



**"WHY NOT FOLLOW
YOUR JEANS FROM DIRT
TO DENIM THE WAY
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GROWN PRODUCE IN
A RESTAURANT?"**

Michael Woolsey

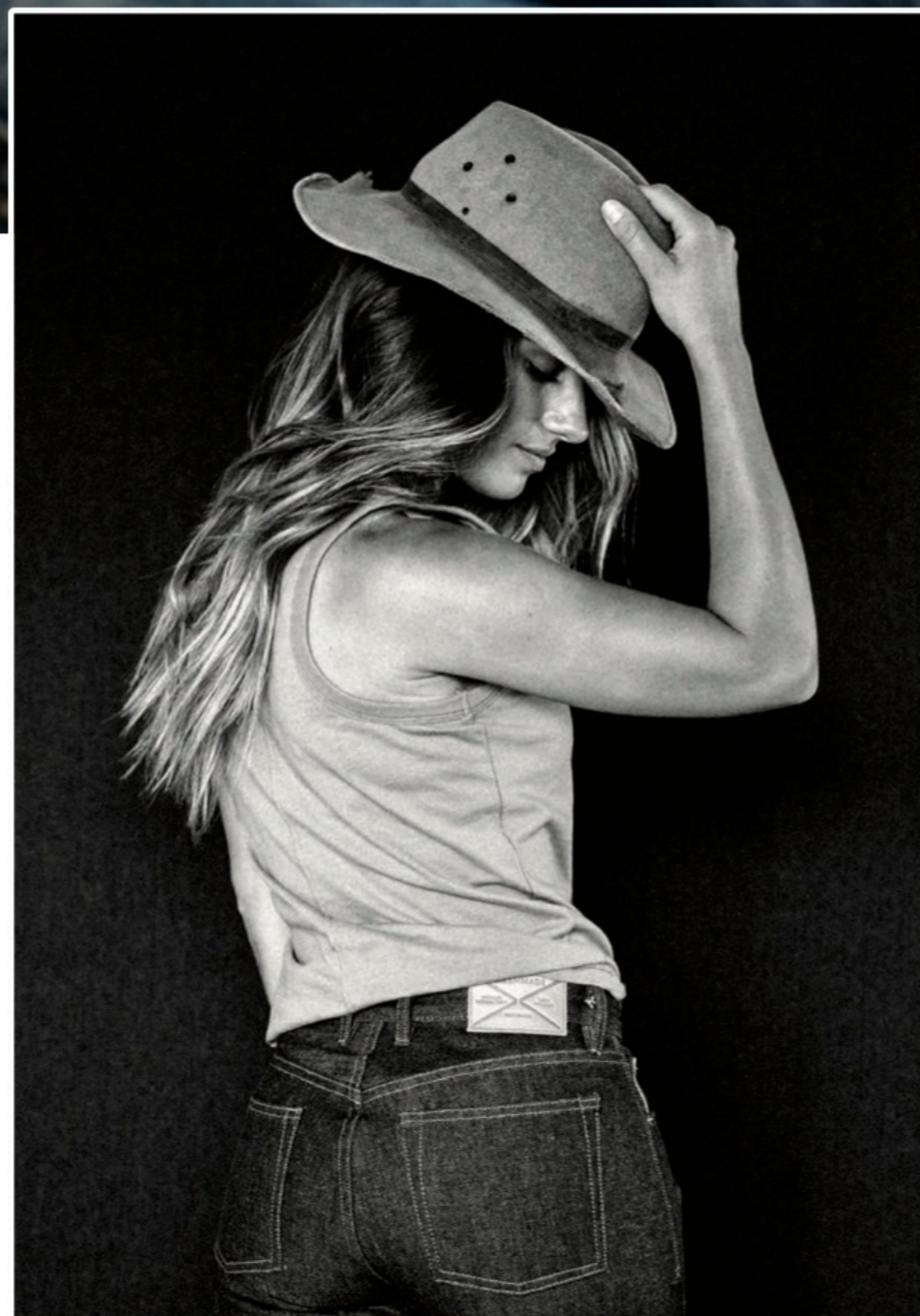
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AMERICAN MADE

Inspired by heritage work wear and crafted using cotton sustainably farmed and milled in the U.S., new Petaluma-based apparel brand WiesMade will make a coveted addition to any denim collection.

By Keri Bridgwater



**“AS A YOUNG GUY
WORKING IN DENIM
SHOPS AROUND
SAN FRANCISCO,**

I'd always walk by the Levi's headquarters and so launching my own line is something I've considered doing for years," says Nic Wiessler, founder of Petaluma-based brand WiesMade (www.wiesmade.com). "Blue jeans were invented and patented up there, so denim is really in our California DNA.

"I love classic Levi's and vintage raw selvedge, but it's tough to find heavy, high-quality denim made in America these days, so I decided to create my own." A third-generation North Bay local, he studied environmental science at Sonoma State University and spent 20 years as a leader in the retail business working with big names like Gap, Lucky Brand and Cole Haan. The notion of "buy once wear forever" resonated with

Michael Woolesey (this page and opposite; all inset)



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Wiessler and inspired a vision of creating a sustainable brand.

"My wife and I live in Petaluma, and our favorite thing is to pull tomatoes out of the garden and make a salad. We were at the farmers market one day, and I thought, 'Why not follow your jeans from dirt to denim the way you would locally grown produce in a restaurant?'" He spent two years developing fabrics, perfecting washes and making patterns. "We looked at hemp and recycled fibers and their wearability and dug into the carbon footprint of transportation, but it became obvious we needed to make our fabrics from scratch because they didn't exist," he says. "No one is creating sustainable fibers using local cotton because it's hard and there's no real supply chain left in the U.S." Woven by the 175-year-old Mount Vernon Mills in Georgia and Vidalia Mills in Louisiana, much of the cotton used in Wiesmade's denim and selvedge denim is

sustainably grown a mile from each mill. Cotton grown in California and Arizona is used for T-shirts and knitwear fabric, which is fashioned at a family-owned sewing shop in Los Angeles.

Based on heritage work wear for men and women, the collection features two jean styles in a choice of washes and denim finishes, canvas jackets, cotton pullovers, henleys, tanks and T-shirts. Wiessler says the ring-spun cotton used for the knits is soft but substantial and looks even better when layered: a timeless look with that pop of a T-shirt underneath to give the silhouette a nice break, something he calls the NorCal layer. While cable-knit beanies, leather belts and raw selvedge ball caps round out the accessories, as for the jeans, he adds that you only really need two pairs in your wardrobe. "My wife loves the regular denim as her everyday go-to, but dressing up for work, the raw denim in that beautiful dark indigo

just looks so good with a T-shirt and blazer." For the record, another of her favorites is the Artcher Jacket in olive.

After commuting between the East Coast and West Coast for over a decade, when Wiessler married and started a family, he moved to Petaluma full-time with his wife — and fell back in love with the sleepy Sonoma County town. "I did photo shoots for Bonobos, Nike and Cole Haan in New York, but realizing I can build all the infrastructure I need for this little denim brand right here is a dream come true. There's nothing we can do here that you'd need a big city for." So far, the feedback has been positive, and WiesMade has already built a small but loyal following, in part thanks to Instagram and *The Denimheads Podcast*. "We would love to eventually open some stores, but want to grow carefully and not scale up too fast," he says. "For now, we're online only but love when people stop by our design studio in Petaluma." 