

Clarence "Candy" Green

Pianist Clarence "Candy" Green, who is not related to the guitar playing Green brothers, was born on March 15, 1929 in Galveston, Texas. His mother played piano, accompanying herself on spiritual numbers, and she taught Green from a young age. Preferring the secular music of the vibrant Southeast Texas blues and jazz scene, at age fifteen, Green began playing for tips in the juke joints and brothels of the area. He quickly became a favorite among patrons and the other musicians.



From 1945 to 1948, Green traveled with the Merchant Navy, igniting a lifelong wanderlust, but when he was home he would perform in his usual haunts. In 1947, rather than continue to play solo, he decided to form a group. Recruiting tenor saxophonist Johnny Fontenette, who later joined Roy Brown's band, Horace Richmond on bass and Rip Bolden on drums, the combo found regional success with one of Green's compositions, "Galveston Blues."

After performing on radio station KGBC, Green was approached by Eddie Henry, who operated Eddie's Records on Houston's Dowling Street. Henry recorded the Green combo, cutting "Galveston Blues" and another original song called "Green's Bounce." Before the record was released, Henry went out of business and the band broke up. Green continued touring alone through Louisiana and Texas.

In 1950, Green approached Peacock label owner Don Robey, and secured a three year contract. Going into the studio with Bill Harvey's band, Green recorded one of his most enduring songs, "Hard Headed Woman." Unhappy with the promotion and compensation Peacock offered, despite his contract, Green avoided recording again with Robey, and turned down other offers to record. Although drafted into the Army, when on leave Green played often with legendary guitarist Wes Montgomery.

In 1952, still under contract to Peacock, Essex Records of Philadelphia offered to record him. Using the name "Galveston Green," Green recorded "My Time is Your Time," using Rathe Lee on tenor-sax, Kinrey Bailey on bass and Lawrence Harris on drums. Soon after, he recorded "Bad Shape Blues" for the Monarch label. Neither of those records met with much commercial success, and Green soured on the recording industry.

While in the Army, Green gained his nickname, "Candy." According to Green himself, women gave him the nickname because of his sweet disposition. It stuck, and he was henceforth known as Candy Green.

Green's wanderlust manifested itself in the mid-1950s, when he traveled to Mexico City with Paul Love's band. The gig ended, but Green stayed, running a jazz club called the Echo. In 1958 he left Mexico intent on traveling, and headed for Copenhagen. He spent the next thirty years gigging, working in bars and clubs, and traveling throughout Scandinavia and Central Europe. He recorded under the name "Candy Green" for the Supraphon label, and found quite a measure of celebrity in Europe, if not in his native haunts of Galveston and Houston.

Green died on April 13, 1988.