The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moscow's Butman Jazz Club Sees Return of Ark

By Darya Bielecka

July 22, 2014



Originally from Moscow, Ark Ovrutski moved to the U.S. in 2005 but still often plays on Russia's small jazz circuit.

Bass player, composer and band leader Ark Ovrutski performs at the Igor Butman Club on Wednesday with guitarist Roni Ben-Hur and drummer Duduka da Fonseca. Originally from Moscow, Ovrutski moved to the U.S. in 2005.

Q: The most famous Russian jazz musician to do well in the U.S. is trumpeter Valery Ponomarev. Who else has made a mark?

A: I know many wonderful musicians from the former Soviet Union who are highly acclaimed in the U.S.: my brothers from the Russian Academy of Music, Sasha Sipyagin and Boris Kozlov, piano player Misha Tsyganov from St. Petersburg, bass players Ruslan Khain and Dima Kolesnikov, and older cats such as Nick Levinovsky and Victor Dvoskin.

Q: Is it more difficult to build a career in the U.S. than in Russia?

A: In the States there is no hassle. You should be on top of the beat. (Just teasing.) Each success is a combination of talent, luck, wise actions and a huge amount of work.

Q: One cliche says that Russian jazz musicians are snobbish, while Americans are nicer and play brighter, joyful music. Do you think that's true?

A: Snobbish behavior is seen as an old-school feature, but legends are open-minded and frank. They are really spiritual people. I was blessed to work with James Spaulding, Curtis Fuller, Javon Jackson, Victor Lewis. I am friends with Bob Cranshaw, "Tain" and Barry Harris. I was taught by Elvin Jones. All of them are icons of jazz and also models of musician's behavior. The right attitude is key.

Q: You often come back to Russia. Do you see many changes?

A: I don't see too many changes. Airports have become nicer, but prices have gone up. Ladies are always beautiful! That will never change! I play often in Moscow and sometimes go to Kazan and Novokuznetsk because of Anatoly Berestov's Jazz Club. Its musical director, Olga Yushkova, is one of the few supporters of instrumental jazz music in Russia.

Q: Is the size of a band important?

A: The size of the band really does not matter to me. It is very important to have understanding and support. I don't need to count or explain when playing with my regular drummer and piano player. I just start playing, and they get it right away.

In the U.S., promoters have been in the business for almost 100 years. They are not afraid to invite different artists, to invest and be part of the process. In Russia, it is a lot smaller. Jazz is the music of the intelligentsia so it exists only in hubs such as Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk and Novokuznetsk. But there are some enthusiastic people, including Igor Butman and Grant Khandzhyan (from Moscow's Esse Jazz Cafe), who are not afraid to be part of the world jazz scene, bringing the best of jazz to the Russian audience.

Ark Ovrutski plays Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the Igor Butman Club. Metro Taganskaya.

Contact the author at artsreporter@imedia.ru

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/07/22/moscows-butman-jazz-club-sees-return-of-ark-a37571