

INTERVIEW BY BEN STONE

# A WARRIOR'S LEGACY

An interview with eskrima master Chuck Canete

Master Chuck Canete is a Filipino from a formidable martial arts family – his grandfather is 'Cacoy' Canete, head of the worldwide Cacoy Doce Pares Eskrima organisation. After joining fellow senior master John Mac on a recent seminar tour of Australia's many Doce Pares branches, stretching from Broome in far northern Western Australia right across to Sydney, Canete gave this exclusive interview to *Blitz*.



From left: Master John Mac, Tony Familiar and Master Chuck Canete in Broome



Masters Canete and Mac demonstrate at Broome's Shinju Matsuri Festival

**M**aster Canete, what was it like growing up under Cacoy Doce Pares grandmaster, Cacoy Canete? Was it always hard training?

There was never a pressure from my grandpa (Grandmaster Cacoy) for us to really learn eskrima and train that hard. I grew up in this environment. In fact, I took my first baby steps with the eskrima sticks in my hands for support and balance, inside our gym.

As I was growing up, I slowly got drawn into the art as I witnessed my grandpa and my late dad, Master Edgar, in their daily trainings, and felt their excitement whenever they prepared for any tournament. Eventually I got hooked in to it.

The mere fact that I, myself, am a Canete, made me strive

harder to master the art of eskrima.

All Filipino martial arts, from what I understand, were primarily knife and sword systems, and the stick came in more as a training tool, then a sport. Does Doce Pares still have much focus on the blade-fighting arts, and is there direct cross-over with the stick and knife techniques?

At our gym, we also train in the blade-fighting arts and the stick-and-knife combination, which we call *espada-y-daga*. But we focus more on the use of sticks, since when we are on the streets, it's not everyday that we carry with us bladed weapons. So, what we did is focus more on stick-work, for it is the extension of the hand. This way, we will be trained how to utilise anything as a weapon, even if it's not sharp.



You're also a judo champion in Cebu – how does that complement your eskrima training, and what other arts have you studied?

Judo has helped me especially in balance-breaking. One can also incorporate its techniques with eskrima, where you can apply

locks and throws using the stick as leverage. This art is called eskrido, which was founded by my grandpa, Grandmaster Cacoy.

Do you think it's necessary or advisable for Filipino martial arts practitioners to employ some other arts as well to give them a completely rounded fighting arsenal?

## OLISI BASICS >>



Master Chuck Canete (left) and Master John Mac (right) begin with salutation, an old eskrima tradition.



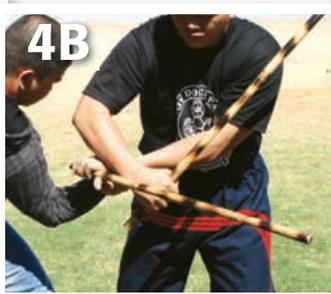
From this ready position, Master Canete moves to attack...



...striking to the head, so Mac applies a forehead rising-block...



...and twists and applies pressure to begin to unbalance Canete's strike, ready for a disarm.



Close up: Mac uses his forearm and bodyweight to apply pressure to Canete's wrist.



Mac disarms Canete while applying further pressure to unbalance him...



...and finishes him off with a strike to the head.

# PANGAMOT VS OLISI



**1**  
Canete readies with his olisi (stick) to attack Mac...



**2**  
...but as Canete is about to strike, Mac applies finger-lock and pulls down to start to unbalance his foe...



**3**  
Canete strikes at Mac, who, while maintaining control of the finger, deflects and parries the attack with his left hand...



**4**  
...redirecting Canete's force backwards, enabling Mac to apply a wrist-lock with both hands and further unbalance Canete.



**5**  
Mac continues in a flowing motion to a takedown...



**6**  
...then disarms Canete and finishes with a strike to the head.

A true martial artist should be broad-minded. Anything that could help him improve himself would be to his advantage.

**Master Canete, you're a lead actor in the Filipino martial arts TV series *Olisi*. How does stick-fighting translate to the screen – is there much relationship between the real fighting/training and what you produce for TV?**

Yes, there is. Every time our fight director choreographs, he waits for my nod first, because I don't want to execute fight scenes that are very far from reality. So, I made sure that the fight sequences, though cinematic, were more realistic and convincing to the viewing public.

