


Who Will Shine in '09?

THOSE IN THE KNOW
REVEAL THE MAKERS THEY
THINK WILL BE HOT IN THE
COMING MONTHS

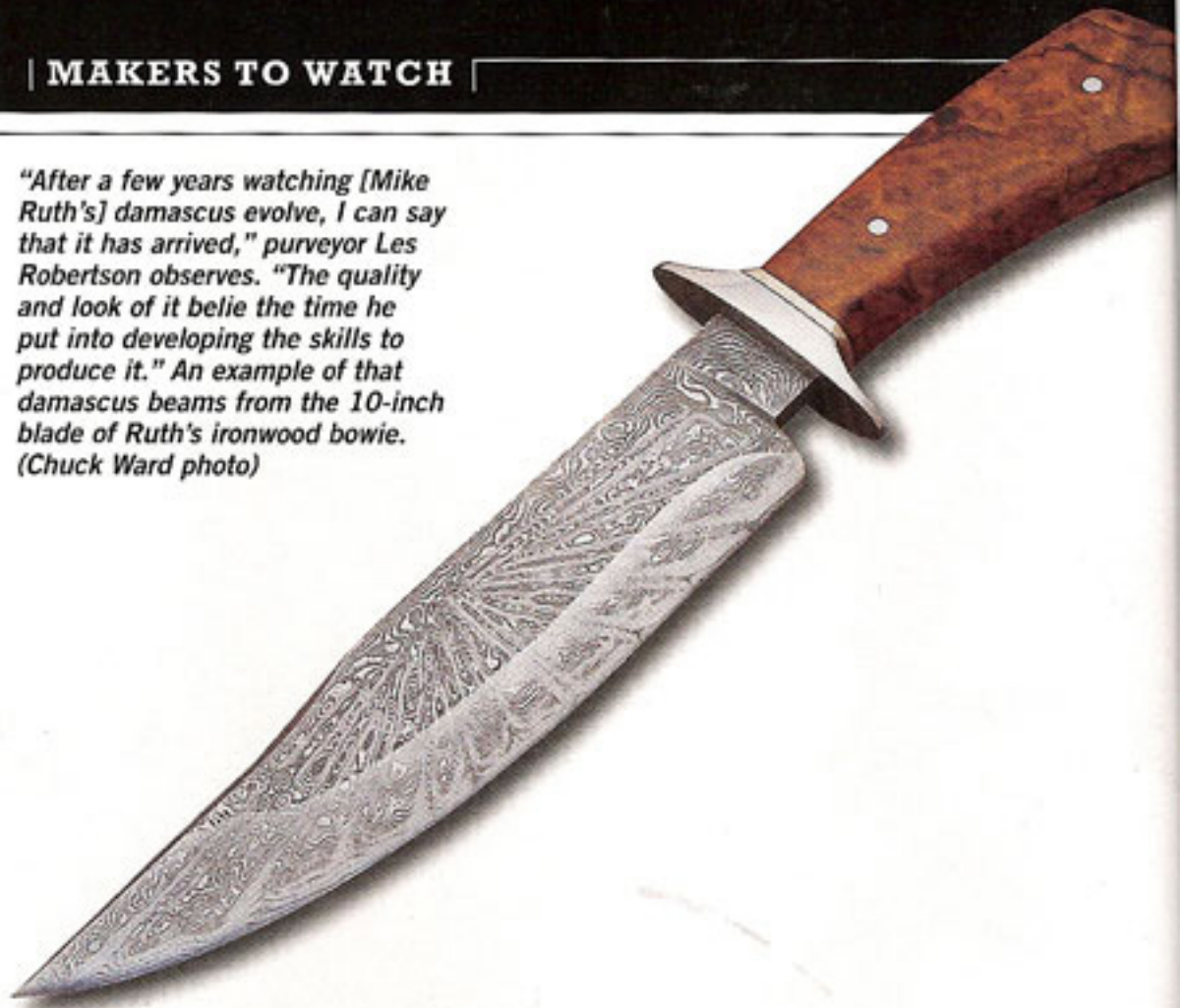
By Mike Haskew



Collector Kevin Jones says 17-year-old Kyle Royer is "producing hunters, fighters and bowies to a high degree that even has many accomplished makers amazed." Royer's mammoth ivory bowie sports an 8.5-inch damascus blade of 1084 and 15n20 steels. The maker's list price for a similar piece: \$1,250. (SharpByCoop.com photo)

On the other end of the age spectrum from Kyle Royer is 67-year-old Emil Bucharsky. "Emil is one of the most promising makers I've seen in some time," notes BladeGallery.com's Daniel O'Malley. "He is forging both carbon and damascus steels, as well as working in precious metals." Bucharsky's "Quiller" boasts a 3.25-inch blade of a twist-pattern damascus in 1095 carbon and L6 tool steels. BladeGallery.com's price: \$985. (BladeGallery.com photo)

"After a few years watching [Mike Ruth's] damascus evolve, I can say that it has arrived," purveyor Les Robertson observes. "The quality and look of it belie the time he put into developing the skills to produce it." An example of that damascus beams from the 10-inch blade of Ruth's ironwood bowie. (Chuck Ward photo)



De Wet and Wild

South African De Wet Van Zyl is a headlining up-and-comer for Daniel O'Malley, president of Bladegallery.com. "De Wet is apprenticing under [ABS] master smiths Heather and Kevin Harvey in Belfast, South Africa," O'Malley remarks. "Working under their watchful eye has given De Wet an appreciation for fit and finish that normally takes makers many years to find. Many of his pieces are collaborations with Kevin and Heather. He has a playful style that has set a direction for these collaborative pieces."

O'Malley says Emil Bucharsky, Erik Fritz and Chris Owen are rising stars. "Emil is one of the most promising makers I've seen in some time," O'Malley comments. "At 67, he is forging both carbon and damascus steels, as well as working in precious metals. Erik has done a lot of work under [ABS] master smith Shane Taylor, and most of Erik's knives fit into the working group, both chute knives and hunters. At 41, Chris is a tool-and-die maker by trade. His silver-wire-inlaid handles are particularly well done and have a [Blade Magazine Cutlery Hall-Of-Famer] Bill Moran flair."

Other bladesmiths are gaining momentum as well, and demand for their knives is growing steadily. Robertson cites ABS master smith John White and ABS journeyman smiths Chuck Richards and Mike Ruth. "John's quality and abilities have grown exponentially over the last several

years," the purveyor observes. "He creates not only stunning works of art but also builds entry-level knives that are priced so that a seasoned collector will find them to be a true value, and a new collector has to at least consider them."

"Chuck's primary strength is in his blades, both carbon and damascus. The overall fit and finish of his knives is excellent, and this is particularly true of his big choppers. After a few years watching Mike's damascus evolve, I can say that it has arrived. The quality and look of it belie the time he put into developing the skills to produce it."

Jones agrees that White is a hot ticket among handforged enthusiasts these days. "He's very creative in his designs, which often incorporate complex elements such as frame handles, fileworked fittings, and a wide range of well-executed damascus patterns," the collector says.

Along with Bucharsky, ABS apprentice smith Dana Hackney and ABS journeyman smith Tommy Gann are worth watching, O'Malley adds. He relates that Hackney has shown a phenomenal design sense, often creating handles that provide a perfect feel in the hand, and differentially heat-treated blades with long-lasting, strong edges. Gann's hunting knives exhibit a Michael Price influence and have an heirloom feel, O'Malley opines.

Assuming The Mantle

Among tactical makers, Swain says he fa-

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