

AL COHN MEMORIAL JAZZ COLLECTION at EAST STROUDSBURG UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The NOTE

SUMMER/
FALL 2019

AN INTERVIEW
WITH **JOHNNY
MANDEL**

**URBIE
GREEN**



**EAST
STROUDSBURG
UNIVERSITY**

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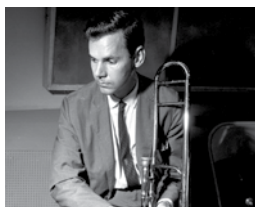
FROM THE COLLECTION



Cover photo:
Urbie Green @Burt Goldblatt/CTSIMAGES



Center spread photo:
Tommy Mitchell, Urbie Green, and Jerome Richardson at a Ray Ellis Recording Session
Photo by Al Stewart



Back cover photo:
Urbie Green @Burt Goldblatt/CTSIMAGES

The Note contains some content that may be considered offensive. Authors' past recollections reflect attitudes of the times and remain uncensored.

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The mission of the Al Cohn Memorial Jazz Collection is to stimulate, enrich, and support research, teaching, learning, and appreciation of all forms of jazz, particularly those connected to the Pocono area of Pennsylvania. The ACMJC is a distinctive archive built upon a unique and symbiotic relationship between the Pocono Mountains jazz community and East Stroudsburg University.

With the support of a world-wide network of jazz advocates, the ACMJC seeks to promote the local and global history of jazz by making its resources available and useful to students, researchers, educators, musicians, historians, journalists and jazz enthusiasts of all kinds, and to preserve its holdings for future generations.

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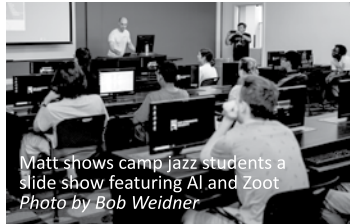
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A NOTE FROM THE COLLECTION COORDINATOR

Dr. Matt Vashlishan

Sunday, June 30th marked the closing of another year at COTA Camp Jazz. The students sounded fantastic, and each one grew in their own measurable way over the course of the week. The faculty were in good spirits and happy with a job well done. This year 16 students from near and far (Toronto!) participated in the camp that was the brainchild of Pocono jazz musicians Rick Chamberlain and Phil Woods. When Phil met with all of us 12 years ago he envisioned creating a local camp that recreated his memories of the Ramblerny camp of the 1960s held in New Hope, Pennsylvania. COTA Camp Jazz was born and has been held nearly annually since 2007.



Matt shows camp jazz students a slide show featuring Al and Zoot
Photo by Bob Weidner

It is my pleasure to host the camp participants at the Al Cohn Memorial Collection for one afternoon session each year. I show them around, play them some Al and Zoot (among other things, this year we had a group digging in to some serious Charlie Parker...), and let them loose for the better part of 90 minutes. It is interesting to observe such a well-behaved group of kids take initiative to explore a place like the ACMJC. It is easy to think each generation gets further removed from what jazz really is and where it came from, yet year after year I am amazed at the attentiveness and curiosity of younger and younger generations who are legitimately interested in this music. This is not limited to listening either. Everything is fair game to the students, including photos, magazines, back issues of The Note, posters, video, etc. Several express interest in coming back to further explore what we have here. It gives the music hope – the more we educate younger people about what jazz is and how special it is, it insures a future for musicians, historians, and hobbyists alike.



Camp Jazz checking out the photo wall
Photos by John Aveni



Jon Ballantyne gives his lunchtime masterclass at the Deer Head Inn

While many issues of The Note have unfortunately celebrated Pocono musicians that have passed away, this issue is no different. A large portion of this issue is dedicated to the trombonist Urbie Green, who lived in the Delaware Water Gap for a very long time. He regularly participated

in the COTA Festival with his wife Kathy, and was perhaps the greatest trombonist, period! This issue features content by several contributors we don't usually hear from, and a few who have never written for the publication. I had an absolute pleasure getting to know Marvin Stamm, Paul Faulise, and Jim Pugh through their contributions and I hope we can hear from them again in an upcoming issue.

Larry Fisher's interview with Johnny Mandel serves as a primer for things to come. The next issue will include Patrick Dorian's piece about Johnny Mandel receiving the Grammy Trustees Award at the Grammy Music Legends Awards at the Dolby Theater in Hollywood on May 11. Pat had advocated for Johnny to receive this for three nomination cycles and the Mandel family invited Pat & spouse Mary to the event and then to Johnny's home in Malibu. For the fourth year, the ceremony was video recorded for PBS-TV's Great Performances series and will be broadcast throughout North America in October or November. Make an autumnal note to look through the PBS listings for "Great Performances: GRAMMY Salute to Music Legends 2019."

All of our readers will enjoy viewing video of Bob Dorough's posthumous award during the NEA Jazz Masters 2019 ceremony from the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC on April 15. Also receiving the award were Maria Schneider, Abdullah Ibrahim, and Stanley Crouch. Many jazz luminaries performed and also an opera luminary! The video and a PDF of the Playbill magazine from the event may be accessed here:

<https://www.arts.gov/lifetime-honors/nea-jazz-masters/2019-nea-jazz-masters-tribute-concert-webcast-archive>

The video alone may be viewed by logging onto YouTube and entering "2019 NEA Jazz Masters Tribute Concert Webcast Archive" into the search box. Dorough-centric viewers will be uplifted by a five-minute video about Bob recorded at the Deer Head Inn in November featuring NEA Jazz Master Dave Liebman, Bill Goodwin, Denny Carrig, and Patrick Dorian. It is followed by a remarkable live performance of Bob's music and Patrick Dorian's acceptance speech at the request of the Dorough family. The official NEA photos of the celebratory weekend may be viewed here:

<https://www.arts.gov/2019-nea-jazz-masters-event-photos>

Bob will be in our hearts on what would have been his 96th birthday on December 12. ■

Once In a While, 'Round About Midnight, I'm in the Mood for Latin American literature. It is reading that inevitably sparks the imagination. Imagination is funny: not only does it make a cloudy day sunny, but it also leads one down untraveled pathways of the mind. The following piece resulted from reading "The Pursuer" by Julio Cortázar, in which Johnny, the protagonist, is a thinly disguised Charlie Parker.

YOU CAN'T GO TO HEAVEN TILL YOU'VE BEEN TO HELL

"The marquesa, for example, thinks that Johnny's afraid of poverty, without knowing that the only thing Johnny can be afraid of is maybe not finding the pork chop on the end of the fork when it happens he would like to eat it, or not finding a bed when he's sleepy, or a hundred dollars in his wallet when it seems he ought to be the owner of a hundred dollars." – from "The Pursuer" by Julio Cortázar

What higher compliment can there be than to say, "I wish I'd written this." Realizing how incredibly brilliant Cortázar was, wishing I could be as brilliant, hoping maybe I am as brilliant... but perhaps I've never shown it, or if I have, I couldn't let myself believe it. Because in the past there've been times when I thought I was brilliant and it turned out I wasn't.

Then I say to myself "why am I here," like I used to say to myself thousands of times back in the old days, before I figured out why I'm here. It's a terrible thing when Doubt returns – the Doubt you thought you had gotten rid of, squashed, smashed to pieces and buried in a field somewhere, maybe in your hometown, where you grew up.

I remember that gig I played with Bobby and Ingrid a few years ago, where they were playing so far out and I didn't know what I was doing and was just trying to hang with the music. Afterwards Mike said "I never heard you play better." So it could be that "not knowing" is the secret. Except I suspect "not knowing" is just the other side of "knowing," and really they are the same. Or that one turns into the other and back again with the ease of the ouroboros eating its own tail.

Just at this moment, José barks in his sleep and I wonder where his mind is, then I wonder where the hell mine is. You see, everything started to get better when I started "knowing." Knowing I'm just playing a game, a game of being a human on Earth. (Of all the planets, in all the galaxies, in all the universe, I walk into this one.) But now the "not knowing" is showing itself again, like the dark side of the moon where supposedly there are secret military bases – and probably a far-out bar like that one in Star Wars – that you and I will never be told about except in the movies because our security clearance level is too low.



It's that flipping of Knowing and Not Knowing that disturbs me. It's like a flexible, metallic disc you got from a Cracker Jack box when you were nine years old, and the image on it changes as you hold it in your hand and turn it this way and that.

A few tears come, but they don't fall onto the page and prevent the pencil from writing because the disc has already flipped to the other side. The idea of the human game returns. This idea always gave me comfort in the past, but now I am inside the disc of Knowing and Not Knowing, flipping, or rather being flipped, back and forth with a speed that prevents my position from being fully documented.

At this point I would like to invoke the Heisenberg Principle, as if to inject some authority into a rambling scenario. But I can't, because the Heisenberg Principle comes from that other world – the world I am trying to run away from but which keeps insinuating itself into everything I do. Yet, it is needed. As one needs a glass of water, or a clean bed to lie down on at the end of a dirty day.

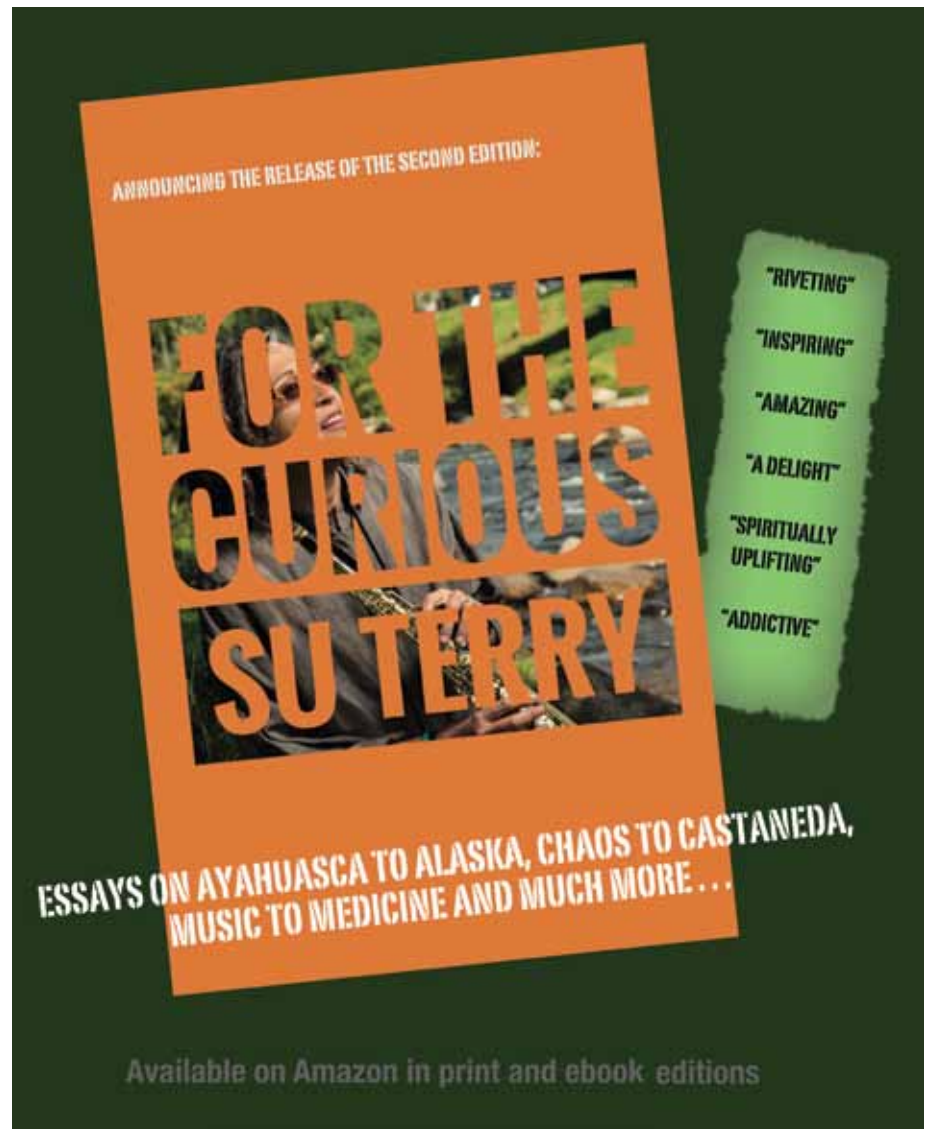
At the end of the dirty day, which could be today if I let it, I don't go to bed because Cortázar's words are pursuing me. That's as it should be. In this world, everything pursues everything else. The ouroboros shows there is no difference between pursuer and pursued, predator and prey. Here we can have another disc! Another conceptual disc to hold in the hand and flex back and forth in the light, until it gets so grimy with fingerprints we can no longer read it.

