

Sword Buyers Digest: MAGAZINE!

From the Desk of Paul Southren (Editor)

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PLUS:

- Lancelot's Sword Fighting Tips!
- WIN a Free Cheness 9260 Spring Steel Katana in Shirasaya
- Video of the Month
- Exclusive SBG Discount Offers
- Where to Get a \$127 Sword for \$59
- And MORE!

Hey guys!

Welcome to the new and (hopefully) improved Sword Buyers Digest, now coming at you in a downloadable magazine format.

As always, it is great to have you aboard! :-)

If you've been with me for a while now, you'll know that the Sword Buyers Digest has been through quite a few 'incarnations'.

First off there was a long newsletter with a small 'members lounge'.

Then there was a trimmed down newsletter with a much bigger 'members lounge'...

And now?

Well, now I've made the whole thing downloadable in an easy to read jam packed 'virtual magazine', so not only can I fit a lot more in it, but it also has a much more 'professional' layout...

While on the one hand it means a lot more work, it also allows me the possibility of supplementing it with a few carefully chosen ads.

Hopefully, by allowing a little advertising here and there I can help cover my expenses and be able to dedicate more time to bringing you the kind of content that you would usually have to pay for, *without ever charging you a single red cent...*

Anyway, I truly hope that you will enjoy this first edition of the new look Sword Buyers Digest Magazine! :-D

If you have any feedback for me or constructive criticism, I'd love to hear from you!

Cheers,

- Paul Southren



SBG Site News

I suppose that this month, work on the site has been kind of postponed due to the planning of this newsletter... :-P

However, I have been doing a kind of mini-overhaul on many of the main pages, just tidying things up a bit, making the pages clearer and easier to read—as well as changing the format of the downloadable videos from mpg and vid to Google video and YouTube. The main

reasons for this change had to do with loading time, the original vids just took too damn long to load, but now thanks to these new 'embeddable' videos they are accessible almost immediately with two clicks of a mouse button!

And the best part is, it means that I can easily add a whole lot more vids in the future! :-)

For all the latest SBG news visit my blog:

[Behind the Scenes at SBG](#)

Sword Industry News: New Products and Special Discount Offers!

CHENESS CUTLERY

Recently Cheness Cutlery introduced quite a few more products to their line up, including two massive Katana—the O-Katana, a huge 33” long blade, and a 30” *Nagasa* Katana, both made from the revolutionary 9260 Spring Steel and designed for the larger practitioner in mind.

Both of these are trial runs, and while I hear that the 30” *Nagasa* will become a part of their regular inventory, sadly the trial run of the Cheness 33” bladed O-Katana is likely to be the only one, so if you are after a nicely priced and extremely strong ‘Giant Katana’, this might be your last chance....

Another new development at Cheness includes using a much tighter *tsuka* wrap, with an upgraded wooden core and channels to firmly seat the *same* panels, resulting in a much stronger and more oval shaped and form fitting *tsuka* assembly—all done without a corresponding price increase.

Finally, Cheness have just released a new and greatly improved version of their carbon steel *iaito* (steel training swords), the **Delux**.

Designed to the specifications of respected 8th dan Hanshi, *Masyayuki Shimabukuro* Sensei from the world famous MJER *Iai-justu* Dojos this would have to be the most affordable and practical *iaito* on the market.

With a mean looking black *same* skin, willow pattern *tsuba*, *bo-hi* and tight brown *tsuka ito* wrap, this sword is perfect for the *kenjutsu* or *iaido* student on a budget.

All of the above swords are now available at the lowest prices on the net at the new:

[SBG Sword Shop](#)

Windlass Steelcrafts ‘Beowulf’ Sword

Windlass steelcrafts make some very nice high carbon steel movie swords, with their ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ swords previously acclaimed as some of their best quality pieces yet.

Well, it looks like Windlass may have come up with another winning, value for money piece...

Their latest venture into the world of movie swords is the extremely attractive and ornate sword of ‘Beowulf and Grendel’. While strictly speaking, at US\$339, its \$39 over the self im-

GENERATION 2

As of the 15th of September, an old favourite that was temporarily retired, the Tolkien inspired **Ranger Sword**, is now back in stock and good to go!



