

Cordura Introduces New Denim Fabric

The company's characteristic durability enhances America's favorite material

BY JILL MURPHY

Since its European launch, Cordura denim fabric has had the apparel market talking. The durable material has tested at four times the abrasion resistance of 100 percent cotton denim, yet it still retains the comfortable feel of its predecessor. This presents promising possibilities for its use in outdoor and lifestyle apparel. At the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market show, America gets its first look at the innovative new fabric.

TESTED DURABILITY

Cordura's denim was designed to provide the authentic look and feel of 100 percent cotton denim, but with a specific blend of fibers to substantially increase durability. The product is based on an 88 percent cotton, 12 percent Invista T420 nylon 6.6 fiber. Invista's 6.6 fiber, produced and engineered specifically to be blended with cotton, is the same used in the Cordura NYCO fabrics. Global Brand Manager and Marketing Director Cindy McNaull explains, "Cordura NYCO fabrics are used by militaries around the world because they're durable and tough enough to function in many different environments, but also incredibly comfortable. We took inspiration from that part of our business and considered bringing those benefits to other applications where people needed durable, comfortable garments. That's where we ended up with the Cordura denim."

This durable material has four times the abrasion resistance of equivalent weight 100 percent cotton denim, based on the Martindale abrasion testing. The testing itself, using a 12 kilopascal (KPa) weight with woolen abradant, was more rigorous than the apparel industry's standard 9 KPa weight test. According to McNaull, the company sees the harsher test as requisite for a material that will be marketed for performance, especially because abrasion resistance is Cordura's key test in deciding whether a product is durable. "Though we also look at tensile and tear," she says, "our experience tells us that a fabric is much more likely to fail from repeated abrasion against a rough surface."

In addition to its superior abrasion resistance, Cordura's denim has been shown to



Cindy McNaull, Cordura Global Brand Manager and Marketing Director

hold up to frequent wear without losing its color. "When we've tested it against the European industrial laundry standards, which is 100 washes at 75°C (165°F) wash temperature, we also saw much higher color retention," explains European Brand Manager Susannah Rayfield. This property is especially valuable for the fabric's use in the outdoor industry. When outdoor activities get rough and messy, apparel must be able to stand up to not only wear, but frequent washing.

A CROSSOVER FABRIC

Invista began developing its denim two years ago, with the goal of producing a more durable fabric. The company believes that, like its 100 percent cotton predecessor, what started as workwear will evolve into an everyday product. "What we see is a carryover," notes McNaull. "We officially started the launch with workwear, and it was a very quick transition over to fashion—even quicker than we may have expected."

Cordura has already seen interest from the skateboarding and ready-to-wear markets, and it is ready to explore the possibilities of the denim's use in outdoor and lifestyle apparel. McNaull comments, "It's a natural progression from workwear into ready-to-wear that can be used for hiking and outdoor applications."



THE APPEAL OF DURABLE DENIM

The Cordura denim range presents exciting possibilities for the lifestyle outdoor market. Those possibilities begin with the high value of durability in this economic climate. "People are willing to spend a little bit more if the product will last a little bit longer," says McNaull. "We are seeing consumers who are less luxury-oriented and more value-oriented."

With its strength and color retention, the material looks to be versatile not only in use, but also in styling. Inspired by fabrics seen at the Denim by Première Vision show in Paris, the Cordura team is especially interested in seeing how their product might react to distressing. As Rayfield points out, "There could be potential to process Cordura denim in a harsher way to get a broader range of different effects." McNall agrees, explaining that, "Our theory is that because it is more durable, it might lend itself to a broader spectrum of processing, including stonewashing, abrasion, rips and tears. The fabric would look worn without deteriorating rapidly." Techniques for distressing the material are only the first of many styling prospects to be explored.

