Jazz changed music forever. And Louis Armstrong forever changed jazz.

When Armstrong passed away in July of 1971 he was undoubtedly the most famous American in the world. "No practitioner of any other art form has ventured so high above all other artists in his field," said Chris Albertson in Giants of Jazz. "Some strong was more important to jazz than Beethoven was to classical music, or than Shakespeare was to drama."

Born and raised in a racially segregated society and economy of his actual date of birth, he claimed Independence Day, July 4, 1900 as his birthday. Lacking any formal musical training, his virtuosity on the cornet and trumpet transformed jazz into a soloist art form with a skill and a creativity that stunned his listeners. With his unmatched abilities in the trumpet, unique vocal qualities, and in his stage presence—he lured artists with entertainment. Even in his early film roles, his personality and exciting humor broke down the racial stereotypes of the era. He knew as an entertainer was well deserved, but that popularity also tended to obscure the obstacles he had to overcome.

Armstrong has been called "the founding father of jazz"—for good reason. As Duke Ellington said, "Nobody had ever heard anything like it, and his impact cannot be put into words." Jazz started out when Armstrong was a boy, as a lively, energetic ensemble music. Armstrong moved outside and beyond that with the sound he produced. In Louis Armstrong: An Extravagant Life, author Laurence Bergreen explains Armstrong's jazz "had two components. There was, initially, a cornet—and later a trumpet—that was more expressive than a mere instrument: sweet, stinging, lilting, swirling, leaping, shattered. And then there was his voice, the unforgettable voice that behaved like a huge instrument: growling, laughing, lamented, scolding, hence. The combination of the voice that sounded like an instrument and the instrument that sounded like a voice created the universally recognized genius of Satchmo."

Without Armstrong jazz would have continued to evolve and develop, but his dominant role was such that it is unlikely to speculate where it would be without his contributions. According to Albertson, Armstrong was "in the right place at the right time, born into a world full of music, just as jazz was ready for a genius." His instrumental and vocal innovations have gone beyond jazz and have become commonplace in all of popular music. During his lifetime he had hits long after rock 'n' roll became the dominant musical force with recordings such as "Mack The Knife" and "Hello, Dolly." He even had a hit decades after his passing when "What A Wonderful World" was used in the 1988 movie Good Morning, Vietnam.

Genius and the frequently used phrase "larger than life" certainly applied to Louis Armstrong. Whether one calls him Louis, Louis, Satchmo, Satch, or Pops, the name contains up an image of a great American entertainer, one of the most successful and beloved the world has ever seen.

Louis Armstrong and jazz were born in New Orleans at about the same time.

Young Louis's hometown was a city interesting to music. Orchestras, marching bands, dance bands were everywhere. Music was played at weddings, picnics, parties, street openings, athletic events—and just for the pleasure of it, something everyone in New Orleans could a great deal about. Music also attracted people out of their life. Brass bands wound through the streets, accompanying funerals and friends as they walked home the honored to the graveyard, and back again. On the way, the band played sorrowfully, respectfully, but coming back they strutted and played "hot." Onlookers followed along to applaud and dance.

Armstrong liked to say that he was born on the first Independence Day of the new century—July 4, 1900—and he may have believed this. The truth, however, is that he was born August 4, 1901, in a little house on a block-long dirt street in New Orleans called Jane Alley. His mother, only fifteen years old at the time, was Mary Albert, called Mayann. She had come to the city from the sugarcane fields of Boutte, Louisiana, and met Louis's father, William Armstrong, who abandoned Mayann and his son soon after Louis was born.

Mayann soon left Louis with his paternal grandmother, Josephine Armstrong, and moved to a one-room shack on Perdido Street, in a tough neighborhood called Black Storyville that was full of brothels and dance halls and honky-tonks, where music played and people danced until the sun came up.

A second child, Beatrice, called Mama Lucy, came along two years after Louis. After she was born, Louis went back to live with his mother and sister on Perdido Street. The Union Sociale Hall—known to everyone as Funky Butt Hall—the place where Buddy Bolden and other early pioneers played, was just down the block.

Even with two children to look after, Mayann remained a free spirit, sometimes wandering off and staying gone for days. So Louis took care of himself and his younger sister. He attended school, but like most young children in Black Storyville, gravitated to he on the street, playing with friends or making money for his family any way he could. He scavenged for little pieces of brass or tinsel he could sell to junk dealers, sold newspapers, ran errands for the prostitutes, and delivered coal.

Eventually, when he was about ten years old, Louis and three friends formed a quartet that sang on the streets for whatever pennies they would give them. The quartet was good, especially Louis. Louis was an excellent ear and a keen sense of harmony and rhythm. People showed their appreciation by tossing them a few coins.

The home for Colored Waifs

On New Year's Eve of 1912, the quartet was out on the streets, singing and earning money. It was the custom in New Orleans to greet the New Year by shooting into the air, and Louis had taken along a pistol, loaded with blank bullets, that he had [illegible] from his stepfather. Others began firing, as Louis did too. Suddenly, a white police detective grabbed Louis's arm and [illegible] him, and took him off to jail.