Designed with the true ‘die-hard’ LoTR fans in mind, this fully functional sword epitomizes the ranger spirit with a look and feel that is both at the same time eminently practical yet also really quite elegant.

With a hand forged 1060 Carbon Steel blade polished to a mirror finish, the **Ranger Sword** (also known as the ‘Pro Sword’) is, like all Gen2 swords, quite a bargain at only US\$239.

But this month only, you can pick up the [Ranger Sword](#) from Arms of Valor with a whopping 15% discount.

Simply enter the special time sensitive 15% Coupon Code (**SBG-15**) next to your name when you order and my good friend Jason at **AoV** will drop the price down to \$203.15!

Plus, as always, a portion of each sale earns SBG referral credits to go towards my next purchase of swords to review.

And remember, stocks are limited on this one, so if you like the look of this sword, you had better get in quick.

OFFER EXPIRES 31st October 2006

[Check it out for yourself here](#)



The New Cheness Cutlery ‘Delux’ *iaito*, designed by 8th Dan Hanshi, *Masayuki Shimabukuro* (MJER)



“Sadly the trial run of the Cheness 33” bladed O-Katana is likely to be the only one, so if you are after a nicely priced and extremely strong ‘Giant Katana’, this might be your last chance...”



Windlass Steelcrafts latest addition: the Beowulf Sword...

Interview With the Founder of Realistic Sparring Weapons (RSW), Lancelot Chan

“Have you ever consider the possibility of fighting like the warriors in the past, where you battle your friends with the historical weapons, as if you were fighting for your life? There would be no rules restricting where and how hard you can hit. You'll do whatever you can to stay alive.”

This is the introductory blurb to Lancelot Chan's aptly named 'Realistic Sparring Weapons' (RSW). And the truth is, fighting with these foam padded swords *is* probably about as close as you can ever get to a **real** sword fight (without getting chopped into pieces in the process that is!).

In this exclusive interview we have a candid chat with Lancelot about how RSW got started, what its all about and even pick up a few sword fighting tips from a man who, as you can see from the many videos on his website, most certainly knows how to handle a sword!



RSW's Lancelot Chan

SBG: *Hi Lancelot, welcome to SBG, nice to have you onboard! If I can start out with a general question, can you pinpoint where your own interest in swords first started?*

Lance Chan: I don't know when it started. Back then when I was a kid of six to seven years old, I would buy plastic toy swords to spar with my younger brother. They all broke at the first day though.

I don't think my interest in swords was special compare to other kids at that age. In fact, I was more into unarmed martial arts at that time. It was when I was 14 I partially and temporarily recovered from the disability caused by juvenile rheumatoid arthritis since 10 years old, did I come up with the idea to fight with my friends with swords again.

The reason behind was that my body was messed up by the disease and I could not stand the vigor or still possessed the flexibility required in unarmed martial arts anymore. On the other hand, in sword fight one hit would often be enough, so that would be somewhat like an equalizer to equate the difference between the strong and the weak, male and female, young and elderly.

However, swords weren't my only interests in weapons. I was also into survival game with airsoft guns.

In 1997, I got a chance to visit the army camp and fire blank rounds with L85A1. The recoil feedback from the firing told me that I can kill a person by simply pulling the trigger with a finger and my target had no way to defend himself. That was way too easy and devalues human life far beyond what ancient weapons would do. With historical weapons, at least a man can make a difference.

Modern technology allowed everybody to be equally effective in fighting and that also means that a boy can kill just as well as an experienced

fighter could. Since then I dropped guns and stay concentrated on swords and historical weaponry.