I, the pursuer – or am I the pursued – come to a point where a piece of writing must be ended. It must be ended with a fine sentence, a perfect sentence. In fact, it can only be ended with the words that are, actually, the first words I wanted to write. But I couldn't come right out with them,

they needed a preamble. A setup. Or perhaps the thought expressed by those words was so frightening it had to be staved off until a suitable cushion could be placed on the floor to fall upon in a faint, if not from simple exhaustion. I've staved it off so well, now I scarcely remember it. No matter. Soon enough, the mind's matter will flip to anti-matter and it will all come spilling out. When it does, how many half-finished manuscripts will be torn up, only to be rescued by a visiting publisher who – as Duke did with Billy Strayhorn's sketch of "Take the A Train" – reaches into the trash can and smooths out a wrinkled sheet, reading in stunned silence until finally exclaiming, "Hey, this is great!"

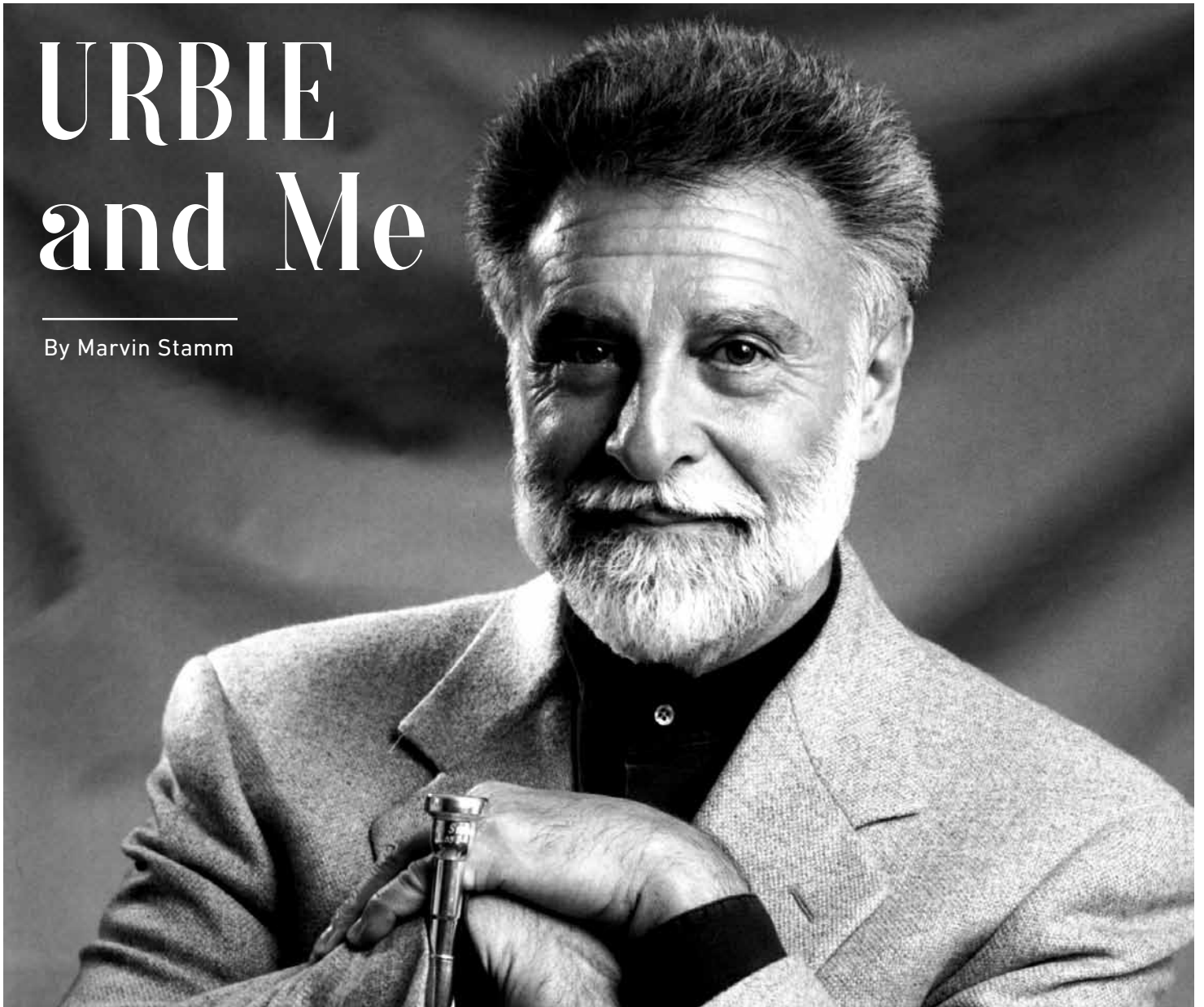
All I know is (there's that Knowing again, and this time it won't surrender its position) I've been in that place, that hell that a human built, and I can't go there anymore.

Ha ha. Nonsense. Everyone knows an Artist must visit Hell on a regular basis. The trick is not to linger too long. And when you climb the stairs on the way out – don't look back. ■



URBIE and Me

By Marvin Stamm



I arrived into New York (NY) in late November, 1966, and probably met Urbie sometime in the early-to-mid part of 1967. I'm not sure of the exact date, but it was sometime within that time frame.

I guess I should give a bit of background here. A week after I arrived in town, I was fortunate to be invited to sub in the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra, and this would prove to be my entrée' into the NY Jazz and studio scene. It was early in Thad and Mel's Village Vanguard tenure – maybe nine months into their first year – and because it was such a unique happening at the time, many players and arrangers came downtown to hear the band on Monday nights. They knew all the guys in the band, except for me, the new face in the trumpet section. So, through my subbing with the band, I became known rather quickly on the scene and soon found myself with my heroes, the giants of the New York music world.

I, of course, knew who Urbie Green was, but didn't meet him until a few months after I got to town, probably working together on a recording session.

Urbie was one of the busiest musicians in town, and he was everywhere, working for everyone. Players in the NY studios in those days were continually busy, running from session to session, gig to gig. It was a place all we young jazz players wanted to go. There were great iconic recordings being made through the 1950s and 1960s, and being accepted into the scene was "living the dream." Of course, Urbie was well-ensconced and highly respected by all of his colleagues. Everyone liked Urbie, even those few players who had competitive personalities regarding work. Urbie was a good guy with never a bad word about anyone.

While I don't remember the details of our first meeting, I'm sure either he or I would have introduced ourselves after having worked together once or twice. Before coming to NY, I heard many times that the city was a cold place. Nothing could be further from the truth in my experience, especially among the musical community. If a newcomer was a nice person, a team player, and showed respect to those who "had been there and done that," the veterans were very accepting of them. If the newcomer possessed these qualities, the established musicians made sure that they were heard, either by passing lead or solo parts so they could get their due. It was a generous community, and Urbie exhibited that same generosity to both his colleagues and newcomers.

The first jazz gig I remember working with Urbie was a concert that pianist Dick Hyman arranged, celebrating MacDougal Alley, the historic street he lived on. The group included Urbie and Dick, saxophonist Phil Bodner, bassist George Duvivier, drummer Teddy Sommers, and myself. It was a marvelous evening spent listening to these fantastic musicians, and I was honored to be included. They had all known and worked together for years, and the respect and camaraderie were palpable.

In April, 1968, I was approached by composer and trumpeter John Carisi who wanted to write an album for me. It was my first recording as a featured artist, and, of course, John and I wanted the best players in the band. Having written so much wonderful music, John knew everyone. As we chose the band, we agreed we wanted Urbie to play lead trombone. Urbie was one of the most flexible of lead and solo players; there seemed to be no setting in which he wasn't comfortable. Urbie was always about serving the music and the band, and he performed John's music beautifully.

Urbie asked me to join a sextet he was bringing into the Riverboat Café in the Empire State Building for six weeks in January, 1969. It was an excellent group that included pianist Dick Hyman, guitarist Howie Collins as well as bassist Eddie Jones and drummer Gus Johnson, both well-known for their years in the Basie Band. Kathy Preston, who would eventually become Urbie's wife of many years, sang vocals. It was a wonderfully swinging group, and it was a pleasure to go to work every night.

A great benefit of this gig was our playing opposite the Bobby Hackett group, featuring trombonist Vic Dickinson. Every intermission was spent listening to one another. This was the first time I had worked a lengthy tenure with Urbie as a leader. Hearing him play night after night,



Marvin Stamm performing
with Thad Jones

always consistent in his musical approach, was a lesson in musicality, exhibited by a great teacher.

In 1974, Urbie asked me to be the trumpet soloist on his album, "Urbie Green's Big Beautiful Band," which featured so many of NY's best. It is a marvelous album that displays Urbie's talents brilliantly. But then all of Urbie's albums do!

I had so many musical moments listening to Urbie play. He made a great impression on me, and I learned much from him. He was one of the nicest people and greatest musicians ever, and I imagine anyone who has listened to his music would be happy to confirm this.

