

# BUDOKON

Where yin and yang come together

BY LEIGH CREWS



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BUDOKON

The martial arts meet yoga in a whole new way through Budokon, a crossover practice that takes its name from the Japanese word for "way of the spiritual warrior." According to its creator, Cameron Shayne, Budokon is a fusion practice that seamlessly blends the heat, energy, rhythm and repulsion (yang concepts) of traditional martial arts with held postures and introspection (yin concepts) of Hatha Yoga and meditation. According to celebrities such as Courtney Cox and Jennifer Aniston, Budokon also helps keep them toned, buff and red-carpet ready.

Budokon's inspiration grew out of decades of continuous study that Shayne has devoted to the practice of martial arts and yoga. Beginning at the age of 12, he studied Moo Duk Kwon, and later Olympic style Tae Kwon Do and other martial art disciplines. At 21, Shayne began studying Hatha Yoga with Cindy Lee at Om Yoga in New York, and began to immerse himself in yoga with the same intensity he had applied to martial arts. This duality of the body-weight-only styles of martial arts and yoga training eventually became the foundation upon which Shayne has built the Budokon program.

According to Shayne, Budokon is "completely about natural movement." No equipment other than your own body is needed for the workout. As a martial artist, Shayne is not impressed with the high-tech equipment available in gyms today. "Machinery has handicapped us—taken us out of our bodies and made us less aware of our bodies," he said, adding that the goal of Budokon is to focus on intelligent movement—working in all planes in an

integrated, sophisticated way. Fitness professionals will recognize the compound movement, multi-planar style of Budokon as an elite form of functional training.

Budokon techniques are designed to explore the body's full range of movement. It is "intelligent movement," as Shayne would say. With continuing practice, students can improve their agility, balance, control, flow, power and speed.

The workouts begin with seated meditation and then move into flowing yoga and combination moves with martial arts influencing the yoga flow. Next is a combination of martial arts standing and ground-based techniques, kicks and punches. Many techniques involve plyometrics and all have interesting names such as Floating Frog Vinyasa, Crocodile or Kimodo Dragon. Gradually, the intensity is brought back down and the practice ends with seated meditation. A 75-minute Budokon class can burn some serious calories and help participants sculpt a lean body.


The Budokon system and its progression of study is structured similarly to many of the martial arts, in that students prove proficiency through a hierarchy of earned belts: red, blue, purple, brown and black. Budokon students typically take up to a year to complete even a Single belt. Those studying to become Budokon instructors may begin teaching once they have achieved red belt or higher status, but only in the curricula they have mastered. Teacher training is a lengthy process. Kancho (founder) Shayne said he is a patient mentor and often can be found leading teacher training workshops

teachers to remain true to his system and value quality over quantity.

Just as there are those who want to do more than practice yoga, there are others who want a deeper experience of Budokon. They are taught the six pillars of the Budokon Living Arts curriculum: physical fitness, optimal nutrition, critical thinking, relating to others, emotional control and environmental awareness. Students of the complete program and those aspiring to teach can pursue comprehensive training in several U.S. cities, including Boston, Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

Budokon physical practice is available at Equinox, The Sports Club/LA and a growing number of other clubs. Budokon is also offered internationally in Canada, Great Britain and Japan.

For those without a Budokon studio nearby, Shayne has released a series of instructional DVDs entitled *Power and Agility*, *Strength and Balance* and *Flow and Flexibility*. Shayne envisioned his DVD series as a comprehensive home study course. He suggests that everyone watch the tutorials first, using each as a learning tool for

A photograph of a man performing a handstand. He is shirtless, wearing dark blue athletic pants and a black waist strap. He is balancing on his hands, with his legs raised high and one leg extended upwards. The background is dark.

correct alignment and precision execution of the basic moves of Budokon. Practice the exercises in the tutorials and once you become proficient in the basis, challenge yourself with the workouts.

*Strength and Balance* is fast-paced, beautiful and extraordinarily advanced. During the DVD, Shayne moves into a series of "rolling crows" from plow posture into crow, the crouching yoga hand-stand, and back several times in sequence.

For Shayne, Budokon is much more than a workout. It is his life's work. "The way you move in an asana is the way you do everything in life," he said. "We live in a task-oriented world where working out becomes just another task to get done." In Shayne's view, this leads to alienation from true and important realities of life. His solution? "Budokon helps you become more tuned in." So sayeth the Kancho. **AF**

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