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A variety of denim, including the metallic and brightly colored jeans pictured here, was shown at Kingpins.

easy. It was the only show devoted to denim. Now, there also is Denim by Première Vision, held twice a year in Paris. When asked if Kingpins would grow, Olah replied, "I would like to see it smaller. Intimacy has advantages." Today, there is a waiting list to get into the show. Next year, it will move to a new location in New York City as well as continue in Los Angeles and Asia.

Cotton ... Stretch ... Blends

When cotton prices went up in 2011, denim markets started to substitute other fibers. According to Cotton Incorporated, Cary, N.C., comments from 225,000 people show that the consumer was not happy with substitutions. American consumers are accustomed to jeans and other apparel made of denim that is woven of cotton. Globally, the average consumer owns seven pairs of jeans. Colombia is the most jeans-loving country, where the average is 8.3 pairs. Japan is the lowest, with 2.7.

Abbey Cook, product trend analyst at Cotton Incorporated, Cary, N.C., commented on some of the trends the company feels will be important. Rose Gold will be the big color. Colored denim has been selling, and so have metallics and foils. Foil coatings will continue as accents, and shine will continue. In Italy, Soko Chimica has developed Underglass, a thermoplastic clear finish applied to denim garments using a pressure treatment.

Cook also mentioned COOLTRANS, an energy-saving printing technique developed by Newtech Textile Technology Development Co. Ltd., Shanghai. COOLTRANS can give denim a dyed or a printed look, and uses less water than other processes. It is a combination of inkjet and roller-jet printing that can be done at room temperature.

Patchwork denim is another direction Cook pointed out. It is done

Denim Rules

Changing lifestyles and fabric innovation make denim the fabric of the moment ... and onward.

By Virginia S. Borland, New York Correspondent

Denim ... is it American? Is it French? Is it the international favorite? The answer to all these questions is YES.

The French claim to denim is its name. Prior to the 17th century, they called the fabric serge de Nîmes after the city in France where it was woven. In America, since the late 18th century, denim has been the workhorse of cowboys and farmers. Today, it is worn everywhere. In France, it is the casual chic way to go to business ... oo la la, expensive jeans with a tailored shirt, tie and blazer jacket. And it is still the comfortable fabric for workers throughout the world.

Serge de Nîmes was woven of wool. In the United States, jeans fabrics were woven of cotton in heavy weights and dyed indigo blue. It is believed the English changed the name "serge de Nîmes" to "denim." Today, add spandex for fit and comfort, Tencel® for luster, polyester for wear, wool for warmth, flax for looks. Dye it in bright colors, or print or embellish it. It can be woven or finished for easy care, soil release, stain

repellency or water repellency. It can be antimicrobial, insect-repelling and a lot more. And, it is available in weights as light as 7 ounces up to 16.

Along with pants, denim is now available in coats, jackets, skirts, dresses, eveningwear, accessories and footwear. It is worn everywhere by men, women and children. Dress it up or down. Denim is the fabric of choice, and its popularity is growing.

Ten-year-old Kingpins

"Denim is integrated into our lifestyle," said Andrew Olah, who heads Olah Inc., founders of the Kingpins show. "There is unlimited potential for denim — you can't put a roof on it. To celebrate our 10th anniversary, we will launch Kingpins in Europe in 2014. We've selected Amsterdam as our location. There is The Jean School there, and the city is vibrant."

With the growth of denim, naturally, there are changes. Which came first, demand or product? According to Olah, it has to do with our casual lifestyle. And starting Kingpins was

with a laser treatment that gives an authentic look. One she mentioned is a herringbone wool patch fused to cotton denim. Cotton Incorporated's Denim Trend Forecast for Autumn/Winter '14-Spring/Summer '15, showing colors and new weaves and finishes, gives many more ideas.

Invista, Wichita, Kan., is noticing a strong upsurge in denim, partly because of the tremendous innovation going into different types of garments and partly because of knitted denim looks. Clean denim is being used for suits; and there are printed denims, and beading and different types of embellishments that are going into dresses. And high stretch, 30-percent or more, with Lycra® and Lycra T-400® is very popular.

Jean Hegedus, global marketing director – Bottoms, mentioned that Invista is working closely with Tencel and Lycra dualFX® to create novel denim fabrics. "There is growth in the young men's market," she said. "They are into lighter-weight skinny jeans."

"Today we see two types of stretch denim: performance and comfort. There is activewear, such as in adidas®, and traditional, as in Levi's®, where COOLMAX® is used. And thermal denim is important. Lighter weights with comfort stretch are another factor," she noted.

Knitted denim has made great inroads: Sometimes, knits look like wovens; and sometimes, woven denim looks knitted. Siddiqsons, Pakistan, is one company making knitted denim fabrics; Texollini Inc., Carson, Calif., is another. And there also is more denim being knitted in the United States.

Sustainability is another important factor. Invista, Hegedus noted, is doing a life-cycle analysis at three plants to reduce energy usage by 20-percent before 2020. "We're ahead. And we're part of the Sustainable Apparel Coalition addressing sustainability on a long-term basis."

Tricia Carey, senior merchandising manager, Business Unit Textile Fibers, at Austria-based Lenzing AG, said: "Tencel has taken off in denim



Turkey-based Bossa Denim & Sportswear exhibited its jeans at Kingpins' January show in New York City.

and chambray at the high end and at the low end of denim markets. It offers softness, strength and sustainability, so it is an important market for Lenzing. It is moving from fashion to core business. New are the multiple effects that can be created such as prints and color. Incoming, there will be more texture with jacquards, nubs, and flecks of color."

