



## What is Selvage Denim?

Only the finest jeans are made of selvage denim.

Selvage denim is made on old-style shuttle looms rather than modern, projectile looms. In simple terms, this means during the fabric weaving process, the cross-thread goes back and forth as one continuous thread, rather than as individual threads for each cross weave. As a result, selvage denim has a clean edge. Modern, single thread weaving has a frayed edge.

Traditionally the fabric made on shuttle looms was so narrow, a pair of jeans required approximately 3 yards of fabric. To maximize yield, jean-makers used the fabric all the way to the selvage edge with a straight outside seam. When the cuff is turned up, the two selvage edges, where the denim is stitched together, can be seen (it's also seen on the inside of the coin pocket). The selvage edge is usually stitched with a colored thread and on vintage jeans, you'll find red, white, green, brown or yellow thread running down the edge, the most common being red. This distinction was made by fabric mills to differentiate between fabrics. True vintage jeans can be recognized the selvage edge.

Japanese selvage denim is the finest and most rare on the market today.

Historically, American denim was considered superior. In time, however, because shuttle looms only made 30-inch wide cloth, they became obsolete. In the 1950's, when American jean manufacturers saw demand for their product skyrocket, they searched for faster, less expensive methods for producing denim fabric. They mothballed the traditional shuttle-type looms in favor of modern, projectile looms which could make a 60-inch wide fabric (or wider) for much less money. The fabric produced, however, was lighter and less durable. Manufacturers also replaced real indigo dye with synthetic substitutes and began pre-washing all fabric in order to control shrink and twist. The byproduct of these changes was an article lacking character with no potential for greatness.

Three decades later, select Japanese companies saw a market for traditionally made denim. They bought up most of the old, American shuttle looms and began crafting denim for small, local clothing companies. When the "Premium Denim" craze began, a few forward thinking companies introduced jeans made of selvage denim dyed with real indigo.

Quality denim is indigo dyed using loop dyeing machines which, like the looms, are rare and ancient machines. They feed a rope of cotton yarn through vats of indigo dye and then up to the roof of the factory to allow the indigo to oxidize before the 'rope' goes back down into the next vat. Some brands use up to 30 dips, creating a rich, deep indigo blue color with excellent character.

As for the raw materials, the best manufacturers use 100% cotton threads, which though they break more easily during the sewing process, are more authentic. Other original production techniques are reproduced at every stage, including the chain stitch at the leg opening which gives a thick stitch-line at the hem. This stitching requires a special machine, which again, has not been produced for the past 40 years. Whenever possible, superior denim manufacturers use Union Special brand machines, the "Rolls Royce" of American sewing machines from the fifties.

The immense care put into the detailing of this unique denim fabric, from the raw material to the weaving, dyeing and stitching, creates a jean of exceptional quality. Denim produced on shuttle looms is naturally irregular and these irregularities are enhanced as the jeans age, causing every pair to develop a unique and beautiful pattern as it fades. The deep blue color and the way the jeans fade can only be achieved by using the loop dyeing system. These details give the jeans authenticity and give you the knowledge that you own an article of the highest quality. Like fine wood, jeans made of selvage denim will only become more beautiful with age and wear, acquiring a patina unique to the wearer that is impossible to reproduce artificially. Each pair transforms in to a one of a kind piece. Owning and wearing jeans made of selvage denim is a very personal experience that no other item of clothing can give you.