

These Jeans Pay Tribute to More Than a Century of American Denim Expertise

Current/Elliott teamed up with Cone Mills on a special collection.



BY [JONATHAN EVANS](#) JAN 18, 2017

America is the birthplace of the modern blue jean, and—all due credit to Japan—still one of the best on the planet when it comes to denim. That's because of institutions like Greensboro, North Carolina's Cone Denim Mills, which was founded in 1891 and still stands as one of the States' last great denim resources. It's also because of younger brands that make a point of crafting jeans on domestic soil, like L.A.-based label Current/Elliott.

So, to celebrate more than 100 years of American denim tradition, Cone and Current/Elliott decided to team up. C/E men's design director Kirk Von Heifner tapped the mill for high-end fabrics and turned to wash development expert Dick Gaines of Henderson, Kentucky-based Wonderland Projects to help create a unique, vintage-inspired look. The result is [three very special jeans](#), all crafted from selvedge denim and named after one of the cities involved in the collaboration.

We caught up with Von Heifner to talk about why he decided to work on the project, what inspired the washes, and whether picking a favorite jean is like asking a parent to choose a favorite child.

ESQ: Why did you decide to work with Cone on this capsule collection?

Von Heifner: Cone Denim Mills is one of the original denim manufacturers and now the last-standing denim manufacturer in the United States. And to this day it remains one of the most respected in the world. The Cone heritage stems back over 125 years, while the production of their fabric remains somewhat unchanged. They provided the denim uniform to our nation's miners and farmers, protestors of the '60s, stone-washed jeans of the '80s and '90s, and up to the present. We're honored to help celebrate Cone's 125th anniversary, because "made in America" is one of the pillars of Current/Elliott denim, which is all sewn in Los Angeles.

Can you tell me about the inspiration for each of the jeans?

We developed three washes with Dick Gains at Wonderland Concepts using Cone White Oak selvedge denim woven on traditional shuttle looms. The first wash, "Greensboro," is the city in North Carolina where Cone Denim Mills is located.

Inspiration for this wash was pulled from Cone's amazing vintage workwear archives. Some of these articles were found in the attics of farmhouses dating back to the early 1900s. The second, "Henderson," is the city in Kentucky where Dick Gaines' Wonderland Concepts is located. Anyone who is part of the denim industry most likely knows Dick and his development washhouse Wonderland—he's one of the original wash experts and had the creative reins on this wash. Last is the "Los Angeles," named after Current/Elliott's home. Using a comfort stretch selvedge denim, the jean has a slightly more urban look and pulled-in silhouette.

Do you have a personal go-to? Or is that like asking a parent which child is the favorite?

All three washes are very unique, and it would be difficult to choose a favorite. A lot of work was put into each of these jeans, and each has a different fit and story to tell. Just grab a black or white T-shirt and throw on one of these washes and be done with it. A classic look, American-made goods—timeless. I will say, I just ordered a Greensboro and I'm really stoked on it. The jean kind of has a '90s vibe with its tapered fit and lighter destroyed shade.

Photos: CURRENT/ELLIOTT