SBG: *A noble and gallant sentiment Lance. So tell me, stemming from this initial interest in swords, when and how did RSW come about? What was it that prompted you to make your own freestyle sparring swords?*

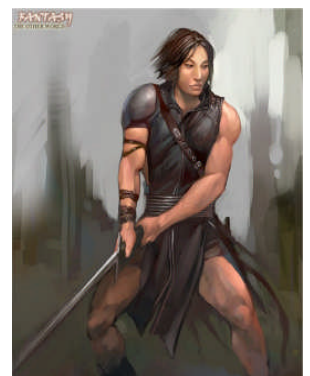
Lance Chan: It was between 1992 and 1993 when I, Max and Ben started to play a LRPG where all the fights and actions were done by ourselves. In fact, I brought up this idea to provide us a chance to spar with friends with weapons. I would like to see how much fight still left in me after years of torture by rheumatoid arthritis.

At first we were simply using sticks to fight but that hurt too much. Then we switched to star wars toy light sabre but that wasn't durable enough. Then we started to reinforce the light sabre by stacking several of them into one piece. However, it hit a lot harder that way.



Then around 1995 to 1997 we started experimenting padded weapons. At that time the LRPG story ended as well and we have concentrated on the martial part of the game. It had become a weekly weaponry fighting gathering for many

“Back then we called ourselves ‘Sunday Butchers’ so everyone who participated got to butcher someone or get butchered.”



Lance's Alter Ego, painted by a friend.

Interview With the Founder of Realistic Sparring Weapons (RSW), Lancelot Chan (Continued)

years. Back then we called ourselves "Sunday Butchers" so everyone who participated got to butcher someone or get butchered.



Maybe it was around 1998 to 2000 we started to go after realism in the weapons' handling characteristic. RSW officially started at the end of 2003 where my father got involved to improve the look of our Sunday Butchers padded weapons.



SBG: *What is the most common question you get asked about RSW swords?*

Lancelot Chan: "Are they sharp?" no kidding... :D

SBG: *Hehe, wow—that's kind of a scary thought! :-D*

But apart from their sharpness, what are people's most common concerns when it comes to taking a serious look at RSW swords?

For example, I imagine that there are a lot of people, especially in the US, who might want to get one are a little worried about overseas shipping fees, etc. What do you say to those people, and do you have any plans to produce them in larger quantities and distribute internationally?

Lancelot Chan: Hmmm locally the other main question was whether they can unsheathe the

sword from the padding... or they don't ask, they just gave it a try and pull the handle! :|

About the shipping charge, it has always been a problem because RSW is relatively a lot more affordable than real swords, yet the same weight and size made them costing just as much as shipping real swords do.

So it may take up a relatively high portion of each purchase compare to buying real swords.

The good thing is that the more swords a customer purchase, the shipping charge per sword drops significantly and sparring swords are always good when comes in a couple or more. In fact, we used to have an exclusive dealer in the USA before but he quitted for a while.

Recently we are negotiating to restart our operation again. Our full production rate is about 20 swords per month and I think the waiting list so far never gets too long. If it does, I may hire more labor to help production. :P

SBG: *Of all the RSW swords you have made, which is your personal favourite? Judging from a lot of the videos on your site, I could guess and say that it is the Brescia Spadona ;-)*

If it is, what attracts you to this sword in particular (and if not, which one IS your favourite?).

Lancelot Chan: My favourite RSW is always the one I made for myself, the one that models after my real sword. Currently I've two real swords and they are both my favourite swords. Brescia Spadona from Albion Swords was one of them and the other was a custom made complex hilt longsword by Tinker.

I've yet to make the RSW for the latter one, so the brescia spadona RSW is currently my favourite indeed.

The reasons it attracts me were that it was a longsword that was light and fast. It was also extremely sharp, thus requiring less force to inflict cutting and slicing wounds in unarmored combat, which we intend to simulate. The guard was also very wide and easy to intercept opponent's attacks.

These factors combined are well suited for my less-than-healthy body. I can concentrate more on fine movements.



My personal favorite RSW—the RSW Katana! :-)



"SBG: What is the most common question you get asked about RSW Swords?"

Lancelot: "Are they sharp?".... no kidding...

:D"



Lance's favorite REAL sword, Albion's Brescia Spadona.

