

THE MARTIALIST: YEAR FOUR, ISSUE TWO

Boker Jim Wagner Reality-Based Blade

Review by Tony Churchman

On a recent trip out of the country, my first line of personal protection was my Jim Wagner Reality-Based Blade, a tactical folder produced by Boker (www.bokerusa.com). After my wife and I did a little shopping, we relaxed in the hotel briefly and were looking through our purchases. When one of the plastic-sealed packages needed to be opened, the Reality-Based Blade was the only knife I had at hand. While I don't normally think defensive knives should do double-duty as utility blades, there's nothing wrong with using them as such in a pinch.

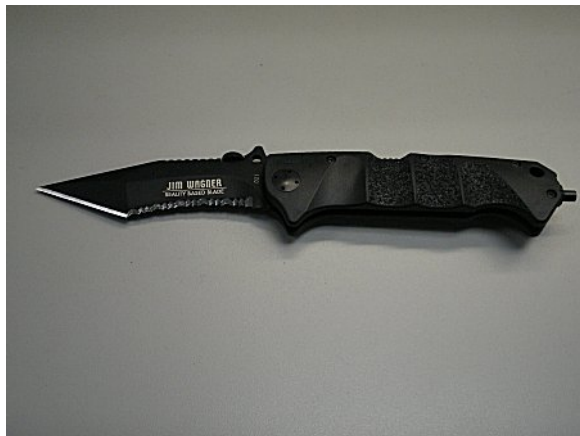


Photo by Phil Elmore

The wickedly sharp, needle-tip blade cut through the plastic wrap and, quite accidentally, deeply into the carton beneath it without any effort. "I think that might be a little too much knife for the job," my wife said.

"There is," I told her, pretending to be offended, "no such thing."

The fact is, though, that the Reality-Based Blade is an intimidating and very effective defensive tool. The Taiwanese

440C blade is partially serrated and ground on one side only (both the serrations and the rest of the edge are chisel ground). Overall length of the knife is just over 9 inches, with a blade of just under 4 inches. Boker's website lists the knife's weight as 6.2 ounces. Some of this weight is due to the 1mm steel liners reinforcing the plastic handle.



Photo by Phil Elmore

The knife's designer, Jim Wagner, is an experienced martial artist, a military veteran, and a former corrections and police officer who has also worked as a Federal Air Marshal. He has contributed to various martial arts publications and has instructional materials of his own available as part of his Reality-Based Personal Protection curriculum. Boker released Wagner's Reality-Based Blade and Armed Forces knife in 2006; it was at this point that *The Martialist* took note of him.

The Reality-Based Blade's fiberglass-reinforced handle is large and highly contoured, with deep swells for the finger grooves. Three of the four grooves have a nicely stippled, irregular texture molded into the plastic. There are grooves in the spine of the handle on either side, matching grooves in the

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rocker-bar lock and on the spine of the blade. None of these grooves are as sharply or deeply cut as I would like, but they're not bad.



Photo by Phil Elmore

The blade has an integral upper guard that complements the molded integral guards at the front and back of the handle halves. There is a molded lanyard hole, too, as well as a hole in the upper blade guard (Boker's website states that these holes are for "air, water and wilderness operations," presumably for lashing).



The knife is held together with Torx screws and, with the help of a suitable driver, even the ambidextrous thumb disk is removable. My sample opens smoothly and easily thanks to mirror-

polishing on the blade tang where it rubs against the lock during its arc. Lock-up is rock-solid with no play whatsoever.

The knife performed very well in various test cutting media, from rope and light plastic to the heavier plastic storage barrels that I use for testing thrusts. The needle tip is obviously relatively fragile, but that's the trade-off. Boker calls it a "gladius penetrating tip" and terms the curved, serrated portion of the blade (which shreds clothing and cuts harder media very easily) a "cutting kriss curve." There are two "blood grooves" on the flat side of the blade (the side on which the edges are not ground).



Photo by Phil Elmore

The thin, low-profile pocket clip is designed to look like a pen cap when complemented by the pen-cap striker. This is installed by removing the conical glass-breaker (a special wrench is provided) and swapping it out for the pen cap. There is no appreciable difference in performance between the strikers when used on glass (I know -- I tried both), but the conical striker hurts slightly more when used to hit a person. At high levels of force this difference is negligible. With either striker in place,

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the clip is reversible for left- and right-hand use, but for tip-up carry only.



Photo by Phil Elmore

the lashing points in the handle and blade.



Photo by Phil Elmore



Photo by Phil Elmore



Photo by Phil Elmore

The pen cap does, indeed, look like a pen. I found a coworker and asked him what he saw in my pocket. He incorrectly identified the knife as a pen, wondering what I was going on about when I started chuckling.

I took an instant liking to the Reality-Based Blade. It's large, ergonomic handle feels very comfortable in my mitts, which means the knife also handles quite well. It's a great impact tool, a passable emergency tool, and an able (and aesthetically aggressive) fighter. It's obvious quite a bit of thought went into the various features, such as the traction surface in the handle and

While the black-on-black, angular design does scream "tactical," I happen to prefer that (though there's little chance of explaining away this knife as a utility tool rather than a weapon). I congratulate Boker and Wagner on producing a tool that has protected me and mine while home and abroad.

That's the only reality in which I'm interested. ♠

Visit Jim Wagner's website online at www.jimwagnertraining.com