



CONQUER AND CRUSH!

There's no room for self-pity in **Black Label Society** leader **Zakk Wylde's** world. Not even after losing his great friend and longstanding collaborator Ozzy Osbourne. As the guitarist and vocalist returns with a new BLS album, 'Engines Of Demolition', he tells *Howard Johnson* about his 'all in' philosophy of life...

2025 WAS A PARTICULARLY difficult year for Zachary Phillip Wylde, better known as hard rock guitarist Zakk Wylde, because 2025 was the year when he lost his friend, mentor, and on-and-off (though mostly on) musical collaborator Ozzy Osbourne. Their relationship went back almost 40 years to 1987, when the 20-year-old Zakk first heard that the former Black Sabbath frontman was looking for a guitarist to further his solo career and managed to get a demo tape to the singer via a loose connection. The young New Jersey's native's skills so impressed Ozzy that Zakk was immediately hired, and soon became synonymous with Ozzy's highly successful ongoing musical career. The pair shared stages, studios, and shenanigans all over the world, together creating some of the most memorable tunes of the era including 'Miracle Man', 'No More Tears', and 'Mama, I'm Coming Home'. So for the 59-year-old Wylde, dealing with Ozzy's death at the age of 76 just 17 days after the final Black Sabbath show 'Back To The Beginning' in Ozzy's native Birmingham was a particularly tough pill to swallow. Even though Ozzy had been suffering from well-publicised health issues for many years, his death on 22 July still came as a shock to Zakk.

"Oz and I were texting each other after 'Back To The Beginning'," he tells me. "He said, 'Zakky, we've got to make another album like [1991 album] 'No More Tears', the one where you were going through your Allman Brothers and Lynyrd Skynyrd phase, something heavy yet melodic.' I was surprised that he was ready to work again, so I said, 'Surely you must be kidding.' He said, 'I'm not kidding, and don't call me Shirley!' Typical Oz!"

Sadly that record will now never be made. But of course Zakk Wylde - the man who has so much rock in his soul that he's called two of his children Hendrix and Sabbath - can't stop now. Not while he's got his 'other' job as leader of Black Label Society, the band he formed back in 1998, still going gangbusters. The group's most recent release, 'Engines Of Demolition', is the latest in a canon of 12 studio albums that have seen the four-piece - now completed by guitarist Dario Lorina, bassist John DeServio, and drummer Jeff Fabb - become one

of the most potent acts currently doing business. So there's really no time in the Zakk Wylde mentality for feeling sorry for himself over the loss of his fast friend.

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"It's all part of life," he tells me. "And it's all about your mindset. When you face problems, you have to face them like a Viking, or like Genghis Khan and his Merry Men. Whatever challenges you have in life, you just have to take them on and just f*cking crush them and destroy them. That's it, man. There is no cowering down. There is no victim mentality. That shouldn't even enter your mind. Whatever it is that you have in front of you, you have to f*cking kill it."

I hope he doesn't include me in that statement...

ZAKK, DID OZZY'S PASSING GALVANISE YOU BY TRULY BRINGING HOME THE FACT THAT EVERY DAY IS PRECIOUS?

"No, because ever since I've been old enough to know that nothing lasts forever, ever since I've been a teenager, I've always been thankful and grateful for everything I have. I've always known how fragile life is, and that

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