Interview With the Founder of Realistic Sparring Weapons (RSW), Lancelot Chan (Continued)

SBG: *Here's an interesting one for you... If someone who was about to go into a real life and death sword fight (with no prior experience at all) asked you what would be the best thing they could do to come out of it the other end in one piece, what advise would you offer them?*

Lancelot Chan: Try to give up the idea and make friend with your opponent. Tell the opponent that nowadays, sword lovers are already scarce compare to the old days because it was no longer a functional weapons in modern warfare, or a part of the fashion, or readily accessible self-defense weapon. By the same reason, those who are still motivated enough today to fight with real sword were even fewer. So why not be a good friend by the swords and let the interests live on instead?

SBG: *Hehe, well - that may be true these days, but let's say it is a hypothetical situation a few hundred years ago, when swords were a standard self defence weapon and duels were an everyday occurrence.*

Let's say that this person had no option but to accept the challenge and fight (even though they'd rather run away) - and they begged you, a veteran sword fighter, to tell them what they needed to do to survive the combat...

What specific technique, or perhaps more importantly mindset, would you advise them to adopt to stand a fighting chance?

Lancelot Chan: Hmm... it would depend on the sword style involved but generally, I will advise the guy to stay aggressive and seize initiative.

Present a threat either by the point or by the edge and let the opponent worries about how to defend himself rather than how to attack him. Hit the person, not the opponent's sword. Hit the hands if possible for they're the closest targets.

Defensive wise, if he is using a western style sword with a cross guard or plenty hand protection, I will also suggest hide himself behind his sword's guard and make sure his sword is always in the position between himself and his opponent's sword. If he is using an eastern style sword that lacks of such defensive fa-

cility around the hand, then make sure he is always able to void by backing out of the distance and retract his hands.

Hands are very frequently hit due to the closeness to the opponent.



SBG: *One of the things I personally like about the RSW swords is that if you get it, it hurts - but doesn't cause any permanent injury.*

This I feel adds a certain level of realism into a RSW bout (i.e. if you are all padded out in armor and don't feel a thing, your way of fighting is going to be different than if you risk a little pain).

But that said, what are the worst injuries you have seen or experienced with RSW swords other than the odd bruise (and bruised ego).

And while its pretty much a free for all, what techniques are outlawed as too dangerous?

Lancelot Chan: We allowed even strikes to the neck and groin and so far ended up with no problem. Here's an example:

<http://lancelot.servehttp.com/neck.mpg>

However, the worst injuries occurred mostly on fingers where the small bones may get fractured (crack developed on bone, not broken though).

It usually recovers in a couple weeks and no mobility was lost to the injured finger. But it may look flatter. That's why we always suggest plenty protection on the hands.

The forbidden strikes were to use any part of the unpadded area of RSW to hit the places where it was not covered by some kind of armor. For example, we allow pommel strike to the head/face where a hockey helmet would cover.

But a pommel strike to the naked neck would not be nice. ..



RSW don't just make swords, check out the huge spear on the right!

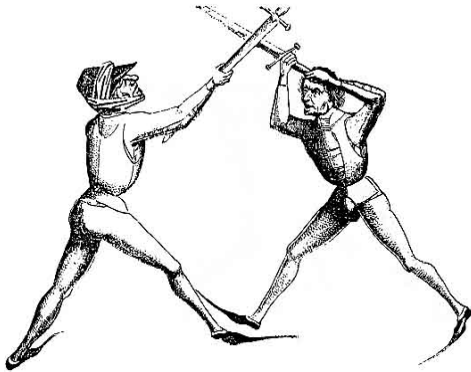
"the worst injuries occurred mostly on the fingers... It usually recover in a couple of weeks... But it may look flatter."



Lancelot's Office, where every RSW is hand made with the utmost care.

Interview With the Founder of Realistic Sparring Weapons (RSW), Lancelot Chan (Continued)

Thus the German style murdering stroke was kinda ruled out unless one can be sure that it hit nowhere but the helmet.... but who would willingly let you hit his head with your pommel?