Over the years, Urbie and I worked together on a lot of studio gigs. But in preparing to write this article, I realized something I'd never before thought about. During those fantastic years of making so much music, our friendships and social lives revolved around our working together, the respect and friendship borne from our music. But many of the players' home lives were private. While we worked in town, most lived elsewhere – in Queens, on Long Island, Westchester, or out in New Jersey. They may have socialized with a number of their colleagues, but over the broad spectrum, their private lives were their families.

I knew Urbie as a friend and working partner, but he spoke little of his private life; he kept this personal. I found Urbie to be on the quiet side, never drawing attention to himself, never into self-aggrandizement. I never saw him any other way, just as a nice person. While he possessed all the confidence needed to play the way he did, he was, in my eyes, a humble person. But he was also one of the greatest musicians and trombonists ever!

Knowing Urbie as a musician and colleague for many years was such a privilege. I am honored at having been a small part of his music, and I treasure all the musical moments we shared. Urbie Green was the best of the best! ■

REMEMBERING URBIE GREEN

| By Dr. Larry Fisher

I first met Urbie Green after a performance at the Valley Forge Music Fair, an in-the-round venue in Berwin, PA. Benny Goodman was the headliner and was part of a series of combo concerts he did between 1973 and 1975. I stopped by the box office to buy tickets for my wife and me, but was told it was sold out. "However," the agent said, "we just had 2 tickets returned in the first row." I said, "SOLD!"

At the time I did not know who else was in the performance, but was delighted to find that Urbie was playing trombone and Slam Stewart was the bass player. I don't remember the names of the other musicians, but they were all excellent. Urbie lived in Delaware Water Gap, PA, so it was natural that some of his friends came there to hear him. Benny left the stage immediately after that performance, but Urbie stayed

to talk to his friends. I joined the group and was pleased to meet him and tell him how much I enjoyed his playing. I never dreamed at this time that I would have the honor of performing with him about a decade later. Fernwood Resort in the Poconos booked the original cast of the Broadway show, "Ain't Misbehavin'," which featured the music of Fats Waller. I was asked to play tenor sax in the accompanying band for a rehearsal and performances on November 10 & 11, 1984. When I arrived on stage, there was Urbie warming up his trombone. It was a very memorable experience. Another different type of musical encounter with Urbie came on April 14, 1985 when Wolfgang Knittel, leader of the Jazz Artists Repertory Orchestra (JARO), asked me to fill in at the last minute for their regular tenor sax player who had a conflict. Urbie was the soloist on arrangements he had made famous on previously recorded albums. Wolfgang knew I would be available to play since I booked the performance as part of the ESU Jazz Concert Series and that I personally introduced each event.

I was very privileged to have had opportunities to perform with Urbie Green, considered by many knowledgeable writers as the greatest of all jazz trombonists. ■



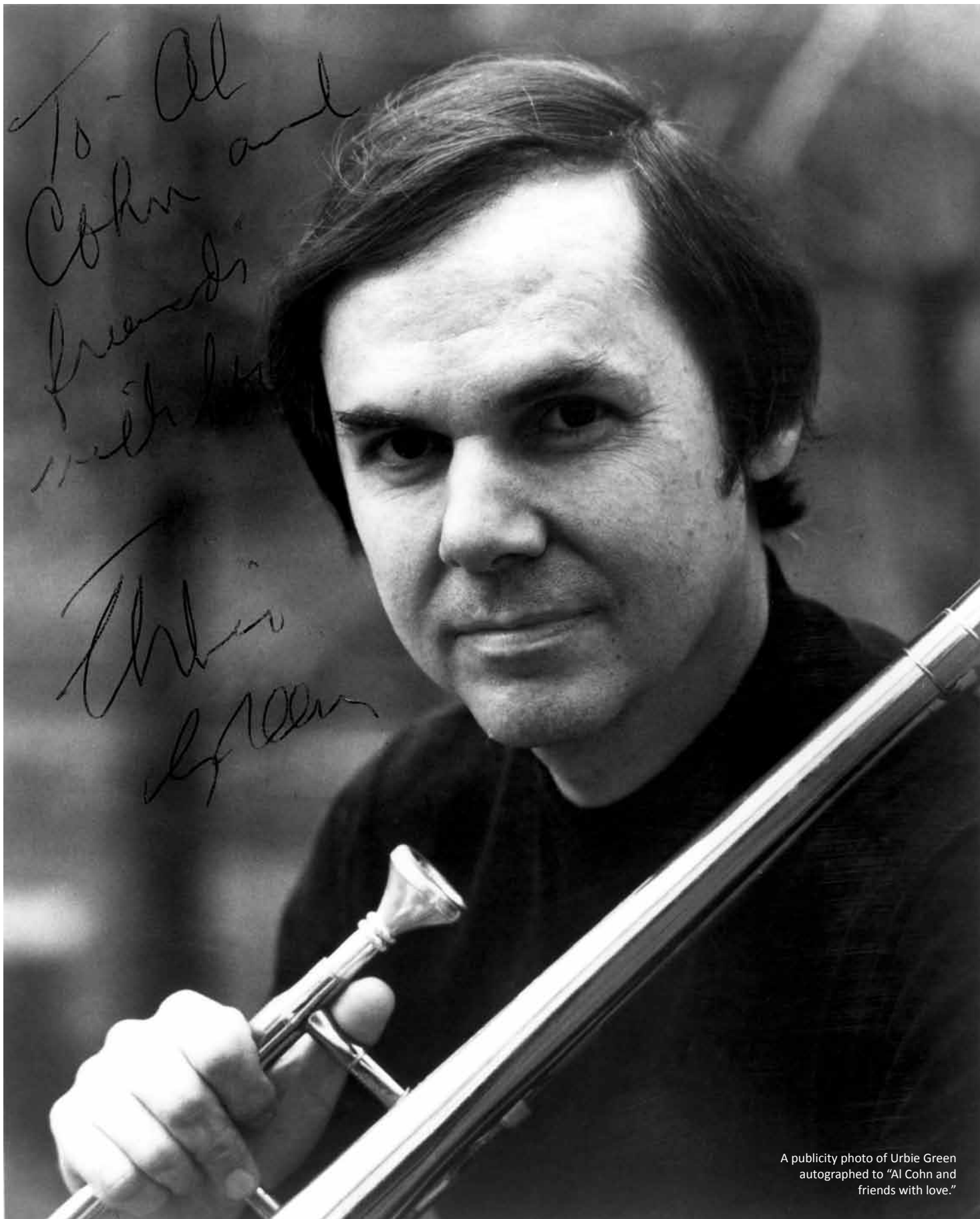
Urbie Green
performing at
the COTA festival



With Urbie on trombone and his wife Kathy doing the vocals, the Green family made regular appearances at the annual Celebration of the Arts (COTA) in Delaware Water Gap, PA. Additional musicians that appeared with the Green's were Paul Rostock, Bass and Drummers Glenn Davis and Bob D'Aversa.

“ I feel fortunate to have been able to perform on many occasions with Urbie. Along with Kathy and Jesse we appeared at the COTA fest, Deer Head Inn and other local venues. One of the highlights was joining Urbie, Jesse, Glenn Davis and Chris Potter on the Royal Caribbean Jazz Cruise that resulted in a live recording titled “Sea Jam Blues.” Although he could be rather quiet and laid back, you knew you were in the company of a master artist and musician. He showed one generosity and respect on the bandstand and at the same time was far from shy and laid back in his role as a leader and what he expected from his sidemen. A huge loss to his family, our community, and the music world but thankfully we have his recordings to inspire future generations. ”

– PAUL ROSTOCK



A publicity photo of Urbie Green autographed to "Al Cohn and friends with love."

AN INTERVIEW WITH

JOHNNY MANDEL,

Concerning his Compositions and Arrangements for Hollywood Films, Television, and Recordings



By Dr. Larry Fisher

Research Chairman, International Association of Jazz Education

Photo: Larry Fisher at the ACMJC COTA display in 1988

This interview was presented at the annual conference of the IAJE in Long Beach, CA in January of 2002. It was first published in IAJE's Jazz Research Proceedings Yearbook – Larry Fisher, Editor.

The amazing musical career of Johnny Mandel can be divided generally into two major sections. The first part was spent as a performer on trombone and bass trumpet and/or as an arranger for some of the finest groups of the big band era. These bands included those of Buddy Rich, Georgie Auld, Alvino Rey, Woody Herman, Terry Gibbs, Elliot Lawrence, Count Basie, Duke Ellington and others. The second part began as the popularity of the big bands declined. After World War II, Johnny did some arranging for the last of the major network radio programs. He then transferred those skills to television in 1950 and wrote arrangements for musical segments on "Your Show of Shows" starring Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca, which also featured Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks. He wrote arrangements for Las Vegas casino shows, which included the top vocalists of that era and eventually arranged and composed music for Hollywood Films. Johnny won several Grammy awards for his popular songs written for movies and arrangements he did for recordings with Shirley Horn, Natalie Cole, Toots Theilemans, and Quincy Jones plus one for the music for the movie, "I Want to Live!" His songs, "A Time for Love" and the "Theme from M*A*S*H" received Academy Award nominations and he won an Oscar for "The Shadow of Your Smile."

This oral history is an edited transcription of the last part of our more than two-hour telephone conversation on September 23, 1996. I sincerely thank Mr. Mandel for sharing his time and his recollections with me.

Johnny Mandel: I moved to California intending to stay there at the beginning of 1954 and played for six weeks with Duke and Jimmy Rowles. After that, I knew I wasn't going to play anymore. I haven't picked up the horn since.

Larry Fisher: Is this the time that you began writing film scores?

JM: I didn't do a movie for about four years. I really did everything else first. I wrote arrangements for many singers including Peggy Lee, Andy Williams and Frank Sinatra. I also wrote for many acts that went to Las Vegas. I even worked there for a while and basically did everything musically that it took to write for the movies. I really wasn't interested in doing movies until I reluctantly took on the challenge. I soon discovered that my previous experience with casino shows was just like working with the visual effect of dancers in Broadway shows. In New York at WMGM I wrote for radio dramas and had to make the music fit time intervals that were predetermined down to the second. When I got into the movies all of the individual skills I developed had to be used together and it felt totally natural. The first movie I was involved in was in 1958. It was "I Want to Live!"

LF: What a great movie and a great way to start.

JM: It was good, and I said, "Hey, I like this kind of work."

LF: How did the jazz music fit into the whole scheme of the movie? How was it put together?

JM: Actually, it was an interesting thing in the sense that we had a story that would work with a jazz score, one of the few I've ever seen. The female lead played by Susan Hayward was a jazz fan and loved Gerry Mulligan. Record producer Jack Lewis was with United Artists at the time. He got hold of this deal and called me to work on the movie. His plan for me was in two parts. The first was to write the music for the film using a small group that included Gerry Mulligan, Art Farmer, Bud Shank, Red Mitchell, Pete Jolly, Frank Rosolino and Shelly Mann. I wrote all the tunes and arrangements. Later we wanted to record another version of the movie score using a much bigger group. There were no strings and it was like a large wind ensemble.

