

TACTICAL

CUSTOMS

Usual Suspects

WHAT'S NEW IN CUSTOMS—FOCUSING ON THE ART AND CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE HANDMADE KNIFE.



On the Labor Day weekend of September 2010, the Usual Suspects network (www.usualsuspects.net) held their second annual "Gathering" (G2) show at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas. This show has turned into a unique hybrid that offers a great mix of both tactical gear and knives. Having heard many good reports about last year's "G1," *Tactical Knives* made a point of having a table at G2. As we expected, the crowd was young and enthusiastic with money to willing spend on their favorite type of cutlery. Given the decline in attendance at many of the traditional "custom knives are for rich collectors" type shows, it's nice to know the blades this publication focuses on are still the hot commodity with the guys that are actually buying. You can count on us being there again next year for sure. The following are a few of the great tactical customs we found on the show's tables.

BITING BULLDOG: Charles Marlowe's "Bulldog" sports a husky 3.25-inch blade of CPM 154 stainless on a handle of carved titanium. Marlowe can be contacted at 10822 Poppleton Ave. Dept. TK, Omaha, NE 68144; 402-933-5065 www.marloweknives.com

HANDY BUD: The Pesh-Kabz fixed blade has long been one of the most popular models in Bud Nealy's line and now he has redesigned the knife into a very handy folder. The armor piercing 3.25-inch blade is ground from CPM-154 stainless and is mounted on a "Grip Guard" G-10 handle frame with titanium liners. Bud can be contacted at RR-1 Box 1439, Dept. TK, Stroudsburg, PA 18360; 570-402-1018 www.budnealyknifemaker.com

LINER LOCK FLIPPER: American Kami Custom Blades can usually be counted on for something out of the ordinary and they didn't come up short at the USN show. Their "SHTF/IKBS Liner Lock Flipper" offers a 4-inch "compound spear/tanto point" blade of 1095 carbon steel on a handle of G-10 with titanium liners. The maker can be contacted at D. J. Urbanovsky, 6140 Country Club Rd, Dept. TK, Omaha, NE 68152; 402-813-0508 www.americankami.com

INJECTION: Todd Rexford's "Injection" features a 3-3/4-inch blade of CPM-154 stainless on a handle of all titanium including the pocket carry-clip. The maker can be contacted at www.rexfordknives.com

FIERCE PEARCE: Michael Tinker Pearce simply calls this unique design his "folding fighter." As strange as the 4.75-inch AEB-L stainless blade looks, the maker assured me that it was scientifically designed for effectiveness as a close-combat weapon. Given his history of producing totally functional battle swords, I tend to believe him. Pearce can be contacted at 6914 S. 116th Pl, Dept. TK, Seattle, WA 98178; 206-772-6720 www.tinkerswords.com

PLAZA SEBENZA: It would be hard to beat Plaza Cutlery's "USN Gathering" limited edition Chris Reeve Sebenza as a souvenir of this new all tactical show. The Plaza/Sebenza is available in both standard and compact size versions with a S30V blade and a titanium handle frame. Plaza Cutlery, 3333, S Bristol Street, Dept. TK, South Coast Plaza, Suite 2060, Costa Mesa, CA 92626; 714-549-3932 www.plazacutlery.com

VIPER STRIKE: Steven Kelly's "Pit Viper" offers a wicked 8-inch recurved blade of CPM-154 stainless on a handle of canvas Micarta. SK Knives, 11407 Spotted Fawn W., Dept. TK, Bigfork, MT 59911; 406-837-1489 www.skknives.com

ROCK SOLID: The father and son team of Grant and Gavin Hawk new "Rock" (Rapid Open Combat Knife) provides a totally ambidextrous 3.5-inch S35VN blade on a 6061-T6 aluminum handle frame. Among other features, knife also offers the maker's special shock absorbing stop pin and "grip clip" carry system. Grant and Gavin can be contacted at P.O. Box 401, Dept. TK, Idaho City, Idaho, 83631; 208-392-4911 www.hawkknifedesigns.com

FLASHY FLG: Brian Fellhoelter's "FLG" provides a 3.5-inch blade of Chad Nichols Damascus on a carbon fiber scales and titanium frame handle. The maker can be contacted at 3149 Palo Verde Blvd N., Dept. TK, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86404; 760-223-2503 www.knifewerks.com

TERRILL HOFFMAN PHOTOS