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Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style



Synopsis

Look closely at any typically "American" article of clothing these days, and you may be surprised to see a Japanese label inside. From high-end denim to oxford button-downs, Japanese designers have taken the classic American look—known as ametora, or "American traditional"—and turned it into a huge business for companies like Uniqlo, Kamakura Shirts, Evisu, and Kapital. This phenomenon is part of a long dialogue between Japanese and American fashion; in fact, many of the basic items and traditions of the modern American wardrobe are alive and well today thanks to the stewardship of Japanese consumers and fashion cognoscenti, who ritualized and preserved these American styles during periods when they were out of vogue in their native land. In *Ametora*, cultural historian W. David Marx traces the Japanese assimilation of American fashion over the past hundred and fifty years, showing how Japanese trendsetters and entrepreneurs mimicked, adapted, imported, and ultimately perfected American style, dramatically reshaping not only Japan's culture but also our own in the process.

Book Information

Hardcover: 296 pages

Publisher: Basic Books (December 1, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0465059732

ISBN-13: 978-0465059737

Product Dimensions: 5.6 x 1 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

I discovered Japanese made clothing through forums and websites. I got to know the brands through some fanatics' jeans and also scanned magazine pages, which showed me a totally new universe. Since then, access to products from Japan rose sharply. Brands that previously operated only in the Japanese market began appearing in stores all around the world. I also had the opportunity to know the country and see a bit of it all. But how they got to that point was still a mystery to me, why couldn't it be like that in Brazil too? What *Ametora* does is unify all this information through very

extensive research. E. David Marx tracked many important figures and obscure clues to trace a narrative that explains the evolution of men's fashion industry in Japan, through the consumption behavior, creation, and content. Reading is light and the build up makes a very exciting plot. The book has less than 300 pages that talk about the Ivy style in Japan, the US denim reproductions, vintage culture, workwear, the avant-garde, and streetwear concept brands. One of the most interesting things in the book is how it describes the role of men's style magazines. These magazines, written by enthusiasts, took on the function of describing the "rules" of American clothing, encoding all styles in categories such as "Ivy", "Heavy Duty", etc. If a Japanese wanted to use Ivy League clothes in the early '60s, he had no older as a reference point and so had to resort to the media to tell you what to buy and how to use. The American style in Japan was not a copy, but more of a filtered version by through the eyes of "influencers" These authors were mainly inspired by catalogs, and as the Japanese grew more confident, magazines decreased the "cake recipes".

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