I knew that I could write this score using only jazz material and I did it using traditional movie technique with the music all timed down to a 10th of a second. Bending jazz music into the dramatic situations felt right because the concept of the story was sound. I'll say that it was the first all jazz movie score, probably the only one, and it worked because the material was right for it. I had people who wanted me to write jazz scores for other movies since then but I have always declined. The scripts didn't seem to be completely compatible with jazz and I didn't want it to sound like a shotgun wedding.

LF: What other movies were you involved in after "I Want To Live!"

JM: Next was "The Americanization of Emily" in, I believe 1963, and "The Sandpiper" in 1964.

LF: What can you tell me that was new or special about these experiences?

JM: I really didn't become a songwriter until this time. I had written lots of instrumental music and never thought of myself as a songwriter, but I got forced into writing a song which turned out to be "Emily." They like the theme music I wrote for "The Americanization of Emily" and I was asked to make a song out of it. I said, "I don't write lyrics, we need a lyricist." They said, "OK, who do you want." I said, "let's start at the top, get Johnny Mercer." They did and he wrote the words. "Emily" became a big hit largely because this was back at a time when publishers were really earning their money with aggressive promotion. As I said before, I never started off wanting to become a songwriter, but I really enjoyed doing it. It wasn't because of the money, but more for the satisfaction and being able to work with some new great people.

The sound track music for "The Sand Piper" was my next project. The song "The Shadow of Your Smile" had words written by Paul Webster, a wonderful lyricist who also collaborated with me on "A Time for Love" from the movie "An American Dream." Both were nominated for Academy Awards, but I received my Oscar for "The Shadow of Your Smile." It also won a Grammy and was voted "Song of the Year."

LF: In what other movies did you become involved?

JM: There were many but not as significant at the box office as the ones we just talked about. There was "Being There," "The Verdict," "Death Trap," "Point Blank," "The Russians are Coming," to name only a few. Then, of course, there was "M*A*S*H." The "Theme from M*A*S*H" is my biggest song, but it certainly wasn't my best effort.

LF: Would you consider "The Shadow of Your Smile" your best song writing effort?

JM: I don't know if it's my favorite song. "A Time for Love" might be a better song or "Close Enough for Love" might be even better. Who am I to say, every composer has favorite songs that nobody has ever heard of.

LF: There are very few people that have never heard the "Theme from M*A*S*H" due to the amazing popularity of the television series. Please shed some light on your involvement.

JM: I did a movie with Robert Altman in 1968 or 1969 titled "That Cold Day in the Park." It was a nice little movie out in Vancouver and Bob and I had gotten along very well. He was starting to work on the movie, "M*A*S*H" and it was decided that I would write the music. It was a very funny screenplay and it looked like it was going to be a great movie and a whole lot of fun. We had no idea at that time that it was going to be a big hit movie or that a television show would be a spin off. There was a section of the movie referred to as "the last supper scene" where the dentist, "the painless Pole," was going to commit suicide because he was unable to perform sexually with a W.A.C. the night before. He figured his life was over and had no alternative than to do away with himself because of this humiliation. This scene was one of the first sequences we were going to film. It's nice when you can be on a picture from the beginning. Bob and I were sitting around having a few drinks several days before they started shooting when he said, "in this last super scene there's a part when they're all filing around the coffin dropping things in like a bottle of Scotch, a Playboy magazine and other items to help see this guy to the next world." "It's kind of dead and we should have a song." "It should be the stupidest damn song you ever heard." I said, "Ok, I can do stupid." We sat in silence for a few minutes then Bob said, "Suicide is Painless... that would be a nice title for this." I agreed. He said, "I used to write lyrics and I'm going to take it home and see what I can do with this." He came back a few days later and said,

“Look, I tried fooling around with that song but there’s too much up in this 45-year-old computer, my brain, for me to write anything as stupid as I really need.” I indicated that it was a shame and that I thought it was a good idea. He said, however, that all was not lost. “I have a 14-year-old kid with a guitar who is a total idiot and he’ll be able to run through this in 5 minutes.” Bob’s son, Michael Altman wrote the words to the entire song and dummied it to a Leonard Cohen melody in a 6/8 meter. After I listened to the tape repeatedly it was hard for me to get away from this melody, but I used his lyrics and eventually wrote the familiar melody which for the movie became “Suicide is Painless.” Later for the television series the words were not used and it simply became known as the “Theme From M*A*S*H.” We pre-recorded the song, which was common practice for a movie and the next day did the filming with the actors mouthing the words. They liked the tune so much that they also stuck it up front of the movie and under the helicopters. I fought them on that and told them that it didn’t fit. They said they liked it there and it would stay. I’m really glad I lost that fight. This introduction carried over to the television series and became the biggest hit I had.

LF: M*A*S*H reruns continue to be aired in the U.S. on many stations just about every day and the same is probably true all over the world. Your music has reached millions and millions of people.

JM: It’s just like the old adage, “Don’t throw anything away, it may become a hit.” Many songs have fallen under this category. For instance, the song, “Mona Lisa” was written for a terrible “C” movie titled “Captain Cary U.S.A.” It was never thought to have potential or meant to be a hit song, but they didn’t consider the artistry of Nat King Cole. His recording is a classic.

LF: You did arrangements for Natalie Cole’s album, “Unforgettable.” How was her live singing combined with Nat’s recordings?

JM: We brought him back from the dead and produced the duets. We called these techniques “necrophilia tricks.” Seriously, the concept originated with Natalie. She did her act in nightclubs and included a segment of her father’s songs. She got a film clip of Nat singing “Unforgettable” so they devised a way to project the clip of Nat singing on a screen in the back of the stage and Natalie sang along as a duet. This always got a real response from the audience and it became the genesis for the recording and the video.

LF: Tell me about how the recording was put together.

JM: We used a three track ½ inch tape recorder that was originally designed to record all those terrible singers in the 1950s. They were amateurs for the most part taken right off of parking lots and the companies got records out of them. The musicians in the bands backing them up loved these singers because they were running up fantastic overtime until the singers were able to record an acceptable product. The record companies started screaming for new 3 track technology by which they could record the band in right and left stereo and send them home. The middle track was reserved for these schmucks and they would work with them until they got it right. That’s how 3 track recording originated. Anyway, back to Natalie and Nat. I thought it would be best to use a 3 track recorder instead of 2 track stereo which would have been tougher to deal with Nat’s singing and the band accompaniment.

Basically, we wanted to fish out his voice and use it with Natalie and a new accompaniment. In the days when Nat was recording they didn’t use recording booths. He was separated from the band by screens or flats since there was no ceiling. As we put the new recording together we were able to get enough volume on Nat’s voice so we could use it, but the accompaniment would leak through. I then had to write something that wouldn’t conflict with what was going on with the orchestra and the parts he was singing. When Natalie was singing by herself, I could write whatever accompaniment I wanted because we muted Nat’s track. When she sang to him, duet style, we would open his track and combine her live voice with his recorded voice and my instrumental arrangements.

LF: That’s fascinating!

JM: It was, and quite eerie while we were doing it. We couldn’t see into the booth and it was like he was in there with her. His voice would come over and we were playing live. It was very moving when we were doing it. Natalie’s mom was there in the studio and she was falling apart, in total tears. I didn’t expect it, but it was a very emotional experience the first time we did it.

LF: Do you have any other inside stories you would be willing to talk about?

JM: Dave Grusin and I did a lot of writing for Andy Williams when he had his real good television show. Andy had great ears and I used to try to challenge him and play games with the music, but it was all in fun. I’d write impossible-to-hear modulations and stuff like that, but never once was I able to throw him. I was sure I got him on several occasions, but he essentially said, “No you don’t” by always hitting it right on the nose. He could hear anything and he’s a very talented guy.

LF: I was always impressed with his big sound and the clarity of his voice.

JM: He was a protégé of Kay Thompson, a singer and theater type. She used to do an act and had the Williams Brothers in back of her when they were little kids. Andy had the kind of training where he had to sing all those hard-to-hear parts. That stayed with him throughout his career which is why I was never able to throw him.

LF: Can you relate some advice to students who may be interested in a career of writing music for TV or the movies?

JM: I wish I could say something positive. If I had a kid who wanted to go into the business he would have to want to do it an awful lot because he's going to have to put up with an awful lot of crap. When I went into the business, I was willing to put up with anything. It was very different then and there were a lot more opportunities of course.

LF: Has the synthesizer, low budgets, and maybe greed changed things for good?

JM: Yeah, but it's also the executives and the people who are running the business. If you look at the quality of the movies coming out it just really stinks. It's done by amateurs for the most part, not only the music, but the movies themselves. There isn't any know-how by someone who has been doing it for 30 or 40 years like there used to be. It takes a long time to get good.

LF: Are you saying that nothing beats paying your dues?

JM: Yeah, that's how you learn, how you get good. It's not by finding winning formulas that will gross a lot of box office for a limited period of time until the next fad comes along. That's not what getting good is all about at all. Getting good means falling on your ass and learning what to do, what not to do, what works, what doesn't work and why it doesn't. It takes this process to become a really well rounded talent. It's not something you usually have from the start unless you are going to be a "one trick pony" or something who hits it once or twice and then is finished.

LF: When you were hired to do a film score were you in charge of what was actually good?

JM: No film composer is totally in charge of anything.

LF: Then you have to put up with the editing of others?

JM: Oh, they try to make unwise changes and that is the main reason I don't want to do films anymore. There are too many amateurs cutting and pasting.

LF: So, if someone came to you with a proposal to do another film would you consider it at all or just turn it down?

JM: It would have to be a very special situation.

LF: How about television?

JM: No, absolutely not.

LF: If you could do some things over again, what would they be?

JM: I wouldn't know where to begin, but I'd get to know a lot of people much better than I did. When you're young you think everything is going to be here forever. I thought big bands would be forever, what did I know?

LF: Big band music is forever in the minds of people who love this music and appreciate the talent and the culture of those who created it. Mozart is also forever, but it's up to the music educators to show the value of all kinds of quality music to new generations. It doesn't seem to get any easier for us to accomplish this. We are competing with overwhelming marketing that is successfully selling trash to connoisseurs of the inconsequential.

JM: I am very grateful for everything that has happened to me as a result of being in the music business. I was lucky and I enjoyed every minute of it.

LF: Your career evolved into a beautiful upward spiral that took you from one challenge to the next. You built on past experience, paid your dues, and wound up enjoying each new level of the demands made on your talent for composing and arranging. Your success is highly commendable. What are you working on now and what are your future plans?

JM: I like songwriting a whole lot and it's very hard for me to write songs that are not connected to something. The type of songs I like to write are not bought by the movies anymore so it's mostly my own stuff right now. I just want to make some records of my own songs. I'd really like to do big band arrangements again and some large, nice, lush orchestra scores.

LF: Do you foresee a market for this?

