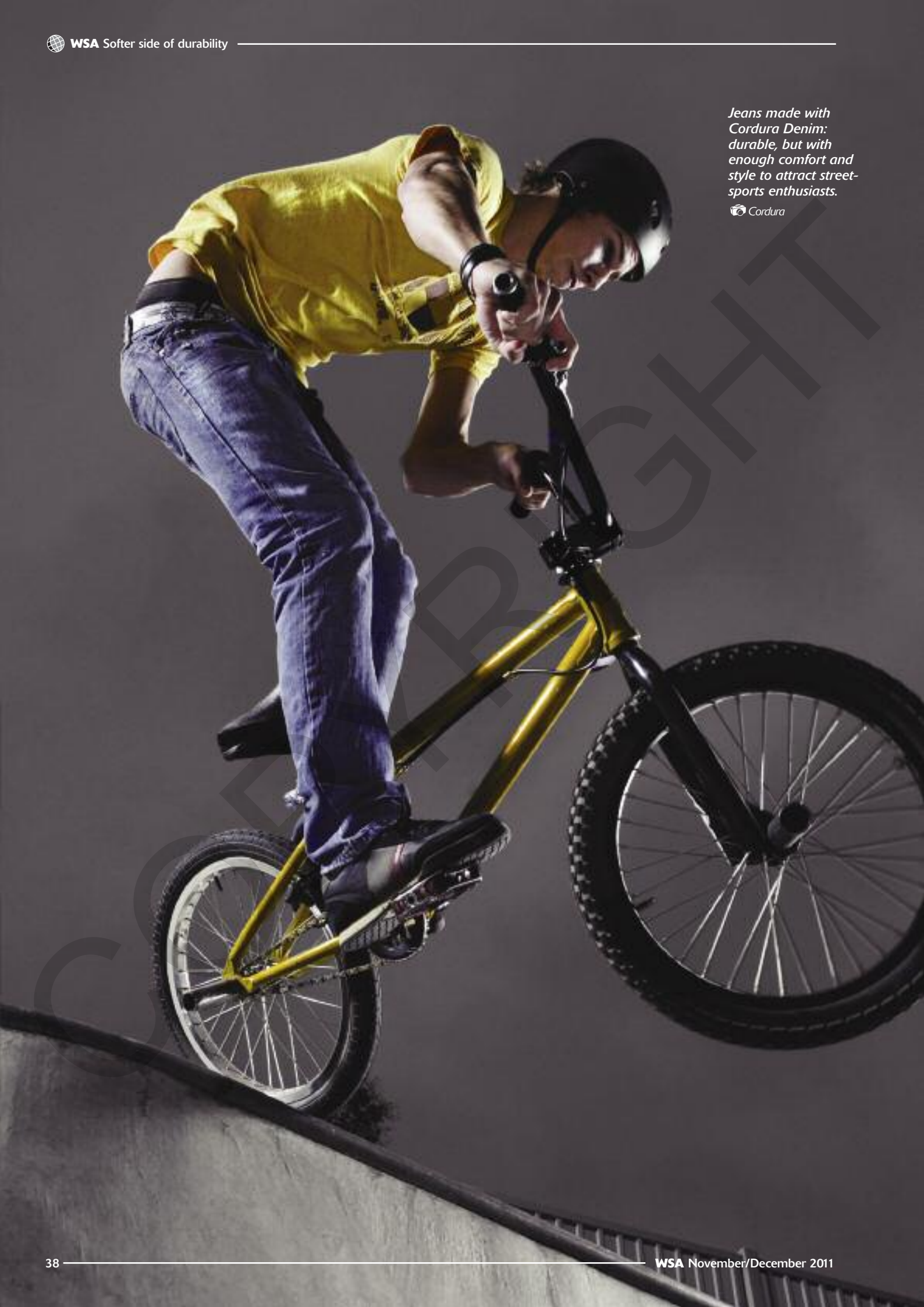


Jeans made with Cordura Denim: durable, but with enough comfort and style to attract street-sports enthusiasts.

Cordura

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A new collection of fabrics that Invista has launched under its Cordura brand have, the company claims, a look and feel similar to those of natural fibres, making them suitable for ready-to-wear applications.

Softer side of durability

Invista's Cordura brand fabrics, known for their durability, have become available in new constructions that the company claims look and feel much more like natural fibre-based fabrics, while still offering high levels of abrasion, tensile and tear strength. It envisages a wide array of end-uses for the new fabrics, the Apparel Collection, including ready-to-wear applications for performance activewear, technical outerwear and shell-weight fabrics.

"When you say Cordura fabrics, you think durability and all the tough end-uses we are known for, such as luggage, packs, and gear," says Cindy McNaull, global Cordura brand and marketing director. "But now, the portfolio has a full line of fabrics for apparel. We're excited to showcase 'the softer side of durability' and demonstrate with our fabric offerings that you don't have to sacrifice comfort for long-lasting performance."

Ms McNaull points out that Cordura fabrics have gone into apparel for almost 50 years (the name first appeared in 1929), with early applications in camouflage clothing for the military in a 50-50 combination of nylon and cotton, which she says has been the bedrock of Cordura. Later iterations had a higher cotton content and were used in T-shirts, with the military the first to sign up to wear them. This is expanding way beyond combat gear now; with the new collection, applications will include knit and woven fabrics for casual wear, jeans, other trousers, T-shirts, shorts, jackets, rainwear, baselayers, hiking pants and shells.

The fabrics that Invista qualifies for the Cordura brand name have always come in a range of constructions, weights and textures. For example, there are ultra lightweight fabrics in 30, 70 or 100 denier and, at the other end of the spectrum, heavyweight ballistic fabrics of up to 1,050 denier, with lots of options in between. Invista makes and sells its nylon fibres, leaving its licensed mill network to combine them with cotton in a variety of proportions to make fabric. It works closely with the mills and guards the Cordura name jealously.



