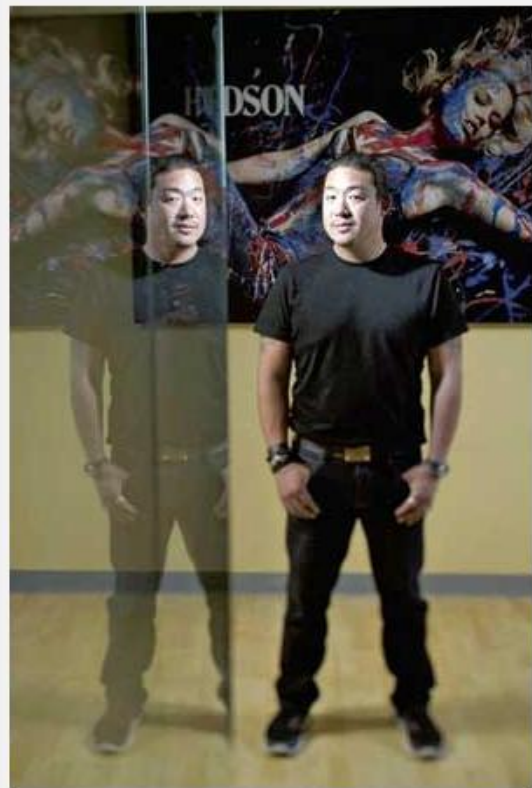


Hudson Jeans CEO Peter Kim fashions his own premium denim brand

By Stuart Pfeifer, Los Angeles Times
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Peter Kim in the lobby of Hudson Jeans' headquarters in the City of Commerce. "Don't be afraid to fail," he says. "Every successful person has failed at some time." (Jay L. Clendenin, Los Angeles Times / August 12, 2010)

The gig: Founder and chief executive of Hudson Jeans, one of the nation's hottest premium denim brands. Hudson is best known for its Union Jack logo, hefty sticker price and advertising campaign that features Mick Jagger's daughter. With jeans sold at select boutiques and high-end stores in countries around the world, the company reportedly had annual sales last year of more than \$50 million.

The image: Kim's goal is to make Hudson Jeans a sought-after item, and he's won over a number of celebrities, including actress Angelina Jolie, soccer star David Beckham and actor Jude Law. He employs an in-house marketing team and uses a public relations company to create buzz on the Web. Hudson's Facebook page includes images of actress Renee Zellweger "rockin' a pair" of Hudson skinny jeans. "The more we become a cool brand, the easier it becomes for people to want to buy it and put it on," Kim said. "It's the whole guilty by association."

The payoff: Launched in 2002, the company now has 90 employees and is headquartered in the City of Commerce, south of downtown Los Angeles. Last year Paul Fireman, former chief executive of Reebok International, was part of a private-equity team that bought a controlling interest in Hudson for a reported \$30 million.

Background: Kim, 39, is a Los Angeles native who attended USC, where he majored in business administration. He got an early start in fashion, working for his parents' clothing company in college before launching several clothing lines of his own. Kim lives in Los Feliz with his wife of 16 years, Seimie, and the couple's twin daughters, age 9.

A challenging start: During his final year of college in 1994, Kim was asked to work at the family's clothing business, which was facing bankruptcy. It was \$10 million in debt and

experiencing a steep decline in sales. Kim spent several years working to save the business. He renegotiated debt with creditors, helped transform the company's line of women's business wear and nursed the company back to profitability. In 2000, Kim branched out on his own, launching the denim brand Jane's Army. The company folded after one year. "We really messed it up," he said. "The quality was off. The fabric wasn't right. It created a lot of customer service problems.... It all goes down to product. Once you mess that up, nothing else matters."

If at first you don't succeed: Kim decided to give premium denim another shot in 2002, launching Hudson Jeans. This time, he put renewed emphasis on quality materials and workmanship. He imported premium denim from Italy and had the jeans cut, sewn, washed and finished in Los Angeles instead of Thailand, where Jane's Army products were made. "The key has always been the fundamentals," Kim said. "If the quality is not what the quality should be, do not ship it. Everybody knows not to ship poor-quality product, but people do it every day."

The secret: "To create a brand, it has to start within. The whole company has to believe in this brand and want to do it with all their heart.... For me, the best decision I made was not giving up on the family business. That sparked everything to come. Make that effort. Don't be afraid to fail. Every successful person has failed at some time."

Everybody that plays it safe, they're never going to fail, but they're never going to be a big success."

The face of Hudson Jeans: In 2009, Hudson signed Georgia May Jagger, daughter of rocker Mick Jagger and model Jerry Hall, to a modeling contract. Dressed in tight-fitting Hudsons — and little else — the rocker's daughter has appeared in the pages of fashion magazines around the world and was named model of the year at the British Fashion Awards. "Our sales are up, so we see the financial impact," Kim said. "In our industry, I'd be surprised if many companies are growing."

Biggest obstacles: "The naysayers, the people who said I couldn't. In my early years, I was affected by it. It's sad because most of us live up to our expectations. If you think you're unlucky, you are. If you think you can't do something, you won't."

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