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ZHU
RISES FROM THE
ASHES WITH
BLACK MIDAS

BY MARK STEFANOS

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FOOD

WHAT'S POPPING UP

Duke's Malibu Reopens Post Palisades Fire

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Duke's Malibu, the popular beachfront restaurant that has been a Pacific Coast Highway landmark for almost 30 years and was the Malibu Sea Lion before that, officially reopens its doors last Friday March 13, just over one year after the Palisades Fire and subsequent mudslides forced the restaurant to close.

The January 2025 Palisades Fire devastated Malibu, and while Duke's remained standing, the restaurant was forced to close as the community began to recover from the disaster. Just as hope was building for a reopening, mudslides rushed down Las Flores Creek on Feb. 13, 2025, flooding the building and extending what would become a year-long closure. What followed was a months-long journey of recovery, as everything in the restaurant had to be replaced, including the furniture, ovens, refrigerators, and plumbing. It took months just to clear out the mud. What was expected to be a four-month job turned into a year.

Duke's brought back its core team along with many returning staff members and completed a comprehensive renovation while maintaining its classic beachfront atmosphere.

This year also marks the restaurant's 30th anniversary. Named after legendary Hawaiian surfer Duke Kahanamoku, the restaurant has carried on a tradition of beachfront dining that dates back over a century, from the Las Flores Inn in 1915 to the Sea Lion Restaurant in 1944, and Duke's since 1996.

On Wednesday, March 25, Tal Ronnen of **Crossroads Kitchen** will host a six-course collaborative dinner alongside Emmy Award-winning TV personality and chef Andrew Zimmern and James Beard Award-winning chef Michael Solomonov.

The \$95 prix-fixe experience will showcase bold, globally inspired, plant-forward dishes like schmaltzy pâté with grilled brioche and pickled carrots, charred leeks with oroblanco, pine nuts



Duke's Malibu

COURTESY OF STAN LEE



COURTESY OF CROSSROADS KITCHEN



Rokusho LA Cocktails

COURTESY OF EVERS STUDIO

and Calabrian chili crunch, sweet potato and feta bourekas with dill yogurt, grilled savoy cabbage with caper aioli and chickpea miso crisps, ricotta gnocchetti sardi with chanterelles and key lime pie with coconut whipped cream for dessert.

Reservations required and seatings run from 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and can be made on OpenTable.

Rokusho LA, where the bar program is led by Japanese mixologist Joe

Honda, who comes from the restaurant's flagship Rokusho Tokyo location, is celebrating National Cocktail Day on Wednesday, March 25, with three custom cocktails for the occasion.

Rokusho offers a curated vintage tequila program, assembled over the years by the owners through private collections and auctions. Many of the bottles date from the late 1980s through early 2000s, representing distilleries, production methods, and branding from earlier eras of tequila — many of which are no longer in production.

Alongside the vintage pours, Honda's cocktail menu explores unexpected cross-cultural combinations, combining Japanese ingredients and technique into agave-forward cocktails.

On the menu: The Matcha Plata featuring Clase Azul Plata, Doburoku milk syrup and matcha foam, the Yami et Aurum made with Hojicha-infused Nankai shochu syrup, and the Suzuki Sour, a mix of tequila or mezcal, Midori, Almatepec, lime syrup, and cilantro. **LA**

MUSIC

ZHU RISES FROM THE ASHES WITH 'BLACK MIDAS'

BY MARK STEFANOS



On a morning earlier this month, ZHU picks up the call from his home in Topanga, the same property that nearly burned to the ground less than 14 months earlier. His voice is measured, the same one that's guided thousands across dance floors for more than a decade. But 2026 ZHU is a ZHU galvanized by resilience — a man who lost his studio, packed a Sprinter van, and turned survival into 14 tracks of pure movement.

His new album, *BLACK MIDAS*, arrives April 24. Its opening seconds drop listeners straight into a dimly lit room. A voice asks a question: "What color do you see in my future?" The answer comes in Turkish, recorded during a short film shoot in Istanbul last December with a fortune teller: "All black."

The exchange sets the tone for a project soaked in shadowy club atmospheres and late-night grooves. It also reflects where ZHU finds himself in 2026: an

artist reconnecting with the dance floor after a turbulent year and a decade-long career that has taken him from mysterious newcomer to global electronic headliner. "2025 was survival mode," ZHU tells *LA Weekly*. "This album represents surviving."

