01 / ORIGINS & PEOPLE

BLACKENED

Sweet Amber Distilling Co. / Whiskey, music and the work of a blender.

BLACKENED began with mature whiskey and a collaboration. Dave Pickerell built the founding blend; Metallica supplied its musical identity. Rob Dietrich later carried the project into rye, higher strengths and guest-maker releases. [1,4]



Launched: August 2018
Producer: Sweet Amber Distilling Co.
Approach: Sourcing, blending, finishing
Identity: Virtual producer in 2023 [14]

A partnership before a place

Pickerell selected mature North American whiskeys and used brandy casks for another layer of character. The commercial debut came in August 2018. Sweet Amber's later description as a virtual organization matters: this is a producer's story, without a documented owned BLACKENED grain-to-glass distillery. [1,3,14]

Founding maker, continuing blender

Pickerell died soon after the launch. Dietrich joined in June 2019 to oversee sourcing, blending and finishing. His experience connected whiskey experiments with concert work. Drew Kulsveen, Wes Henderson and Kaveh Zamanian later contributed to distinct collaborations. [2,4,8,11,14]

Watercolors are symbolic interpretations, not exact buildings or documentary portraits.

02 / HISTORY & PLACES

From a song to a whiskey family



1988 / 2018 A Metallica song supplies the name. The whiskey debuts in August 2018; Pickerell is remembered that November. [17,1,2]

2019 / 2020 Dietrich takes the blending role. Batch 100 joins whiskey with vinyl, a playlist and a zine. [4,6]

2021 The Black Album pack is Batch 114. The Willett collaboration opens Masters of Whiskey with Madeira-finished rye. [7,8]

2022 Rye the Lightning adds a double finish. Wes Henderson joins a bourbon collaboration linked to Team Rubicon. [10,11]

2023 Cask Strength reaches a national rollout after earlier limited releases. 72 Seasons and Rabbit Hole follow. [12,13,14]

2024 Rye the Lightning returns with a revised blend and cask approach, bottled at 92 proof. [15]

Read the place by its role

North America: the early sourcing landscape. **Kentucky:** named collaborators and selected whiskey origins. **The finishing cask:** another history, from brandy and Madeira to rum or Calvados. These roles do not establish a single BLACKENED production campus or visitor destination. [3,8,14]

The full website preserves thirteen individually illustrated milestones and detailed research qualifications.

03 / WHISKEY, STORIES & SOURCES

Follow the blend. Read the edition.

Selection and blending establish the base. Finishing then adds another cask history. The brand describes low-frequency sound during finishing as BLACKNOISE; its claimed effects remain maker accounts, without independent causal or quality proof here. [1,3,9]



Original, Cask Strength and Rye the Lightning are distinct branches. Masters of Whiskey changes the collaborator, base whiskey and finish. A thirteen-year component in the Rabbit Hole blend is not an age statement for the whole bottling. [12,14,15]

Batch 100 made listening part of the occasion: Dietrich chose songs and Lars Ulrich sequenced them. Built to Serve connected a guest collaboration with flood-relief work. The music and relationships help explain how the whiskey reached people, alongside the choices made in the blending room. [6,11]

Research notes & linked sources

Checked October 20, 2026. Former brand URLs now redirect to a retailer. Current production, ownership shares and a visitor facility remain unconfirmed. No current availability is promised. Specs are edition-specific; source 16 is a preserved historical index, source 13 contemporary secondary reporting.

[1] 2018 launch
[2] Pickerell memorial
[3] Pickerell interview
[4] Dietrich appointment
[5] Dietrich biography
[6] Batch 100
[7] Black Album pack
[8] Willett release
[9] Whiskey Business
[10] 2022 rye release
[11] Built to Serve
[12] Cask Strength rollout
[13] 72 Seasons report
[14] Rabbit Hole release
[15] 2024 rye release
[16] Historical catalog
[17] Song namesake
[18] 2023 signings