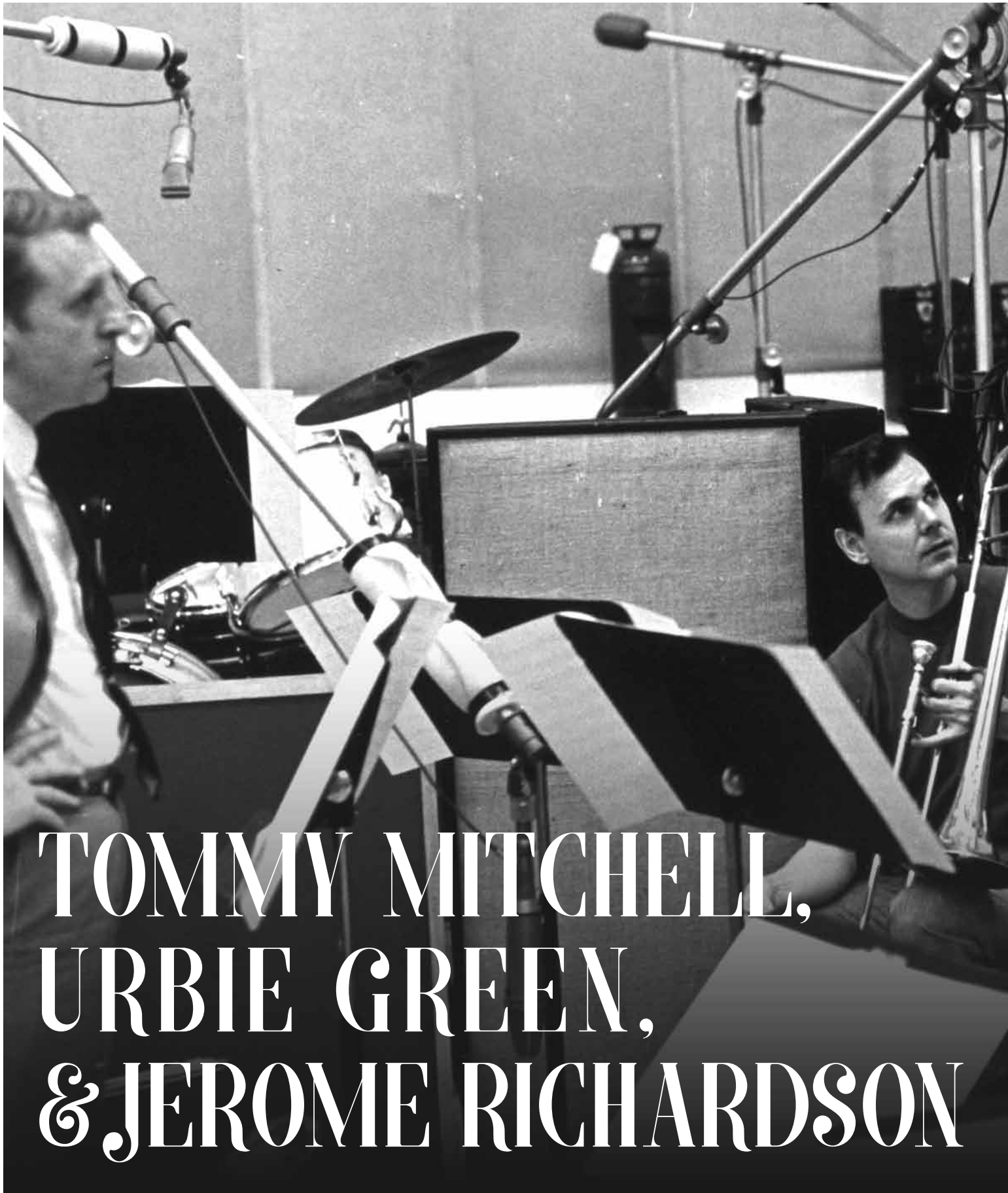
JM: No, I'm just going to do it and then worry about selling it later. If I worry about selling it first, I don't know that I'll like what I've done later. I've gotten to the point that I'll just do it and maybe somebody sooner or later will want it. If they don't, I'll have enjoyed doing it. I might as well do the things I enjoy. If I don't do it now, when am I going to do it? ■

MERV GOLD'S MOUTHPIECE

From
Bill Crow



Trombonist Merv Gold, who was much addicted to sight gags, once took a hack saw and cut the rim of a trombone mouthpiece into a series of sharp teeth. He then had it re-plated, and added the logo "SURE GRIP COMFO-RIM" to the side of it. He got a lot of laughs whenever he showed it to other trombone players on gigs and record dates. **But when he showed it to Urbie Green, URBIE JUST PUT IT ON HIS TROMBONE, PLAYED A LOT OF DIFFICULT PHRASES, HIT A COUPLE OF HIGH NOTES AND HANDED IT BACK TO MERV, SAYING WITH A STRAIGHT FACE, "NOT BAD."**



TOMMY MITCHELL,
URBIE GREEN,
& JEROME RICHARDSON



AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL FAULISE ON URBIE GREEN

May 23, 2019 | By Matt Vashlishan

[The following information was gathered from an interview between Paul and Jack Schatz for the International Trombone Association Journal, April 2009 Volume 27, No. 2]

In addition to being one of the nicest people I have had the pleasure of speaking with, Paul Faulise is one of the greatest bass trombonists in jazz and commercial music. I met Paul through a suggestion by Marvin Stamm specifically for this issue, and I will be honest I was not aware of him by name. However, I was very aware in another way, in that I have heard him time and time again on some very important jazz recordings. Originally from Buffalo, NY, Paul can be heard on recordings of Cannonball Adderley, Oliver Nelson, Oscar Peterson, Art Farmer, Dizzy Gillespie, Jimmy Smith, Quincy Jones, Benny Goodman, Frank Sinatra and others. He has played on countless recordings for film, TV (the original Tonight Show band), jingles, soundtracks and more.

Many would consider Paul one of the greatest bass trombonists ever. In 1987 and 1989, the New York Chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences named him, "Most Valuable Player." Thanks to Marvin Stamm, Paul was probably the best person to discuss the professional and personal life of Urbie Green. You will appreciate his thoughts and stories about Urbie, as well as some discussion about himself and how he became the musician he is today. We also meander to a few discussions about music in general and other musicians whom are very significant to the ACMJC. It was an absolute pleasure to speak with him.



Paul Faulise



Urbie and Paul outside
Urbie's home in the
Delaware Water Gap

Matt Vashlishan: Hi Paul, thank you for taking the time to speak with me. How did you first meet Urbie?

Paul Faulise: I first heard him when he came through my hometown of Buffalo, NY with Woody Herman's Third Herd. I went to see them, and it was the first time I had seen or heard Urbie. He just blew me away! He was playing lead, and splitting the jazz chair with Carl Fontana. The other trombone player was his brother, Jack Green. Urbie played all the lead and the ballad solos. He and Carl would switch off playing the jazz, but Urbie was a jazz player from day one. I'm not sure if you are aware, but he never had any formal training.

MV: No, I didn't know that...

PF: Yeah, no formal training, and I think it worked to his benefit because he wasn't confined to all the rigors that you have to go through learning this stuff formally. He did say he took two lessons in his life. One was with Will Bradley (Wilbur Schwichtenberg) who I worked with on the Tonight Show, and the other was Gordon Pulis. Gordon was the first trombonist of the New York Philharmonic. Urbie said took one hour each with them, just to get their ideas. That was the only formal training he ever had, and it came later in life after he was already working in NY professionally.

MV: More out of curiosity it seems.

PF: Yeah. His mother was a pianist and she made sure all her boys learned how to play the piano. They had one trombone in the house. His brother Al had it first, and then his other brother Jack had it next. Then finally Urbie ended up with it. There was always just that one trombone in the family. Of course after Jack played it he bought a new trombone and handed the family horn down to Urbie. He would listen and play to the radio. He just started out playing jazz. But back to when I first heard him with Woody, I just couldn't believe what he was doing!

MV: How old do you think he was at the time?

PF: I would say he was probably in his late 20s.

MV: So he was already unbelievable in his 20s...

PF: He spent about 11 years on the road with different bands. The next time I saw him was when I worked with him on a Claus Ogerman recording session. There were only three brass on it – I don't recall why that was. It was Doc Severinson, Urbie Green, and myself. After that I worked maybe six or seven more times with him, and I guess he liked what he heard because he asked me to go out on the road with his band. It was a two-week tour and he asked if I wanted to join the band.

MV: Which band was this?

PF: Oh it was just a road band – his road band. Under his name, playing his music. Most of the music was from the “Let's Face the Music and Dance” album. What was so amazing to me was that we couldn't afford any stage crew, and the first day Urbie was setting up all the stands, putting the lights on, then passing out the music, all kinds of things. While doing all these errands he hasn't played one note. So he calls up a set, and the first tune he plays is “Dinner for one, please, James” that is this huge trombone feature, and he just starts playing it like it's nothing. He just picked up the horn and there's this gorgeous sound coming through the horn. I couldn't believe it. I was in such awe of him.

MV: It seems like everybody was, right? He was the trombone player's trombone player.

PF: He was, yes. Absolutely. You know I don't think there will ever be anyone that can do what he did and how he did it. He's the innovator. He taught everybody. One of the guys who came close was Bill Watrous.

MV: It just seems like Urbie's sound was so much more refined. He could be playing what everybody else is playing but there's just that extra refinement to everything. It's like the top, top shelf version of everything in terms of sound, taste, all of that.

PF: Well there will never, ever be another Urbie Green. I worked extensively with him after that. We did three world tours together with the Philip Morris Super Band. I ended up being the first call bass trombone for a lot of things with him, many different situations. When I walked in to all those sessions, and the lead trombone chair was there empty I would wonder to myself, “now who will it be.” Then when Urbie walked in I would always breathe a sigh of relief! I knew it was going to be a good session.

MV: Now you've always played bass trombone, but have you ever played tenor trombone?

PF: Well actually yes. If you want a little of my background I can tell you how I came to play the bass trombone.

MV: Yes of course!

PF: When I was in my first year of high school, maybe fourteen years old, I was on the track team. I always make the joke: I ran the 100-yard dash in a 90-yard gym! I was doing the broad jump, and I tripped on the mat. Instead of just falling down I tried to catch my balance and by the time I caught my balance I was at the end of the gym and my face went into the brick wall. I cracked my front tooth right in half and it eventually had to come out and they put a bridge in and all that. Before all this happened I was playing trumpet. From nine-years-old right up to the point my face went into the wall at 14. During all the dental work I was really having trouble trying to play trumpet because it really requires a lot of pressure and a small mouthpiece. My friends suggested that I try the trombone, because it uses a larger mouthpiece and there wouldn't be so much pressure right on the important spot. I took their advice, and I liked the trombone so I stuck with it. In my senior year I heard George Roberts playing with Stan Kenton and I said, “Wow, what a great sound!” I convinced my parents to get me a bass trombone, and stuck with it from that point on. So my senior year in high school onward I was playing the bass trombone. I went into the army and played with their symphony and all that.