Since breaking through with the smoky deep-house anthem "Faded" in 2014, a track that became a global club hit and earned him a Grammy nomination for Best Dance Recording, ZHU has built a catalog defined by cinematic electronic music and personal mystique. His earliest releases arrived anonymously, inviting listeners to focus on the music rather than the person behind it. More than a decade later, ZHU's music has grown into a sprawling creative universe of albums, immersive live shows, and conceptual visuals. *BLACK MIDAS*, due out in 2026, marks the next chapter, and, in many ways, a reset.

For years, ZHU's concerts have leaned toward spectacle: large festival stages,



COURTESY OF ARDA AY TAN

elaborate lighting rigs, and full live bands. Those shows helped propel him into the upper ranks of electronic music touring. But in recent years, he began craving something simpler.

That impulse led to the revival of his BLACKLIZT parties, a series of minimal DJ sets held in underground venues and warehouses around the world. “The first BLACKLIZT was in New York in this bank called Capitale,” he recalls. “It was me wanting to strip away everything — production, lights — and just go back to music only.” At BLACKLIZT, fans arrive dressed entirely in black, a ritual that turns the crowd itself into part of the aesthetic: no giant LED screens, no elaborate stage.

“BLACKLIZT is all about the DJ ZHU,” he says. “It’s about the essence of the energy on the dance floor.” The experience also reconnects him with the community that shaped his earliest musical instincts. When ZHU was still a student at USC, he was absorbing electronic music culture from the crowd, watching major producers transform laptop production into arena-scale performance.

“One of the most influential moments for me in terms of music was seeing Justice at Hard,” he says. “Seeing Deadmau5 at Coachella in Sahara. That was the first time it clicked in my brain that a person who can make music on a computer can now have a way to perform it and reach mass amounts of people. That was game-changing at that time, because prior to that, you had to sing, you had to be in a band or you had to rap.”

Those revelations helped shape a career that would soon explode. ZHU’s 2014 debut EP *The Nightday* introduced his blend of deep house grooves and breathy vocals, led by “Faded,” which climbed charts worldwide and became one of the defining dance tracks of the decade.

More than ten years later, he says the heartbeat of that music remains the same. “Since the beginning, the pulse was about electronic music,” he says. “It was about the dance floor.”

The road to *BLACK MIDAS* was anything but conventional. In January 2025, the devastating LA wildfires swept through the hills near ZHU’s property in Topanga Canyon. The house survived, but smoke damage rendered the home unusable for nearly a year. “The studio — everything — was basically a barbecue,” he says. “The structure was there, but they had to open up the walls and redo a lot of things.”

Instead of waiting for repairs, ZHU packed a mobile recording setup into a Sprinter van and hit the road with members of his team. The result was a creative process that unfolded across deserts, highways, and impromptu parties. “Driving is therapy for me,” he says. “I wanted to make these records while moving.”



COURTESY OF JAXON WHITTINGTON

The journey took him through New Mexico, where one session took place inside an abandoned missile silo. The trip was met with some extreme conditions: 90-mile-per-hour windstorms, sudden blizzards, then endless stretches of desert landscape, but the unpredictability fueled the music. “It was raw,” he says. “Very DIY. I’ve never made a record like that before.”

Those travels also led to spontaneous gatherings. When Bonnaroo was canceled one weekend, ZHU and his crew drove to Nashville and threw pop-up BLACKLIZT parties instead. The sense of motion is foundational to the album’s concept. “This record is for anyone who needs 52 minutes to tune out,” he says. “You tune into my world and realize the way to keep going is to keep moving.”

If ZHU’s last album, *Grace*, leaned into introspective and cinematic textures, *BLACK MIDAS* shifts toward a more physical experience. “This one is about dancing,” he says. “Dancing tracks are about the groove. It’s about simplicity. You open the low end and let people move.”

The album draws heavily from the rhythms he encountered while traveling. Percussion and bumping basslines anchor many of the tracks, creating a sound designed for dark rooms and crowded dance floors. “I put a lot of tribal drums on this album because going around all these different dance scenes, it feels like tribes of people,” he says. “Different

places — Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East — it’s all different tribes.” Drums become the common language.

“Melody is melody,” he says. “But if the drums are slapping, people know what to do.”

