravagant styles."

Leverton sees a parallel between quiet luxury's rise and the birth of normcore during The Great Recession. "We believe it's a mirror of the 2008 market crash, a moment when financial uncertainty led consumers to buy more intentionally, buy less and gravitate towards quieter, higher quality garments," she said. "With Gen Z at the helm though, the shift is driven by the discovery of obscure brand names, meme culture and more than a touch of irony."



QUIET QUALIFICATIONS

After two years of keeping pace with rapid-fire fashion cores with clever names, quiet luxury offers consumers, brands and retailers the opportunity to jump off the bandwagons and reset.

"Young consumers are experiencing a moment of microtrend fatigue and need solace in rooted timeless trends. Part of the reason they connect so deeply with quiet luxury is simply to escape the overwhelmingness of fast fashion and consumerism, and to explore investment pieces that have lasting power," Coleiro said.

Few garments have lasting power like a pair of jeans, giving tried-and-true denim brands like Levi's and Gap a voice in the trend. "Denim, with its versatility, it's the ideal fabric to support this new trend, that can exploit all its potential," said Daniele Lovato, general manager of

◀ "Succession" star Brian Cox poses in Kith's Fall 2023 campaign.  
▼

Gen Z gravitates to Sofia Richie Grainge's elevated style.

the Italian garment manufacturer Elletti Group. "Few other materials are as apt as denim to express the subtleness that is required to get quiet luxury right."

For denim, quiet luxury means a return to proven fits, clean finishes and core colors like indigo, black and ecru. "For denim to feel luxurious, the key is to remain true to classic silhouettes that exude timelessness. An essential aspect of quiet luxury is the concept of slow fashion, which means denim brands that provide handmade stitching, natural washes, and adhere to sustainable practices will embody the essence of quiet luxury," Coleiro said.

Lovato added that it could (and should) be difficult to tell a basic from a quiet luxury garment from a distance. "Quiet luxury is more about self-awareness than showing off, and most of the things that make [jeans] luxurious are to be felt, not to be seen," he said. "A properly washed and well-fitted garment will give the ideal feeling to the wearer, and that is what quiet luxury is all about."

Ghize pointed out that consumers are drawn pieces that serve utilitarian purposes, have subtle status and are "a IYKYK wink." On Doneger-Tobe's list of quiet luxury must-haves are the 5-pocket straight-leg jean, slim maxi skirt, shirt jacket, jean jacket and chambray shirt and the foundational silhouettes, with the big three washes — dark, medium, light — and no distress, rips or tears.

"We are noticing a pressed front seam emerge, that will sit beautifully in this story, adding newness and maintaining the elevated wardrobing aesthetic," she said.

Gen Z is navigating quiet luxury in their way. Lorna Hall, director of fashion intelligence at WGSN, said the cohort opts for denim-on-denim styling or matching sets, which "smartens up an overall look but allows for versatility in outfitting."

"We can also expect to see some new key items that will drive this approach," she said. "The contoured Trucker jacket can be used — it's neat, streamlined shape and long body that hits at the hip gives a svelte style. If you look at the [F/W 23-24] catwalks, denim skirts, dresses and tops were all increasing with the denim column skirt a key item that youth shoppers can adopt and make their own."

Despite being rooted in exclusiveness, the quiet luxury movement has kickstarted a return to simpler, built-to-last fashion, which is the bedrock of the denim industry.

"At the heart of this story is a healthier and less wasteful attitude towards our purchasing habits and that's what's best to focus on," Leverton said. "The jean is the ultimate in quiet design: its timeless, core and universal." ●

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# MASTERCLASS: ADRIANO GOLDSCHMIED

**FROM DRESSING CLUB KIDS AND A-LIST CELEBS TO BECOMING ONE OF THE INDUSTRY’S MOST EFFECTIVE ADVOCATES FOR SUSTAINABILITY, ADRIANO GOLDSCHMIED REFLECTS ON HIS DENIM DESTINY.**  
by [Chelsea Dobrosielski](#)

**I****N THE MORE** than five decades since Adriano Goldschmied began selling imported jeans outside an Italian disco, the “godfather of denim” has made his mark on the industry multiple times over.

In 1974, Goldschmied debuted Daily Blue, a pioneering denim brand that would help popularize designer jeans. Years later, he launched Genius Group, the creative cohort that helped grow brands like Diesel and Replay. In 1993, he partnered with designer Ron Herman to introduce Agolde, one of the earliest champions of sustainable denim. Seven years later, he doubled down on environmentally conscious fashion, teaming with Yul Ku, a veteran of denim production, to launch AG Adriano Goldschmied, a premium denim label focused on sustainable manufacturing.

Eco-friendly design continues to be a hallmark of Goldschmied’s work. In early 2022, he collaborated with French designer brand Chloé on its first circular jean. In November, he resurrected Daily Blue, this time integrating Earth-friendly practices, including sustainable washes and no-dye fabric, and avoiding polyester and metallic trims. In May, OVS revealed plans to release a Fall/Winter 2023 collection with Goldschmied employing water-saving dye technology from the Pakistani company Crescent Bahuman.

An early proponent of sustainable design, a mentor to future fashion heavyweights and a pioneer of designer denim, Goldschmied has worn many hats over the course of his career, including his first major job in fashion — operating a small but influential clothing store in the mountains of northern Italy.

► **Adriano Goldschmied at Rivet’s studio in Los Angeles.**

**EARLY CAREER**

Goldschmied entered the fashion world “by accident,” without any relevant schooling or preparation, he said. Instead, he first began selling jeans upon the suggestion of a good friend, the owner of a popular club, who saw an untapped market in the hundreds of people waiting in line to enter his venue. Goldschmied followed his friend’s advice, even operating his store, King’s Shop, to match the habits of club-goers, opening at nine at night and closing at four in the morning.

Located in the Italian ski resort Cortina d’Ampezzo, a destination for international jetsetters and celebrities, the store picked up a wealthy clientele that valued pricy, unique items. In response, Goldschmied began traveling to London and bringing back styles that were “impossible to find in any store in Italy at that time.” The business model was “incredibly successful,” Goldschmied said. After a few years, however, he grew tired of flying back and forth between London and Italy and decided to take on denim manufacturing himself.

“Obviously, I didn’t have any preparation,” Goldschmied said. “I didn’t know anything about design, nothing about the construction and the design of the garment..That first production was going to a fabric store in my hometown, buying crazy fabrics for a very high price and going through manufacturing with my tailor...The product was extremely expensive, and in some way, I created a premium denim by accident.”





Fortuitously for Goldschmied, Cortina d’Ampezzo not only attracted celebrities, but all sorts of wealthy travelers — including international store owners, who would ask him to send products for them to sell abroad. When he began manufacturing jeans himself under his first formal label, Daily Blue, these connections gave Goldschmied an international network of stores that could sell his designs. Launched in 1974, the brand offered “a very different point of view,” focusing on new fits and new color combinations, Goldschmied said.

“My customer network came to me immediately and so I got immediately a kind of global distribution,” he added. “That was totally uncommon in that time.... Nobody was selling internationally.”

In addition to its global reach, another important characteristic of Daily Blue was its high price point. “That was an inspiration for designers” Goldschmied said. Until then, denim functioned largely as a utility product, selling at low prices. Daily Blue joined the small, but growing movement of high-end denim brands, inspiring designers to add jeans to their collections.

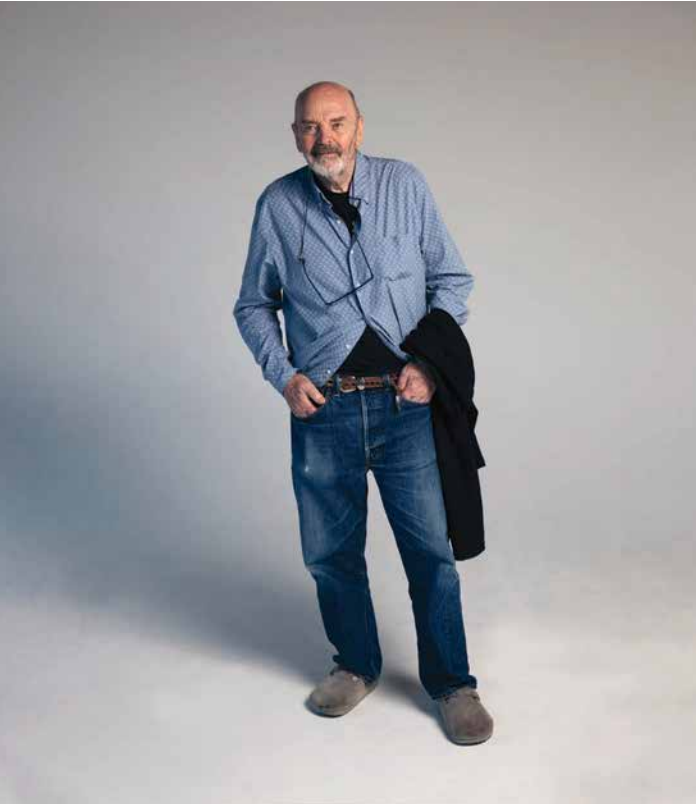
“Daily Blue was important not only for the sales and success, but also because it had a very strong influence in the fashion business,” Goldschmied said. “Basically, at that time, denim fashion started.”

GENIUS IDEA

Goldschmied began thinking about his next project soon after Daily Blue achieved success. “A characteristic of my personality in some way is that when I do something successful, I walk away,” he said. For Goldschmied, this trait led to “one of the most important” moves of his career: founding Genius Group.

The idea behind the conglomerate was to financially support young designers as they pursued their individual visions. Under Genius Group, he helped shepherd to success brands like Diesel — founder Renzo Rosso worked at Moltex, a clothing manufacturer owned by Goldschmied, when he bought a 40 percent share in the company and began selling its products under the Diesel name — and Replay — the brainchild of another founding Group member, Claudio Buziol.

The legacy of Genius Group — now spelled Genius Group — was not limited to its brands, however, but also extended to innovation. The idea of washing the jeans came out of the conglomerate by the end of the ’70s, Goldschmied said. Also important, he added, was the network of suppliers it created.



