

Buyer Alert: Deadstock Denim, February 28, 2014 by [Eben Nicastro](#)



While selvedge materials have long defined the premium denim market, new deadstock-inspired indigo twills are offering fresh direction. Stemming from the recent trend for incorporating never-used vintage textiles in designer collections, newly woven denims are crisp and pristine like raw selvedges, but are not necessarily made on narrow shuttle looms. Less costly to produce, these materials inspire a narrative for once-forgotten fabric stockpiles of the '60s and '70s.

Recently, Levi's relaunched its Orange Tab line, which was first introduced in 1969 as a more affordable youth-centric alternative to its Red Tab workwear label. Collaborating with its original partner Cone Mills, Levi's moves vintage deadstock looks forward with a collection that not only evokes Americana style, but is also made in the USA.

Clean twill weaves, rigid constructions and bright mid-indigo casts characterize the surplus looks of late '60s and early '70s deadstock denims. Instead of pricier ring-spun yarns, deadstocks call for all-cotton, open-end yarns. Whether yarn-dyed or over-dyed, color is pure, even and solid. And to further strengthen this retro youth-culture trend, fits are lean. Garment details include bar tacks instead of copper rivets and zippers instead of button flies.

Consumer tastes are more sophisticated than they were five years ago, creating mid-premium opportunities for both higher-end labels looking to cash in on the mass market, and major brands and retailers looking to elevate their style status. As with Levi's original Orange Tab line, which addressed the increasing purchasing power of American teenagers in the late 1960s, the deadstock denim theme has mass appeal, keeping costs low while setting new fashion trends.

Images courtesy of Levi's Vintage Clothing