**How important is the competitive aspect of the sport in preserving and propagating**

**the martial art of Cacooy Doce Pares eskrima?**

It is very important because it will encourage or motivate the practitioners to train harder to win in tournaments. Moreover, during these competitions, the participants could establish camaraderie, even though they come from different eskrima clubs. It is also a chance for them to come together for the love of the art, which in a way, makes FMA grow stronger and attractive to others, especially those who are not yet into martial arts.

**Has the sport changed the art at all, in your opinion?**

In my opinion, yes it has. Some rules in the tournament prohibit a player to execute a technique during the fight. Also, sometimes during a tournament fight, some players forget to block the strikes because they have the protective devices on, whereas in a real fight, you can't afford to ignore your opponent's strikes. You must block them to protect yourself. So, I should say that if you are a good tournament fighter, it doesn't stop there. You should practise the combat aspect of the art as well.

**What military/law-enforcement branches do you teach, and is the training specialised for them? What sort of things do you teach them?**

Doce Pares has been in partnership with the [Philippines] military and police forces. My grandpa, Grandmaster Cacooy, used to handle seminars for Presidential Security personnel and local police units. In my part, I had the chance to train some of the local police units in our area under the sponsorship of our City Government in Cebu, Philippines. The training program focused on weapon-disarming techniques and ways

to neutralise an aggressor using the baton.

**Eskrima has been around for centuries and is heavily tied in to the history and culture of the Philippines. Is it still a heavily practised art in the Philippines today?**

Yes. In fact, we have more than a hundred eskrima clubs in our country that practise different styles and systems. So, we could be assured that the art will live on for many generations to come.

**Does the Doce Pares system of eskrima have a philosophical aspect or creed?**

We have no particular philosophy that we follow. But I can always remember my grandpa saying, "Practise continuously. Always be a step ahead of others, because we never know when a challenge comes." His words gave me a deeper and greater understanding on how important practise really is.

**Across the martial arts, there is much politics and competition between different styles and organisations, and in the Philippines there are many different schools of arnis/kali/eskrima. What is the martial arts scene like there – is there much sharing and exchange between schools, or does each style keep to itself?**

At present, most of the new generation of eskrimadors are open-minded. Some even cross-train just to satisfy their quest for more ideas. However, it is a reality that there are those who are overly cautious in sharing their skills in eskrima because of their experience in the past. Thus, they become more choosy in teaching their techniques to others.

**What did you think of your visit to Australia, and the Australian martial arts culture?**

The Australians are fantastic, especially the martial artists



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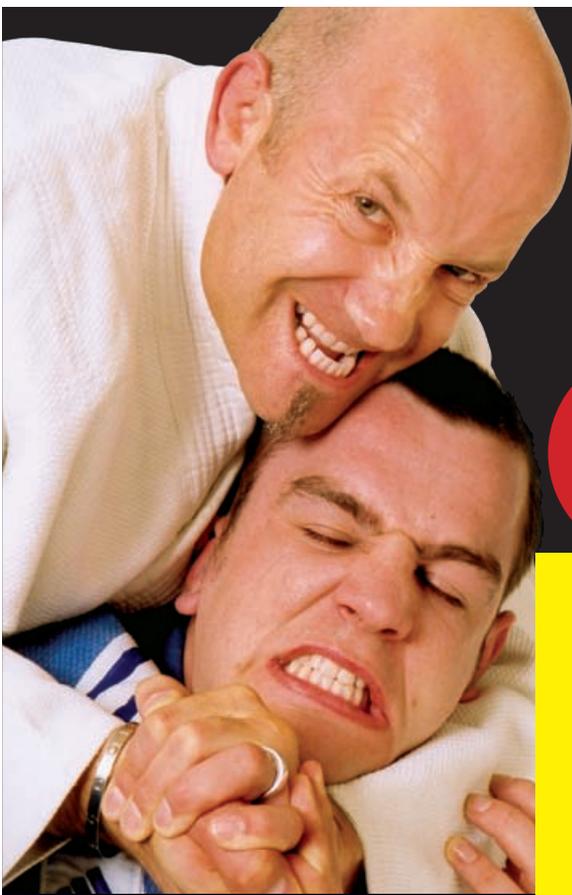