“**I REMEMBER COMING BACK FROM MY FIRST TRIP IN CHINA AND REALIZING THAT WE HAVE TO REPAIR OUR MISTAKES.**”  
—ADRIANO GOLDSCHMIED

“Denim jeans means that you have fabric suppliers, you have the pocket lining, you have the thread, you have the buttons, you have the labels, you have embroideries and so in that area, we created a network of companies and suppliers that are extremely functional to the jean,” Goldschmied said. “Consider also that Italy for sure is a creative country and every supplier was bringing something in terms of innovation. The embroiderer was finding a new system to embroider, the laundry a new system to wash and so it was in some way a golden era of denim.”

After Genius Group, “everybody around the world was asking ‘Can you help me?’” Goldschmied said. The questions led to the designer pivoting to the consulting business. During those years, he traveled

the world, visiting Japan, the U.S., and, for the first time, China — experiences that opened his mind. “I was working in Italy in a factory that was in the middle of nowhere,” Goldschmied said. “Our mentality was the world, but our reality was very small and limited in that area. Consulting for me was extremely important because I started to travel.”

Taking Responsibility  
For the first two decades of his career, Goldschmied’s sole goal was to make nice products. Traveling in Asia, however, he began to realize the “tremendous influence” his work had on local communities.

“I remember coming back from my first trip in China and realizing that we have to repair our mistakes,” he said. “That’s why at that time I started working in sustainability.”

In 1993, he helped launch Agolde, where he pioneered some of the first applications of Tencel-branded lyocell fibers. The label was “very important” at the time, said Goldschmied, who touted Agolde as “the first brand with a clear understanding of sustainability.” In 2000, he and manufacturing veteran Yul Ku introduced AG Adriano Goldschmied, a company that prioritized sustainable production. Just in the past year, he resurrected his original brand, Daily Blue, with a new focus on sustainability.

“I remember that at the very beginning, it was like a voice in the desert because nobody was believing and everybody was telling me ‘This is a waste of time and money,’

“The public is not going to care about that,” Goldschmied said.

Today, of course, sustainability has become a buzzword in the industry, with nearly every brand releasing its own version of “sustainable” apparel. Though Goldschmied sees the interest in eco-friendly fashion as a positive, he remains concerned about the speed at which corporations are pivoting. In particular, he called out greenwashing brands that celebrate their small sustainable capsule collections but retain standard business practices for the other 99 percent of their product.

“Climate change is not waiting for us,” he said. “Every season is worse than the other and it is clear that today, working on lowering the impact is extremely urgent.”

Likewise, Goldschmied called for fashion companies to improve working conditions and pay standards across their supply chains.

“We can introduce a new way or a new form of capitalism [that] is not only about making money, making money, making money,” he said. “Our goal is to make the people happy. That’s what I think. For example, when I design something, I like to imagine my consumer smiling in front of a mirror.”

FUTURE MINDS

With five decades of experience under his belt, Goldschmied is thinking of the next generation, responding to students who reach out and seeking ways to transfer his knowledge to future fashion leaders. “Honestly, I answer to everybody,” he said. This focus on nurturing young designers follows a long history of educating and bringing into the business new talent — “one of things that I’m most proud of,” he said, calling out Diesel founder Renzo Rosso, “a guy that I hired super young,” in particular.

“He was like 20 years old,” Goldschmied said. “The idea of taking a guy like him and to put him in a position to grow and to arrive where he arrived, obviously, is a big satisfaction.”

“I think that the relationships that I have today are extremely valuable,” he added. “I see, for instance, when I pick up the phone, I call somebody, nobody’s hanging up. If they can help me, they help me. Also, because they know how much energy I’ve been spending to help people. For instance, if somebody, a student, is calling me to [say] ‘Oh, I’d like to do something,’ I can spend hours talking. And I think that relationship and the value of the relationship is one of the most important things.” ●

◀ Goldschmied recently unveiled new collections for Daily Blue and OVS.



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# COLLECTOR'S CAMELOT

INSIDE DENIM TASTEMAKER SEAN WOTHERSPOON'S WEIRD AND WONDERFUL WORLD. by Jessica Binns

**S**EAN WOTHERSPOON never imagined he'd be a cultural tastemaker courted by the likes of Gap and Adidas. Instead, the 33-year-old, Jersey-born married father of two saw himself running a skate shop when he grew up — turning a lifelong passion for action sports into a self-sustaining business. But fate would dictate otherwise, the famed sneaker designer, vintage collector, Japanophile, Round Two boutique co-founder and onetime YouTube showrunner told a reporter as he hopped on a banged-up longboard for a quick spin around his sprawling Compton studio 18 miles from Downtown Los Angeles, where red, white and black shoe boxes are stacked into a larger-than-life Air Force 1 sneaker.

► Wotherspoon at his studio in Compton.

But while a Nike Air Max 97/1 collab vaulted Wotherspoon to official sneakerhead status back in 2018 during the heady heyday when grail-hunting turned high-heat shoes into investable assets, now the California creative has his fingers in a little bit of everything. And denim, he said, inspires and influences much of his aesthetic output and personal fashion archive.

It's denim's "timeless" appeal, he said, that makes the fabric such a popular choice for limited-release sneaker drops. "Everyone understands it," said Wotherspoon, clad in silky shorts printed with photographs of denim offering the illusion of the real thing. "You don't need to re-educate your customer on what denim is, how to use it, how it fades, how it gets worn."

In many ways, denim also forms the foundation of Mntge, the category-bending startup Wotherspoon co-founded in 2022 along with music industry veteran and Snoop Dogg whisperer Nick Adler, and Brendan Russo, a marketing alum of both the Three Stripes and faux-meat maker Beyond Meat. Wotherspoon, a vegan who starts each morning with a soy milk matcha latte, plastered pineapples, oranges, strawberries, grapes and other popular produce-aisle picks on "hand-picked" Levi's 505 jeans along with graphic tees from the '60s through the 2000s for the first drop from Mntge, whose mission is to merge vintage fashion with the budding demand around NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, stored on the blockchain to signify one-of-one ownership.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MADDIE CORDOBA



Each unique item in the inaugural “Fruits and Veggies” collection was sold with a sewn-in NFC chip that turned the real-life garment into a digital collectible. It’s fashion for the plugged-in meta generation. It would be “cool,” Wotherspoon said, if the PSA, the Professional Sports Authenticator, would grade Mntge patches designed by artists including psychedelic drip-art visionary Jen Stark and Brooklyn tattoo studio owner Scott Campbell, like how it bestows “collectability” status on everything from video games to baseball cards.

The patches were conceived as complements to the \$249.99 Mntge Star Jacket, a line of vintage Trucker toppers from Lee, Wrangler, Levi’s and similar legacy brands bearing the Mntge “M” logo and citrusy star logo on the back.

“We figured if we want to create a brand [in Mntge] that has that same longevity, heritage and timelessness, why not attach to something that’s already proven that?” Wotherspoon said of selecting jean jackets from labels that have endured years of wear and tear and often are the better for it. “We don’t need to reinvent the wheel on a denim jacket to put our chip-enabled patches on it. We just need a really good jacket that people already understand.”

More than anything, Wotherspoon wants to make stuff people want to own — not just now, but also many years down the road as a cherished part of their wardrobe. It’s the principal motivation behind his undying affinity for Japan — Wotherspoon book-ended this interview with trips to the selvedge-loving nation — where consumers have a “true appreciation” for seasonless quality and don’t mind paying for it, he said.

“I’m not here to one-and-done something,” he said. In places like Japan, he said, “you can work on a project for multiple years and it’s not out of style” when it finally comes to market.

Wotherspoon believes in “using what we already have” and breathing new relevance into vintage treasures. He first discovered the joy of well-worn fashion as a kid when his family moved to Richmond, Virginia and he stumbled into the capital city’s embarrassment of secondhand riches. Early ‘90s vintage Polo Sport clothing first captured his imagination — it was “way doper” than the brand’s newest products, he said. “And way cheaper, too.”

Rifling through racks of pre-owned jeans, jackets, sneakers and tees became a lightbulb moment for Wotherspoon, who cites Bape founder, Kenzo creative director and Levi’s collaborator, Nigo, as



“

**I’M GOING TO  
KEEP DIGGING  
AND FINDING  
COOL PIECES  
OF HISTORY.”**

—SEAN WOTHERSPOON

his vintage inspiration. “This is my place,” he said of the youthful realization of what the secondary market had to offer. “I’m going to keep digging and finding cool pieces of history.”

History has its fingerprints all over Wotherspoon’s kid-in-a-candy-store archive, where kitchenware is molded in the image of blue jeans, classic Snoopy T-shirts hang in deep autumnal shades, and denim treasures reach decades into the past. The more splatters and tatters, the better, according to Wotherspoon, who said mint-condition garments just aren’t “as exciting” as clothing, especially durable denim, that visibly bears the hallmarks of previous ownership.

Wotherspoon’s collector’s eye is always searching out telltale fades, rips and repairs, and customizations like patching and stitching that lend a singular appeal to what otherwise might be a mass-manufactured throwaway. But some items, like a Vivienne Westwood polka-dot denim jacket, offer the kind of

▲ **Wotherspoon sports the Mntge Star Jacket.**

magnetic je ne sais quoi that’s hard to resist. Then there’s the orange-and-brown Diesel jacket that he recently unearthed in Japan. For Wotherspoon, “my inspiration comes from everywhere.”

But the garments themselves that make up the goods in many of Wotherspoon’s and Mntge’s drops often come from a Los Angeles-area family-run rag house where used clothing is bundled in 100-pound bales and sorted by type: Levi’s 501s, Levi’s denim jackets, or movie T-shirts, perhaps. Though Wotherspoon said a recent bale was a “dud” — all modern Gap sweatshirts when he was looking vintage — he quickly came up with a solution: turning otherwise unusable tops into eye-catching couches destined for use in Gap stores.

In Gap, Wotherspoon has found what might be his ideal collaboration. His Summer 2023 vintage curation for the American denim label sold out in hours, signaling strong demand for the brand’s throwback hits. And there’s equally strong demand for modern-day Gap elsewhere in the world, even if the brand might be trying to regain its footing in the U.S.