ZHU also sees the album as a kind of invitation. “I feel like these days people almost need permission to move,” he says. “I’m giving permission to everybody who comes to a ZHU show: you can move. That’s why you’re there.”

The collaborative cast of *BLACK MIDAS* reflects the spontaneous spirit of its creation. Singer Joyia appears on the track “BURN,” bringing a sultry R&B hook to the record’s shadowy production. Another contributor is Zonly, a multidisciplinary artist. “He’s a painter and a musician,” ZHU says. “At some of the BLACKLIZT parties, he’s walking around with bowls of paint and people put paint on themselves — it becomes this kind of unifying thing.” ZHU plans to bring that energy to the stage as well. At Ultra Music Festival, Zonly will paint live during the performance.

The collaborators weren’t selected through traditional industry matchmaking. Many simply crossed paths with ZHU during his travels. “Everybody on the album was there because they were in the right place at the right time,” he says.

ZHU describes *BLACK MIDAS* as only the first chapter in a much larger story. He envisions the project unfolding as a trilogy over the next year and a half. “This

is the beginning of the Midas story,” he says. The arc starts with the stripped-down, dance-floor-driven energy of *BLACK MIDAS*. Later installments will expand the musical palette and spotlight emerging collaborators. The final chapter will bring everything together on a grand scale. “By the end of the trilogy, we bring back the band and take it to arenas and amphitheaters.

“This first part is primal,” he explains. “It’s survival mode—just moving. Then it evolves into something bigger.”

As he returns to the underground, ZHU’s artistic ambitions extend far beyond the DJ booth. Recently he scored the upcoming film *He Bled Neon*, collaborating with composer Joseph Trapanese, known for work on films like *Tron: Legacy* and *Straight Outta Compton*. The project marked ZHU’s first time composing directly for a film narrative. “When I make music, I see scenes in my head,” he says. “Visuals are a huge part of my art.”

The connection between music and imagery has long been central to his work. His previous album, *Grace*, recorded inside San Francisco’s Grace Cathedral, was accompanied by a film that remains unreleased due to label changes. ZHU says fans may finally see that footage later this year.

In addition, he’s preparing an immersive visual experience tied to *BLACK MIDAS*, designed as a continuous film accompanying the music. “It’s more like an experimental listening experience,” he says.

Looking back, ZHU’s rise remains one of the more unusual stories in electronic music. Born in China and raised in the Bay Area, he emerged in 2014 with little public information attached to his name. Early releases circulated online with no photos or interviews. The anonymity fueled curiosity as “Faded” quietly spread through clubs and radio stations before becoming a worldwide hit. The track’s success launched ZHU into a touring career that quickly scaled to massive venues.

“Back then, electronic music was still figuring out how to present itself live,” he says. “Seeing people do it on a big stage opened the door for me.” Over time, the mystery faded. Fans learned his identity and discovered the artist behind the silhouette. ZHU’s music expanded into conceptual albums and theatrical performances, often incorporating live instruments and elaborate staging. Yet through all those evolutions, the core impulse remained unchanged. “It all came from dance culture,” he says.

ZHU’s rise also resonated with fans who saw themselves reflected in a scene where Asian-American artists were often underrepresented. “Since I came out from anonymity, I’ve definitely seen more Asians come through the shows,” he says. The connection matters to him, though he doesn’t frame it as a mission. “I just do it through action,” he says. “I’m making music from experience and storytelling.”

His own parents initially struggled to understand what he was building. “They were very skeptical in the beginning,” he says. “It wasn’t until they came to a show that they saw the crowd and understood.” The turning point came when his father called from Europe one day. “He said ‘Faded’ was playing in stores there,” ZHU recalls. “That’s when it became real.” Now they’re very interested in what he’s up to and ask a lot of questions, proud even if they still do not quite get the music itself.

As 2026 unfolds, ZHU’s calendar is already filling up. The release of *BLACK MIDAS* will be followed by festival appearances, along with a series of immersive listening events. Later this year he plans to resume BLACKLIZT parties and continue building the trilogy’s narrative arc.

“Coming out of the fire, it feels like a reset,” he says. In a year that forced him into survival mode, he chose to keep moving.

Now he’s inviting everyone else to do the same — a deliberate return to the pulse that started everything: a dark room, a heavy groove, and the sound of the dance floor starting again.

Zhu’s *BLACK MIDAS* touch turns everything to motion.



COURTESY OF ARDA AYTAZ

Follow ZHU on Instagram @ZHU. 📱

ENTERTAINMENT

SAMARA WEAVING RETURNS TO THE BLOODBATH AND BATTLES BUFFY IN 'READY OR NOT 2: HERE I COME'

BY GIL MACIAS

In the landscape of modern horror, few faces are as instantly recognizable — or as frequently covered in viscera — as Samara Weaving's. Since her breakout in *The Babysitter*, the Australian actress has carved out a niche as one of the genre's most resilient brawlers. But as she returns to her most iconic role in the highly anticipated sequel, *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come*, Weaving isn't just surviving the night, she's running the show.

For the uninitiated, 2019's *Ready or Not* is about a bride named Grace whose wedding night turns into a honeymoon from hell when she's thrust into a deadly game of hide-and-seek with her wealthy (and very bloodthirsty) in-laws. It's a family tradition that links back to an ancestor's dubious dealings with a demonic entity known as Mr. Le Bail. Spoiler alert: Grace wins the game, but the newly minted widow's night of body-exploding horror was just the beginning.

"We had so much fun making the first one, and we loved it so much, but we didn't know if the world would enjoy it as much as they did, so it was quite a surprise that it got the audience that it did," recalls Weaving. "Suddenly I started seeing people dressed up as Grace on Halloween, and people getting tattoos of my face on them and stuff. Then it became a real conversation of, 'Oh, okay, let's do another one,' which was just so exciting, but definitely unplanned."

Weaving is not only donning the blood-spattered bridal gown all over again, she's also taking on a behind-the-scenes role. Stepping up as an executive producer, she worked closely with the filmmaking collective Radio Silence (Matt Bettinelli-Olpin and Tyler Gillett) and Searchlight Pictures to ensure Grace's evolution felt authentic. "It definitely was a collaborative job," she explains. "I don't think any one of



Still from "Ready or Not 2: Here I Come"

COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

us wanted to make something that we didn't absolutely love. They were so great at hearing my ideas and taking them on board, and we all just wanted it to be the best movie it could be."

If the first *Ready or Not* was a grueling game of cat and mouse, the sequel is an all-out war. The film picks up just seconds after the first left off, giving Grace no time to recoup. She remains one of the most physically punished protagonists in recent memory, drawing comparisons to *Evil Dead's* Ash Williams, played by national treasure Bruce Campbell — a character Weaving is intimately familiar with after her stint on *Ash vs. Evil Dead*.

Gorehounds will be pleased that the sequel ups the ante with "blood cannons" that far exceed the original's body-combusting climax. While Weaving jokes that she doesn't exactly love being drenched in crimson goo, she embraces the necessity of it. "It is such an iconic part of the first movie, I knew that there'd be a lot of those in the second one," she says.

However, she's quick to share the credit for her "tough as nails" screen presence. "I do love doing my own stunts, but I also do need to give credit where credit's due, and the stunt team on this movie, they're absolutely incredible. They make me look very cool."

That commitment to the "goo" led to a surreal moment during production near Niagara Falls. "I completely forgot that I was covered in goo," Weaving laughs, recounting a quick sightseeing trip between setups. "I thought, oh, just while they're setting up this next location, I'll just quickly get one of the location guys to drive me to where you can see the falls really quick. I got there, and I realized, oh, wait a minute, I'm covered in blood. I am going to terrify everyone here."

Her driver, Tim, wasn't much help. "He went, 'No, no, you'll be fine,' and just drove off. And so I'm wandering around Niagara Falls trying to hide from all these tourists who are just trying to have a great time, and there's this bloody woman, just head to toe in gore. I got one selfie of me covered in blood by the falls, and then quickly got in the car and went back, but yeah, you forget sometimes."

Beyond the blood and physicality, there is that impressive set of pipes. Weaving has become famous for a distinctive, primal, and incredibly guttural scream that has become her calling card. Interestingly, she didn't know she possessed the "talent" until she was on the set of *Ash vs. Evil Dead*. As for her ritual to protect her vocal cords before a big take? There isn't one. "I don't know! I didn't do anything before. It just comes out," explains the natural-born scream queen. "It just lives in me, and is just



Stills from "Ready or Not 2: Here I Come"



COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

ready whenever I need it. I don't know why it doesn't cut my vocal cords, it doesn't seem to, anyway. I might be a bit hoarse the next day, but it's not like it hurts or anything. I don't know what to tell you, it's just in there."

One of the biggest draws of *Ready or Not 2: Here I Come* is its powerhouse ensemble, featuring horror royalty like David Cronenberg and the beloved Elijah Wood. But for Weaving, the highlight was "throwing down" with the slayer herself, Sarah Michelle Gellar.

"It was amazing. It was so cool," Weaving gushes. "I think when they realized she signed on to do it, they wrote that scene with her so that she could do

her Buffy thing, and I'm so honored that it was with me."

The sequel also breaks Grace's "lone wolf" status by introducing a sister, played by Kathryn Newton. "She's an absolute delight," says Weaving. "The idea of Grace having a sister was really genius, because in the first one it was just me alone, sort of experiencing this, so to have the second set of eyes and another perspective on it for the second one made it have a freshness that I think would have been difficult to find if it was just me experiencing that all over again. So I really loved having a partner to bounce ideas off of, and I think it had a lot of room for humor, too."

And while she and Gellar shared the screen, they also shared a legacy: both are veterans of the *Scream* franchise. "She's just the best hang. I just am obsessed with her, and I love her so much. I don't remember if we spoke specifically about [*Scream*], but I should. I'll give her a call."

When dealing with the satanic themes on film, stories of "cursed" sets sometimes follow. While Weaving didn't experience any ghostly visitations, she did witness something that almost caused her to break character — and it involved a costar of the hoofed kind.

"I don't think anything spooky happened, but I will say what was cool was,

there's a scene with a goat," she recalls. "And what was kind of amazing was, unprompted, everyone had to kneel in the scene. What was so cute and fun was that the goat kneeled at the exact same time. She just did that. I don't know, it was just so cute and funny, and I had to keep a straight face, but I wanted to be like, 'Woop! Look, she kneeled!'"

While the first film was a contained, intimate nightmare, the sequel reveals a much larger world of the occult and other factions influenced by the demonic Mr. Le Bail. So, could there be a third outing?

"There's always room for more," Weaving teases, though her pitch for the trilogy-capper might surprise fans. "We were laughing on set, saying that, what if the third one wasn't a horror movie at all, and was just a rom-com of two sisters on holiday? But we'd probably really annoy all the horror fans."

With a filmography oozing with blood-curdling cult classics, one might assume that the *Ready or Not* star made it a goal to be the horror genre's next rising star. But as she points out, that really wasn't the case.

"I don't know if I'm an aficionado, but I've definitely been around it a lot," Weaving says of her horror pedigree, which includes *The Babysitter*, *The Babysitter 2: Killer Queen*, *Mayhem*, *Azrael*, and a memorable opening kill scene in *Scream VI*. "I think when I got *The Babysitter*, that was my first big American movie, and because of the success of that, I was offered a lot of really cool genre movies, and then sort


of fell into this horror universe, which wasn't planned or orchestrated by any means, but I'm so grateful that it happened that way."

The modern-day "scream queen" label, too, was also inevitable. It's a title Weaving wears with a wink, though she has some thoughts on the industry's vocabulary.

"I love the term queen, who wouldn't? That sounds lovely," she admits. However, she's ready to retire one specific trope. "I think we should change 'final girl,' though. Unless we make it 'final boy,' as well, but I feel like no dude would go for that. So let's make it 'final woman.'"

When asked who sits on her personal Mount Rushmore of female horror legends, Weaving struggles to narrow it down. "Oh, God, there's so many. I mean, Jamie Lee Curtis, Shelley Duvall, Mia Goth... there's just too many to pick from."

Whether she's dodging satanic ritualists or navigating a partners-in-crime love story in her upcoming film *Carolina Caroline*, Samara Weaving has proven she can handle whatever the script throws at her — be it a battered wedding dress or a gallon of fake blood.

"I have two movies [coming up]," she says, wrapping up. "One's called *Over Your Dead Body* with Jason Segel. If you're a horror fan, I think you'd really love it. And then we have a slightly different genre, *Carolina Caroline*. It's a really sweet '90s Bonnie and Clyde love story. It's really, really fantastic, and that's coming out later this year, too." 



Stills from "Ready or Not 2: Here I Come"

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