





Words: Ed Mitchell Photography: Joseph Branton

WYLDE AUDIO ROUND-UP

Black Label Society's Zakk Wylde has been one of metal's most prolific endorsees over the last decade, so it was a logical step for him to set up his own brand. Wylde Audio has kept us waiting for a year or so, but it was worth it – they're some of the best-playing and equipped metal guitars you can get your hands on...

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WHEN he's not trying to convince us that he's the metal Elton John with his anguished piano ballads, Zakk Wylde is one of the most exciting lead guitarists alive. And you wouldn't dare say otherwise to his face. The big man also knows his gear, and as such, has been head-hunted by Gibson, Epiphone, Dunlop, MXR and Marshall to represent their goods as a signature artist.

Now, the hirsute riff-monger of Black Label Society has launched his own guitar label tailored, unsurprisingly, to his metal brethren and sistren. Built by the good people of South Korea and distributed by Schecter, the Odin, Warhammer and Viking V share a bunch of features. At their core, all three guitars have mahogany bodies (with a flame maple top for our Odin's Death Claw Molasses finish), a three-piece maple neck with ebony 'board, Zakk's longtime favourite EMG 81/85 active humbucker layout and some cool finish options with daft names. C'mon... Death Claw Molasses? While Wylde has had a bit of fun with the names, his approach to the playability of the guitars is deadly serious. All three models on review here possess fat necks, 22 jumbo frets and a 14-inch fingerboard radius. These are not your typical metal guitars...

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WYLDE AUDIO ODIN £999

The hammer of the gods...

NAMED after the one-eyed Norse god with an affinity for ravens, in case you were wondering, the Odin is a cool twist on Zakk's beloved Gibson Les Paul format. The Death Claw Molasses model in our clutches has a mahogany body core topped with a slice of flame maple, but you can opt for the all-mahogany Blackout Bullseye model (£1,019). What's the difference? Well, you might simply prefer the classic Zakk Bullseye finish, but more importantly, maple adds some weight and top-end to a guitar. That said, we don't know how thick the maple is on the Death Claw Molasses. It could be a thin veneer to make the see-through finish look smart.

The Odin is the only Wylde model you can play sitting down. That's a good thing, 'cos this guitar is so addictive you might lose track of how long you've

been playing. It's that neck that's got us hooked. In common with the rest of the Wylde bunch, the Odin has a fat-profile neck, like something you'd find on a pre-'59 Gibson Les Paul. It's made from three pieces of maple and that, along with its substantial girth, makes the neck feel rigid. That's great news for tuning stability and tone.

The active EMG 81 bridge unit is a metal staple, stuffed with ceramic magnets for powerful output and sustain, and the razor-sharp response that you need with high-gain distortion. The 85 neck 'bucker is a bottomless pit of low-end, but in typical EMG style doesn't sound muddy when you kick in the dirt. The fat neck and bright attack of the Odin's ebony fingerboard propel riffs and licks through your amp. You really couldn't wish for a better guitar for metal.





WYLDE AUDIO WARHAMMER FR **£1,199**

Choose your weapon...

THERE'S no getting away from it. The Warhammer FR looks like a subtly tweaked take on Zakk's Gibson ZV Custom Signature mode – the one that looks like an SG had a Flying V shoved up its arse. The 'FR' part of the guitar's model designation refers to its satin black Floyd Rose Series 1000 double-locking vibrato. If you're not a whammy aficionado, you'll be pleased to know that this model also comes as a hardtail in the same Pelham Blue Vertigo finish, or our old friend, Death Claw Molasses. Both variants retail at £1,099. Again, the satin black hardware is completed with the same well-regarded Grover Rotomatic tuners found on the other Wylde models.

The playability of our review guitar is, like its Odin and Viking V brothers, exceptional. The string height is set

super-low, and it's buzz- and choke-free everywhere up the 'board, if you have a light touch. Heavy-handed shredders may want to lift the action a little. The Floyd Rose is recessed into the Warhammer's top for a bit of pull back and, as expected, maintains its tuning faultlessly, no matter how many times you dump the strings on the pickups. Speaking of which, the EMGs sound as brutal as they do on the Odin and Viking V, but there's an increase in clarity to our ears here likely thanks to the big hole occupied by the Floyd Rose.

The Warhammer FR is an out and out metal machine – with its looks, it could hardly have been anything else – and it excels in build quality, playability and sheer brute force. Add in a neck so sturdy that you could use to ram a hole through a concrete wall, and you have a spectacular package.

WYLDE AUDIO VIKING V **£1,099**

Come on feel the Norse...

THIS prickly customer has the same neck profile and flat 14-inch radius ebony 'board as the Odin and Warhammer. We really like that consistency. You know you're getting a great playing instrument; you just have to decide on the body style and finish. Tonally, the all-mahogany Viking V roars through its bridge pickup. Bottom-string riffs sound monstrous, while the articulation on extreme gain settings is impressive, meaning you can hear every note. Like the other two Wylde models here, the Viking V has two volume controls, and a master tone. The control nearest to the bridge is the neck pickup's volume, the one in the middle is for the EMG 81. The furthest away knob handles the tone.