“Gap has the best image in the Philippines. They couldn’t stop talking about Gap,” Wotherspoon said of a recent trip to Manila. “You know what they loved about it? How fair the prices were, how good the quality was and how unchanged the brand was. They were like, ‘we lost them for a few years, there was a little weird time for Gap — what’s going on, this is really cheap-y?’ But honestly, every country I go to — Philippines, Japan, China, UK — everybody speaks so highly of Gap and is so excited about what Gap’s brought there.”

With millennial-era fashion “popping” these days, Wotherspoon believes culturally relevant brands like Diesel and Evisu, the Osaka-founded Japanese imprint, are primed to bring their points of view to new audiences. Vintage stores in Germany are stocking tons of early-to mid-2000s denim from European and made-in-Japan brands right now, said Wotherspoon, who sees international denim players having a “crazy moment” in the next five years.

Wotherspoon hopes American consumers ditch their obsession with “fads and trends” and start to invest in fashion that sustainably stands the test of time — much like his current collaborator.

“If you loved Gap in the ‘90s, you can still love it today. And they’ve been there the whole time for you,” he said. “Whether you went through a phase of liking them or not, they withstood the test of time.” ●



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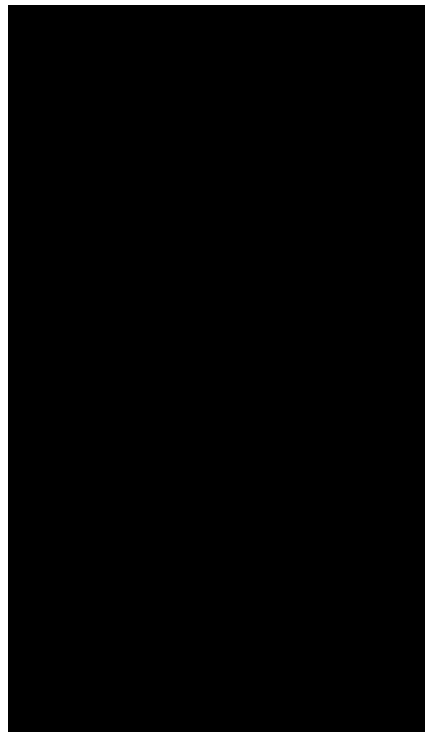
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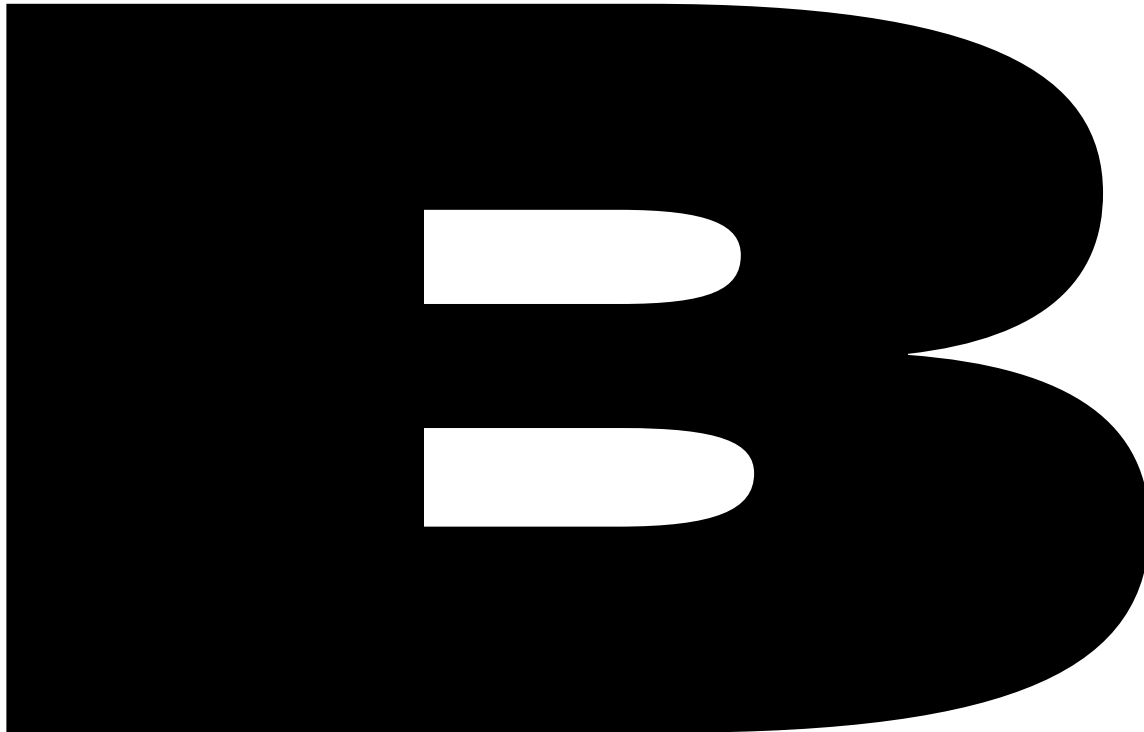




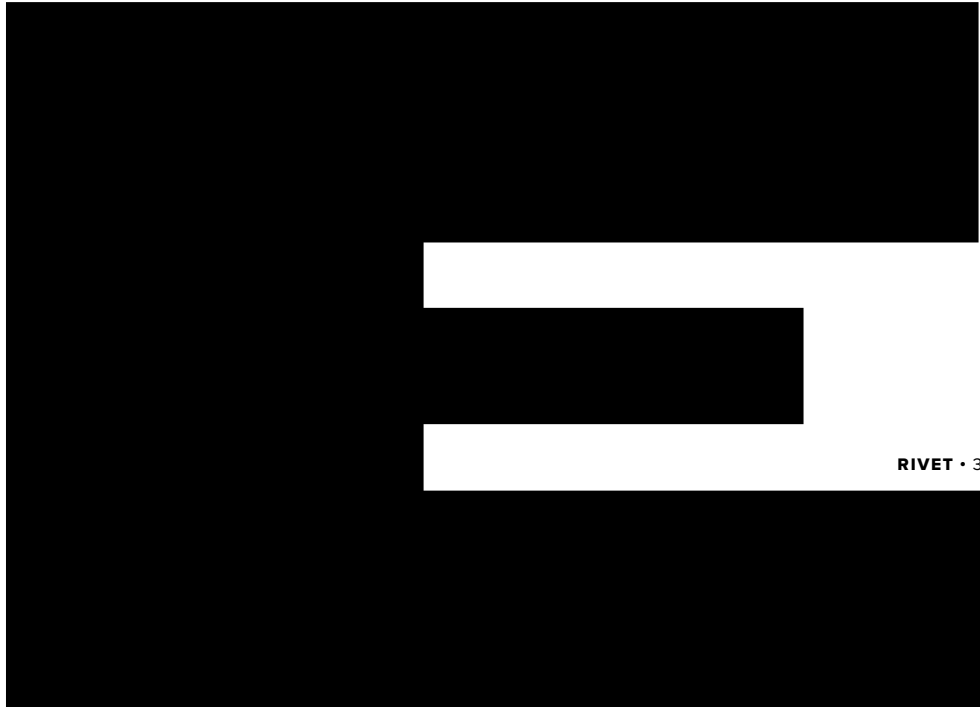


STYLED BY ALEX BADIA

DENIM ANCHORS A NEW FUSION OF RAVE, SKATE AND Y2K FASHION.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE OWEN







◀◀  
PREVIOUS PAGE

HEAVEN X  
BLUMARINE  
BABYDOLL TEE,  
LEVI'S PURPLE JEANS,  
KELSEY RANDALL  
FAUX FUR COAT,  
SAULE NECKLACE,  
MODEL'S BOOTS AND  
EARRINGS (WORN  
THROUGHOUT).

◀  
THIS PAGE

JORDACHE TOP,  
THE SERIES SHORTS,  
CHARLES AND KEITH  
BOOTS, ELSIE  
FRIEDA EARRING.

▶  
THAT PAGE

FROM LEFT: MOTHER  
COATED PANTS,  
MARINE SERRE  
CORSET, J.LINGBERG  
LONG-SLEEVE TOP,  
MODEL'S OWN SOCKS,  
CHARLES AND KEITH  
SANDALS, MIANSAI  
WHITE TENNIS  
BRACELET (WORN  
THROUGHOUT);  
OMIGHTY DRESS,  
MIAOU MESH SHIRT,  
IMPALA SOCKS,  
MODEL'S OWN  
SNEAKERS, JENNIFER  
BEHR TRIPLE STRING  
DIAMOND NECKLACE.







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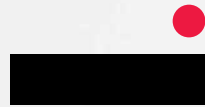
**COMMANDO** PANTS,  
**MIAOU** MESH SHIRT,  
**JULY LI** KNIT TANK,  
**JENNIFER BEHR**  
TIARA, **MARC JACOBS**  
SUNGLASSES.

#### THAT PAGE

FROM LEFT: **ADIDAS**  
VINTAGE JERSEY  
FROM **SCENES NY**,  
**MARINE SERRE** MOON  
MESH TOP, **DOMREBEL**  
DOODLE JEANS,  
**FOUNDRAE** EARRING;  
**OMIGHTY** SKIRT AS  
TUBE TOP, **STUSSY**  
CARDIGAN, **HAIKURE**  
JEANS, **NOTTE**  
EARRING; **REDONE**  
FLOCKED JEANS,  
**MARINE SERRE** TOP,  
**CHARLES AND**  
**KEITH** SANDALS.







THIS PAGE

ALICE AND OLIVIA  
CARGO JEANS,  
MARINE SERRE  
CROP TOP.

THAT PAGE

OMIGHTY TANK  
TOP, VICTORIA  
BECKHAM JEANS,  
DR. MARTENS BOOTS,  
BONBONWHIMS  
ADJUSTABLE FLOWER  
BOMB RING, ENAMEL  
BAND AND LING BLING  
RING (JEWELRY  
WORN THROUGHOUT).







#### ◀ THAT PAGE

FROM LEFT: VINTAGE JERSEY FROM **SCENES NY**, **CLIO PEPIATT** SHEER TOP, **CLOSED** DENIM JEANS, **DR. MARTENS** BOOTS; **MARC JACOBS** DENIM JACKET, VINTAGE UMBRO SHORTS FROM **SCENES NY**; **DSQUARED2** TOP **FILIPPA K** DENIM COAT, **THE SERIES** SHORTS.

