

FASHION

Gen Z Steers Trends at Denim Première Vision

• The Nineties are still going strong, but experts also attribute a fresh, contemporary shift in the category to the social-media-native generation.

BY KATYA FOREMAN

PARIS – The influence of Generation Z was hard to miss at the recent 10th anniversary edition of Denim Première Vision. The Nineties is still going strong, but experts also attributed a shift to a softer, lighter mood to the social-media-native generation. Directions like delicate, sophisticated, tone-on-tone jacquards in the season's ruling sky blue shade are replacing the gritty vintage look that has been holding the denim category under its sway.

For these youngsters – who are between 11 and their early 20s, and came of age with selfies, Snapchat and YouTube – “Their own new vision of denim is fresh and contemporary,” said Marion Forêt, fashion product manager at Denim Première Vision.

Traffic at the three-day event – held Nov. 14 to 16 at the Paris Event Center – was stable, with around 66 percent of the 2,000 visitors hailing from abroad.

The next edition – set to run May 23 and 24 – will mark a changing of venue to Paris' Parc Floral, skimming off a day.

“To this generation, vintage is the Nineties – an era like the Sixties is pre-historic, it doesn't mean anything. Vintage is Nineties hip-hop, rave parties, the beginning of electronic music, skateboarding baggies, the beginning of Supreme for instance,” said Pascal Montfort, founder of trends marketing agency REC and member of pop group Le Shopping. “Guess is collaborating with A\$AP Rocky; Gap has brought back its iconic 90s archive styles and remixed its ad campaigns from the decade; Goshia Rubchinskiy launched his skate brand,” continued Montfort, adding: “The classic five-pocket 501 look is also something strong for the new generation but they don't connect it to rock 'n' roll, Harley Davidsons or cowboy culture.”

Citing influencers like rapper Young Thug, who in a global video campaign for Calvin Klein for fall 2016 delivered the line “You can be a gangsta with a dress or you can be a gangsta with baggy pants,” the genderless trend is also bubbling, Montfort confirmed. “They came from unisex to what we call post-gender; you can be a rough, straight boy and wear a short short, or even denim dress. It's just the beginning.”

Key trends for the spring 2019 season included soft hands in linen and Lyocell blends, balloon cuts, transparency – like the use of devore denim, denim lace and laser perforations – and shine, incorporating mercerization and technicolor finishes including hologram foil effects and mélange yarns mixed in the weft.

Nate Freeman, senior men's designer Joe's Jeans, said it felt like the heavier weights with Lyocell and Tencel blends were trending. “This gave the fabrics a classic denim look but with a modern softer

hand. Also, jacquard and dobby weaves were very prevalent. So many more mills were expressing sustainability, too, which was very nice to see and it also explains the use of Tencel and Lyocell blends,” he said, citing among standout mills Santanderina, for its “beautiful” twills and great prices; Mexico's Global Denim – “they had most fabric constructions in a variety of shades” – and Toray's Miracle Air line: “Their PFD with a neon weft was also really cool and forward-looking.”

“The vintage look is out, now it's all about subtle, flat washes that are quite bright and fresh. I also found the metallic, phosphorescent trend quite interesting; the jacquards and the interesting square weaves that are back,” said Patrick Porto, category manager for men's and women's denim at Esprit.

Visiting the show in a miniskirt, lace tights and matching camo jacket, Robin Life, founder of amaninaskirt.com – “a blog on my journey with transvestism, and a comment on men's fashion, which I have always found to be quite dull and one-dimensional” – was shopping for his just-launched clothing brand. “I'm not a fashion industry person, I'm a carpenter and builder who two years ago became honest about my transvestism; I just want to wear clothes like women wear,” he said.

Highlights from an exhibition of eight avant-garde designers selected to present silhouettes made in collaboration with their pick of the show's exhibitors included a look mixing folk and workwear references by New York's Ampersand Heart; a woven denim ath-leisure outfit by L.A.'s Knorts, and a boho-chic silhouette combining bleaching, fraying and knitting techniques by London's Hanna Brabon.