ANOTHER DURABLE FABRIC

With this introduction of

CORDURA
BRAND
F A B R I C

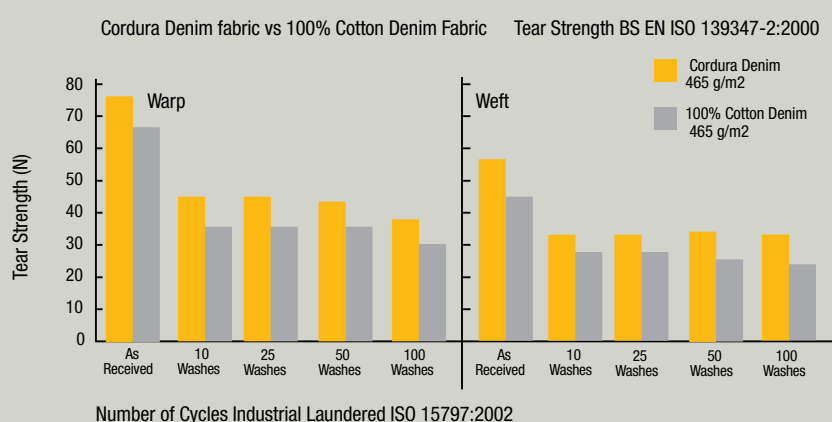
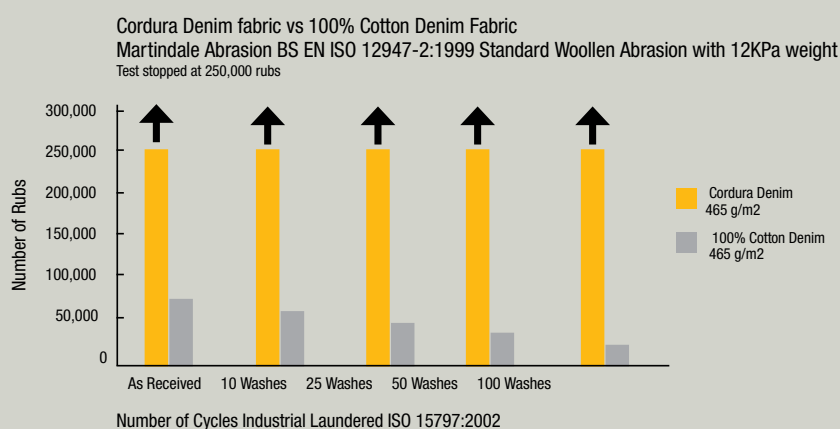
a groundbreaking new denim fabric, Invista hopes to change not only the way the outdoor apparel market looks at denim, but at the Cordura brand. "In the early days, our filament-based fabric was known for its use in backpacks and luggage," says McNaull. "What we're hoping to introduce people to, if they're not already aware, is the versatility of our product offering. Through our material, we demonstrate that you don't have to sacrifice comfort for durability."

The Cordura brand is presenting itself more decidedly than ever as a fabric brand. "Over the past 2 or 3 years, our range has grown enormously, but they all still have a measurable durability story," comments McNaull. Innovation continues to be the driving factor, but it is always grounded in three values: durability, versatility, reliability. With these qualities behind its design, the new Cordura denim fabric invites a wealth of possibilities within the outdoor industry.



Susannah Rayfield, European Brand and Sales Manager

> Cordura Denim Performance <



••• Cordura Branding •••

Cordura recently launched the "Durable Fabrics for Durable People" marketing program, including an interactive website, communication initiatives, and new point-of-sale branding. The campaign revolves around the tagline, "As long as the world is full of durable people, we'll keep making durable fabrics."

The new website was designed to make it easier for end-users, retailers and companies to find out where to find genuine Cordura brand fabric. It includes the "Durability Experience" section, which illustrates Cordura fabric in action. Users get a 360-degree view of seven different characters outfitted in Cordura from head to toe, with pop-ups offering additional product details and links. The site also includes the interactive "mill finder," designed to help customers locate where they may be able to source Invista qualified Cordura fabrics across the globe.

In synch with the new message, the company redesigned sewing labels and hang-tags. The point-of-sale branding changes were orchestrated to enhance and enforce brand value, featuring the tagline, "durable, versatile, reliable."