The next morning, on New Year's Day, Louis went before a judge, who sentenced him to the Colored Waifs Home, a home [illegible] for the residents of New Orleans. Once first few days, Louis was miserable, unhappy, and homesick, but he adjusted quickly and even grew to like the place. The meals may not have been great, but they were regularly. He had shoes for his feet, clean sheets to sleep on, and plenty of boys who seemed eager to be his friend.

Most of all, the home had a band, led by a good musician named Peter Davis. Although Professor Davis kept his distance from Louis at first, perhaps because of the rough neighborhood Louis had come from, eventually he began to warm to the polite and enthusiastic boy, who spent every minute he could listening to the band rehearse. Davis finally asked Louis to join the band.

The first instrument he gave Louis was a tambourine. Although Louis was bitterly disappointed, he played it with such gusto that Davis switched him to the drums, then to the alto horn, a band instrument of the French horn. Louis was happy, and apparently so was Davis.

The Waifs' Home also had a bugler who signaled the boys that it was time to get up, come to meals, and go to bed. When the former bugler was released, Professor Davis appointed Louis to take his place. Thrilled, Louis dressed up the bugle and played it so well that Davis switched him to cornet in the band. Before long, Louis became the leader of the band, which periodically played concerts outside the home. On one occasion, they marched through Black Storyville. Louis drumming proudly out in front. His appearance in his old weight, [illegible] caused such a sensation that the onlookers, rather than giving the boys the usual coins, took up a collection instead. They gathered enough money to buy new instruments and uniforms for the band.

After Louis had been at the home for about a year and a half, his father, who had shown no interest in him until that time, arranged for his release. Louis was sorry to leave his friends, and especially the band, but he had no choice. He went off to live with his father, who by then had a wife and two other children. Louis dutifully helped out with the cooking and the babysitting. Before long, though, after William's wife had another baby, Louis went back to Perdido with Mayann and Mama Lucy.

Becoming a Musician

The Louis who returned to Perdido Street was a very differ[ent] boy from the one who had left. This one knew he had talent—and knew he wanted to be a musician.

He also knew what it was he wanted to play. All over Storyville, people were putting together a new kind of music—raucous and lively and unlike anything before it. In recent years producers was ragtime, those rousing, syncopated songs that had taken the United States by storm at the end of the 1890s, but New Orleans musicians were too inventive to stick with just that. They threw in blues, hymns, spirituals, folk tunes, slow dances, marching songs, even bits of opera and classical orchestral pieces. Underneath all that, though, was huge ragtime's driving rhythm.

This new music didn't really have a name then—some referred to it as "tasty music," "gut-bucket music," "dance jam [illegible]," "spiced [illegible]," spelled [illegible] with an e, not a a).

The musicians just called it "playing hot."

Whatever it was, it was well established in New Orleans by the time Louis came back from the Waifs' Home. The bands in the honky-tonks and out on the streets were all playing it. And Louis Armstrong loved it.

Even though he was very young, barely fifteen or so, and his only experience had been with the Waifs' Home band, Louis began getting jobs playing in some of the smaller honky-tonks. His low ear and extraordinary inventiveness were impossible to miss, even then.

Louis's chief man a cornet player named Joe Oliver, who played with the Onward Brass Band and also with considerable skill. Oliv's band at Pete Lala's Storyville saloon. Oliver had replaced the early legendary cornetists, Freddie Keppard and Buddy Bolden, as the best horn man in New Orleans. Louis felt honored along after Oliver to consider carrying his case, which the young player considered to be an honor. He was amazed for Oliver's sake, anything to be close to his hero.

Oliver responded by becoming Louis's sponsor and, to some extent, his teacher. Although Oliver never sponsored anyone else, he helped Louis again and again. He gave Louis his best decent cornet, shared tips on technique, and put him jobs with some of the better bands in town.

Especially in the smaller honky-tonks but even in the better places, Louis earned very little for his playing, maybe a few dollars a night and some tips. He therefore had to keep working during the day. Sometimes he could spare personally but also unloading banana boats, delivering milk, selling newspapers, doing whatever odd jobs he could find. During the mornings, though, he was what he wanted most to be—a cornet player.

RPCEA MEMBERS SHOW PREVIEW

On from Storyville

World War I brought the U.S. Navy to New Orleans in force. In 1917, as the country was entering the war, the government banned organized prostitution within five miles of all naval/marine installations, including the New Orleans naval station. The brothels in Storyville were officially closed. With honky-tonk and honky-tonkerous the area's honky-tonks began to go out of business as well.

Although Armstrong had signed up for the draft, he was not taken. He was able to find work in the nearby town of Gretna, at a brothel called the Brick House that had managed to stay open. While he was playing there, he fell in love with one of the prostitutes, a young woman named Daisy Parker. They married in 1918, moved into a tiny house in New Orleans, and began a stormy relationship.

Even before Storyville started shutting down, New Orleans musicians had been moving on—across to riverboats on the Mississippi River, along up North. Finally, Joe Oliver himself decided it was time to go and accepted an offer from a band in Chicago. Armstrong went to the train station to see Oliver off and learned some astonishing news: He had been chosen by Kid Ory to replace Oliver as the best band in New Orleans.

