

At a glance**BC Rich Zoltan Bathory Signature ASM**

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: Maple, thru-body
FINGERBOARD: Ebony with Standing Lion inlay
FRETS: 24 jumbo
SCALE: 25½"
PICKUPS: 2x Rockfield Mafia humbuckers
CONTROLS: 1x volume, 1x tone (push-pull coil-split), 3-way pickup selector
HARDWARE: Chrome Floyd Rose Original Series vibrato, Grover Mini Rotomatic machineheads
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Onyx with ebony fingerboard (shown), Onyx with maple fingerboard, Natural quilt maple with maple fingerboard
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BC Rich Zoltan Bathory Signature ASM

£899

Five Finger Death Punch guitarist's new model gets the thumbs up

This guitar is a metal riffer's dream. The tonal range of Zoltan's ASM runs from singlecoil sweet to full-on brutality

Pickups ■
 The tonal versatility of the powerful Rockfield Mafia humbuckers took us by surprise

■ **Fingerboard**
 The Standing Lion inlay adds some class to the plain ebony board

■ **Bridge**
 Zoltan's ASM comes loaded with a genuine Floyd Rose Original Series vibrato

Zoltan Bathory is the founder and one of the guitarists of metal band Five Finger Death Punch. This guy's been getting some major props for his incendiary playing recently, featuring in TG's Modern Heavy Metal feature last issue. He's also received a new BC Rich signature axe, based on the existing Assassin Pro model. Zoltan's guitar takes that metal blueprint and runs with it.

Bathory's custom spec Assassin couldn't be any more macho if it sported Burt Reynolds' *Smokey And The Bandit*-era moustache. It has a pointy reversed headstock, Mafia humbuckers, a Standing Lion fretboard inlay, wearing a knuckle duster crown (FFDP's logo) and brandishing a sword, and the volume and tone knobs are shaped like handgun cylinders. It's such an aggressive-looking beast we reckon it could get a part in *The Expendables*.

The good news is that you don't have to be a brute to handle Zoltan's guitar. The slim-profile neck and 24 jumbo frets make it a joy to play, regardless of what size your hands are. You couldn't ask for better upper fret access. And while Zoltan's crushing tone is achieved by fitting his guitars with a custom heavy gauge string set (high to low: .013, .017, .028, .038, .048

and .062) and tuning down to B, BC Rich has played it safe and fitted light gauge strings.

The original Assassin Pro model boasts active EMG humbuckers but Zoltan has chosen a deuce of Rockfield Mafia pickups (fitted with powerful ceramic magnets) for the ASM, which can be coil-split for singlecoil tones. The Rockfield 'buckers are a revelation. Thanks to those ceramic magnets and that hard ebony fingerboard, brutal metal riffs cut through without the slightest hint of muddiness – even in the neck position. Taking Zoltan's cue we pumped up the mid control on our amp and the increase in attack blew us away. This guitar is a metal riffer's dream.

Conclusion: Zoltan's ASM is everything a great metal guitar should be. For a kick-off, it looks the absolute balls. Playability is first class and tuning stability is rock solid thanks to that Floyd Rose. Granted, you'll either love or hate the stylistic touches, and some of you may worry about the lack of fingerboard inlays. But don't let that put you off. Add the tonal range that runs from singlecoil sweet to full-on brutality and we reckon the ASM is worth every penny of its £899 price tag. No question.

Ed Mitchell

SUMMARY

For: Great spec, tone and playability

Against: Lack of fingerboard inlays

★★★★★

TG says... Assault and Bathory for metalheads



If you only have one inlay, why not make it a sword-waving, knuckle duster-crowned lion?