

louis armstrong



Photo: Institute of Jazz Studies

IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT LOUIS “SATCHMO” ARMSTRONG

Born:	August 4, 1901, New Orleans, Louisiana
Died:	August 27, 1971, Chicago, Illinois
Period/Style of Jazz:	New Orleans Jazz
Instrument:	Cornet, trumpet, and vocalist
Major Compositions:	<i>West End Blues</i> , <i>Struttin' With Some Barbeque</i>
Interesting Facts:	Louis Armstrong's technical abilities on the trumpet set the standard for all trumpet players that followed. He was the first true jazz improviser. Armstrong was also known for his deep, gravelly voice.
Suggested Listening:	<i>West End Blues</i> , <i>What a Wonderful World</i>

■ The Story of Louis Armstrong (1901–1971)

Louis Armstrong was born in the Storyville district of New Orleans, Louisiana, on August 4, 1901. Storyville was a lively part of town filled with dance halls, cabarets and gambling establishments called sporting houses. Louis grew up hearing blues, ragtime, and the new hot music called jazz being played in these venues by musicians such as his idol, trumpeter Joe “King” Oliver.

In his early teens, Louis was sent to a reform school for boys after shooting a gun in public. There he joined the band and learned to play the cornet. When he was released about two years later, he started playing professionally, first with King Oliver, then replacing Oliver in a popular jazz band led by trombonist Kid Ory when Oliver moved to Chicago in 1919.

In 1922, Louis received a telegram from Joe Oliver, asking him to join his Creole Jazz Band in Chicago. There, Louis met Lillian Hardin, the piano player for the band, and they were married in 1924.

He later recorded with his own bands, the Hot Five and the Hot Seven, which included his wife Lil’ and Kid Ory. Now considered classics, these recordings turned jazz into a soloist’s art form and Louis’s warm and soaring tone set the standard for jazz trumpet playing. His engaging personality as an entertainer

earned Louis the nickname “Satchmo,” short for satchel mouth, because of his huge cheeks and wide smile. Later, Louis recorded the popular “West End Blues” and “Struttin’ with Some Barbecue.”



King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band



Magazine ad, 1954

Louis Armstrong was also a remarkable singer. According to Satchmo himself, while recording “Heebie Jeebies” in Chicago on February 26, 1926, the sheet music fell off the stand. Louis did not want to stop the recording session, so he continued singing, using nonsense syllables and making sounds similar to an instrument. The result was the first recorded example of what became known as scat singing, a jazz vocal practice still very popular today.

Armstrong eventually moved to New York and performed with many great musicians including the innovative arranger, Fletcher Henderson. As Armstrong’s popularity grew over the years, his music introduced the entire world to jazz. In 1968,

his recording of "What a Wonderful World" became a number one hit. Louis Armstrong, one of the first celebrities of the twentieth century, is widely recognized as a founding father of jazz. Louis Armstrong died in Chicago on August 27, 1971.



Louis Armstrong

Photo: © Robert Parent

New Orleans: The Birthplace of Jazz

The city of New Orleans has a rich cultural history which made it the perfect place for jazz to have its beginning. New Orleans, like other American seaports such as Charlestown, Philadelphia and Boston, welcomed waves of immigrants to the "new world." Prior to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, New Orleans was quite a cosmopolitan region. There were people of French, Creole,



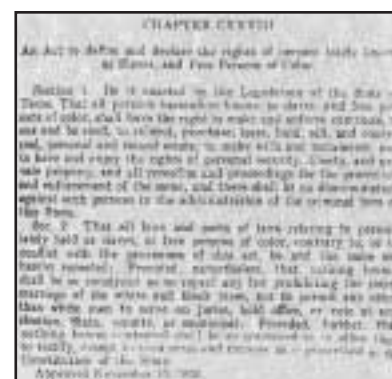
Source: Library of Congress

New Orleans c. 1852.

Spanish, African and Caribbean descent interacting all of the time. The varied commercial activity in New Orleans helped to create a fertile ground for music to flourish.

During this period, master teachers from Europe opened music schools. People of European descent were invited to attend these schools, which included Creoles of Color (i.e., persons of mixed Black and French or Spanish ancestry), while Negroes (as African Americans were referred to in those days) were not welcome.

After the Louisiana Purchase, the social and political climate changed in New Orleans. One instance was after the slave revolt in Haiti (1790–1804), as many ex-slaves migrated to New Orleans. This influx of Negroes created a Negro majority and inspired whites to create and enforce rules that were called "black codes." A second wave of ex-slaves moved to New Orleans after the American Civil War ended in 1865 and the black codes were more stringently interpreted to apply to Creoles of Color who had come to enjoy many of the same privileges as whites. Many Creoles had studied music from the European music teachers and now began to share this wealth of knowledge with free Negroes. This helped to improve the quality of music being produced by Negroes during this time and by the end of the nineteenth century a great melding of technique and style had emerged.

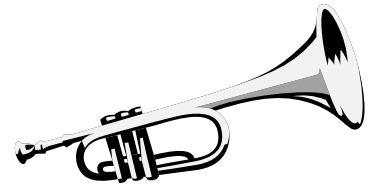


The black codes of 1865

The "black codes" made it extremely difficult for blacks to move forward economically and socially after the American Civil War.

In the early 1900s, brass bands of various nationalities living in New Orleans also helped to influence the beginnings of jazz bands, which originally had the role of accompanying dancers. With the popularity of ragtime (an African American version of the polka featuring steady left hand "oom-pah" bass and a syncopated melody), many of the brass bands began to perform compositions that resembled the compositions of Scott Joplin. This allowed for the beginnings of improvisation in jazz.

armstrong word search



Look down, across, backward and diagonally to find the words that will complete the sentences below. Circle the words.

R	G	N	I	G	N	I	S	T	A	C	S
O	J	G	H	X	Z	S	O	R	H	O	K
N	E	W	O	R	L	E	A	N	S	R	S
K	I	K	D	S	T	I	D	E	N	N	N
F	A	H	U	H	O	T	S	E	V	E	N
S	E	D	T	R	Y	A	S	D	U	T	U
H	U	Y	S	D	T	H	D	U	I	R	H
F	Y	J	K	C	H	I	C	A	G	O	D
B	W	R	H	O	T	F	I	V	E	T	S
M	U	M	C	D	L	H	Z	A	T	P	V
J	O	E	O	L	I	V	E	R	D	K	E

1. In 1901, Louis Armstrong was born in _____, Louisiana.
2. Louis Armstrong first played the _____.
3. When Louis was released from reform school, he joined a band led by _____.
4. When Louis Armstrong left New Orleans, he moved to _____.
5. Louis Armstrong's nickname: _____.
6. The names of Louis Armstrong's bands in the early 1920s: _____ and _____.
7. A kind of singing that involves the use of nonsense syllables: _____.

Vintage postcards of New Orleans

