



THE BEST TV OF 2015
With more original shows each year, creating a Top 10 list is a cruel process guaranteed to miss some of the best >> D3

COMICS & PUZZLES >> D4-5
TELEVISION >> D6



CINDY ELLEN RUSSELL / CRUSSELL@STARADVERTISER.COM

Above, Calvin Domen, left, and Cris Haas incorporate capoeira into their improvised swordplay at the Hawaii Jedi Saber Academy. Nate Young, at left, the class instructor, poses with a lightsaber. The Jedi academy uses different types of European and Asian swordplay to create a unique style.

Lightsabers offer an upper-body workout for participants in the Hawaii Jedi academy

By Deborah Manog
Special to the Star-Advertiser



Jedi knight fitness might sound like a clever cover for science fiction geeks who want to dance around in "Star Wars" costumes, but Keith Mylett, founder of the Hawaii Jedi Saber Academy, insists that the workout is out of this world.

Of course, no one gets cut in half in Mylett's academy, which was inspired by similar academies in Singapore, Europe and on the mainland. The lightsabers aren't real and there's nothing sharp about them. They're made from heavy-duty aluminum rods that light up with a glowing laserlike effect. But the blades, which are 2 to 3 feet long, require effort to swing.

"You get a whole-body workout, specifically upper-body," Mylett said. "When you're swinging that around, you start feeling the burn in your arms. The sabers are not toys. They're sparring quality, so they have some weight to them."

The 38-year-old English teacher from Kalani High School is no stranger to high-caliber fitness. Mylett has been training in the style of parkour for more than five years and is the founder of Precision Parkour in Kakaako. He regularly leads classes in the fluid blend of running, gymnastics and ninjalike moves.

The creative acrobatics of parkour, combined with the hype over the newest installment in the "Star Wars" franchise, which arrives in theaters Friday, felt like the perfect recipe for the lightsaber academy, which Mylett opened in November.

"It's amazing that we can turn something that we've been into since we were kids into a friendly sparring type of thing, and it's actually a surprising workout," Mylett said.

The Jedi academy takes different types of European and Asian swordplay, including Japanese

Please see JEDI, D2



HAWAII JEDI SABER ACADEMY

>> Next class:
Jan. 15
>> Where: 556 Reed Lane
>> Time: 8:30-9:30 p.m.
>> Cost: \$30 per class or \$20 per class if you have your own sparring-quality lightsaber
>> Reserve a spot by contacting keith@precisionparkour.com.



For a video on lightsaber sparring, visit staradvertiser.com

JEDI

Continued from D1

kendo, and fight choreography to create a unique, flashy style, according to Nate Young, the class instructor.

"The class is mainly about lightsaber dueling, going with the 'Star Wars' universe, and hopefully people have fun, try it out and learn a little bit of action choreography, swordplay, and look cool doing it," he said.

The University of Hawaii student is easy to spot — he's the one in the room wearing a black robe that drapes his body and falls to just below his knees. Young, 25, grew up as a fan of the "Star Wars" films. The academy seems to be a sweet marriage between Young's 17 years of studying martial arts and his fascination with "Star Wars."

Jedi beginners might not find the class strenuous at first because it takes time to learn swordplay, Young said.

"When you get comfortable, you can play around more and feel more of a

workout when you move around so much," Young said.

The first class, held on a Tuesday last month, drew students who were "Star Wars" fans, including one who brought his own lightsaber. They warmed up with exercises to get the blood flowing in the upper body and loosen the wrists, arms, shoulders and neck. Then they learned four basic sword strikes and practiced whipping the lightsabers through the air before the real fun began: one-on-one lightsaber combat.

Charlotte Harris, a 16-year-old student from La Pietra — Hawaii School for Girls, had no martial arts experience, but was practically a natural. Although a relatively new fan of "Star Wars," she wielded her lightsaber like an extension of her arm, smacking her opponent's lightsaber so fiercely that she forced her backward. And when Mylett challenged her, Harris struck so aggressively, he ran away.

"She's scary!" Mylett said. As the class grows more



DISNEY

COMING
TOMORROW

>> **Episode IV:**
"Star Wars"
treats

advanced, more acrobatics and jumps will be added, but even without the upper-level stunts, the Jedi academy is still a good workout.

"I'm sweating a good bit. This definitely works your arms a good amount," said 23-year-old Justin McClure. The "Star Wars" fan had already been searching for a lightsaber on the Web and rushed his order when he found out about the Jedi academy.

Calvin Domen wasn't sure



CINDY ELLEN RUSSELL / CRUSSELL@STARADVERTISER.COM

Yukari Mizushima fends off Charlotte Harris' offense during the Jedi academy's debut course, held at CrossFit Hawaii gym in Kakaako.

what to expect from the class. But by the end of the night, he felt tight across his back and throughout the rest of his upper body.

"It was fun, a good workout, more of a workout than I thought it would be," said Domen, 39.

At the end, partners developed their own moves and showed off their fight sequences to the entire class. For Neal Torres, a 34-year-old assistant coach at Precision Parkour, this was his favorite part of the night.

"I liked the choreography and especially planning our own patterns," he said.

He and his sparring partner put together a sequence of 10 strikes, complete with a backward-style dodge reminiscent of "The Matrix" and a finishing move that sent his partner flying backward a few feet (for added effect).

When the class was over, Mylett concluded the Force was strong in his gym.

"Look around the room," he said, pointing to smiling, sweaty students. "They want to come back. I think I'm gonna need to get more lightsabers."