

OLD COUNTRY

EDC



KJ OF THUNDERHORSE BLADES MAKES KNIVES IDEAL FOR CAMP, RANCH OR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON | PHOTOS BY KAREN JONES

Having grown up in Colorado and lived in New Mexico for a while, I've always had a fondness for Native American style. When I first saw KJ's work at ThunderHorse Blades, it reminded me a lot of home.

I am drawn to her natural handle materials, Native American trimmings and the completely utilitarian designs—especially when it comes to her favorite style to make, the bowie. Though I like aesthetically pleasing knives, I do not collect safe queens, so when I see a knife that has “safe queen” looks with ranch hand functionality and build, my attention is piqued. I love a great-looking knife, but I have to be able to use it—and that is where ThunderHorse Blades comes in.

01 An Impressive History

Being raised by a career military father who loved the Old West, KJ learned responsible gun and knife handling from a young age. This eventually led to her becoming a Wild West entertainer all over the country, performing tricks such as trick shooting, trick horses, trick roping, bull whips and knife throwing—which led to her becoming inducted into the International Knife Throwers Hall of Fame. While working at the ESEE booth at Blade Show in 2011, she met Justin Gingrich of Gingrich Tactical and her knifemaking career began.

02 The Challenges

KJ found the transition to be challenging. She had no background, and she went from a lifelong career to one that had no safety net. Coming into a male dominated industry made it a little

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Instagram: @ThunderHorseBlades
Facebook: Facebook.com/ThunderHorseBlades

difficult for her to find her niche, but from what I can tell she has settled in very nicely. Although she is very good at promoting others, she finds it difficult to promote herself. Once people see her work, however, that will not be much of an issue any more.

03 Inspired

When asked who inspires her, KJ had a hard time narrowing it down from the many great talents out there. However, she does find a favorite in Fine Art Knives by Dellana for her functional works of art. KJ finds makers who utilize their culture, heritage and background in their designs to be inspiring. “I almost know who they are by looking at their work,” KJ says.

04 Mediums

Though her favorite steels evolve with experience, and she still wants to experiment with different types, KJ has been loving the high-tech stainless steels for everything from EDC belt knives to chef's knives, while also having a lean towards Damascus. When it comes to handle materials, she likes to keep it natural and opts for burl woods, turquoise, stone, antler and bone. She also plans to start making her own handle material and incorporating personal items from the client.

05 True Custom

Though she has a competition legal throwing knife coming soon with a production company, all of KJ's knives are custom and she loves taking customer requests. But keep watching her line for more of her own designs and options.

06 Ordering

KJ does her business via Instagram and Facebook. A website is on its way—but until then, contact her through social media, email her at sixgunskj@gmail.com or call 682-777-1193 to purchase or custom order a knife. Her typical waiting period is a speedy two to six weeks; now would be a good time to get in touch with her before her books fill up. **KI**

GETTING PERSONAL

City: Small town near Fayetteville, NC
Education Background: High School, Career
Years Making Knives: 3