Unarmed strikes are allowed to the semi-contact degree. Full contact unarmed strikes better occurred in the rings than on our field. :P

SBG: *Final Question, what is in store for the future at RSW?*

Lancelot Chan: More expert grade models for sure, maybe more axes that were made safer, a halberd, a spear with side blades...

SBG: *It's been cool having you on SBG Lance, thanks for your time! :-)*

Lance's website has a lot more info on it than just description of all the RSW swords and other sparring weapons (including knives, spears, etc).

For a start, there is tons of videos of him and the team in action, as well as sword reviews, general information on swordsmanship, sparring tips and a whole lot more.

Check it all out here:

<http://www.rsw.com.hk/index.htm>



RSW being filmed for a Hong Kong Cable TV Interview

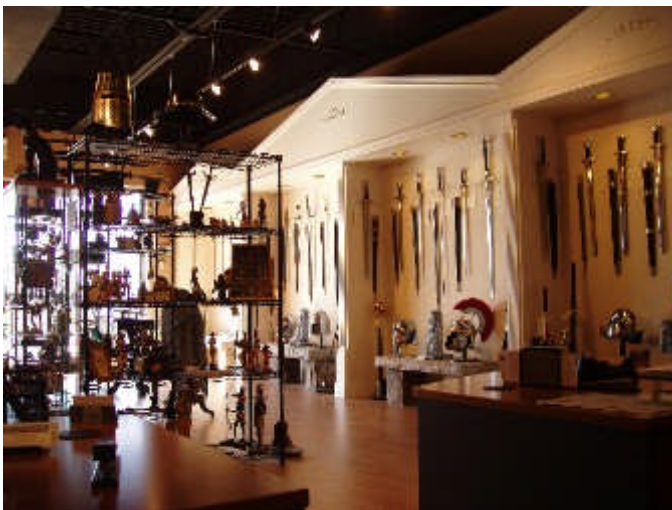
"Unarmed strikes are allowed to the semi-contact degree. Full contact unarmed strikes better occurred in the rings than in our field

:P"



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Practical Swords Reviewed: By SBG Contributor Scott Hardy—Part 1

Scott Hardy is a sword enthusiast who loves practical, fast and short bladed swords.

This month, in the first of a 3 part series, Scott will be taking a look at the Hanwei Forges Main Gauche (pictured below, far right) a short bladed parrying sword designed primarily to be used in the left hand.



Hanwei Main Gauche

Spanish style, simple model

This main gauche is a model you're not likely to see for sale very often, it's an older model, much less ornamented than Hanwei's "Taza" main gauche, and slightly less so than the Windlass "Musketeer." A few turned up unexpectedly, and were being closed out by Weapons Emporium at \$59 (marked down from \$127), which seemed hard to beat.

Main gauches differ quite a bit in construction, and some have symmetrical blades, allowing them to be used either right or left handed. I had rather hoped that it would be one of those, but it isn't at all. The back of the blade is purely for parrying, and at nearly 1/4" thick, should be able to parry any weapon you have the strength to stop.

Distal taper is good, and the balance point is only about an inch in front of the guard, so it handles about as lightly as a fencing foil. The blade is 17.5" long, and the weapon is 23" long overall. Weight is maybe a pound and a half.

It came with an edge which was almost sharp in places, but extremely dull in others, and

required half an hour or so of filing before I could move on to sharpening proper.

This included only slightly over half of the blade, the edge giving way to 1/4" steel a few inches from the guard. The sweet spot is about 5" from the tip. The steel and heat treatment both seemed reasonable, but definitely milder than a Generation 2 sword blade, for example.

Between the balance and the fact that only maybe 9" of one side of the blade is sharp, this main gauche is MUCH better suited to thrusting than to swinging. It might make a good stand-alone weapon for a left-handed person, but the total dullness of the base of the blade would mean that it could be grabbed with relative impunity, and the blade-catchers cut into the blade would ensure a great grip if one succeeded.

Construction seems fairly solid -- the blade is unquestionably so, and you can see that the tang is nice and wide where it enters the guard. It is peened into the pommel, and appears able to stand significant use/abuse.