The show also introduced a new space dedicated to small quantities – the SMQ Corner – while off-site, taking over the rue du Vertbois in Paris' Marais district, was the first edition of the salon's ‘Denim Pop-up Street,’ presenting brands including Billy Jackets, Kiliwatch, Atelier Tuffery and Léon Block.

Lina Horner, senior designer at Tommy Hilfger Denim USA, said she'd enjoyed the show's trend area, “on-point” seminars and the pop-up event but cautioned that “many vendors that Tommy Hilfger USA works with” chose to attend Kingpins Amsterdam over Denim Première Vision this year, and will attend Kingpins New York at the end of this month. “It raises interesting questions on what this show can and will be going forward. Is Paris a relevant center for denim?” she said. Among the season's trends, she mentioned the heavy-looking textures like twills and cross-hatch – “so much of the ‘authentic,’ salt-pepper, orange-peel looks” – as well as the jacquard, tone-on-tone blocking and metallics and different coatings.

“It was all incredibly lightweight. Achieving those old-school looks, but with stretch and lightweight comfort...” she added citing the use of stretch and Tencel, and seeing lot's of drape, stretch and softness in women's denim.

“Stretch has been a thing for a while, and our legging jean always does well, but with all the lightweight, soft fabrics



Technicolor finish with hologram foil effect by Pakistan's Rajby Industries.

I loved seeing silhouettes with lots of volume. Peasant skirts, dolman-sleeved blouses, high-waisted wide-legged pants, it was exciting to see this in denim,” she said. Not forgetting the “incredibly relevant” innovations in sustainability on show. Post-consumer waste denim, for instance, was a hot topic.

Historically a garment producer, Pakistan's Soorty, which has been producing denim fabric since a decade and started incorporating sustainable processes five years ago, has installed recycling units used to produce yarn from recycled garments that are then used in their fabrics. With some three million garments produced monthly, the company counts two denim mills in Pakistan, one garment unit in Bangladesh, a design office in Amsterdam and a washing laundry in Turkey.

Levent Korkmazwer, the firm's marketing manager and product developer denim, said brands like Zara and H&M are putting heavy pressure on mills to make “everything sustainable.” “It's coming from the end-user, we have sustainable methods in place for every process except for one, mercerization, where we use caustic soda to make the fabric flatter, softer and shinier, but we are working on an alternative, hopefully for the next collection,” he said.

Innovations launched at the show included Micro Modal, using a fiber “100 times finer than human hair, to give a premium softness to the fabric,” and a sustainable 14-oz. black denim dubbed Black Forever. “When you buy black denim, it fades and turns gray, but this fabric, even if you do a bleach wash, will stay black,” said Korkmazwer. The company had also expanded its collection based on a zero water waste concept to include black, bright blue and gray shades. “In regular

denim processing, we use 15 liters per each meter of fabric,” he said.

“Circular economy will be the new main focus, a lot of brands are picking up on post-consumer recycling....People like us will collect used jeans from NGOs and brands and then we will shred it, take the fiber and mix it with new fiber,” said Murat Yildirim, marketing manager at India's leading denim producer, Arvind Mills, which showcased “an entire gambit” of sustainable products covering “fiber sustainability, dye-chemical sustainability and socio-economic sustainability.”

Spain's Jeanologia used gaming-style virtual reality glasses to showcase what it billed as the first jeans finishing plant that guarantees zero waste and pollution, dubbed 5.Zero, harnessing a combination of four of the company's laser technologies: laser, ozone, eflow and H2 zero.

Founded in 1993, the company, which specializes in sustainable finishing techniques, is present in 60 countries with around 600 customers around the world; mainly laundries but also brands like Levi's, Replay, Gap and H&M.

“A lot of the brands have introduced sustainable collections, but the objective is to be entirely sustainable and we are working with them to achieve this,” said Carmen Silla, the firm's marketing and communication manager. “I think, after 20 years of working to make things more sustainable and efficient, we are [finally witnessing] the transformation of the industry, and the consumers are pushing for it as well.”

Full-year revenues at the company are expected to total around 61 million euros, up from around 44 million euros in 2016, according to company statement, riding the momentum of an industry looking to clean up its act.