#### ▶ THIS PAGE

**AKNVAS** CARDIGAN, **KELSEY RANDALL** TANK, **R13** LEATHER PANTS, **VERSACE** GLASSES, **TORY BURCH** EARRING.

#### • CREW CREDITS

TALENT: **LILLY VAAL** @ THE INDUSTRY, **CARMEL ROGER** @ SUPREME, **CELESTE ANDERSON** @ SUPREME; HAIR: **TAICHI SAITO** @ ART DEPARTMENT; MAKEUP: **ASHLEIGH CIUCCI** @ SEE MANAGEMENT; MAKEUP ASSISTANT: **ALEX PACHECHO**; CASTING: **LUIS CAMPUZANO**; PHOTO ASSISTANTS: **ALLISON BROOKS**, **HECTOR GONZALEZ**; MARKET EDITORS: **EMILY MERCER**, **LUIS CAMPUZANO**, **THOMAS WALLER**; FASHION ASSISTANTS: **KIMBERLY INFANTE**, **ARI STARK**; EDITOR: **ANGELA VELASQUEZ**







# TASTE OF ITALY

**ITALIAN COMPANIES EMBRACE CHANGE WHILE RESPECTING THEIR HERITAGE.** *by Angela Velasquez*

**T**HE “MADE IN ITALY” label is synonymous with quality and design. The country’s denim industry is taking steps to make an addendum, however, adding sustainability and traceability to the list of traits Italian jeans are known for.

Italian companies are scaling sustainable technologies or inventing their own. They are reimaging classic designs with new ingredients and promoting denim to categories outside of apparel. Through city-wide festivals and unique retail touchpoints, mills and brands connect with consumers on a new level to help foster an appreciation for the fabric’s past and excitement for its future.

In short, there’s more to “Made in Italy” than meets the eye. Here, executives from four Italian companies share how their businesses are evolving to meet new market demands while maintaining their unique heritage.





#### TAILOR MADE

For Berto, “Made in Italy” represents respect for the country’s deep textile knowledge, its artisans and being close to the customer. The mill’s “artisanal approach is perfectly linked to the modern industrial system,” said Francesca Polato, Berto marketing and communication manager.

Located in Bovolenta, in the Province of Padua, the mill has been a source for elevated fabrics since 1887. Each season, the family-owned company proposes fibers other than cotton to help enhance the touch, feel and value of fabrics. For fall, that’s cashmere and Tencel, a mix that gives maximum softness and comfort to the wearer. For spring and summer, Berto offers linen, Tencel and silk. It blends these fibers with standard, organic and recycled cotton, which Polato said is traced and cultivated in sustainable ways.

“We give back to the Earth all that we borrow,” she said. “Being a sustainable business is not the end goal but a shared value. Sustainability is a process closely linked to research and innovation. Over the years, [our] production processes have been redesigned and improved to ensure maximum efficiency, in order not to waste resources in every step of the production.”

Using smart dyes that are easy to wash, biological indigo and ecological finishing processes are part of Berto’s effort to balance style, quality and sustainability. New fabrics made with reactive indigo, which does not fade, have been critical to Berto’s expansion outside of apparel. The mill supplies fabrics to footwear and handbag companies, as well as sofa companies.

Indigo looks are key to the sartorial look Berto promotes. Earlier this year, Berto collaborated with Stefano Chiassai, Fendi men’s designer and a consultant for luxury brands, to create a capsule collection that takes the fabric out of its typical five-pocket dimension. Berto denim fabrics were mixed with luxury fabrics like organza, velvet, leather and sustainable fur treated in unexpected ways.

“This project has been very successful and has elevated denim to the next level, proving that when done with care and quality, as we do at Berto, it is an extremely suitable fabric for the sartorial world,” Polato said.

#### FRESH START

When OVS set out to refresh its men’s and women’s denim assortment this fall, the Venice-based apparel retailer turned to one person: Italian denim veteran Adriano Goldschmied.

The “Godfather of Denim,” earned for his work at Diesel, Replay, AG and more, was brought on to deliver fashion-focused designs, unique interpretations of trends and high-quality products geared toward a younger consumer demographic.

The collection launched last month and offers new shapes and volumes for women, including 100 percent cotton cargo, culotte, and wide-leg fits. Selvedge jeans anchor the men’s collection.

The jeans were dyed with Blue Infinity, Pakistani mill Crescent Bahuman’s dye process that allows up to 62 percent water savings compared to conventional dyeing methods using indigo as well as a significant reduction in energy use and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. OVS will trial the dye technology exclusively for the

“**WE GIVE BACK TO THE EARTH ALL THAT WE BORROW.”**  
—FRANCESCA POLATO, BERTO

Italian market this fall and for the Spring/Summer 2024 season.

In the process, Vania Rinaldi, OVS corporate communication director, said Goldschmied’s experience and his culture have enriched the company. “With this partnership, OVS will reach higher levels of experimentation not only in terms of fashion content but especially in sustainability,” she said.

Sustainability plays an increasingly central role in OVS strategy. In 2023, for the third year running, OVS ranked first among the world’s 250 largest fashion brands in the global Fashion Transparency Index.

Blue Infinity complements the other resource-saving steps OVS is taking in its denim production. The retailer, which has more than 1,200 stores in Italy and abroad, produces and sells about six million pairs of jeans each year. The vertically integrated company measures the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and water consumption of its products and procures 100 percent of its cotton from recycled, organic or BCI sources. Since 2019, 100 percent of its denim is made without potassium permanganate.

“The challenge for OVS is to reduce the impact on the planet by focusing on circularity as a key

element, right from the design phase of our garments,” Rinaldi said. “The choice of fibers is decisive in this, increasing the proportion of more sustainable materials compared to conventional ones. The denim project is part of this strategy.”

#### CONTINUED EDUCATION

Though established in 1938 as a mill in Italy’s Parco del Ticino Natural Reserve, Candiani Denim became a multi-hyphenate in the industry dabbling in retail, technology, custom jeans and most recently, its first consumer brand. With Alberto Candiani at the helm, this fall the company introduced Coreva Denim, a jeans brand that uses fabrics featuring Coreva technology.

In 2020, Candiani launched Coreva as a solution to replace synthetic stretch yarns with 100 percent natural, biodegradable and compostable yarn. Brands such as Stella McCartney, Denham, Triarchy, Heron Preston, Jacob Cohen, Closed, Diesel and more have already tested or fully transitioned to this new technology. Likening the innovation to the electric car, Simon Giuliani, Candiani’s global marketing director, said Coreva has redefined the standard for sustainable stretch denim and is challenging the industry with a new research stream.

Coreva Denim — the brand — is a means to funnel knowledge about Coreva to the end consumer. Simon Giuliani, Candiani’s global marketing director, said that the “final goal is to create an awareness in the consumer that Candiani’s B2B clients will be able to leverage when introducing the technology in their collections.”

“Everyone knew that it was possible to create an alternative to fossil-fueled cars, but it took



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one guy to lead the way,” he said. “Alberto has applied our usual ‘modus operandi.’ He isolated the problem of the environmental impact of synthetic elastomers and researched an alternative solution to it. It took time, faith and important investments but ultimately, he reached his goal and to confirm the pioneering significance of this solution Coreva was granted the patent.”

Candiani took the same approach to Graphito, a new graphene-infused fabric developed with Directa Plus in response to an analysis of the “domestic maintenance process” of jeans. Candiani’s research found that people in Europe wash their jeans after having worn it for only 2.5 times, leading to high water and energy consumption. With Graphito, Candiani applies Directa Plus’ G+ Graphene Plus to fabrics, allowing jeans to stay clean longer with antiviral and antibacterial protection.

“After measuring the antimicrobial shield activity in the lab over five days, we found that compared to conventional jeans, a Graphito jean can be worn at least four-times longer before gathering the same amount of bacteria on its surface,” Giuliani said, adding that washing jeans after 10 wears instead of 2.5 results in a 75 percent decrease in water, energy and carbon footprint.

Candiani is proving that denim can have style and substance. “Starting with the assumption that nobody really needs a new jean, we believe that empowering the customer with the knowledge that can finally allow them to consciously choose a new pair of jeans is an effort worth doing,” Giuliani said.

Or, in the case of Candiani Custom, consciously design a new pair of jeans at its micro-factory in

Milan. Opened in 2020, the boutique allows consumers to make bespoke jeans that are cut, packaged, treated and washed on-site by skilled workers. “Retail is a completely different animal than industrial production and as such it’s been an eye-opening experience for us,” Giuliani said.

The immersive experience, which won the 2023 ITMA Sustainability Innovation Award, hits five touch points of sustainable jeans production: overproduction, end of life, social responsibility, transparency and traceability, and climate change impact mitigation. “The micro-factory is a virtuous project that aims to inspire from B2C to B2B,” Giuliani said. “Everyone can experience how we approach these five problems at the micro-factory and take away [solutions] for their own businesses.”

Several brands that Candiani supplies with its fabric have chosen

▲ Candiani Custom invites consumers to design the jeans of their dreams.

▼ GenovaJeans marries fashion and history.



“THE MICRO-FACTORY IS A VIRTUOUS PROJECT THAT AIMS TO INSPIRE FROM B2C TO B2B.”

—SIMON GIULIANI, CANDIANI DENIM

to work with the micro-factory’s supply chain to reshore their productions closer to their markets to reduce their carbon footprint and improve the social responsibility of their supply chain. “Most interesting is the compliance of the micro-factory with all the directives the EU commission is working on outlining an all-encompassing solution for brands,” he added.

FESTIVAL FASHION

Many cities and countries claim jeans as their invention, but since 2021 Genoa has thrown a whole festival to remind the world of Italy’s indigo heritage.

GenovaJeans, which took place this year from Oct. 5-8, offered a 360-degree cultural program built around the port city being a jeans pioneer. In addition to being the home of indigo-dyed linen artwork from the 1500s and 18th-century statues dressed in blue jeans, Genoa transforms its historic medieval city center into an open-air networking space for denim professionals, students and consumers alike.

“It makes sense for us to invest in something with a very strong identity. The birth of jeans in Genoa is a milestone of historical value,” said Anna Orlando, GenovaJeans chief curator.