The softness of Tencel is especially popular in womenswear with skinny jeans. There is greater acceptance of multi-fiber blends because of what they offer. And sustainability is becoming an increasing factor, Carey said.

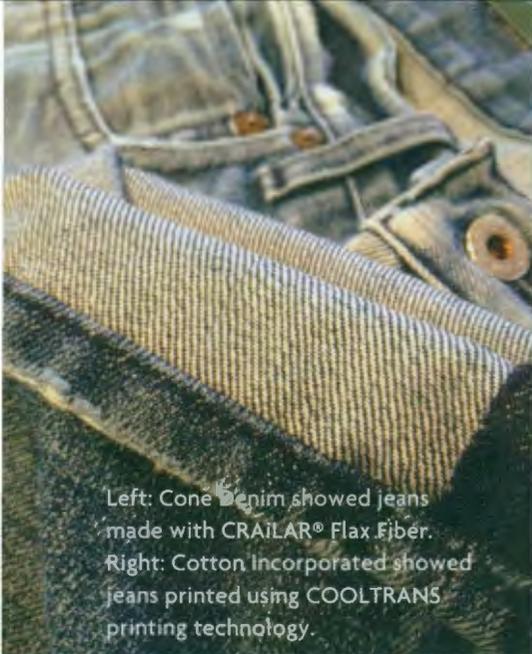
New Denim Woven In The USA

Cone Denim, Greensboro, N.C., part of the International Textile Group, has one of the oldest U.S. mills. Its White Oak plant started weaving denim fabrics more than 100 years ago. Today, the company is global: Along with White Oak, Cone has denim manufacturing in Mexico

and China. "One reason we have expanded is because we are willing to innovate and develop new denim fabrics," said Kara Nicholas, vice president, product development and marketing. "We have focused on areas of performance, comfort, uniqueness and sustainability."

Nicholas noted changing lifestyles in which people are more active and are multitasking, so they are wearing comfortable clothing. "They want fashion and function — something they can dress up or down," she said.

One of Cone's first advances was stretch. Its SGENE® technology offers premium stretch using multiple core yarns. The company reports it provides superior fit and comfort, eliminates baggy knees and maximizes the range of motion and recovery. Another innovation involves using EarthSPUN® yarns that come from recycled colored plastic bottles. The yarns provide sustainability and color. Brown comes from beer bottles, green comes from soda bottles, and black comes from food trays.



Left: Cone Denim showed jeans made with CRAILAR® Flax Fiber. Right: Cotton Incorporated showed jeans printed using COOLTRANS printing technology.



A recent development at Cone is the use of CRAILAR® Flax, a fiber that is grown in the U.S. It provides good drape and hand to fabrics, transports moisture, and is a sustainable fiber. At the moment, Crailar is used in the weft. According to Nicholas, it will be used in the warp as well and will be combined with stretch. Current blends are 90-percent cotton/10-percent Crailar.

Trends Nicholas sees ahead include darker blues, soft-hand denims and stretch. One of the most popular is a cotton/Tencel/rayon blend with SGENE for stretch.

Peter Ross, the new creative director at Denim North America, Columbus, Ga., said denim has always been around as a work cloth. With the advent of premium jeans and other denim apparel, it has really taken off. The three biggest trends he sees at the moment are the color blue-black, power stretch for super-skinny jeans and woven denims with the aesthetics of knitted fabrics. Other looks he mentioned are crosshatch and broken twill weaves, especially for menswear. "Men are finally accepting stretch," he said, "and men and women are getting closer together in their taste levels, especially in the younger menswear markets."

American Denimatrix — comprising Lubbock, Texas-based Plains Cotton Cooperative Association's

American Cotton Growers (ACG) denim manufacturing mill in Littlefield, Texas, and its Denimatrix denim apparel manufacturing plant in Guatemala — has seen a recent upsurge in denim and jeans markets. "Denim and jeans are a great value," said Jack Mathews, vice president of sales and marketing. "They are versatile — they go to work and they go to after-work functions. Denim is suited to the American lifestyle."

According to Mathews, the denim market is returning to its roots. Today, there is more production in the Western Hemisphere. For a long time, menswear fabrics for Levi's and VF Corp. were ACG's main business. Today, the company is selling a greater range of fabric styles and to more customers. "Young men and women are finding that they can spruce up their wardrobes with a new pair of jeans, and for very little money," he said.

"Today, we are selling a greater variety of weights and more stretch," Mathews said. "With stretch, performance and comfort are important factors. A pair of jeans must look like you just put them on when you take them off — no bagginess." About 90 percent of the company's womenswear denim fabrics are stretch. "We're doing 9- and 10-ounce ring-spun," Mathews said. "Fashion jeans for menswear are 12-ounce."

Traceability is unique with Ameri-

can Denimatrix. Through information on hangtags, jeans can be traced back to what farm grew the cotton that went into them. Buyers can check to see if pesticides were used, how much of the water that went into growing cotton came through irrigation, and other factors.

At Kingpins, American Denimatrix introduced 15 new fabrics. About half of them are stretch, and some use new dyes and yarns. "We have a tri-blend of cotton/Lycra/polyester and a lighter weight blending cotton with Tencel," Mathews said.

At the most recent Denim by Première Vision show in Paris, Switzerland-based Clariant presented the Advanced Denim concept that can reduce water consumption by as much as 92 percent and energy consumption up to 30 percent when using the company's new dyes for denim and jeans. Soft colors are attainable using affinity-free, sulfide-free dyes.

The Right Fabric At The Right Time

Denim is the right fabric at the right time, and its market is expanding. As lifestyles change, so does denim — with new weights, fibers, finishing techniques, application treatments and end-uses.

As Olah said, "It is a great industry. I love indigo, I love denim and I love jeans." **TW**