

# Igor Kogan Big Band - Live At Vitello's

*Concert review by Scott Yanow, "L.A. JAZZ SCENE"*

Arranger-composer and bassist Igor Kogan was born in Russia, lived in Israel from the age of 15, and graduated from New York's New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music. He spent several years in New York where he was a busy freelancer as a performer, arranger and composer for films, television, and live shows. In 2014 he moved to Los Angeles where, in addition to all of his other musical activities, he formed the 17-piece Igor Kogan Big Band, featuring arrangements that are always forward-looking and individual while also being accessible. Kogan seeks to mix together aspects of jazz and classical in his writing, having his band perform his new original music.



When I asked the bandleader about his band and his music in general, he explained. "Working in both the classical and jazz idioms, I'm trying to mix those compositional approaches in my writing. Traditionally big bands have been playing swinging music and arrangements of popular jazz standards, but my initial intent when creating this project was to perform new original music and to explore different composition and arranging techniques with contemporary influences. Another important aspect of making this project successful are the musicians. They are all great individuals as work very well as a team. For some sections, solos or even a whole song, I write the arrangements to feature specific players, keeping in mind their sound and stylistic differences. I'm glad to work with people who truly understand my ideas and can convey the right interpretation to the music."



The orchestra recently performed at Vitello's in Studio City. The night began with the uptempo minor-toned blues "Catchy Up Your Flight." Satoshi Kirisawa's drum breaks launched the piece and he was soon answered by some shouting ensembles. Trombonist Phillip Menchaca showed plenty of personality during his fluent solo while pianist Marco Apicella's playing built on the momentum generated by

the hard-swinging rhythm section. It made for an exciting opener.



“Emergency Call” had the band continuing its swinging but in 11/4 time. Guitarist David Colon added a rockish sound and tenor-saxophonist Colin Kupka was fine in his spot. The mood changed during the atmospheric ballad “Delayed Departure” which had a prominent role for the tuba of Juliane Gralle. The long involved piece “In-Between” also set a haunting mood with the leader contributing many written ensembles that were both melodic and modern. “Air Pocket” featured bassist Max Kraus and drummer Kirisawa really

driving the band. Here as throughout the set, Kogan’s arrangements perfectly set up the solos (by altoist Jeremy Lappitt, trombonist Evan Mackey and baritonist Caesar Martinez) while the individual improvisations were a logical extension of the ensembles.

Igor Kogan’s big band has a particularly strong trombone section and each of the bones had opportunities to solo during the set. “Ballad For Trombone” (one of the leader’s most memorable melodies) put the spotlight on Ido Meshulam whose warm playing during his showcase hinted a bit at the late Bill Watrous. The dramatic “December In The Morning” featured passionate statements by trumpeter Ryan DeWeese and Colin Kupka on tenor that were matched by the exciting ensembles. The set’s one piece not composed by its leader (although he wrote the arrangement) was Chucho Valdes’ “Claudia.” The pretty melody was well served during a lyrical arrangement that left space for some excellent solos by flugelhornist Jason Colby, pianist Apicella and Ian Roller on tenor. The night concluded with the rousing “Revival” which featured altoist Lappitt, built up slowly and ended in explosive and triumphant fashion.



Throughout the night, the obviously well-rehearsed band was impressive, paying close attention to dynamics and mood variations. All in all, this was a fun evening. Fans of modern jazz orchestra are well advised to check out the Igor Kogan Big Band.

*Scott Yanow, jazz journalist/historian and author of 11 books including Jazz On Record 1917-76 and Trumpet Kings, “L.A. Jazz Scene”*

For more information on Igor Kogan: <http://www.koganigormusic.com>