When I first started to play probably around nine-years-old it was during the big band era. On the trumpet my big hero was Harry James. I was really into the trumpet.

MV: That's so interesting that you started out on trumpet, which was the loudest and highest admiring the guy that's way on top, and then you end up on the bottom.

PF: Well the funny thing is that on both trumpet and on trombone I had a good low register. Somebody was trying to tell me something! [laughs] It was a natural progression I think.

MV: Well it's a good thing you wacked your tooth then right? Or you would be playing 4th trumpet your whole life!

PF: If I'd be playing it at all! It's amazing all these little twists and turns in life and how they pan out. At first they seem like a tragedy, but they turn out to be the best thing. Not always, but in my case yes.

MV: There must be a particular relationship between the bass and lead trombone right?

PF: Oh yes.

MV: So concerning you and Urbie, that must have been a very special thing, or a constantly growing type of relationship?

PF: Well I was working with all the great players. Buddy Morrow, Warren Covington, Urbie, Frank Rehak and all these different players would come in to play lead. I had to adjust what I was doing to their style of playing. And of course, Urbie was the easiest! He was just so musical. I always said that working with Urbie was like taking a lesson. He was my teacher and my mentor. All I had to do was listen to him and follow all his nuances and try to match that gorgeous warm sound that he always had. It was all a wonderful experience.

MV: I really think that is such a testament to what a player Urbie was. When you hear it from someone like yourself who was actually in the sections, who played with all of the greatest trombone players and you can compare first hand to how wonderful he was as a player in terms of sound, phrasing, nuance, everything. And it's nothing against any of those other players, because they were ALL incredible.

PF: Oh yes, I was very fortunate to work with all of those great players. They were all of the best trombone players at that time. JJ Johnson, Kai Winding, Carl Fontana, Frank Rosolino, I worked with all these guys.

MV: I'm curious about how he played the trombone. You mentioned he had no formal training, so was it correct? Or did he play the trombone unlike how others would play it?

PF: Oh yes it was very natural. He said he had an undershot jaw so it pointed the trombone downward. He said he had some dental work done to adjust that so that when he played the trombone would be facing straight out. That's about the only change he made physically.

MV: But as far as embouchure goes or things like that it was normal?

PF: Yes all of that was very natural. The thing with Urbie is that he didn't know that what he was doing, how he was playing, that people just aren't supposed to be able to do that. At least to that point, nobody ever did it. Some trombonists he listened to were Jack Jenney and Trummy Young, Jack Teagarden – guys of that era who were active in the 1930s. Those were the people that he emulated. Later on he got into his own thing of course. He would just play how he felt, and he was able to do it in the upper register and all that with getting around up there. Usually Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller would just play a beautiful ballad in the upper register, but that's all they did. They didn't play any nuance or do any tricks or anything. Urbie was able to get all around the horn and do whatever he wanted. That's what set him apart from everybody else.

MV: This is all very interesting. What can you say about Urbie as a person?

PF: Oh he was a gentleman. Very soft-spoken and not

very talkative.

MV: What was it like when you were working with him in that regard? Like when he was in charge as the bandleader.

PF: Well you know what he would do? Say you were in a recording session, and at that time there were usually four trombone players, practically on every single date. He would be in the lead chair, and he would play the first tune. Then he would pass the lead part on the second tune down the section to give everybody a chance to be the lead voice. Unless his name was on it, because in that time if a particular arranger really wanted you to play the part they would put your name at the top instead of "trombone 1" or whatever the part might be. Urbie played lead on maybe two tunes of each recording session and always passed the others around. He didn't want to hog the whole thing.

MV: Now that's interesting.

PF: I think he thought that because he was the top call guy, nobody else was getting a chance to play lead, and they were of course, all very capable.

You know sometimes I was there and I saw one of those parts where the arranger wrote his name, either "Urbie Green" at the top instead of "Trombone 1" or things like "Urbie Solo," so I would take a pencil and mark "8va" over the first measure so however high it was it looked like he was supposed to play it an octave higher than that. And he would do it!! He would start out actually playing it and the arranger would go, "No, no, no!!!" [laughs]

MV: Yeah and I'm sure he did it with no problem whatsoever. He seems like the type of musician that never had a weird day, an off day, anything like that.

PF: Well not that I ever heard. And he has been through things in his life, good and bad, and he never played or behaved in a way that wasn't absolutely professional.

MV: In this area, where he lived for a long time and new a lot of people, it was always kind of known that he practiced every day. Whether he was actively playing gigs or not, he was always maintaining or working on something.

PF: Yes, and I still do too. I'm 87 and I'm still practice. It's habit really, you can't get out of it.

MV: I would think it's therapeutic at a certain point. I have a question about a record here. Here at the collection I deal with Al Cohn and Phil Woods and all of these guys.

PF: They were friends of mine too. I worked with Phil on Quincy Jones' band.

MV: Back in the 1950s?

PF: Well, it was yes the late 1950s and early 1960s.

MV: I have an Oliver Nelson record here, "Full Nelson." You're on it with Urbie Green, Al Cohn, and Phil Woods and Jerry Dodgion among others. All who have contributed to our collection. What an ultimate band with all of these people in one spot.

PF: Yeah it was a really great time for music. Actually the last time I saw Phil was at Urbie's 40th anniversary at his house. I said, "Phil what are you doing?" And he started giving me this whole itinerary of what he was doing and I said, "Phil! How the heck can you do all this?" [laughs]

MV: I don't know how he did it. Occasionally he would play a quintet gig at the Deerhead Inn, and I did two of those with him, so he and I were playing alto. And he's sitting in a chair with his lung problems as they were, and there I was, probably in my early 30s at the time. Despite all his health problems, he had without a doubt the biggest, loudest alto sound of anyone I've ever heard. There I was less than half his age in perfect health trying as hard as I could to even come close to the sound he was making. I was probably doing all the incorrect things, but I just remember that, how difficult it was to hear him and then hear my puny sound coming out by comparison. But you try and try and you just can't get it to anywhere near that level. I think that was surely the case with trombone players in relation to Urbie. I also think these qualities are a product of being so active in the 1950s and 1960s, playing with all those bands, standing next to Dizzy, playing in all those big bands acoustically. All these guys, and you included, learn and grow into these things. There were only a handful of people that got this kind of opportunity. Quincy's band was probably one of Phil's first major gigs. Were you on that tour...

PF: No I wasn't on the European tour, I joined the band right after they got back. I joined when they went to Birdland, Basin St East, we made a ton of recordings. There's that one bossa nova that Quincy wrote that was really famous - Soul Bossa Nova, I did that. The way I started working with all the jazz players was through Ernie Wilkins. I started out with his band. He arranged for Tommy Dorsey and Harry James. He did a bunch of recording with Oscar Peterson, Carmen McRae, a whole bunch of people. It was one of the best times of my life.

MV: You all were so fortunate. You were right in the middle of your career at probably the best possible time in history for this type of music. There were different types of jazz music happening, and there was still a commercial value to it all. People were interested in it on a large scale, and it was what was used for everything – TV, commercials, etc.

PF: Most of the time I was playing with large groups, and there were always four trombones. Sometimes five. But

eventually they started cutting down, you know. They would have two trumpets, two trombones, instead of four and four. Urbie and I worked a lot when it was just two trombones.

MV: I think when you cut things down like that you lose the whole point of the bass trombone, because then you have to play up higher and deal with the other parts of the chords.

PF: That's it. Yeah it was sad when everything started to disappear.

MV: Do you know Jim Daniels? He's another Pocono musician out here.

PF: Oh yes he's a fine bass trombone player. I didn't really know him, I might have met him one time but I know of him for sure.

MV: I guess you wouldn't see much of each other, both playing bass trombone.

PF: That's true, very rarely were there ever two bass trombones on the same session.

MV: I think a real bass trombone player is rare. It's hard to find somebody that really has that vibe about it. There are people that can play it and all, but when you hear the real deal, it's a whole other thing.

PF: Well that's it. A lot of tenor trombone players would double on bass, but there's a huge difference as opposed to someone who dedicated themselves to the bass trombone.

MV: Oh sure. It's almost like it's not a trombone anymore.

PF: Well you have to think very differently in the low register and as the bottom of the section. You're responsible for the intonation because it all comes from the bottom.

MV: Have you ever found yourself having certain relationships with any particular baritone sax players for that reason?

PF: Yes, oh yes. I worked with some for over 20 years. One in particular was Sol Schlinger. We worked together and really worked on trying to not get in each other's way. You are very aware of whoever is playing baritone. Sometimes you're are playing the same part, and other times you just have to be aware of how you're blending together down there.

MV: It's obvious you must have thought a lot about color and getting into each other's sound. For playing the level of music you did the way you did I feel there must have been some thought about this. I do think this is something that is going away, how people think about what power they have within the ensemble and these various relationships across the sections.

PF: Yes he and I were very aware of our role together.



Buddy Morrow, Urbie Green, & Paul Faulise



Urbie and Paul in a recording session

MV: Was this something you actually talked about? Or was it more of an intellectual awareness?

PF: You just do it and try not to overshadow one another. I have worked with certain baritone saxophone players who just go in there and blow the hell out of the horn. There's no musicality to it - they are just playing notes. Speaking of that, there's another thing about Urbie that relates to this. We were playing a session and there was a new piece Urbie had to play a solo on. The arranger was trying to explain to him how to play it and what he had in mind. Urbie asked, "Well what are the lyrics at that particular point?" Then it dawned on me. Urbie was never just playing notes, he was playing lyrics. That's how intense he was about doing the right thing.

MV: Well the lyrics really have everything to do with phrasing. If there are lyrics, that creates the whole point.

What about career wise? Did you have a relationship with Urbie in that way or was it just professionally playing together?

PF: Oh yes he helped me out a lot. He referred me for things and all that. It does take a little bit of luck, but you need people to be there and support you and help you out. And when the chances come or luck happens you have to be ready to handle it. Some people think if you get recommended you just go in and you have the job. Not true! When I first got into the commercial music business they had contractors. They were usually violinists. I don't know why, but they were. When you first worked for a particular contractor, they would come to the gig or session and sit next to you and listen to you.

MV: Really? To make sure you're cool?

PF: Oh yeah. Talk about pressure! You're recommended, but they don't know your playing.

MV: I guess there's a lot on the line for them too. Especially at that point in time.

PF: Of course. They don't want to put someone on a recording session that will mess up.

MV: Recordings at that time were much more crucial on an individual level. Everybody had to get it right. It can be very forgiving these days with all of the technology.

PF: One of the very first recordings I did was for Ernie Wilkins and was four trombones and rhythm section. There was NO place to hide!

MV: Especially you on the bottom with a whole different sound concept. I suppose you could try and make a case for third trombone hiding or something, but not bass! You're just as exposed as the lead player.

