Urbie Green

Biography

Urbie Green is known as a fine jazz player with a beautiful tone who is highly respected by his fellow trombonists. He has recorded at least 24 albums under his own name, and appears on more than 250 recordings made by others. He is probably one of the most recorded, and arguably the best trombonist to ever live.

The Early Years - Urbane Clifford Green was born in Mobile Alabama in 1928. Urbie was set on the road to his musical career by his mother, who taught him to play the piano. His early practice on the piano was not from method books, but from reading off of sheet music for the popular songs of the day. He started playing the trombone when he was around 12 years old. His early musical influences were a cornet player from Mobile named Bill Lagman, and trombonists like Tommy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden, Lawrence Brown, J. C. Higginbotham, Jack Jenny, and Trummy Young. According to a 1976 interview with Downbeat magazine, Urbie's primary influences were not trombonists, but rather Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker and Lester Young. Urbie was also influenced by two older brothers who were also trombonists. Urbie's trombone style was also influenced by vocalists such as Perry Como, and the vocal style of Louis Armstrong. Urbie's father died when he was 15, and Urbie helped support his mother and younger sister by playing the trombone professionally. Urbie moved to California by the time he was 16 (approx 1944) and spent his teenage years playing with the big bands of Tommy Reynolds, Bob Strong and Frankie Carle. He also worked with Gene Krupa during 1947-50. From 1948 to 1952, Urbie Green had a stint with Woody Herman's Third Herd. He also appeared on some of the famous Buck Clayton Jam Sessions (1953-54).

The 1950's and 1960's - The 1950's and 1960's were probably Urbie Green's most productive time for recording. Urbie arrived in New York in 1953, and by 1954 had established himself as one of the top trombonists in that highly competitive market. This is also about the time that Urbie had his first formal music training. His previous training was "on - the - job" experience. Urbie worked with Benny Goodman off and on during 1955-57 and appeared in the movie "The Benny Goodman Story". Urbie Green played with Count Basie in 1963. He also recorded with Jazz great Louis Armstrong. After the death of Tommy Dorsey, Urbie Green fronted the Tommy Dorsey ghost band (1966-67). Other artists that Urbie recorded with during the 1950s include Charles Mingus, Billie Holiday, Coleman Hawkins and Ella Fitzgerald. Urbie Green recorded frequently as a leader in the 1950s and 60s. His discography from this period includes
the following albums:

1953 Blue Note New Faces, New Sounds
1955 Bethlehem The Melodic Tones of Urbie Green
1955 Bethlehem East Coast Jazz, Volume 6
1955 Bethlehem The Lyrical Language of Urbie Green
1955 Vanguard Urbie Green and His Band
1955 Paramount Blues and Other Shades of Green
1956 Paramount All About Urbie Green
1957 Jazztone Urbie Green Octet / Slidin' Swing
1957 RCA Let's Face the Music and Dance
1958 RCA Best of New Broadway Show Hits

The 1960s brought us the collaboration of Urbie Green and Enoch Light. Enoch Light was probably one of the most progressive producers of his time, and a pioneer in both stereo and quadraphonic recording. The recordings made by Urbie Green and produced by Enoch Light under the Command and Project 3 labels are arguably some of Urbie’s best. These include:

1960 Command The Persuasive Trombone of Urbie Green
1961 Command The Persuasive Trombone of Urbie Green Volume 2
1963 Command Urbie Green and His 6-Tet.
1967 Project 3 21 Trombones
1967 Project 3 21 Trombones Volume 2

The 1960s also saw Urbie very busy in the studios recording with other artists such as Antonio Carlos Jobim, Wes Montgomery, Joe Morello, Jimmy Smith and Cal Tjader.

The 1970s - The 1970's saw a continuation of the collaboration between Enoch Light and Urbie Green. It also Urbie's foray into the world of equipment with the design of the Jet Tone Urbie Green Mouthpiece and the Martin Urbie Green Model trombone. Urbie's experimental mind also included recordings made with the "Green Monster", a King trombone using a King Vox Amp pickup in the mouthpiece connected to an octave doubler and reverb unit. In addition to recordings with Enoch Light and the Light Brigade, Dick Hyman, Maynard Ferguson and Doc Severinsen, Urbie also recorded the following:

1971 Project 3 Green Power
1972 Project 3 Bein’ Green
After the very productive Enoch Light years, Urbie’s style changed a bit. His recordings under the CTI label contained much more music by Urbie’s band and fewer solos by Urbie. Albums released by Urbie in the late 1970s include:

1976  CTI  The Fox  
1977  CTI  Senor Blues  
1978  Flying Fish  Live at Rick’s Café American

The 1980s and beyond - The 1980s saw a slowing down of Urbie Green’s recording career. Both albums recorded by Urbie during this period are live, straight Jazz works. These are:

1981  E.J.  Just Friends  
1995  Chiaroscuro  Sea Jam Blues

Urbie continued to tour and record in the studios during this period, but an increasing amount of time was spent at home on his farm in Pennsylvania. Urbie’s son Jessie Green, a Jazz pianist, also launched his career at this time and appears on the Sea Jam Blues recording.

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