



## A voice to remember: Irene Atman's Live Jazz at Grand Millennium Sukhumvit

At the Blu Bar of the Grand Millennium Sukhumvit, Canadian singer Irene Atman's took here first bow in Bangkok.

RON FELDMAN

The inBlu Jazz Lounge was beginning to fill up in expectation of Irene Atman's appearance. It extends in a wide arc with lots of cushiony, comfortable seating under low lighting with a busy bar at one end where wine seemed to be by far the most popular order. Maybe that's what jazz people drink these days.

The night before, Irene had begun her first Asian tour for Hitman Jazz with a concert at Silver Lake Winery in Pattaya. Then, before heading for Hong Kong, Shanghai and Taipei, she would be at the Aksara Theatre at the King Power Complex. Between the two concerts in Thailand, she slotted in an appearance

at the Blu Bar, which was much more intimate - cosy even - and more like a club date than a concert. For a singer, there's a big difference between the two, as she explained before she went on.

"Obviously, you have a much closer contact with the audience in a club," she said.

"You can see faces, so it's more interactive. People often ask for requests, so you can't have sort of planned programme you can when you're doing a concert, when you decide what songs you want to sing and work out with the band when you're going to sing them. But even there, with a set list of songs, you'll still feel vibrations from the audi-

ence, and you can signal the band to make changes when something's going well."

The musicians she is currently working with are Ron Davis, a pianist from her home town, Toronto, and two Thai musicians from the Bangkok jazz scene.

"The Thai guys are great," she said. "You work out the arrangements with them and that's it: they've got it in their heads - don't have to write it down."

This may be her first time in Thailand but she's no beginner; she had grown up with music.

"My dad played records at home all the time. He loved the big bands and the singers, and that's what I absorbed," she said.

"One day - I must have been seven or eight years old - I was playing up in the attic and I found this old packing case, and when I opened it up I found it was full of old vinyl records from the 1950s. There was early Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday - I played them all on my dad's old hi-fi. I was hooked - and I wanted to be a singer."

There were plenty of opportunities to sing in choirs at school, in church and in college. She practised, she learned from listening to the records and as an amateur she was able to develop her vocal technique. Then, while in her first year in university, a friend heard her singing and insisted on introducing her to her brother who played sax in a band.

It turned out that it was the biggest and best known band in Toronto, and to cut a short story shorter, the brother took her to see the bandleader, the bandleader asked her to sing, and bingo! He gave her the job. At 19 she was a professional singer and stayed as the band's vocalist for several years before deciding to go solo as an independent artist.

Last year she toured Australia and Japan where her jazz-inflected vocal style made her many friends, and in Tokyo she was invited to sing to sing at the



IRENE ATMAN



### SPECIAL FEATURE

Canadian Embassy in a tribute to the great Canadian jazz virtuoso, Oscar Peterson.

Jazz is really what Irene Atman likes and what she does, but she has acquired nuances from singers in other styles. She took full advantage of her all too short sequence of six songs at Blu Bar to provide the audience with a comprehensive picture of what she could do and how she could treat a song.

She opened with one that was a surprise: "Shall We Dance" from "The King and I," to which she gave an upbeat, tightly swinging treatment that was quite original and gave the song a new dimension.

At one time she appeared on the same bill as Tony Bennett, and, not surprisingly, this is a star quality memory for her, and she sang the song that he had sung on that occasion, "The Shadow of Your Smile."

The slow tempo allowed her to extend her voice showing her range from high notes to low, and from whisper-soft to fairly dramatic intensity. Barbra Streisand made a memorable recording of this, and many in the audience might have called her to mind during Irene's reading of the song.

You wouldn't describe her singing as 'cool' on this showing. Quite the contrary, there is warmth and fullness in the voice and she goes straight for the emotion of the song.

"That's what I'm looking for when I sing," she said later. "The emotional connection I can make with the audience and maybe take them back to some

special time they remember."

This feeling was certainly to the fore in the romantic treatment she gave to her next ballad, Hoagy Carmichael's "The Nearer of You." Then, in complete contrast, she stepped deftly into jazz mode with a brisk, uptempo version of another song that's associated with Tony Bennett, "The Very Thought of You."

This is usually taken at a dreamy, romantic tempo, but Irene skipped into the song lightly and took the melody through variations of tone and texture that were a joy to listen to.

Altogether it was a short session at the Blu Bar, but an excellent introduction to a singer we'd not seen before, and my guess is that when her Hitman Jazz tour is over, Irene Atman will be back.

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### HOTEL NEWS

## A family adventure at Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok



Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok's Golden Treasure Family Adventure Package is the perfect treat for families who want to experience the thrill of exotic Thailand. The package includes a treasure hunt along the colorful streets of Bangkok and the opportunity to ride on an elephant.