PF: Yeah sometimes I would have a bass line or something independent from the rest of the section, so definitely.

MV: This is all great information. Is there anything else you would like to say about Urbie?

PF: Well, I've said it a thousand times but Urbie was just an absolute one of a kind world-class musician. I would keep in touch with him after he retired. I would say, "Urbie, you doing any practicing?" And he would say, "Nah... I already gave." [laughs] He sure did! He sure did give! ■

LITTLE KNOWN FACTS ABOUT URBIE GREEN

1 During the 1950s and 60s, Urbie and Frank Rehak were the busiest trombone players in New York City.

2 Bobby Byrne, also a busy trombone player, was a pilot. He was able to convince Urbie and Frank to chip in and purchase a used small airplane and gave them flying lessons. The joke among NY musicians was that all the NY trombone players were going to chip in and buy an anti-aircraft gun to shoot the plane down so they could get more work!

3 As you know Urbie was a vegetarian. However, before moving to the Delaware Water Gap, he owned a 40-acre property in PA and raised Charolais cattle. They are French cattle raised for their beef. After a few years, he stopped raising Charolais and sold the property to the composer Alan Menken.

URBIE TRIBUTE

June 10, 2019 | By Jim Pugh



Urbie Green and Jim Pugh



Jim Pugh, Urbie Green, and Dr. Howard Horn
Photo Courtesy of Jim Pugh

STORY 1: New York and Catskill trombonist, Boris Malina, was in rehearsal with a band that was to accompany (reportedly) singers, Steve Lawrence and Eydie Gorme. After playing through one chart in which Boris had a ballad trombone solo, the conductor told him to simply play the solo like Urbie Green. To which Boris replied, “Schmuck! If I could play like Urbie Green, you think I’d be here?”

STORY 2: A few musicians (mostly trombonists I’m sure) were chatting one day, possibly at the union, possibly on a break? Among the group was the great bass trombonist and section mate with Urbie for decades, Paul Faulise. The topic of discussion at some point turned to Urbie and someone lamented the fact that no one plays like that any more. Paul followed that observation with one of his own, mentioning that “No one played like that THEN either!”

While these anecdotes are cute and clever, in a larger sense, they give some idea of the respect and admiration felt for Urbie throughout the community of musicians. There are other stories as well that show the breadth of his impact: such as the time Antonio Carlos Jobim reportedly completely cancelled a recording session without hearing a note when he walked in and saw that Urbie, his favorite trombonist, wasn’t able to be there. Or the fact that Emory Remington (of the Eastman School of Music and arguably the most important classical trombone pedagog of the 20th century), when asked by his classical, orchestral students where to go to hear the legato they should emulate (smooth, connected playing), always told them to listen to Urbie Green.

In 1961 I was 11 years old, living in Atlanta, GA and had been playing trombone for about a year. I needed to get my first pair of glasses and, post eye exam, my mother and I went to a local optometrist to get the glasses. During the obligatory chit chat, my mother mentioned to the person waiting on us that I was a young trombonist. He told us that his brother was a trombone player in New York and had a few records (“vinyl”, for you millennials!) out that we might like. Well, the optometrist’s name was Bob Green and you can guess who his brother was. We immediately got a copy of “The Persuasive Trombone of Urbie Green” and the direction of my life changed.

My folks and I moved to western PA shortly after that and I grew up there in a vibrant trombone/brass community (thanks to Matty and Eddie Shiner and their dedicated teaching of young brass players) and Urbie influenced us all. I remember him appearing at the annual MidEast music conference in Pittsburgh in 1968 - our world came to a stand still because Urbie was coming to town.

There’s not a trombonist playing today who doesn’t owe a debt of gratitude to Urbie for raising the bar on the trombone’s lyrical, expressive, technical, fluidity and range ceiling. We are all his trombonistic descendants,

whether directly (through the luck of timing and geography) or generationally through teachers or hearing trombonists who were influenced by his playing. In my teaching studio at the University of Illinois I have three pictures on the wall: Matty Shiner (my teacher through middle school and high school), Emory Remington (my teacher through college) and Urbie (my first and only trombone hero). I feel it’s important for my students to understand that nothing that I try to impart to them happens in a vacuum, that on good days the spirit, knowledge and influence of these musicians is also in the room and we hope they look down on us kindly.

Having had the great fortune of working and playing with Urbie (always inspiring and never for long enough) gave me the opportunity to see the person he was and his humanity that extended beyond music; his love of and pride in his family; the graceful manner in which he dealt with the business; the respectful way he interacted with colleagues; his consummate professionalism; his willingness to aid and encourage young players either as a visiting clinician or in professional settings; and so on.

Admittedly I still suffer from a bad case of hero worship. For all the times I sat beside him in a section I never really got past the awe of hearing the tone and articulation that I grew up on and that had formed my concept of an “ideal” trombone sound coming from the man sitting next to me.

In the history of our instrument there have been skilled technicians, lyrical players, strong players with formidable upper registers, gifted improvisers and great players in any imaginable style. Urbie was all of these things in a single musician and pushed the boundaries in every area. I remember one of his albums (another word for “vinyl”) labeling him as “America’s Greatest Trombonist”. In his case, it actually wasn’t hyperbole. In 60 years (and counting) of playing, I have yet to hear his equal. He gave us much to strive for. Personally, I will always be grateful for everything he showed and continues to show me in my trombone life. ■

URBIE AT THE COTA FESTIVAL IN 1983



Urbie Green performing



Urbie and Kathy perform together



Urbie on trombone with Tony Marino on bass



Urbie plays while his wife Kathy sings

AN INTERVIEW WITH URBIE GREEN

Patrick Dorian

East Stroudsburg University | East Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania

This Interview was previously published in the IAJE Jazz
Research Papers 1993, Dr. Larry Fisher Editor.

From the 1940s to the 1990s, Urbie Green has been one of the most influential trombonists in jazz and commercial music. He was a member of Gene Krupa's Band from 1947 to 1950 and Woody Herman's Third Herd from 1951 to 1953. His New York City recording studio career is legendary.

PAT DORIAN: I'm here in Urbie Green's living room on August 28, 1992, and I'm going to be talking to Mr. Green about his career and music in general, especially as it pertains to the trombone. Urbie, throughout your learning process, who taught you the most, which people, and what do you remember specifically that they taught you that helped you out as a musician?

URBIE GREEN: Well, let's see, that's kind of a long question. As you probably know, I didn't really have real formal training, I came from a family of five kids, and we all started off on the piano, which our mother taught us to play somewhat - she didn't really play the piano very much herself. That's a long story, though, but anyway - and then a trombone came into the family as a result of some time we spent in California, and we brought that trombone back to Mobile, Alabama, my hometown, and my two older brothers played it before I did. They sort of just did it on their own, also having some experience at the piano, knowing how to read music, and then we got an Arban book. That trombone was handed down to me by way of my brother Jack, brother Al was the first one, so those were my big influences on the trombone. In the beginning, my two older brothers - and that was the time when the big bands were making a lot of noise and people like Tommy Dorsey, Jack Teagarden, Trummy Young, Lawrence Brown - were big influences and I'm still trying to get around to who was the biggest influence. I guess I'd have to say my brother Al, for a long time, and then it was during World War II,

when I dropped out of high school, went on the road with some bands, sort of learning as I worked. I played with bands that were popular at that time, and, actually, I learned from everybody. I was always the youngest kid in the band and was always trying to learn from the older guys that had been around longer and had probably been to New York and studied with some of the teachers there. There's one fellow in particular, when I was with Frankie Carle's band, and his name was Clarence Willard. He had studied with Max Schlossberg and he showed me a lot of those exercises that he had written down by hand from when he had studied with him, and they were very helpful to me in straightening out my embouchure. Having started off with no real formal instruction, I had a screwy-looking embouchure, and through these exercises and pushing my lower jaw out a little more than I was normally playing. This is an awfully long story!

PD: No, it's good because we can condense it.

UG: I was able to even out my embouchure from lows to highs. I used to kind of switch around - I had a different embouchure for high notes than I did for low notes. Through these exercises which were basically scales like two octaves or more up and down twice or more, depending on how fast you play and how much air you've got. So, like scales from low to high, softly and staccato. We used to do that backstage between shows. Back in those days the bands played a lot of theaters, where you played four or five shows a day, and so in between shows we would go down and practice. So that was a big step forward for me. I think I was about 18 at that time. I had already been on the road for about two years.

PD: You said that your brother Al was a major influence on you, and I think it would be of interest to see what role family members play in a musician's development. Could you talk about that?

UG: Well, Al was a child prodigy piano player. He played by ear he just picked it up himself after our mother got him started. I think he was about 12 years old when he used to have his own radio program in Mobile, "Little Al Green." I think it was every Saturday, something like that, and I think when he got to be 17, which would have made me about seven, we decided to make a trip to California because the economy was so bad in Mobile during the Depression days that we thought maybe going to California things would be a little bit better. We'd take a look around out there. So we headed for California in an old Model A Ford, and my brother enrolled in Hollywood High School. It was Hollywood, California, naturally, and he was playing piano in a little jazz band made up of the students there. Earle Hagen was the trombone player. He was the fellow who has done a lot of writing in Hollywood and composed some nice pieces. One of his most well known tunes is "Harlem Nocturne." He was a high school buddy of my brother's. They were both 17 years old at the time, and my brother became interested in the trombone. He bought Earle's old trombone from him, I think for two dollars, if I remember correctly, and at the end of a year we decided to go back to Mobile.

When we got back there, my brother started playing some jobs around Mobile on the trombone as well as the piano, and he bought himself a new trombone and gave the old one to my brother Jack, who was two years older than me. I played it for a couple of years, started working around Mobile, and got me a new trombone. I don't know what ever happened to the old one. It had a really terrible slide; you could hardly move it. You had to hold it with your fist to make it go. Well, anyway, we were talking about brother Al. He was the one who broke the way into the music business, the first professional in the family, and he had us listening to what were the right things to be listening to at that time: the big band music, people like Tommy Dorsey, Harry James, Benny Goodman, Benny Goodman's band, I guess that was a big influence on us back then. He loved Teddy Wilson on the piano, who was with Benny's trio, my brother Al, I'm still talking about. Count Basie, Duke Ellington bands, and brother Al's music interpretation was a big influence on me and my brother Jack too. He was just a real natural hard-swinging trombone and piano player. I always thought he sounded a little bit like Trummy Young when he played the trombone, and he was very much influenced by Teddy Wilson on the piano.

In those days the pop music of the day was a very high-caliber music. People were listening to songs like "All the Things You Are" and "Sentimental Over You," Tommy Dorsey's theme song, and all the great Duke Ellington tunes like "Sophisticated Lady." I would try to copy the trombone solos to see if I could play like Jack Jenney. He was one of my favorite players in those days when he would play with Artie Shaw's band, so I'd try to play his solo on "Star Dust."