The event uses history as a springboard to promote innovation and sustainability. “GenovaJeans’ commitment is to promote the culture, art and educational aspect of next-generation jeans, enhancing the whole system through collective art-like exhibitions of heritage brands, new creatives and supply chain companies,” Orlando said.

The event’s program spans guided city and artisan shop tours, denim-themed art exhibitions, film screenings, workshops and, of course, appetivo. There were opportunities for visitors to donate textiles, take part in denim photo shoots, and hear from designers, sustainability experts and denim veterans in a series of talks. The Jeans Lab, conceived by Manuela Arata, president of GenovaJeans promoting committee, brought denim production to the city center. In collaboration with CNA Federmoda, Candiani Denim and Diesel, the lab aims to foster and support the training of new jean makers. “Our goal is to highlight the value of the resources and competencies of the area,” Orlando said.

All hands are in to make the event a success. GenovaJeans is a project by the Municipality of Genoa, promoted with Regione Liguria, realized with the eponymous Promoting Committee, whose members include the Municipality of Genoa, the Genoa Chamber of Commerce and E’T’I. GenovaJeans is supported by ITA–Italian Trade Agency and developed in collaboration with CNA Federmoda and Conartigianto Liguria. The initiative boasts the patronage of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, SMI – Sistema Moda Italia and Milano Unica.

“We believe that the strength lies in sharing values and knowledge with passion,” Orlando said. ●

“THE BIRTH OF JEANS IN GENOA IS A MILESTONE OF HISTORICAL VALUE.”

—ANNA ORLANDO, GENOVAJEANS

AGI UPS SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS



“AGI DENIM'S APPAREL PARK IS A PIONEERING EMBODIMENT OF SUSTAINABLE, EFFICIENT AND INCLUSIVE DENIM MANUFACTURING SETTING NEW STANDARDS.”

ARTISTIC GARMENT Industries (AGI Denim) is making significant strides to increase sustainability and transparency in the denim industry—from partnering with regenerative cotton producers to investing in a sustainable apparel park.

Last month, the Karachi, Pakistan-based B Corp. manufacturer announced its newly inaugurated LEED Platinum-certified Apparel Park—scheduled to be completed by Q2 2024 and fully operational by Q3 2024—which represents a “remarkable” fusion of innovation and sustainability, according to Ahmed Javed, executive director at AGI Denim. With 20,000 units per day

production capacity, the \$30 million facility will operate as a versatile cut-to-pack composite unit, ensuring efficiency and precision in AGI’s manufacturing processes.

Additionally, by incorporating the latest technology, AGI’s Apparel Park introduces modern ventilation systems, automated sewing hanger systems and a 100 percent automated sewing machine setup.

“These innovations will enhance productivity and reduce the margin for human error, ensuring the highest quality in our denim products,” said Javed.

In addition, the company is

investing in worker equality. “Our dedication to diversity and inclusion is proudly reflected in our workforce at the Apparel Park, with 70 percent female employees. This not only underscores our commitment to gender equality, but also brings a diverse range of perspectives and talents to our team.”

For phase 2, the company will invest in a state-of-the-art laundry facility with a capacity of 20 thousand units per day production. Taking its capabilities one step further, AGI is also expanding its sewing capacity by an additional

10 thousand pieces daily, enabling the manufacturer to better serve its customers and continue pushing the boundaries of responsible and sustainable denim manufacturing.

“AGI Denim’s Apparel Park is a pioneering embodiment of sustainable, efficient and inclusive denim manufacturing setting new standards in the industry,” Javed said.

In addition to the apparel park, AGI is working toward increasing the traceability of cotton in Pakistan’s denim industry.

Earlier this year, AGI established a partnership with Good Earth Cotton (GEC), an Australian regenerative cotton producer known for its commitment to environmental safety and sustainable cultivation practices.

“GEC’s cotton serves as a cornerstone in our quest for responsible sourcing,” Javed said. “What sets GEC apart is [its] use of innovative FibreTrace technology.” This technology is purposefully designed to confirm the presence of GEC on a garment by emitting a distinct signal when placed in contact with it. By integrating FibreTrace, AGI has achieved end-to-end traceability of textile fibers, seamlessly guiding them from farm to fashion.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

While the manufacturer is putting in the work for a more sustainable denim industry, success does not come easily. One significant challenge AGI faced was balancing the contrasting demands of fast-fashion and the growing trend of slow-fashion. “We are tasked with finding ways to meet consumer expectations for variety and affordability while also encouraging responsible consumption and longer product life cycles,” Javed said.

While challenges have occurred, AGI Denim is staying ahead of the curve by adopting innovations and technology—including investing in automation, digitalization and sustainable materials to remain competitive while reducing its carbon footprint—that are “crucial” in the denim industry’s evolution.

In navigating these challenges, AGI Denim is dedicated to overcoming obstacles and driving positive change “Sustainability, transparency and innovation are all critical facets of our journey toward a brighter, more sustainable denim industry,” Javed added. ■





# DONE DEAL

▲ Polyester remains a challenge for post-consumer denim to-denim production.

percent post-consumer recycled (PCR) content. They also agreed to set and pursue their own higher goals for incorporating PCR cotton into denim garments, developing roadmaps based on collaboration with their peers.

Roosmarie Ruigrok, coordinator for the Denim Deal, said the three-year initiative yielded “even better” results than expected. “The target was a challenge in the start,” she said, “but by working with the complete supply chain, it seemed not that difficult.”

“The biggest challenge was to get brands on board, as it is a new approach,” she added. By Jan. 1 of this year, 49 signatories, including eight brands and retailers, had pledged their participation, from PVH Europe to Scotch & Soda, Kings of Indigo, Calik Denim, Ereks, Recover, Bossa, Isko and Lenzing.

During 2022, 39 percent of the denim products brought to the Dutch market for sale by signatories of the Denim Deal contained at least 5 percent PCR content, totaling 691,950 pieces — a 13 percent improvement over the year prior, and a 31 percent increase from 2020. Globally, 53 percent of garments made and sold by signatories complied with the 5 percent standard last year, up from just 12 percent three years ago.

Monitoring for jeans produced during the three years also showed forward movement; while just 8 percent of jeans brought to the Dutch market in 2020 contained a minimum of 20 percent PCR content, that number grew to 41 percent by 2022. The global market saw 53 percent of jeans produced by signatories hit a minimum of 20 percent PCR. What’s more, the Denim Deal has “far surpassed” its goal of bringing 3 million pairs of 20-percent-PCR jeans to market, having hit that goal in 2021. The group estimates that 2022 saw the total pairs produced reach more than 5 million.

“A reverse supply chain needs an open mind, courage and willingness not to succeed,” Ruigrok said. Textile take-back and recycling at any scale remains a challenge, and while the Denim Deal saw most brands and retailers set ambitious goals for PCR content at the beginning of the initiative, the experience gave them more perspective on what’s realistic moving forward.

When asked about their goals for 2024 in a survey last year, five of the eight brands said they were shooting for 35 percent to 100 percent PCR content in their denim offerings. Now, the group said that the highest values targeted are 25 percent to 40 percent PCR content, and “most

brands indicated that targets like 20 percent and 25 percent...are already an ambitious challenge.”

“Everyone was helping and trying to do their best — we are very enthusiastic,” Ruigrok added. “It is a very new business model, and it works.” The Denim Deal coordinator said the organization is currently engaged in meetings with other stakeholders “to see how we can evolve this project to a broader network across the globe.” One aspect Ruigrok and peers would like to see addressed is the dumping of unwearable, unsalable textiles in countries around the world, she said.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Besim Ozek, strategy and business development director for Turkish denim manufacturer Bossa, said he believes the Denim Deal could have had a more pronounced impact if its targets were more refined. A focus on promoting market visibility across all parts of the denim value chain, including brands, garment and fabric producers, garment sortation bodies and global governments, could have garnered more participation. Meanwhile, more research and development are needed in developing quality fibers made from post-consumer textiles.

“Post-consumer denim-to-denim production’s biggest challenge is polyester contamination,” he said. Bossa has sufficient capacity for shredding both pre- and post-consumer waste, as well as producing new fibers. However, “the post-consumer process is more costly,” as feedstock is limited compared to pre-consumer waste.

What’s more, producers like Bossa have a responsibility to manage brands’ expectations, and at this juncture, recycled fibers can’t compare to virgin cotton in quality or style. “There might be some differences in the look of the fabric,” Ozek said. “Brands should be informed about it,” he added, along with “some technological limitations for the weight and color.”

Romain Narcy, a partner with Ereks Blue Matters, said he believes the project would have generated a greater impact if it had had a broader reach. “The objective of the Dutch Denim Deal is to revolutionize the denim industry by promoting sustainability and circularity,” he said. “By uniting various parties in the PCR cotton value chain, we strove toward a more eco-conscious future for denim fashion.”

“As someone who has been involved with circularity initiatives within the denim industry since 2016 through organizations like the Denim Alliance, I can say that our



“**A REVERSE SUPPLY CHAIN NEEDS AN OPEN MIND, COURAGE AND WILLINGNESS NOT TO SUCCEED.”**

—ROOSMARIE RUIGROK, DENIM DEAL



first attempt fell short due to a lack of involvement from major brands,” he said. However, the Turkish manufacturer, which was an early signatory of the Denim Deal, “learned valuable lessons” that it plans to apply moving forward including the importance of collaboration.

“Working groups established under this initiative have facilitated unprecedented cooperation between competing brands on issues such as circular design knowledge-sharing or standardization guidelines for PCR cotton use,” Narcy said. The goals established for the three-year period were also the first of their kind, and he believes the pursuit of those commitments has “sparked change throughout our sector.”

Along with participating in the Denim Deal, Narcy said Ereks has taken “significant steps towards achieving our vision.”

“Our aim was not just limited to disseminating information about Denim Deal but also creating awareness among people through speeches, fairs and university workshops on raw materials, chemicals recycling and future possibilities,” he said.

As the Deal concludes and looks to the future, Narcy said he hopes more denim stakeholders from all levels of the value chain, and all geographies, will consider getting involved.

“One of our biggest suggestions is getting the Turkish Textile Exporter Association signed up,” he said. “Lack of collaboration remains a major challenge as manufacturers often limit their productions based on orders, rather than considering consumer preferences or sustainable practices during product-making processes.”

