



Cone Denim Expands Selvage Denim Capacity

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Yesterday it was announced that Cone Denim's historic White Oak mill has uncovered a collection of American Draper X3 looms to handle the growing demand for Made in the USA selvage denim. The expansion will increase its production of authentic vintage selvage denim by 25 percent.

Everyone is talking about Made In America right now, what with Imogene & Willie's recent TED talk, the inclusion



of the Made In America section of the new Liberty trade show, and the explosion of small, local denim brands in the premium denim market. At the center of this movement is Cone Denim, famous for their White Oak Plant full of vintage American Draper X3 looms, the supplier for so many denim brands such as Tellason, Raleigh, Imogene & Willie and Public School.

So what could Cone do to keep up with this growing market? They are the only American mill to be weaving on vintage fly shuttle looms from the '40s, and had preserved a number of shuttle looms back in the mid-80s to bring back into working order; but in recent years, demand has outstripped supply – a good problem to have, but still a problem!

“Demand continues to grow for authentic Made in the USA selvage denims and has exceeded the capacity of our current X3 looms,” says Kara Nicholas, Vice President of product development and

marketing. *“With no more looms in storage we began searching; this is an extraordinary find for us,”* says Nicholas.

We caught up with Kara at last week's Kingpins trade show and she was telling us all about the amazing discovery, as the company has been searching the US for the looms for years and eventually found them in a field in South Carolina.

"In some ways finding the looms may have been the easiest part," said Nicholas. *"The restoration of the looms has been tedious and would have been impossible without the expertise of our technicians, many who've worked on the original X3 looms."*

That's what sets White Oak aside from so many other mills; we've been to the plant, and the amazing staff who work on these vintage looms are the true heroes that keep the story alive. Without their expertise the mill would not have been able to restore the looms to their former glory. Nicholas explains, *"Vintage weaving is more art than science. Each loom that is installed gives us an opportunity to continue to master the intricacies of shuttle weaving and transfer that know-how to the next generation."*

Skilled workers carefully tend the looms, which sit on Turn of the Century wooden floors that move in a rhythmic sway to create vintage denim constructions reminiscent of the early 1900s.

"We recognize the unique capabilities of White Oak and the growing demand for Made in America denim fabrics and garments," says Ken Kunberger, President & Chief Operating Officer of Cone Denim and International Textile Group. *"It is exciting to strategically invest in our U.S. manufacturing base and to further the White Oak legacy."*

Way to go Cone! We wish them every luck in installing and nurturing these important looms back to life.