Jack Teagarden too, I tried to see if I could do what he was doing. I guess those were really great influences in the early days of my trombone playing.

PD: Before you settled in New York, you had spent 11 years on the road. What did you learn specifically that helped your musical development while you were constantly traveling?

UG: Well, I was just thinking that the experience before I went on the road playing around my hometown was very useful, and in later years the experience of playing with some of the Dixieland bands down there in Mobile, Alabama. That was a very popular music in those days and it's still popular. I mean it's the kind of music that will be around forever, I guess, in some form. A band came through Mobile and offered me a job and I went on the road. That was the beginning of 11 years of traveling around with bands, so I guess that experience was my best teacher. They were mostly swing-type bands. Bob Strong was the first one. We went to the Roseland Ballroom in New York. Then I went with Jan Savitt for a year and then Frankie Carle for two years and then Gene Krupa for four years and then I got to play with the band I always wanted to play with: Woody Herman. I stayed with Woody for three years until I finally settled down in New York.

During those 11 years I got to play with many fine musicians, and along with that kind of playing we would be on theater tours a big part of the time playing shows in the movie houses. We would alternate with the movie-like the movie would show for a couple of hours and then we would go and do a stage show for an hour, and there would be three or four acts that would be with the band, so I got to play different kinds of music for those acts, like Spanish music for a Spanish dance act, or a magician or a dog act - it could be anything. They would just pass out the music, so I got that kind of experience along with the regular band music, which was very helpful for preparing me to go into the New York studios, which I did in the fall of 1954. With all that experience, I was pretty well prepared to go right in there and it got real busy in a hurry in the recording studios.

PD: With all of the types of music you would have to play in the studio, was there anything else you felt that you needed to study to be ready for anything?

UG: Well, after playing with mostly big jazz bands for about 11 years, besides the acts and shows, I always fell a little short in the symphonic trombone playing part of music. When I got to New York and started to do various kinds of work around, I wanted to learn a little bit more about symphonic interpretation. You know, when you play with a jazz band, you don't always play the music exactly like it's written,

as when you're playing eighth notes and sometimes they sound more like six-eight or twelve-eight time, but they generally write them as just eighth notes or dotted eighths and sixteenths. Most arrangers don't want to be bothered putting in all that extra ink. I thought that there might be a lot more to symphonic interpretation than I knew about, so someone introduced me to Gordon Pulis, who was playing principal trombone with the New York Philharmonic. It turned out that Gordon was a lot more interested in learning about playing jazz, so we would hang out, and rather than a teacher-student relationship we just became good friends. When I was playing a jazz job, he would come down and spend the night listening. He wrote out the trombone solo from Ravel's "Bolero" for me and played it for me. I had always thought that symphonic music was strictly a mechanical approach to playing, but I found out that there is a little interpretation that goes with that too. They told me that Toscanini actually liked Tommy Dorsey's interpretation of the "Bolero" better than a lot of that guys that played with the symphony. So Gordon eased my anxiety a little bit about that part of music, and as a result I felt a little more comfortable going in to do things like movie scores, which in many cases were a symphonic kind of playing, and even television commercials - you never knew what they were going to throw at you; it could be any kind of music. I guess I got a reputation as a guy who knew how to do it all to some degree. I played on CBS staff for a year under Alfredo Antoninni. He conducted the CBS Symphony during live televised plays like "Playhouse 90" and "Studio 21." That was before they started putting everything on tape. Sometimes they were small groups of musicians, but it was all very symphonic kind of playing.

PD: How did you develop your particular style, in other words, when people hear Urbie Green playing, what elements add up to the entire end result - the Urbie Green sound and style?

UG: That's a rough question. I think I mentioned that the earlier influences were people like Jack Teagarden, Trummy Young, Tommy Dorsey, Jack Jenney, and then as time went on in the late forties I became aware of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Miles Davis, Lester Young. It's difficult to say; I don't know what I sound like to other people, but if I were listening to myself on a record I think that I would see influences of all of those people I mentioned already and somebody like Billy Butterfield, who I really loved a lot, especially the way he played ballads. He played an old Besson trumpet and he was just a beautiful player. He was on that same record of "Star Dust" that Jack Jenney was on with Artie Shaw. He's the trumpet player that starts the record. When I play I think that a little Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie comes out. The way I see my playing,

I don't think I sound like bebop or any particular era. I like to think of it as being a universal way of playing like you could play with anyone. If I was playing with a bunch of Dixieland guys, I would sound pretty much the same, or if I was playing with a bunch of bebop guys, I'd still play kind of the same way. It's just music. A fellow like Zoot Sims was like that, and Al Cohn was too. I don't really put a label on their style. It's just music. I'd like to be in that category where it's just not a style that comes and goes. It's kind of a universal style. Good singers influenced me a lot, like Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong. Now Louis influenced everybody, singers and players alike. I don't know why I didn't mention him first! I like to have fun when I play, if possible. If you're playing with the right people, music can be a lot of fun. To get too serious about it sometimes takes away something from it. All of those things go into the makeup of what I try to do.

PD: What recommendations do you have for young musicians who want a career similar to yours? I know that you play with a lot of college jazz ensembles. What do you say when student musicians come up to you on a break or an intermission or after a concert and want your advice?

UG: I'm not one of those people who lectures, but I like to have rap sessions with the kids where they just talk about what's on their mind. They generally end up talking about the profession and music in general rather than just the trombone, because if you're talking with a bunch of musicians, most of them are not trombone players, so we just talk about the business and the profession and music. I like to point out that it's important to listen to all kinds of music, because if you become a professional, it's not just being a jazz player. If all you want to do is be a jazz player, I'd say to listen to all the jazz records you can and have jam sessions on a regular basis with kids that have the same interests.

It's very important to go back to the basics and do a lot of research in the early days of jazz and see how it progressed into what it is today. In a sense, music isn't all that different today than it was in the beginning. The notes are all the same. If you go back to the early blues records, there are still guys doing that same kind of thing today. With different rhythms maybe, but it still seems like that old two and four beat is still there, even in most kinds of jazz and rock music. Play every day somehow if you are a player rather than if you are a writer, composer, or arranger. If you want to be a jazz player, try to set up regular jam sessions and play as much as you can. That's the fundamentals of it.

PD: Since you play frequently in Europe and tour the world with groups such as the Phillip Morris Superband (directed by Gene Harris), what do you feel is the state of jazz today?

UG: Well, from my point of view, I know that there are all kinds of jazz out there today, anything you want to choose: there's a real free form and there are still the old traditional Dixieland bands, the blues bands, the swing bands, and the bebop bands. There are more kinds of music out there than ever before, and there will probably be more in the future. My main involvement is somewhere in the swing-bebop-contemporary jazz field. Contemporary, whatever that means. I don't even know what that means [laughs]. That's probably a wrong way to put it. The Phillip Morris Superband that Gene Harris directs is made up of guys from the Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Woody Herman bands and some of the younger fellows coming up today. It seems like that is still a very powerful music, received very well all over the world. We went to Japan, the Philippines, Russia, Poland, Casablanca, Cairo, and people love it everywhere. There's no telling what the future has in store for us.

There's all kinds of experimenting going on all the time. With all the different kinds of jazz that have developed over the years, it seems like they all have that one thing in common of a rhythm where you hear that two and four beat coming out somehow. It's a form of dance music still. If it's something you can dance to, whether it's the old Charleston beat, Dixieland music, or Michael Brecker and his electronics, or sambas from Brazil, which is a form of jazz, it's still got that finger-snapping kind of a thing going. It all came from the African rhythms, and all those European harmonies got mixed in there and different cultures, but it's still got that finger-snapping two and four going no matter where it came from. There may be some ultra-free music around that I'm not too into that doesn't have any kind of rhythm going, but for the most part it's all got some kind of swing beat going.

PD: Could you talk about the value of practice and how much time you spend practicing as you prepare for certain situations and how you organize your practice time?

UG: Practice is very important to me these days because I'm home a lot. I'm not really out there playing every day like I used to, so I have to practice in order to stay in shape to do whatever comes along in the line of performing. I have a little routine that I go through. I try to do it every day. It takes about an hour and includes warming up, long tones, a combination of long tones and lip slurs together where I just don't hold out one note at a time. I usually "lip" to another note in the same breath so that I don't fix my embouchure differently for every note. That's related to the old Schlossberg warm-up, which I put in a little book I wrote a few years ago called "One Hour A Day: A Technique and Embouchure Maintenance Method." It's not always exactly the same routine. I change it around somewhat to suit what my needs seem to be. It combines long tones and lip slurs together. I do that for a while and then scales, all these two-octave scales up and down.

And generally holding the last note out for quite a while after you get to the bottom note, or start at the top and go down and back up and end on the top note; reverse it. I wrote all that out in this little book for CJC, Creative Jazz Composers (1977). I don't know if they're still distributing it or not. I haven't heard from them lately.

If it's a jazz thing I've got coming up, I try to jam around the house or play with some rhythm section records. We've got some of the Aebersold records around. I usually don't bother to get them out, though. I got them from my kids. One of the things that really helps to keep my lip strong is to play ballads. It seems like ballad playing is a lot more demanding on your endurance than just playing scales and things. Like old Tommy Dorsey types of solos where you play the melody in the high range, I think that those things will make you stronger than anything else. To go out and play with that Phillip Morris Superband, they put me on first trombone. I played all the lead. I had to get ready for that, but it still works. Another little thing that I do is that if I haven't been playing a lot, and I have to get ready for a concert on kind of short notice, if I practice a lot, say two days before the concert, like almost overdo it a little bit, then the next day don't play at all, and then go do the concert the third day. Sometimes that will get me through if I've neglected to stay in the shape I should have [laughs].

PD: So that's one day of hard practice, don't play the second day, and then on the third day you have your performance?

UG: Yes, and regarding the playing of ballads during your practice to keep your chops strong, it is a good idea if you want to really interpret the ballad correctly if you know the lyrics, because sometimes you may be taking a breath where you are interrupting a sentence. It has got to have its poetic value as well as its harmonic sense going. I don't claim to know the lyrics to every ballad I ever played. I wish I did know them [laughs]. The benefit from playing the ballads as far as your lip is concerned, if you're in shape to play something like Tommy Dorsey's solo theme song "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You" two times in a row, you'd be in pretty good shape.

PD: In terms of young people's musical development from an early age on, what are some of the more important aspects that should be emphasized?

UG: Well, I think that one of the most important things of all is that if the school that they are going to has a good music program, and somebody that really knows the music profession like you, like Pat Dorian. My two boys have played all through junior high and high school, and with the East Stroudsburg University bands: the concert bands, the marching bands, and the jazz ensemble over at the university. Pat has really exposed them to the best of jazz and the best of all other kinds of music. That's the best situation you can have. ■

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A black and white photograph of a man in a suit and tie, sitting and looking down at a trombone. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his face and the instrument. The background is dark and out of focus.

URBIE GREEN