Active EMG pickups are driven by a nine-volt battery. While there's no law against running an EMG 81/85 clean, they come to life when you dish out the

dirt. Suddenly, pinched harmonics feel easy to launch, and the sustain on offer is of Spinal Tap-esque proportions. That response is boosted further by the Viking V's string-through-body construction and the chubby neck.

This guitar kills, but before you make your mind up you should know there's a Bloodburst finish on offer at £1,099, also hardtail but with a quilted maple top, and a Floyd Rose-equipped version in the same Pinstripe finish as we have on test for £1,199. Also, while we like the stylised Les Paul headstock on the Odin, the fearsome-looking beast protruding from the Viking V and Warhammer couldn't look more metal if it were being used for a spot of pillaging by a horde of Norsemen. Yeah, Zakk Wylde has done a good job with these guitars, but with the Viking V, he's taken a well-worn concept and made it feel fresh and dangerous again. >>>



VERDICT

WHILE THE beautifully constructed, Wylde Audio guitars are aimed at a very specific audience – you know who you are – we like the fact that Zakk has dared to push through with his own preferences. The fat neck profile makes these guitars feel indestructible, addictive to play and way faster than you would

imagine. Those of you that think slim is best when it comes guitar necks and shredding may just be surprised how easy it is to adapt to some extra beef. The reward? Gargantuan tone and sustain – there isn't a rock or metal guitarist alive who couldn't use some of that.

WYLDE AUDIO ODIN £999

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany w/ flame maple top
NECK: 3-piece maple, set
SCALE: 625.5mm (24.6")
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 14" radius
FRETS: 22, jumbo
PICKUPS: 1x EMG 81 (bridge), 1x EMG 85 (neck)
CONTROLS: 2x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
HARDWARE: Satin black TonePros LPM04 Locking tune-o-matic bridge and tailpiece, Grover Rotomatic tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Death Claw Molasses (as reviewed), Blackout Bullseye (without maple top)
CONTACT: Westside Distribution 0844 326 2000 www.wyldeaudio.com

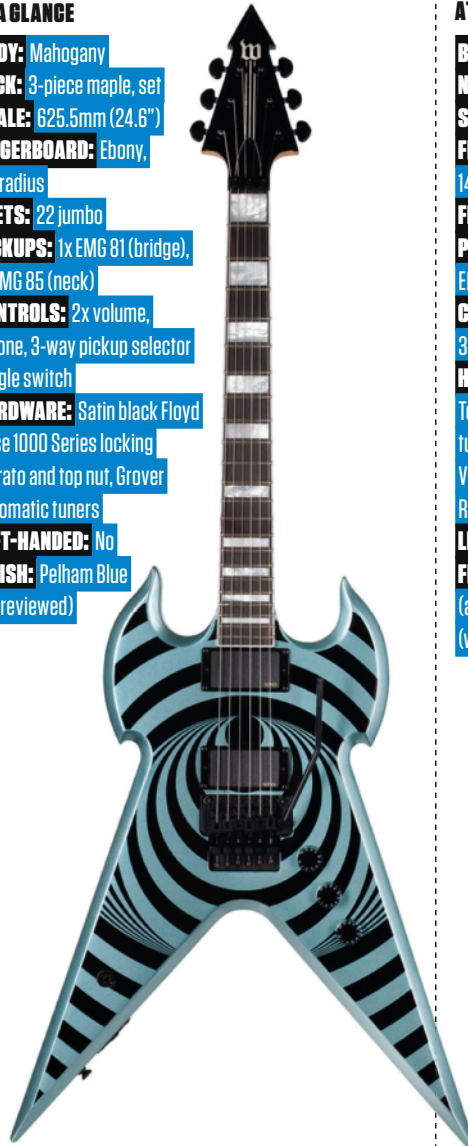


SUMMARY	FEATURES	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★							

WYLDE AUDIO WARHAMMER FR £1,199

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: 3-piece maple, set
SCALE: 625.5mm (24.6")
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 14" radius
FRETS: 22 jumbo
PICKUPS: 1x EMG 81 (bridge), 1x EMG 85 (neck)
CONTROLS: 2x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector toggle switch
HARDWARE: Satin black Floyd Rose 1000 Series locking vibrato and top nut, Grover Rotomatic tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Pelham Blue (as reviewed)



SUMMARY	FEATURES	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★							

WYLDE AUDIO VIKING V £1,099

AT A GLANCE

BODY: Mahogany
NECK: 3-piece maple, set
SCALE: 625.5mm (24.6")
FINGERBOARD: Ebony, 14" radius
FRETS: 22, jumbo
PICKUPS: 1x EMG 81 (bridge), 1x EMG 85 (neck)
CONTROLS: 2x volume, 1x tone, 3-way pickup selector switch
HARDWARE: Satin black TonePros T3BP Locking tune-o-matic w/ string-through V plate tailpiece, Grover Rotomatic tuners
LEFT-HANDED: No
FINISH: Pinstripe (as reviewed), Bloodburst (w/ quilted maple top)



SUMMARY	FEATURES	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	SOUND QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	VALUE FOR MONEY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	BUILD QUALITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	PLAYABILITY	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	OVERALL RATING	★★★★★							