Invista has branded a range of Cordura fabrics as its new Apparel Collection because they are light, soft and comfortable enough to go into garments.

Cordura

Ready for work

It is some of these options that have now been grouped together to form the new Apparel Collection, nylon-cotton blends, performance knits, traditional wovens and ultralights, as well as something new, Cordura Naturalle, a fabric assortment that provides a matte appearance similar, Invista claims, to the look of cotton. Another name that features prominently in the collection is Cordura Denim.

Interestingly, some of the first enquiries about using the collection in ready-to-wear have come from manufacturers of workwear, long-time fans of the Cordura blends of nylon and cotton for heavy-duty products. Brands including Mascot from Denmark, Snickers from Sweden and Klopman from Germany have been among the first to express an interest in the softer side. The workwear companies want durable fabrics, but, responding to demands from their customers, they also want something more comfortable for the clothes they make.



Cindy McNaull, global Cordura brand and marketing director, believes consumer want to buy smarter fast fashion.

Cordura

Durable is sustainable

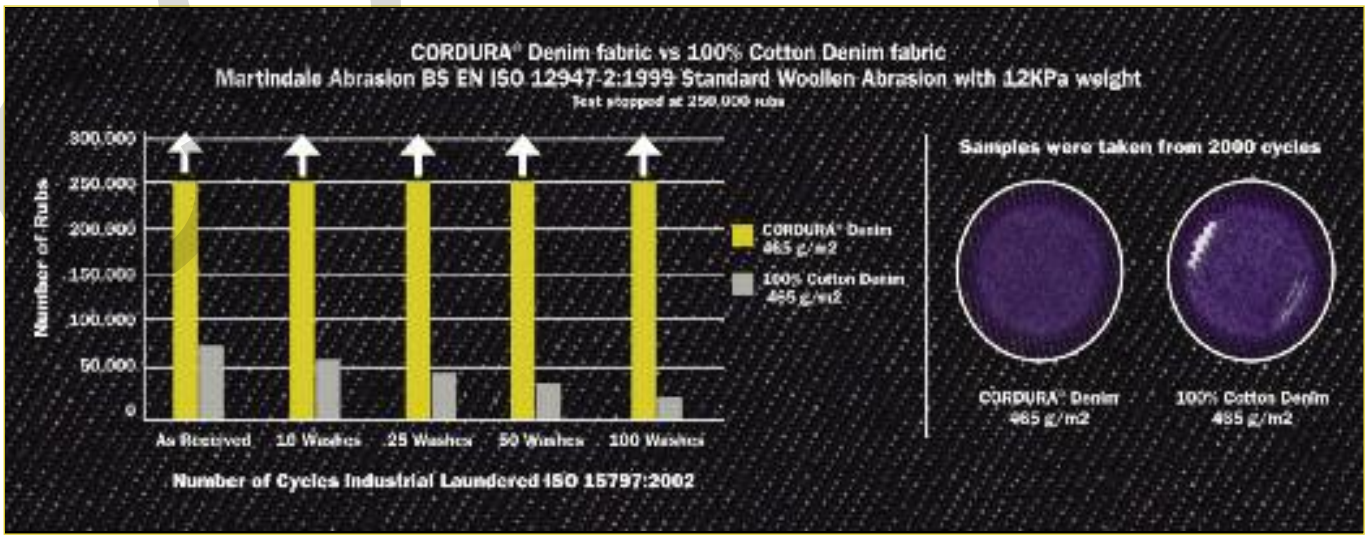
Following appearances by the Cordura team at events dedicated to denim, including Denim by Première Vision in Paris, requests also came in for denim-style fabrics for ready to wear, resulting in the Cordura Denim component of the new range. Cindy McNaull's explanation for all the interest is this: "People want to buy smarter fast fashion. And there's also the question of sustainability. Sustainability begins with products that last. We're trying to take the durability premise and expand the user-base." The company has prepared figures to help it make this argument for its new denim-style fabric. It was the well known and widely used Martindale abrasion test, pitting samples of Cordura Denim against traditional 100% cotton denim fabrics in a standard weight, 465 grammes per square-metre. The test compared the number of rubs the fabrics could endure when new, as well as after 10, 25, 50 and 100 wash-cycles. According to the results that Invista has made public, Cordura Denim withstood between four times and ten times the number of rubs that ordinary denim could endure, depending on the number of wash-cycles the samples went through, and showed little or no degradation itself, even after 100 washes.

Innovation and performance stories

Garments made from the Apparel Collection fabrics have now begun to hit stores, with prominent fashion brands, including Timberland, among the early adopters. Some of the denims have a bit of stretch in them, giving the resulting garments an appeal among street-sport enthusiasts such as skateboarders and BMX riders, and the campaign is going well. Cindy McNaull comments: "We don't do things for the sake of it, but with a purpose. We may not always be the quickest, but we do things the right way. We listen intently to our customers and we know that what retailers are asking apparel brands to deliver is innovation and performance stories, with sustainability added on."

Additional applications, including waterproof and breathable garments, look certain to follow the initial market response to the Apparel Collection. Ms McNaull says that at the end of the Outdoor Retailer Summer Market exhibition in Salt Lake City in August 2011 brands in the outdoor sector had asked for "more meetings than ever", and that she had 20 pages filled with details of the companies who wanted to receive fabric samples in the weeks following the event.

It looks as though the market likes Cordura's softer side.



A graph showing the results in a Martindale test of Cordura Denim and traditional 100% cotton denim.

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