

new denim resources

Blue Jean Babies

New denim manufacturers startle the competition by doing more than just the basics.

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THERE IS PLENTY OF COMPETITION IN THE DENIM MARKET. AFTER ALL, MANUFACTURERS CAN COLOR DENIM OR USE DIFFERENT WASHES AND WEIGHTS, but when it comes down to it, they are still offering jeans and shorts that look like everyone else's jeans and shorts.

One way that the newcomers are solving the problem is by offering more than just the basics. In fact, these companies are focusing on fashion. That's right. New denim manufacturers are creating stylish, forward bodies and using denim to interpret them.

And while manufacturers try to keep the price points competitive, buyers are welcoming the new denim duds with open arms. Flirty dresses and fresh top silhouettes keep buyers coming back for more.

ORIGINAL EL PASO JEANS CO.

Owner Sophia Wardy says that although she only introduced her line in June, the response has been overwhelming. Based in El Paso, Texas, the company offers styles for both men and women in 14½ ounce double ring-spun denim. Wardy offers two washes, a weather wash which is a uniform stonewash, and the river wash, a deep indigo wash that has been sandblasted for a soft hand. The company also offers 13½ ounce left-hand twills in women's bottoms in saddle brown, cactus green and gunmetal.

Special details are evident everywhere. From the flathead rivets to the flat side seams to the double-stitched waistbands and hems to the leather label and key chain on each garment, the company takes the time to develop a lasting

garment. Another hidden detail is the custom pocketing that bears a history of the Old West. Bodies vary, but in terms of bottoms, there are four styles. One is a unisex jean, sized 28-38, that features a low-rise waist and button fly. The Slim Straight and Relaxed Boot Cut are two jean styles for women sized 2-16 that feature zip flies. This year's limited edition jean (the company features a new style each year) is called the Traveler (\$58 wholesale) and resembles a cargo jean with concealed zippers that zip the lower legs off, turning the pants into shorts. Next year's version is the Traveler Goes West—a 10-inch back of a cowboy is embroidered on the back of the right thigh.

Since the company only puts out two collections—one in April and one in October—each year, Wardy plans on introducing new items until April. "We chose to simply add new items rather than develop another line in October. This way we'll be on track for April," Wardy explains.

There is an entire collection of Tencel shirts and tops available in unisex sizes 1, 2 and 3 that wholesale for approximately \$48. Offered in 100 percent Tencel, Tencel/rayon blends or Tencel/linen blends, the shirts can be found in colors like sunset, horizon blue and mesquite green. Wardy plans to add brights and pastels for late Spring.

Henleys are popular as are the 100 percent stonewashed cotton shirtings. Wardy also does button-down shirts with top stitching and rivets for a Western flair and a custom black print that is overdyed blue. Overdyed and screen-printed heavyweight Ts wholesale for \$16 while overdyed embroidered sweatshirts with logos and Western motifs wholesale for \$45.

Look for accessories in addition to clothing like baseball hats with leather or suede visors (\$13.50-\$16.50 wholesale) and embroidered saddle bags, featuring a silver clasp, available in black canvas or distressed chocolate leather (\$38 wholesale).

For more information, call (915) 545-1272.



LITTLE LUA's child's version of its adult Empire-waist denim dress.

LITTLE LUA FOR LITTLE PEOPLE

Based on Lua, the women's line of contemporary denim dresses and sportswear, Little Lua For Little People is designed for sizes extra small through large—basically for girls up to 9 years old. Sold in high-end specialty stores and catalogs, the line wholesales for \$20 and is, according to co-owner Dana Wish, a perfect complement to the Lua line.

Little Lua consists of seven pieces, miniatures of garments from its adult counterpart. There is a cropped jacket, a cropped top, full-length overalls and four dress styles. Look for an Empire-waisted dress, a tennis dress, a double-collar dress and an overall dress to be big hits with little girls.

Little Lua as well as Lua uses a no-chemical stonewash and organic thread in its garments. "We're an earth-friendly company," says Wish. Top stitching, organic red stitches and rivets detail every garment in the line for a traditional denim feel. Little Lua also uses 8½ ounce woven antique double ring-spun denim for a soft hand.

"We've seen an amazing response to the Little Lua line," says Wish. "We can't keep up with production. So we have every intention of expanding the line."

For more information, call (213) 749-7931. ■