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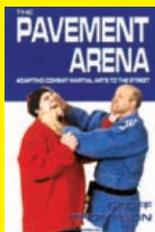
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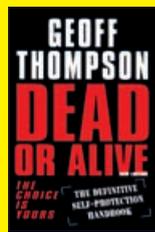
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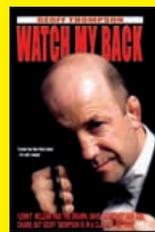
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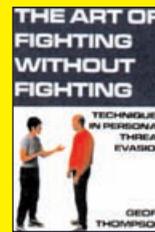
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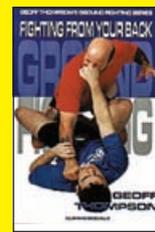
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## DOCE PARES DOWN UNDER

Since 1969, Broome in far northern Western Australia has held the *Shinju Matsuri* – Japanese for ‘the festival of the pearl’ – to celebrate Broome’s distinct multicultural heritage. That heritage incorporates Japanese, Chinese, Malay and Filipino cultures, which were all brought to Broome with those who came to work as divers and crewmen on the vast pearling fleet, along with the local Indigenous community.

In 2008 the Shinju Matsuri focused on Broome’s Filipino heritage and, along with the Broome Martial Arts Academy (BMAA), sponsored Master Chuck Canete and Master John Mac of the Cacoy Doce Pares eskrima organisation to visit Broome from the Philippines. As well as demonstrating at the festival, they undertook several workshops for practitioners of

Tony Familiarì’s taekwondo and eskrima school, BMAA, before heading off across the country.

During their nine days in Broome, Masters Canete and Mac performed six public demonstrations for many thousands of people, the majority of who had never seen or even heard about eskrima. Their aim was to show audiences a rounded presentation, so they may gain an appreciation of the Doce Pares art as whole.

To that end, their demonstration routine included the following:

- *Amara* – combinations of strikes and warming up
- *Pengke-pengke* – double-stick work, displaying the co-ordination of left and right hands
- *Sayaw* (forms) – an overview of eskrima principles, in particular, going from long range to close range
- The 12 strikes of the Cacoy Doce Pares (CDP) system
- The 12 blocks of CDP
- Disarms and counters
- Four counter-strikes
- Medium-range multiple counters
- Pre-arranged sparring drills to work attack and defence
- The *Pinuti* blade (the Cebuano fighting blade) – applying eskrima fundamentals to dealing with a ‘live’ blade.
- Sports sparring (performed by two students from the Broome Martial Arts Academy)
- *Eskrido* demonstration – throwing techniques that blend eskrima with aikido, judo and jujitsu
- Controlled sparring with the application of disarming techniques.
- Eskrido applications of close-quarter sparring
- *Pangamot* – empty-hand techniques from CDP to defend against a dagger,

snatch a dagger and also *tapi-tapi* drills combining the two.

- *Sayaw* (forms) using stick and dagger.
- During the public demonstrations, Tony Familiarì narrated the story, explaining for the audience how, from the basics, the advanced movements evolve. “The masters wished that in the demonstration and the narration story what people were seeing was much more profound than just entertainment; they were witnessing an elementally integrated curriculum and programme of Cacoy Doce Pares,” said Familiarì. “They are mighty ambassadors; the newspapers, and television and the talk of the Broome township was about the masters’ spectacular, educational and informative demonstrations of Filipino martial arts.”

we’ve met. We were amazed by the warmth and enthusiasm shown to us during our one-month stay there. We saw by the look on their faces, their intense desire to learn more about eskrima. It was unbelievable!

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank *Blitz* magazine for the chance to share something with your readers. Also many thanks to Master Tony Familiarì and family, the Shinju Matsuri Board for inviting us to perform during their Festival in Broome, Grandmaster Martin Gardiner, Grandmaster Vince Palumbo and family of Adelaide, Master Craig Hayward and family of Sydney, Master Dominic Lavalle and family of Wollongong, Marcroy Tarce and family of Alice Springs, and Louie Sayson and family of Darwin. 

## PANGAMOT VS KNIFE



1 Canete readies to attack Mac with a knife...



2 ...but Mac immediately applies a finger-lock and pulls down to start to unbalance him.



3 Canete thrusts at Mac’s stomach, but Mac deflects and grabs the knife-hand while maintaining control of the finger.



4 Close up of control of finger and knife-hand.



5 Mac redirects Canete’s attack backwards with a twisting wrist-lock...



6 ...and continues in a flowing motion to take down, disarm and finish his attacker.