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NEWS RELEASE

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Revered Saxophonist/Composer Miguel Zenón Celebrates 20th Anniversary of his Quartet with the Group's First-Ever Live Album

Vanguardia Subterránea, recorded at NYC's legendary Village Vanguard

Out August 29, 2025 via Miel Music

Available on Vinyl, CD and all Streaming services

Album release shows at the Vanguard Tuesday, September 16 to Sunday, September 21, 2025

Alto saxophonist and composer **Miguel Zenón** is a MacArthur laureate, a Guggenheim fellow, a Doris Duke Artist, and 2024 Grammy Award winner for *El Arte del Bolero, Vol. 2*. On August 29, 2025, the pioneering artist takes another step forward in his remarkable career as he releases *Vanguardia Subterránea* the first-ever live album from his longstanding quartet featuring pianist **Luis Perdomo**, bassist **Hans Glawischnig**, and drummer **Henry Cole**.

Zenón's 18th album as a leader was recorded over two nights in September 2024 at New York's iconic **Village Vanguard**. Released on Zenón's own label **Miel Music**, it features all new material including six compositions by Zenón, plus his arrangements of Willie Colón and Héctor Lavoe's "El Día de Mi Suerte" (1973) and Gilberto Santa Rosa's "Perdóname" (1990).

Despite performing many hundreds of concerts around the world over the span of two decades, until now the quartet's phenomenal, always surprising live shows have never been released as an album. "This album has an energy that's really different than all our other records," says Zenón, "because it was recorded in this sanctuary of music." The beloved Village Vanguard's dim, red, subterranean room on Seventh Avenue South opened in 1935 and has had a full-time jazz policy since 1957. "It's the dream of every jazz musician," says Zenón, "to play in that legendary room." The quartet has played week-long residencies there five times, and will return to celebrate the release of *Vanguardia Subterránea* from September 16th to the 21st, 2025.

The album opens with the Zenón original "**Abre Cuto Güiri Mambo**," a phrase that in *bozal*, or first-generation African Spanish, means "open up your ear and hear the *mambo*." Mambo is a Cuban-Congo musical-spiritual exhortation associated with bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez, whose pathbreaking 1940s Havana dance band with trumpets, piano, and conga was foundational to a way of layering horns over drums. "A lot of these riffs or mambos or jaleos, whatever you want to call them -- they're really coming out of a rhythmic perspective," says Zenón. "We're like another drum!"

"**El Día de Mi Suerte**" follows the opening track. Even on this New York-centric album, Zenón's native Puerto Rico is strongly present. But then again, the two places have been in constant communication throughout the history of jazz. Zenón's music is a product of that connection. Remembering his first professional job in a salsa band while he was in high school in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Miguel recalls, "We were rehearsing kind of far from my place. So on the drive there, *all* we listened to was Willie Colón and

Héctor Lavoe, over and over, over and over again. Those records are really deep within my DNA as a musician.” Like his other re-arrangements of popular tunes (as on the 2019 *Sonero* and 2011 *Alma Adentro*), it’s practically a Zenón composition by the time he’s through. “I’m not trying to replicate the original,” he says. “I’m trying to draw elements from the original that I can use in my own way. The narrative might end up being different than the original, but you can still hear some of those elements.”

The exquisite “**Vita**” showcases Zenón’s strong lyrical streak. While he has written and recorded songs with words (in 2009’s *Esta Plena*, for example), he’s often playing to unheard lyrics. “Vita” originated as a private song, written in 2010 with the title “Segunda Madre” as a birthday present for Miguel’s grandmother, Jovita Soto Santiago. Now 95, she has the original score framed in her home. Zenón expanded it into a full composition for the quartet, with a chacarera-style rhythm supporting the tender melody.

“**Dale la Vuelta**,” which translates to “Turn It Around,” comes from an exercise – or a game, as Zenón calls it – in rhythmic counterpoint. “I’m a rhythms guy,” he says, with emphasis on the plural. In this composition, the same space is subdivided in two different zones (7 and 8), switching back and forth to create a unique rhythmic identity. Despite its complexity, Zenón’s virtuosic quartet makes it sound easy.

The quartet’s experiences playing at the Village Vanguard form the conceptual basis for “**Coordenadas**.” To create the main theme, Zenón looked up the geographical coordinates for the Village Vanguard and the birthplaces of each band member: Santurce (Zenón); Mayagüez, Puerto Rico (Cole); Caracas, Venezuela (Perdomo); and Graz, Austria (Glawischnig). He encoded the numbers into pitches, massaged the result until it sounded like the music he wanted, and turned the band loose on it. The result: the four musicians play their origins at this famous location, and when they solo, they’re each at home.

For the title cut “**Vanguardia Subterránea**” Zenón crafted what he calls “a melodic poem, inspired by the history of the club.” To transform that into a composition for the quartet, he added “a continuous groove, something that has a straight-up clear pulse. And then we added something else that’s floating against that groove – rhythmically disconnected at first, and locked in eventually.”

“**Bendición**” is inspired by Latin American traditions and Zenón’s mother, Nancy Matos Soto. “In Puerto Rico and other places in Latin America,” says Zenón, “when you see your elders, you say, *bendición*, you ask for their blessing. That’s the first thing that I say to my mom, to my aunts, to my uncles, to my grandmother when I see them. I was raised this way and it’s common in my family. I wrote it as a tribute to my mom, but also as a way of displaying love and affection.”

Love and affection – and unheard lyrics that every salsa fan knows – are at the core of the album’s closer “**Perdóname**,” a reworking of Jorge Luis Piloto’s giant hit from 1990. This version is a tribute to the singer who made it famous, superstar Gilberto Santa Rosa, one of the most facile *soneros*, or improvising singers, in the rich history of Puerto Rican salsa. In a subtle commentary on the art of the live album, Zenón references Santa Rosa’s famous live version, recorded in 1995 at Carnegie Hall, which contains one of the dizzying extended poetic improvisations for which the singer is known. Playing jazz to evoke a great sonero is the kind of exhilarating, unusual move typical of Zenón’s artistic vision.

With extraordinary new music and arrangements by a saxophone giant and a commanding composer, *Vanguardia Subterránea* captures all the riveting excitement of Zenón’s uncommonly bonded quartet in the moment, and marks another significant addition to his remarkable canon.