By using the popular children's book *The Mystery of Bangkok's Golden Treasure*, guests will follow the book's heroine, Claire to discover new and amazing sights in the City of Angels through a child's eye. A professional tour guide will provide guests with an unsurpassed insight to Bangkok's colourful heritage and the delights of the city.

The Golden Treasure Family Adventure Package is divided into two parts: the White Elephant and the Golden Naga. Guests should state their preference at the time of booking:

### White Elephant - Part One

#### Day 1:

- A visit to The Grand Palace
- A visit to Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)
- A visit to Pak Klong Talad (Flower Market)
- A visit to The Golden Chedi
- A visit to the Pantheon of the Chakri Kings
- Afternoon Tea for four persons at the Verandah followed by feeding the catfish
- Thai set dinner at Sala Rim Naam for four persons

#### Day 2:

- A Klong river tour
- A visit to the Royal Barge Museum
- A visit to Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn)
- One 60-minute spa treatment for two adults at The Oriental Spa
- Set dinner for four persons at the Verandah
- After dinner Siam Niramit Cultural Show

### Golden Naga - Part Two

#### Day 1:

- A visit to Wat Trimit (Golden Buddha Temple)
- A visit to Pak Klong Talad (Floating Flower Market)
- A visit to Wat Po (Temple of the Reclining Buddha)
- A visit to Marble Throne Hall
- Four tickets to Siam Ocean World to see 4D theatre and experience a glass boat ride
- Dinner for four persons at the Barbecue Riverside Terrace

#### Day 2:

- An all-day trip to Ayutthaya
- One 60-minute spa treatment for two adults at The Oriental Spa
- Thai set dinner at Sala Rim Naam for four persons

■ The two-day Golden Treasure Family Adventure package is available until 15 October, 2010\*. Rates per night, are US\$1,639 for two Superior River Wing Rooms and USD 2,679 for a Two-Bedroom Family Suite and are based on four people sharing. Rates are subject to 10% service charge and 7% government tax. The package can be booked online at [www.mandarinoriental.com](http://www.mandarinoriental.com) or by contacting Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok at +66 (2) 659 9000 ext. reservations or via email: [mobkk-reservations@mohg.com](mailto:mobkk-reservations@mohg.com)



## The Nomad Roaring River Safari New Year's Eve Countdown

The Nomad ([www.thenomad-travel.com](http://www.thenomad-travel.com)), a travel and lifestyle show for savvy travelers, in collaboration with The Traveler Show (FM 98 Business Station), is organizing its first New Year's Eve countdown party with the Roaring River Safari onboard Chaophraya Cruise's elegant yacht "The Star".

This event is exclusively catered to only 90 guests that will witness the midnight fireworks along the Chaophraya River at the best spot in town.

Set to be an annual affair with new theme each year, part of the proceeds through the event will be donated to an honourable charity which, for this year, the children of the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand have been chosen.

"2010 is the Year of the Tiger on the Chinese calendar," explains Project Manager Varin Sachdev. "We played around with the idea and came up with the safari theme and with Jet Airways sponsoring roundtrip tickets inclusive of an Indian safari to see

### FESTIVE CELEBRATIONS

Bengali tigers we immediately jumped at the notion."

Once The Star sets off on its route along the Chaophraya River there will be numerous games for guests to engage in to pass the hours until midnight. You can get your fortune told for the coming year by the onboard Mystic or chill with shisha under the stars on the forward deck.

Varin switches his role to emcee/DJ, playing a selection of cool World music. There will be freebies from Sisley and health packages from Power Plate and Holistic Medical Center for every guest worth at least Bt5,000.

To win the night's major prizes for overnight stays at Villa Maroc in Pranburi or B-Lay Tong in Phuket, Evason Huahin and Phuket, scrumptious Seafood Brunch with free flow

Veuve Cliquot at the InterContinental Bangkok, Ayurvedic Treatment at Ayurveda Residence Mandarin Oriental and the roundtrip Jet Airways tickets, you will need to participate in the onboard game which will be played an hour before the Countdown. You will need to make a donation to play and all the proceeds will go to sponsoring a hearty meal for the children of the Christian Foundation for the Blind in Thailand.

The party starts at 20.00hrs with welcome reception and boarding at Chakrabongse House's private pier at Tha Tian. Tickets are priced at Baht 7,500 each and can be obtained by contacting [info@thenomadtravel.com](mailto:info@thenomadtravel.com) or call Alexandra at 0849033090. Each ticket comes with a complimentary bottle of Prosecco. Only 90 spaces are available.

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