

PASSION TRIFECTA

CURTIS HAALAND MAKES EVIDENT HIS LOVE FOR THE CRAFT

STORY BY JOSHUA SWANAGON | PHOTOS BY CURTIS HAALAND

They are sharp, pointy and beg to be held. When I stumbled on the work of Curtis Haaland at Free Hill Blades I found myself wanting to reach into my computer screen and pick one up. It was almost a compulsion. Every once in a while you discover the work of someone that makes you ask yourself, "How have I never seen this maker before?" Curtis is one such maker.

01 An Early Start

To look at Curtis's work it would be difficult to guess that he is only 21, but perhaps more impressive is the fact that he got his start when he was a wee lad of 17. Coming from an artistic family, Curtis has always loved art, knives and working with his hands. One day his father told him he could put those passions together and make knives. We now get to reap the rewards of his father's advice.

02 The Challenges

Curtis finds challenge in designing and creating something that is visually flawless, comfortable and useful. However, he finds his biggest challenge in gaining the notoriety to make money doing what he loves most, although I think this will be a short-lived problem.

03 Inspired

A couple of years after Curtis started on his knife-making path he met Burt Foster at a hammer-in at Haywood Community College. Curtis has since gotten to know Burt and learn from him. For this reason, Curtis

cites Burt as his biggest inspiration, along with other knife-making dynamos, such as Nick Wheeler, Jason Knight, Scott McGhee and Michael Quesenberry.

04 The Materials

When it comes time to start working on a new knife Curtis likes to reach for the W1 tool steel due to its round stock and ability to take a good hamon, which lets him get really creative. For his handle scales he prefers African blackwood because it looks classy when finished and has a subtle wood grain.

05 Dual Talents

When Curtis is working on custom blades he likes to forge, giving them that extra personal touch. For any of his more standard designs he uses stock removal.

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Instagram:
@freehillblades

Website:
FreeHillBlades.com

06 Ordering

Working out of his Gray, Tennessee, shop, Curtis provides custom blades and more standard designs that he can customize with different handle materials and blade finishes. He does take customer requests and will take direction from the customer, but he executes the design work himself.

If you would like some custom work from Curtis, you can expect your wait time to be a staggering two to three weeks—now that is fast. However, I have a feeling that after people start seeing his work the time frame will get longer. I recommend that you get while the getting is good. Judging by his work, it isn't going to be long before he will be in demand. **KI**

