"The girl has a voice that's a mixture of Marian Anderson, Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington and Mahalia Jackson and I don't know what she's better on spirituals than when she's walking and singing the blues" ~Duke Ellington

Lil Greenwood was born on November 18, 1923, north of Mobile in Prichard, Alabama. She was the youngest of seven children born to Reverend Sylvester George, Sr. and his wife Maggie. Her musical career began at age three singing in the choir of Cedar Grove Baptist Church where her father was pastor.

She was educated in Mobile County's public and private schools, and attended Alabama State College. After a brief stint of teaching at the Allen Institute, she was encouraged to further her formal training in music by Mobile County Schools Music Supervisor, Ariel Williams Holloway and her Allen principal who gave her bus fare to California to pursue a professional singing career.

Lil moved to the California bay area where she began singing R&B and blues at an Oakland club owned by Slim Jenkins. She then moved to the Purple Onion in San Francisco. There, in 1958, she was discovered by the legendary Duke Ellington who invited her to front his band. The Duke further complimented Lil, according to an April 1960 Ebony magazine, when he decided "to let her become the first of his vocalists, in many years, to sing the repertoire of the late great Ivy Anderson".

Ellington's support and major performances at famed Apollo Theatre in New York and the Newport Jazz Festival, precipitated a whirlwind tour of continental appearances for Lil. Although her recording history dates back to 1950 with rhythm & blues artists like Roy Milton, The Four Jacks and Little Willie, it was the Ellington era that catapulted her into the international limelight.

From 1958-1960, she toured the US, Europe and Asia with the Duke Ellington Orchestra, co-writing several songs with him and Billy Strayhorn, including “Walking And Singing The Blues”.

Following the Duke’s death, she worked with his brother, Mercer Ellington and with Ray Charles as a Raylette. She has also appeared on television’s The Tonight Show, My Father’s House, Good Times, The Gong Show, The Flip Wilson Special, The Jeffersons and Grady.

Along with her prolific musical performances, Lil Greenwood has extensive film and stage performances, including The River Niger, My People, Buffalo Chips, Wedding Band, Back Alley Tales and Dark Symphony.

After returning to Mobile in the 80’s, Lil rekindled a musical relationship with the Lewis Brothers, Joe and Marion, that lasted for 15 years and worked with the A. Leon Casher Philharmonic Choir and the Rick Denton Trio.

Now in her 80s, Lil lives quietly in Mobile. She continues to perform and is currently working working on her first CD of gospel songs in honor of her musical roots.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

**SINGLES (A & B SIDES)**

- Grandpa Can Boogie Too / Never Again 1952 (w/The Four Jacks)
- The Good Life / Broke And Lonely 1953
- Monday Morning Blues / My Last Hour 1952 (w/Little Willie Littlefield & The Four Jacks)
- I'll Go / I'm Crying 1953
- All Is Forgiven / Mercy Me 1954

**WITH THE DUKE ELLINGTON ORCHESTRA**

- Live At Newport 1958
- Famous Berlin Concert 1959
- Duke Ellington's My People 1963

**COMPLIATIONS**

- Ace 30th Birthday Celebration: Blues and R&B 2005

**CDs**

- From Lil With Love circa 1981 (w/The Joe Lewis Trio)
- Lil Greenwood & the Rick Denton Trio Live at the University of West Florida 2003 (Unreleased broadcast recording)
- Walking & Singing the Blues 2004 (w/Little Willie Littlefield, The Johnny Otis Band, Roy Milton's Solid Senders)
- Back to My Roots 2007 (w/David Amram)

**RECORDINGS**

- Originally released 1950
- Recorded at Dogwood Studios