The guard's bars are nice and thick, and the rolled-edge plate seems solid enough. The pommel appears to be of a different metal from the rest of the weapon, which is an unfortunate, if minor, cosmetic blemish. The wire wrap on the handle isn't perfect, but it's pretty posh for a \$59 blade.

The scabbard seems like an afterthought, it's cheap leather and chrome plated steel, which seems a few centuries out of place.

Overall, I would say that I really have no cause for complaint at the deeply discounted price I paid, but it would not be my first choice for a practical, stand-alone weapon. If you're a right-handed swordsman who likes using two weapons, at \$59 it's a good value for that purpose.

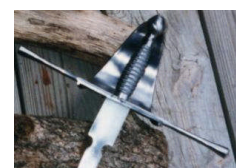
The verdict:

Historical accuracy: 5/5 if you throw away the scabbard
Fit and finish: 3/5
Handling: 5/5
Structural integrity: 4/5
Value for money: 5/5 at \$59, 2/5 at \$127



A historical example of the Main gauche in use.

"The Steel and Heat treatment both seemed reasonable, but definitely milder than a Generation 2 sword blade, for example."



The Hanwei Forges Main Gauche.

DIY: Custom Katana. Resources and Tips for Refitting a Japanese Sword!

Those of you have been with me for a while now might know I've been running a **WIN a FREE Katana in Shirasaya** competition for a few months now. And while there were a few enquiries in the early days of the, it would seem like that a lot of people just don't know where to begin...

I wish that I had enough time right now to put together a comprehensive, step by step guide, but I don't (which is part of the reason I was putting the competition together in the first place! I need some help). In the meantime though, for those of you want to give it a go but don't know where to start, here are a few resources you can use to put the pieces together yourselves (no pun intended!).

ONLINE RESOURCES

<http://japantrip.tripod.com/nihonto/tsuka/tsuka01.html>

Great little illustrated guide to making a tsuka from a wooden hammer handle.

<http://pages.prodigy.net/tlbuck/tsuka/tsuka.htm>

Quite a detailed look at how to properly wrap the handle.

<http://sayashi.com/project%20pages/shirasaya.htm>

Detailed pics and instructions on how to make a saya (Scabbard)

<http://pages.prodigy.net/tlbuck/lac.htm>

How to properly lacquer the saya.

BOOKS

[The Craft of the Japanese Sword](#)

Considered by those in the know to be the best resource on making and fitting a Japanese sword. While it is designed more as an overview of how the masters do it, it obviously contains a lot of useful info that even the beginner can utilize.

SUPPLIERS

www.shadowofleaves.com/

Recommended as the best supplier of high quality yet reasonably priced tsuka ito, menuki, me-guki and all the other bits and pieces you might need to complete your project.

WIN a 9260 Spring Steel Shirasaya COMPETITION: Extended to December 2006!

If you want to give refitting a bare blade a try yourself, why not share your efforts with the rest of the sword community and win yourself a FREE [Cheness 9260 in Shirasaya](#) for your efforts!

Simply send in some photos and a walk through of how you did your customisations that I can put up on SBG to share with other Japanese

sword enthusiasts and the best entry gets a Cheness 9260 Spring Steel Katana in Shirasaya sent to them anywhere in the world for free - to be drawn on the 1st of December 2006 (extended from the 1st of November)!

Simply submit your entries and any questions to paul@sword-buyers-guide.com

Good luck!



Making your own tsuka handle might be time consuming, but is also very rewarding...



"If you want to give refitting a bare blade a try yourself, why not share your efforts with the rest of the sword community and win yourself a FREE Cheness 9260 in Shirasaya for your efforts!"



Cheness 9260 Spring Steel Katana in Shirasaya: the perfect DIY sword project.

This Months 'Best' Forum Posts...



<http://forums.swordforum.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=70981>

An easy Shirasaya Project in the Making.

