

Technical influence

Outdoor Retailer Winter Market reflected increasing emphasis on garment styling and technical apparel, with US brands having to fight hard to maintain market share in the face of European competition. **Kathy Swantko** reports

Outdoor Retailer Winter Market attracted more than 21,000 attendees. Held in Salt Lake City, Utah, US, there was a nearly double-digit increase in the number of retailers attending, including an especially large number from the northeast USA, the arrival of iconic brands like Bruton and debut of new lines such as Quiksilver Mountain.

“Winter Market remains one of the fastest growing shows in the country,” said Kenji Haroutunian, ORWM director. “Retailers and media have flocked to the show from the corners of the continent and the world to witness the incredible strength in the 2012-13 products and brands.”

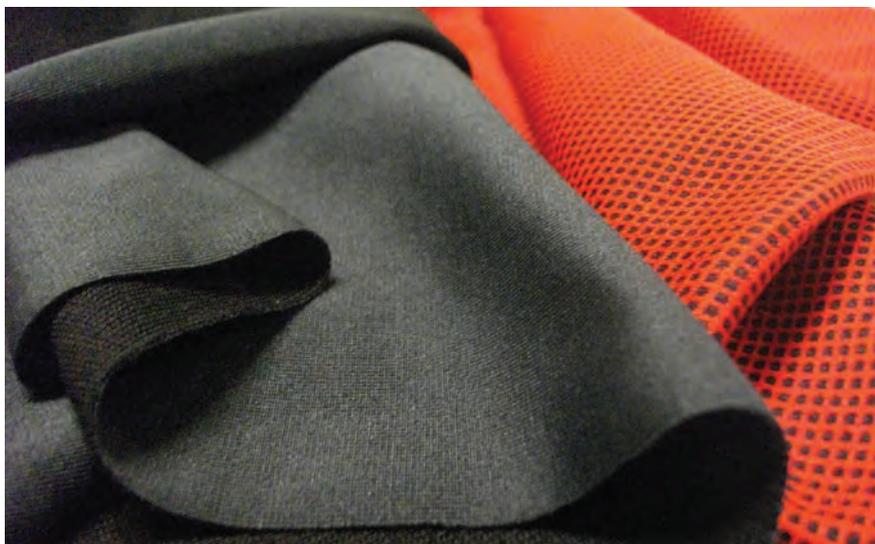
Since then there has been a general slowdown in new textile product developments. Much of the interest in what’s happening in today’s outdoor market has been generated by design and lifestyle. Garment styling has become more important in directing textile innovations in the outdoor market.

“The designer is so critical in directing our business,” said David Parkes, of Concept III. “Styling, such as the use of brighter colours, faux fur applications, lifestyle-friendly designs and the steady growth of prints are just a few examples of how important fashion has become in determining the trends for today’s textile products.”

Besides style, Mr Parkes highlighted other influences on textile trends, including an increased emphasis on technical apparel at retail; stabilisation of raw material pricing; US brands working to maintain their market share as more European brands enter the US market; greater attention paid to energy/water consumption; recent growth in outdoor footwear resulting in an increased demand for technical textiles; transition of product sourcing back to the US and Central America from China and Southeast Asia; the influence of social networks and the ongoing importance of the branding and marketing of US products.

Outlast Technologies introduced new polyester filament yarns at the show, following up on its polyester staple yarn introduction of 2010. The new polyester filament yarns are being offered in blends of polyester/spandex, poly filament blended with poly/cotton staple, poly/nylon blends, and tri-blends. The yarns are being targeted towards the sports textiles, performance T-shirt, activewear and underwear markets. Mills offering new Outlast poly filament knit fabrics include Chia Her, Taiwan and Far Eastern New Century Corp, Taiwan.

Lenzing presented a wide range of Tencel and Lenzing Modal blended products at the show. Responding to an increase in consumer demand for comfortable and sustainable clothing, Lenz-



Bi-Component fabrics from Merino State

ing was able to improve all areas of its business in 2011 compared with 2010. Andreas Grtler, global textile marketing manager for Lenzing, said: "We've had double digit growth in all textiles and outdoor sports textiles has been particularly strong for us. We have seen a very positive reaction to Patagonia's new soft Tencel knits. Going forward, I see a very strong future for Lenzing fibres in the outdoor market."

Besides the importance of comfort and sustainability, Mr Grtler said: "Last year's big rise in cotton prices helped to move mills into using yarns of Tencel/cotton and Lenzing Modal/cotton blends."

Kingwhale is going beyond recycling with the development of its new Low Impact Technology (LIT) initiative, which implements new methods in material science that reduce the environmental impact of creating advanced performance fabrics.

James Huang, president of Kingwhale, explained: "By manipulating molecules in the polyester, we can take any Kingwhale fabric construction and make it LIT. All the fabrics are textured to feel like cotton, act like a polyester and at the same time save water and energy."

According to Mr Huang, the new science saves up to eight gallons of water per garment and 1,150 kWh of energy per dye lot, enough to power a typical US household for over a month.

"Garment styling has become more important in directing textile innovations in the outdoor market"

Merino State featured its wide range of fine premium technical and Merino blended functional knit fabrics for the outdoor apparel industry. Julian Collins of Merino State said: "We say, 'Merino State is M+'. We take Merino wool to the next level, making inroads into marketplaces that haven't used



Cordura® NYCO Knit fabric



Cordura® Air Flow Technology (ATF) fabrics

Merino before."

At Outdoor Retailer, Merino State showcased its Bi-Component fabrics combining Merino with other fibres including organic cotton, Biophyl, Tencel, Modal and polyester into interesting knit fabric constructions to offer a range of versatile, multi-functional products for a variety of end-use applications.

Cordura showcased new knit fabrics at ORWM 2012 - Cordura AFT and Cordura NYCO knits.

The NYCO fabrics also offer comfortable durability for military uniforms, workwear and casual clothing. Based on an intimate blend of cotton and Invista's T420 nylon 6.6 fibre, Cordura NYCO fabrics provide exceptional abrasion resistance, comfort and durability.

Sanitized AG, a worldwide leader in antimicrobial hygiene protection, released an improved version of Sanitized TH-27 to the North American market at ORWM 2012. This full line of antimicrobial products can be used on a variety of knitted fabrics, depending on the substrate. Darrel Burnette, business development manager for North America said: "Visitors to the Sanitized AG booth were interested to learn about our new Sanitized TH 22-27 zinc pyrithione."

According to Mr Burnette, Sanitized TH 22-27 gives both anti-bacterial and anti-fungal protection against bacteria, as well as yeast, mould and mildew. It is bluesign approved and carries EPA registration.