As a part of its work at “breaking the cycle and bringing more sustainability into the fashion industry’s DNA,” Ereks is joining in on efforts that promote circularity. “We’ve ventured out to new projects aimed at developing post-consumer textile recycling solutions which will help us achieve Circular Company status by 2030,” Narcy said.

“We are immensely proud of what we have achieved thus far through collaboration with like-minded brands and individuals who share our vision for sustainable practices in fashion production,” he added. “We welcome new partnerships as well because together, we can make even greater strides toward creating a better world for ourselves and generations yet unborn.”

“It’s clear how much progress has already been made towards realizing more sustainable practices throughout all levels within this important sector.” ●



# WINNER’S CIRCLE

HOW DID JEANS REDESIGN BECOME THE CIRCULAR GUIDELINES BRANDS AND SUPPLIERS AGREE ON? by Jasmin Malik Chua

“

“OUR APPROACH AS A BRAND IS TO TAKE ON BIG, STICKY CHALLENGES AND SHARE OUR LEARNINGS AND PROGRESS ALONG THE WAY TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO JOIN US.”

—CARRIE FREIMAN PARRY, REFORMATION

AS THE WESTERN world’s clothing waste continues to pile up on the desert sands of Atacama in Chile or snake across the riverbanks of Accra in Ghana, it’s easy to dismiss the idea that a circular economy could ever make a dent in fashion, let alone reshape the way it’s made, consumed and disposed of.

Juliet Lennon, fashion lead at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, however, remains a stubborn optimist.

Lennon heads the Jeans Redesign, an initiative that the British nonprofit kicked off in 2019 to create denim products that use safe and recycled or renewable inputs, are manufactured for more frequent reuse, and, in the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s own words, “made to be made again.”

This wasn’t a simple request. As indispensable as jeans are, most are created in a way that would make Mother Nature blanche: think vats sloshing with toxic chemicals, smokestacks belching out thick clouds of greenhouse gases and waterways bubbling with unnatural, almost iridescent hues. Denim was among the sectors fingered for the draining of the Aral Sea by aggressive cotton agriculture. The “silicosis epidemic” that destroyed the lungs of otherwise hale and hearty workers in Turkey? That was pinned on denim, too.

But the organization surmised that jeans could also serve as both an entry point and a delivery system for the linear economy’s larger reckoning, which has been stymied by piecemeal efforts and middling ambitions. So it brought together

a slew of stakeholders — brands, manufacturers, NGOs, academics — and “basically locked them in a room” in London for two days until they pounded out what would later turn into an 18-page set of minimum requirements around durability, traceability, recyclability and material health.

It was difficult but necessary. “Today’s fashion system is broken; we’re taking resources from the ground to make products that are used for a relatively short amount of time and then when they’re no longer wanted or needed, we get rid of them,” Lennon said. “But if we want to create a thriving nature-positive fashion industry, we need to radically transform the way that products are designed, the way they’re made and the way they’re used.”

As the Jeans Redesign enters its fifth year, there are plenty of reasons for cautious hope. The program started with 16 brands, including Gap Inc., H&M Group and Reformation, then expanded to 72 participants. To date, it boasts 100 signatories — including 50 brands, 23 manufacturers and 19 mills — sprawled across 25 countries on five continents.

According to a 2021–2023 update, nearly three-quarters of them, or 72 percent, have made fabric or jeans that met the project’s guidelines, resulting in 1.5 million pairs of redesigned jeans. One in nine brands rejiggered at least 40 percent of their denim portfolio to meet the criteria, with some companies even achieving 100 percent.

“That’s still a tiny fraction of the industry total and we very clearly acknowledged that in the report,” Lennon said. “[But] what it shows is it’s possible. They’ve progressed now beyond this proof of concept.”

But the problem with reworking an iconic product is the number of sacred cows that must be tipped over. There were, for example, some surprisingly fraught discussions about minimizing or even eliminating metal rivets, which, barring workwear that needs to preserve the modesty of miners or cowboys, serve more or less of a decorative function and are a pain for recyclers to remove. Many also raised doubts about rounding up enough organic cotton or the feasibility of sourcing what can broadly be described as recycled content, let alone the more specific post-consumer kind. Changing washing practices proved to be another contentious issue.

“We are talking about very complex laundry processes that attempt to re-create products that are more than 50 years old,” said Jorge Bunchicoff, founder and CEO of Paraguay’s Blue Design America, which bills itself as South America’s only “boutique denim factory.” Making the shift wasn’t as big of an issue for the company, which was already B Corp certified with a LEED-certified factory by the time it signed on with the Jeans Redesign





in 2021. Two of its customers, Frame and Good American, were also signatories, making the decision even more of a no-brainer.

“Up to then we were thinking about chemicals, about making our people better every day and saving water, but since we met the Jeans Redesign project, this has also become part of our DNA,” Bunchicoff said. Not all mills had the same head start, though, which narrowed the options for brands looking to ease the transition, especially in the beginning.

Still, companies quickly found workarounds. In the project’s first two years, more than two-thirds of participants eschewed traditional rivets in favor of screw-on versions or stitched-on reinforcements, even though it wasn’t mandatory. More than half also voluntarily included recycled content in their products, “despite it being said in that room like it was just not going to be possible,” Lennon said.

#### EVOLVING GUIDELINES

When the Jeans Redesign raised the bar for participation in 2021, for instance mandating a minimum of 5 percent recycled content in the textile composition, 83 percent of them succeeded in doing so. Of those, 90 percent exceeded expectations, even opting for significant amounts of post-consumer materials. By the time 2023 rolled around, 100 percent of mill participants met the minimum standard of ZDHC’s wastewater guidelines, including testing and reporting, an uptick from 95 percent in 2021.

Carrie Freiman Parry, senior director of sustainability at Reformation, said that the Los Angeles purveyor wasn’t cowed by the guidelines, instead eyeing them much the way a mountaineer might consider an unconquered summit. “Our approach as a brand is to take on big, sticky challenges and share our learnings and progress along the way to encourage others to join us,” she said.

As the Jeans Redesign guidelines evolved, so too did Reformation’s tack. In 2022, the brand applied all its learnings to create its first fully circular denim collection, which combines cutting-floor waste, climate-positive Good Earth cotton from regenerative sources and FibreTrace traceability technology. In tandem, it launched RefRecycling, a textile-to-textile recycling program that allows customers to trade in their old jeans for store credit.

Reformation couldn’t have done this alone, Parry said. Its circular denim range was brought to life by



WEEKDAY

▲ In 2023, Weekday produced 40 percent of its jeans portfolio according to the Jeans Redesign guidelines.

denim mill Bossa and manufacturer and laundry Strom, both from Turkey. RefRecycling is powered by SuperCircle, a New York-headquartered tech platform and reverse logistics system.

“Designing for circularity requires significant collaboration,” she said, noting the importance of “clear and consistent” communication and process development for sourcing, fiber and trim approval. “Bringing our redesigned jeans to market was a significant cross-functional effort, particularly with our design and product development teams, as well as externally with our suppliers.”

Upping the ante every time is how H&M Group is integrating the Jean Redesign’s criteria. It

began in 2020 with a 100 percent recyclable and biodegradable jacket and pair of jeans, wrought from 20 percent post-consumer waste and 80 percent organic cotton, for its subsidiary Weekday. Fast-forward four years and more than 60 percent of Weekday’s autumn/winter denim assortment will be designed according to the initiative’s requirements.

“Through the years, more brands from the H&M Group have joined the initiative as well, with selected products from H&M ladies’ wear and men’s wear and Monki,” said Sarah Hayes, the company’s business expert for circularity. “Our teams learned a lot along the way, and we might not make the same decisions today. Season by season, we’ve been steadily increasing the number of styles we design using the guidelines.”

In 2021, the world’s second-largest apparel company after Inditex released its own innovative circular design guide, which it dubbed Circulator. Co-created with H&M Group’s product teams, with the support of a range of internal and external experts, it will “support the realization of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s vision of a circular fashion industry,” Hayes said.

#### BIG PICTURE

Indeed, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s ambition has always been to use jeans as a jump-off for larger conversations about fashion design, Lennon said. And if anything, they’re there to inspire people to push further. “We’re seeing national governments and EU institutions referencing the Jeans Redesign guidelines as best practice and they’ve been used to inform the direction of travel and show policymakers that upstream changes can help create those enabling conditions,” she said. “We’ve also seen organizations [that are] not part of the project pick up those guidelines and reference using them because they’re publicly available. And that’s really the hope: for this to have a much broader impact.”

That isn’t to say there aren’t still challenges, though the Jeans Redesign is now clearer-eyed about where solutions exist and where they don’t. Limiting non-synthetic stretch, for one, continues to be a major material innovation hurdle.

“At least for the brands that we produce for, rigid is not a very big section of their business,” said Melissa Anderson, Blue Design America’s president of product development in North America and Europe, as well as a former executive at Frame and Good American. “So it doesn’t

really allow those brands to run large programs because their customer doesn’t navigate to that fabric.”

The scale and sophistication of fiber-to-fiber recycling available is another looming issue. According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, less than 1 percent of clothing castoffs are used to make new ones. Part of the reason is that existing platforms have trouble handling more than a fraction of synthetic inputs without compromising what comes out at the other end. Another is that the removal of trims and other components, even if they’re designed for disassembly, is still enormously labor intensive.

“It has become even more obvious, that there is a need for new technology that can handle blended and stretch fabrics as well as bio-based material alternatives,” Hayes said. “Either of these solutions would help to increase the amount of recycled fibers available and to meet the demand.”

Lennon said that circular fashion can indeed be the norm; the entire sector just needs to rally. Triarchy, to name one example, decided to design out stretch from their jeans entirely. Chloé, for another, has managed to incorporate up to 87 percent post-consumer recycled content into its denim assortment, 90 percent of which has been reworked according to the guidelines.

At the same time, what’s needed now, she said, is systems change because, without it, the progress that’s been made to redesign products will not be fully realized.

“We need to keep redesigning products, absolutely,” Lennon said. “But that’s not enough. We need to redesign the services, the supply chains, the business models and the processes that will deliver those products and keep them in use for as long as possible. And once they’ve been used many, many times, there needs to be an infrastructure for them to be collected, sorted and recycled back to ideally the same garment or another garment again.”

The Jeans Redesign is a work in progress, she said. While it doesn’t have an expiration date, ideas are already forming about what comes next. The idea is to move beyond nibbling at the edges of the problem and create something that will fundamentally change the industry.

“For the next five years, we’re looking at taking a pause just to see what is the right combination of activities that will build on all the great product redesign work, and then moving to redesign the systems they enter,” Lennon said. “So watch this space, more will be coming soon.” ●

# CONE DENIM INVESTS \$13 MILLION INTO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

D

**DENIM’S SUSTAINABILITY** problems require serious solutions, so Cone Denim has set aggressive goals for water reduction, greenhouse gas reduction and sustainable/preferred fibers. Over the past five years, the 132-year-old, U.S.-based denim mill has invested more than \$13 million in new equipment installation and advanced processes to lessen its environmental impact.

“The climb gets steeper the further we go, but it’s exciting to see the progress and to be a driving force in sustainability in this industry,” said Jimmy Summers, chief sustainability officer, Cone Denim.

A significant portion of that investment went to a Zero Liquid Discharge wastewater treatment system located at Cone Denim’s mill in Parras, Mexico. Installed in 2021, this system saves up to 100 million gallons of water annually, while a customized ultrafiltration and reverse osmosis system recycles facility wastewater and treats 11,000 gallons per hour. In fact, 33 percent of Cone Denim’s global denim production is produced with such recycled water.

Additionally, its Jeanologia Ozone finishing process uses 83 percent less water, 39 percent less chemicals and 14 percent less energy than a traditional process to do the same finishing techniques. “We’ve also commissioned a rooftop solar power project for our mill in China that will be completed by the end of 2023,” said Summers, noting it will generate up to 10 megawatt hours of energy a year once in service.

Recycled inputs also got serious attention. With partner brands requesting “up to 30 percent recycled cotton in fabric construction,” Cone Denim established its own supply chain for



“OUR CUSTOMERS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO MORE OPTIONS THAT INCORPORATE MORE CIRCULAR CONTENT, MORE RECYCLED CONTENT, AND MORE SUSTAINABLE FIBERS.”

JIMMY SUMMERS, CHIEF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER

certified recycled cotton in response. Its Mexico mill, for example, can produce up to 50 percent recycled cotton (PIW) in denim fabric with an open-end yarn construction, while its China facility offers up to 100 percent recycled cotton (PIW) in denim fabric constructions. The mill in Jiaxing, China is GRS, RCS and OCS certified.

“Our customers can look forward to more options that incorporate more circular content, more recycled content, and more sustainable fibers into Cone Denim styles that maintain the authenticity and character of classic denim,” said Summers.

#### TRACKING & TRACING TO HIT GOALS

To gather, report and synthesize impact data with confidence, Cone Denim created a sustainability dashboard and set metrics that it reviews monthly with the leadership team. “We’ve taken these large sustainability goals, which can feel nebulous, and broken them down into actionable metrics that are a key part of the business KPIs,” said Summers. “This dashboard is key to being able to meet our larger, aspirational targets.”

Cone Denim’s partnership with Oritain also adds end-to-end traceability across its global manufacturing footprint in China and Mexico. “Through the Oritain program, we have peace of mind that our cotton sourcing traceability and transparency efforts, which rely heavily on documentary evidence, are effective in ensuring that we are sourcing exactly what we intend to source: sustainable and ethically produced cotton.”

Cone Denim’s investments have paid off, and the mill is proud of its achievements, reporting that progress is on pace to meet all three goals. For water conservation, it achieved 21.8 percent reduction against the 2025 goal of 25 percent, largely led by the Zero Liquid Discharge installation, which, as noted, saves 100 million gallons of water annually by recycling the water used in the manufacturing process. At end of 2022, Cone Denim achieved 73.5 percent of its sustainably sourced cotton against its 2025 goal of 80 percent, and met its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 4.2 percent each year through 2022, which puts the mill on track to meet its 2030 target. ■



# NEAR & FAR

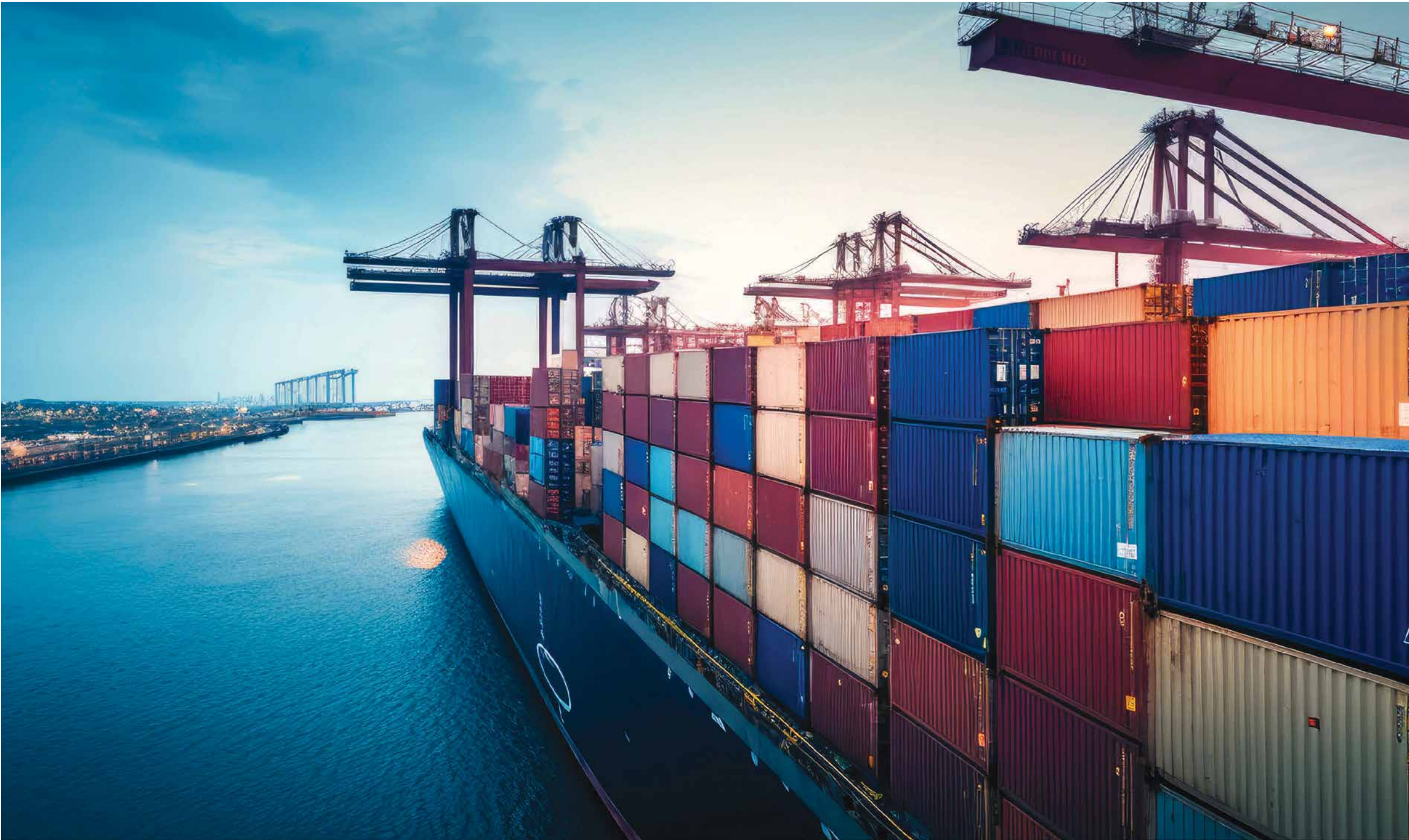
SOURCING COUNTRIES ARE AFFECTED BY SOFT DEMAND FOR JEANS IN THE U.S. by Claire Wilson

**J**EANS EXPORTS TO the U.S. continued their downward trajectory in the first six months of the year, with almost all of the usual suspects showing dramatic declines over the same period last year.

The great differentiator was that some, like Mexico, which was the biggest player with a 17 percent market share valued at \$312.5 million, were only less bad.

According to the Commerce Department's Office of Textile & Apparel (OTEXA), the percentage of decline in exports to the U.S. from Mexico was relatively low, about 15 percent, compared to losses by one-time powerhouses like India which declined 59 percent in women's and men's denim bottoms. For Mexico, this is a far cry from January to June two years ago, when jeans exports to the U.S. jumped by almost 55 percent.

Massive moves toward nearshoring and predictions of a tectonic shift in production to the Western Hemisphere are not yet borne out by the numbers. Nicaragua's exports to the U.S. fell by 84 percent in women's and 31 percent in men's. Guatemala's exports to the U.S. dropped 59 percent in women's denim bottoms and 31percent in men's. Total declines for all six countries



in CAFTA-DR were 54 percent, although individual market shares remain pretty small.

The evolution of nearshoring is also said to be hindered some by high inventories but that's not the case, according to Jon Devine, senior economist for Cotton Incorporated. He notes that a drawdown of physical inventories has been underway for the past year, perhaps slowed by consumers who choose to spend money on experiences like travel and restaurants instead of merchandise. The real culprit, Devine said, is how much more expensive everything is, including money, further putting the kibosh on consumer demand.

17%

Mexico's market share of jeans exports to the U.S.

11%

Pakistan's market share of jeans exports to the U.S.

"One was the rise in inflation and the sharpest increase in interest rates in decades," he said. "Another factor may be the increase in the average garment costs, which set new record highs."

The move to nearshoring however is inevitable, according to Robert Antoshak, consultant with the Switzerland-based Gherzi Textil Organisation. There is a great deal of investment going on in the CAFTA region and that will pay off in spades when the market turns around, he said. People are dumping their traditional Asian sourcing, Antoshak observed, and they want to be closer to home to be less tentative about long term commitments. He recalled

how the domestic industry moved offshore in the '80s and '90s, and that it was a slow process.

"It didn't take four months for that to occur, it probably took 15 years to fully realize," he said. "It takes time for these things to occur anywhere, but the reality is that if you're going to have consistent business it's going to take time to build out."

## ASIA

Despite decreases of 32.5 percent in exports to the U.S., OTEXA said Bangladesh remains strong, with exports valued at \$292 million for a 22 percent market share. Pakistan has half that market share, roughly

11 percent, valued at \$163 million. That was on par with Vietnam, which also has a roughly 11 percent share of the denim bottoms market. It is valued at \$138 million.

Pakistan's losses might be explained by the severe flooding that wiped out 40 percent of its cotton crop for the year, which affected several factories at the time. "Maybe they don't have the materials to make the product," said Nate Herman, senior vice president for policy of the American Apparel and Footwear Association.

The crop will come back, but in his view a business comeback will depend on demand and right now demand is flat. "If demand picks up,

they're going to need capacity and that capacity might not be in Central America or Mexico, so they'll come back to countries like Pakistan and India," he said. "If demand stays flat, it could be harder for Pakistan."

Exports into the U.S. from China, meanwhile, were down by 26 percent, between January and June of this year. China had 10 percent share worth \$139 million.

Elsewhere in Asia, Singapore had gains of 2,160 percent in women's jeans, five times the increases in the men's category, which was up by 429 percent. Hong Kong saw gains of some 528 percent in women's jeans but slipped by 92 percent in men's. South Korea got on the map in the region with a gain of 429 percent in men's.

## AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa may be an alternative to Asia in some measure, and while the numbers are still small some observers see a great deal of potential. Kenya jumped 361 percent the first six months of this year over last and Lesotho was up 275 percent in women's, but down by 14 percent in men's.

Africa also appeals as a future manufacturing center and alternative to Asia because cheap labor makes up for the increased shipping costs, sources said.

## EUROPE

There were some surprising gains in Europe, among smaller producers where pricier goods boosted relative dollar values. Winners registered much higher gains in the men's category: exports to the U.S. from Spain were up 179 percent in the first half of this year over last, France was up 77 percent in the same period, and Italy was up by 26 percent.

In women's jeans, exports to the U.S. from Spain gained 41 percent January to June this year over last, and Italy registered an increase of 19 percent in the same period, while in France, the women's category only saw a two percent increase in dollar value.

Looking ahead, sources said expect more of the same as consumers are paying more to carry credit card debt, and student loan repayments resume. These factors will put much more pressure on household budgets and back-to-school and holiday increases remain a question mark.

According to Herman, jeans sales will be soft over the holidays although changes in habits made for brisker sales in fashion and dressier clothes, taking away sales from the already rather stagnant jeans category. ●

BIGGEST PLAYERS IN JEANS EXPORTS TO U.S. IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS	
MEXICO	\$313
BANGLADESH	\$293.3
PAKISTAN	\$163.8
VIETNAM	\$137.8
CHINA	\$130.5
EGYPT	\$74.6
NICARAGUA	\$51
TURKEY	\$33
KENYA	\$14.9
INDIA	\$14.4



# EYE ON 5 COMPANIES TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR

THERE ARE MANY QUESTIONS SURROUNDING DENIM, FROM BOOSTING FIT TO DECREASING IMPACT. THESE FIVE COMPANIES OFFER UP ANSWERS. *by Lauren Parker*



## 1 HUUE

Can bio-engineering make a better indigo?

Forget water into wine; HUUE's "miracle" is turning microbes into dye. Created by Michelle Zhu, CEO (Inc Female Founder and Forbes 30 Under 30) and Tammy Hsu, CSO (MIT 35 Under 35, Inc Female Founder and Newsweek Disruptor), HUUE's co-founders took a bioengineering approach to provide a non-toxic alternative to indigo dyeing without losing those natural blues consumers crave. HUUE's biological route for developing indigo differs from both petrochemical

and plant-based methods in that "it uses nature's blueprint to make the dye [but] doesn't require acres of plants to do it," said Zhu. "We study the enzymes within the cells of dye plants that convert plant sugars into color, then engineer our microbes to mirror the plant's process of enzymatically converting sugar into dye," she said, adding that due to the dye's "drop-in nature," denim mills can easily substitute HUUE's bio-indigo 1:1 for whatever conventional indigo they are currently using. HUUE's "bio-identical dye molecule" also creates the same dye effects as conventional denim industry requirements, from application to washdown. "We've shown that denim fabric made from our bio-indigo is very comparable to fabric dyed with conventional indigo," said Zhu.

## 2 GINGER + DANDELION

Can jeans let bloat breathe?

Launched in August, Ginger + Dandelion offers the "first-ever bloat-friendly" jeans for the 75 percent of women who experience the disruptive digestive issue for reasons ranging from hormones and long-haul flights to post-surgery and post-pregnancy recovery. The jeans feature "Tummy Technology," a trademarked construction that includes a relaxed contoured waistband that lays flat on the stomach and a panel that smooths and reduces the visibility of bloating while expanding to make room

for the expansion. In bloating wear tests, bloating can cause stomachs to grow up to 3 inches. Tummy Technology is engineered to accommodate comfort during bloating. Bloating may not be a fashionable topic, but founder Nicole Berger has found her audience. "These are [for] women who gave up on wearing jeans or don't like wearing jeans, and we wanted to make sure both fits felt very flattering to them," she said. "They're gaining their confidence back and that's what they lost through this whole process."

## 3 BOLD METRICS

Is it too much to ask to buy jeans online that fit?

AI-powered sizing technology solutions company Bold Metrics says no. "Denim is likely the most returned category in the apparel industry — lack of stretch, so many different fits and inconsistencies between brands all contribute to this," said Jeff Mergy, Bold Metrics vice president of product and strategy. "We see a big opportunity to leverage our unique brand-centric approach to make an impact on denim fit-related returns." From just four to six online survey questions (no imprecise measuring tapes or invasive body scanning required), Bold Metrics' AI sizing technology gathers millions of data points to determine over 50 body measurements. The system even intakes shoe size and other easily known customer data points to deliver tailor-level accurate body measurements. Once the survey data is input, brands can offer product recommendations, and consumers can add them to their cart with confidence they will fit. Bold Metrics' Virtual Tailor application



can also power bespoke denim. Before implementing the Virtual Tailor, "Made in USA" brand Blue Delta Jeans only built products for people they measured by hand at their Oxford, Miss. shop or at sponsored events around the country. "The Virtual Tailor has enabled them to reach any consumer that wants a pair of jeans built for their body and their fit preference," said Mergy.

## 4 DYSTAR

Can dyeing denim be done with less water?

Dyes are crucial to achieve denim's various hues, but traditional indigo dyes spell environmental harm. DyStar, a century-old Singapore-based dye and chemical company, has worked out a solution with its recently launched Eco-Advanced Indigo Dyeing. Compared to standard indigo process, DyStar reduces water usage by up to 90 percent, and uses 30 percent less energy consumption, 85 percent less water effluent and up to 10 percent less indigo during the dye production process. The trick is a pre-treatment with Lava Fix FFA Eco, and an after-fixation

with FFA Eco and neutralization process. This reduces the amount of box washes needed to dye the denim, saving water, energy and effluent. DyStar's Eco-Advanced Indigo Dyeing is applicable in the Indigo traditional dyeing process and can be used with both sulphur dyes and colored denim and is also laser friendly. "At DyStar, we are constantly innovating through our research and development. The introduction of an advanced sustainable indigo dyeing technology will help the denim industry to save valuable natural resources," said Naceur Azraq, global technical manager of DyStar Denim.



## 5 STILL HERE DENIM AND CAFE

How can you make denim's end of life more useful?

One forward-thinking company is turning its post-consumer waste into denim-driven compost for a Guatemalan coffee farm. The result? Coffee with a great back story, and a denim brand that flexes its creative muscles on its path toward helping the planet. Still Here, started in 2018 by husband-

and-wife team Sonia and Maurice Mosseri, references both denim's timeless popularity and its ability to be reused, recycled and repurposed. "To make use of the waste that emanates when 'dirty cotton' is cleaned of its seed and debris, we challenged our mill in Guatemala, The New Denim Project, to upcycle that dirt into fertilizer, which a nearby coffee farm uses on its plants," said Maurice about the coffee-from-jeans process. In its new boutique in New York's downtown Nolita, Still Here displays a big bag of pre-cleaned "dirty cotton" straight from the mill, which serves as a conversation starter for the brand's increasingly curious and engaged consumer. The store also serves free brewed coffee while customers shop, and sells coffee beans by the bag. The cleaned cotton is made into its off-white Bone Denim collections, as well as the newer Cloud Denim, which the brand calls "the softest denim in the world." In addition to new denim collections, what's Still Here's next creative sustainability project? "We're working on mixing blue denim waste with concrete to create vessels for a fragrance brand," said Mosseri. "It's not a huge part of our business, but it's the cool part, and it's exciting and interesting!" ●





SOFI

HUMAN  
**LILA HABERMANN**  
• Artistic Milliners  
VP of design and product development



CAMILLA

HUMAN  
**BARBARA GNUTTI**  
• EFFE-BI SRL  
CEO



BAILEY

HUMAN  
**SERRA MARANGOZGLU**  
• Cross Jeans  
designer



DARLA

HUMAN  
**ROSALBA RUIZ**  
• Redone  
designer



KODA

HUMAN  
**CHRISTINE RUCCI**  
• Godmother NYC Inc.  
founder



LUNA

HUMAN  
**KATE NISHIMURA**  
• Sourcing Journal  
features editor



ISA

HUMAN  
**SHIRLEY ZHENG**  
• Tommy Hilfiger  
denim product developer

BFFs

MEET THE DENIM INDUSTRY'S FURRY BEST FRIENDS BEHIND THE SCENES. *by Angela Velasquez*




KOBE

HUMAN  
**JULIE BESSO**  
• JAG Jeans  
VP of design





BIRDIE

HUMAN  
**EVELYN HANSEN-GILLIS**  
• Mavi  
marketing assistant




HUDSON

HUMAN  
**ALLIX COWAN**  
• Sourcing Journal  
manager of audience development



COSMO

HUMAN  
**TROY STREBE**  
• Paige  
wash director




JULIAN

HUMAN  
**ANGELA VELASQUEZ**  
• Rivet  
executive editor



ROSIE

HUMAN  
**ALISSA FRIEDMAN**  
• Mavi  
senior marketing and PR manager



OREO

HUMAN  
**BEGUM UNSAL**  
• Designer

BLUE CHILL  
Summery Flavor

CALIK DENIM





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