<http://forums.swordforum.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=71816>

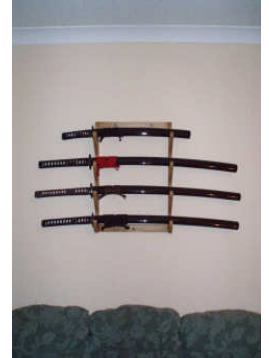
Displaying blades safely at home: (safe for the blade that is!).

<http://forums.swordforum.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=71651>

Sword Myths Exposed, a list for Mythbusters!

<http://forums.swordforum.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid=71931>

On swords and the sticky issue of self defence...



The 'correct' way to display Japanese swords, edge up—tsuka (handle) to the

VIDEO of the MONTH!



Of special note is the focus on subtle shifts of body position, moving just enough to evade a blow and then quickly counter-attack in the same movement.

These guys also demonstrate some classic half swording techniques (I.e. gripping the blade with a gloved hand in the middle) as well as some classic disarms and submission holds.

All in all, this is easily one of the best demonstrations of German longsword on the internet. And while it might not look as fancy as all the spinning, twirling 5 minute fights from the silver screen, these techniques are designed from real life and death historical encounters...

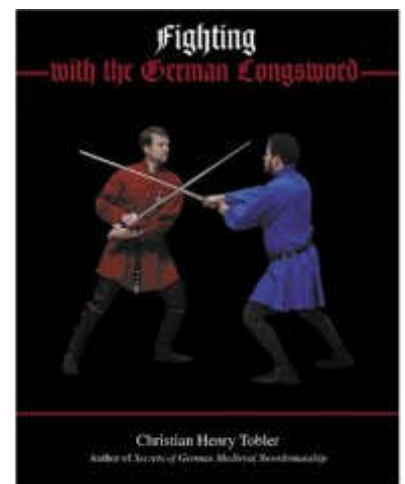
[Click HERE to Watch the Video](#)

Authentic German Longsword Techniques

Unlike a lot of the 'sword fighting' garbage on Youtube, these two guys demonstrate some authentic longsword techniques from the German tradition, a very aggressive style of medieval swordsmanship.



"While it might not look as fancy as all the spinning, twirling 5 minute fights from the silver screen, these techniques ain't Hollywood, these techniques are designed from real life and death historical encounters"



For anyone interested in learning the German Longsword style, [Fighting With The German Long Sword](#) by Christian Tobler is a must have...

SWORD BUYERS DIGEST:
MAGAZINE



SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscribing to the Sword Buyers Digest is absolutely FREE, to sign up visit my subscriptions page [here](#)

ENQUIRIES

Any suggestions, comments, press releases or advertising enquiries are more than welcome.

Please direct your correspondence to:
Paul@sword-buyers-guide.com

“That’s All Folks!”

I hope you enjoyed this issue of the Sword buyers Digest Magazine as much as I enjoyed putting it together for you! :-)

Until next issue, stay safe and have fun with swords!

Paul Southren



**SBG Sword Store Special Discount Cheness Katana Offer!
(Sorry, USA Subscribers Only)**



- **Bonus FREE Sword Stand**
- **AND a FREE Cleaning Kit**

Naturally, since at this price I am literally almost giving them away - this special offer is strictly limited to orders placed before midnight **31st of October 2006**.

Don't miss out! Stock is limited and I have no intentions of repeating this special price, so if you want one, you'd better get in quick...



US\$229.99 + \$20 Shipping

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Offer Expires 31st October 2006.

Discount valid only on orders within the continental US. Limit of one sword per customer.



With a tsuba based on an actual antique and a natural hamon the Kaze is pure class all the way....

With a differentially hardened blade that compares favorably to swords twice its modest US \$299.99 price tag, the Cheness Kaze is a great value for money sword.

And if you've seen my full [review](#) of this traditionally forged Katana, you'll have some idea of exactly what it is capable of...

Well, now for the first time ever, I am proud to be able to offer the Cheness Kaze Katana directly from SBG at a ridiculously low price of just **US\$229.99 + \$20 shipping within the US!**

Not only do you get everything this sword normally comes with such as a *display box*, *sword bag* and of course, *lacquered saya*, but with special offer you also get: