

Igor Butman's Big Band - Moscow 3 A.M. (2009)

Written by bluesever

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1 *Russian Passion* 2 *That's All* 3 *Dirty Dozen* 4 *Nevalyashki* 5 *Take The "A" Train* 6 *The Bells Rung In Novgorod* 7 *Mirage* 8 *We'll Be Back* 9 *Moscow At 3 A.M.* 10 *Little Finale*
Bandleader, Tenor and Soprano Saxophones – Igor Butman Alto Saxophone, Flute – Konstantin Safyanov Baritone Saxophone, Flute – Aleksandr Dovgopolyi Bass Trombone – Nikolay Shevnin (Conductor – Nikolay Levinovsky Contrabass – Vitalyi Solomonov Drums – Eduard Zizak Piano – Anton Baronin Sopranino Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Clarinet, Flute – Oleg Grimov Tenor Saxophone, Soprano Saxophone, Bass Clarinet – Dmitryi Mospan Trombone – Alexander Ageev, Maxim Piganov, Mihail Gigin Trumpet – Vladimir Galactionov, Pavel Zhulin Trumpet, Flugelhorn – Artyom Kovalchuk, Vadim Eilenkrig + Trumpet – Wynton Marsalis (tracks: 1, 5, 8)

Casting a welcome spotlight on the underexposed Russian jazz scene, star saxophonist Igor Butman reunites with a longtime friend and collaborator, composer/arranger Nick Levinovsky, to co-lead a bright, swinging 16-piece ensemble on *Moscow @ 3 A.M.* Both men are important figures in their nation's jazz history: In the 1980s, Butman and Levinovsky formed the core of the band *Allegro*, among the best-known carriers of the jazz banner in what was still the Soviet Union. In the intervening years, Butman has bounced between Moscow and New York, building an impressive résumé of work with top international artists. (He's recruited Wynton Marsalis as a guest soloist here.)

The music, blazingly rendered for a full 77 minutes, is pretty much all Levinovsky. Smoothly gliding and tightly focused, Levinovsky's lush orchestrations are always on the move, built from hard-swinging, repeated riff melodies that recall Gerald Wilson's big-band style but also carry the occasional whiff of folk melody. Solos are spread around the group, and Butman's presence, while strong and assured, is far from dominant. Still, he turns in some ambitious playing, stretching out from positions of calm repose to insistent, impassioned jabs, buoyed by the ensemble as in the sweeping, odd-metered cycle of "Dirty Dozen."

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The set is especially flattering to soprano saxophones. Tag-teaming in the sassy “Nevalyashki,” soprano players Dmitry Mospan and Oleg Grymov chase each other in circles, an elusive hummingbird’s flight juxtaposed with sure-footed analysis. And Marsalis adds his distinctive trumpet touch to three tracks, settling gently into Levinovsky’s enveloping swing like a pearl on a velvet cushion. --- Forrest Dylan Bryant, discogs.com

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