"There were many good, experienced trumpet players in town," Ory said later. "But none of them had young Louis's possibilities."

Armstrong quickly lived up to Ory's expectations. "The first night I played with Kid Ory's band," Louis wrote in his autobiography *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans*, "I was pretty lost on my horn at that time, and I had a good one I could catch on real fast."

Pete Mandile was the leader of a band made up of black musicians that played for white audiences aboard the *Sidney*, one of the steamboats that took cruises out of New Orleans along the Mississippi River. Mandile heard Armstrong play and decided he had to have him. Armstrong jumped at the chance and was an instantaneous success. "We all had set the beat on him," Mandile said later.

It was an important time for Armstrong, because one of the other musicians on the boat, David Jones, taught Louis how to read music. He learned quickly, and soon could play all the sheet music Mandile handed him. What Armstrong didn't need help with was his solos. He now his improvisations were astonishing inventions.

"When New Orleans musicians recalled the birth and evolution of jazz," said their hometown to Louis Armstrong Museum, "they often pointed to the remarkable solos Armstrong devised on the steamboats. It was said he could start a solo two miles outside a city and still be improvising when the boat glided into the dock."

By the time he left the boats in 1923, at the age of twenty, Louis Armstrong was an established professional musician.

"the boys were so surprised they could hardly play their instruments for listening to me blow up a storm."

Chicago

Armstrong enjoyed his time on the steamboats, and realized how important the experience had been for him. Even so, he was growing impatient with the restrictions placed on him by the ship's owners. Captain Fatchiba, a white man who liked to think of himself as a musician. The Captain was a smart enough businessman to want to give his customers the "hot" new music everyone was clamoring for, but his own tastes were decidedly conventional.

To Fatchiba's dismay, Armstrong was becoming ever more successful. He kept wanting to rip the music open and fill it with his own ideas. The more assertive Armstrong became in his playing, the more Fatchiba tried to rein him in. Giving the customers the new music they were eager to hear was one thing. What Armstrong wanted to do, though, was too much. Frustrated, Armstrong resigned.

Back in New Orleans, he started playing with the Tuxedo Dance Band. He also separated from his hot-tempered wife Daisy, but that was more of a relief than a disappointment. Besides, as Armstrong said all his life, his horn and his music came first with him. Other people, including wives, came somewhere after that.

In 1922, one of the best jazz bandleaders in the country, Fletcher Henderson, tried to get Armstrong to join his band in New York City. But Armstrong said no. Later that year however, Armstrong's old sponsor Joe Oliver sent Kid Ory sent a telegram asking him to come to Chicago. This time, the answer was yes. Four days after his twenty-first birthday, Armstrong played his farewell with the Tuxedo Dance Band, saved money to get his auto paid and the most outlandish his mother had made, and caught the evening train for Chicago.

Black audiences from Los Angeles to Chicago to New York were already wild about jazz. As more as radio broadcasts began exposing white audiences to the new music, it quickly became a nationwide craze. Those who understood the music best believed that King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band was the best band in Chicago. If not the entire country. Both black and white musicians flocked to the Lincoln Gardens ballroom to hear their play.

When Armstrong arrived in Chicago, he took a taxi to the Lincoln Gardens and stood outside listening to the band. "I was a little shaky about going inside," he wrote in *Satchmo*. "For a moment I wondered if I should. Then, too, I started wondering if I could hold my own with such a fine band. But I went in anyway, and the further in I got, the better the band got."

Oliver put Armstrong right up on the stand with the rest of the band. The first number they did together went so well, the band had to take an encore. As time went by, not only did Armstrong play better than anyone else in the band, he also began taking jazz in the direction he thought it ought to go.

"Louis's breathtaking improvisations and highly rhythmic solos were more than mere hots," said Lawrence Berger. "They presented to a new type of music." Within a few years, a generation of jazz musicians, black and white, would build whole careers on the new style of jazz that Louis began to forge in Chicago in the latter part of 1922."

In 1923, the Creole Jazz Band made a number of recordings.

These were, of course, the first Louis Armstrong ever made, and they had an enormous impact on the course of jazz. Oliver and the other players, through extraordinary musicians, were stuck in the ensemble tradition they had always followed. In his few solos, Armstrong hinted things up with improvisations so intricate and satisfying that everyone who heard them realized how far ahead of the rest he was.

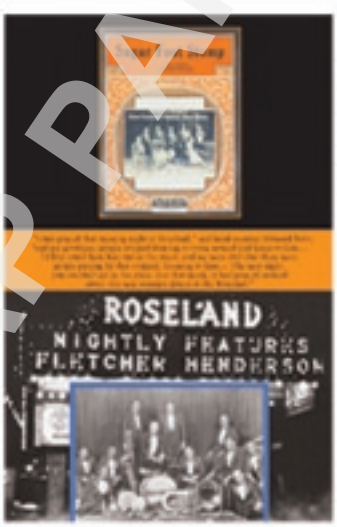
"[These recordings," says Lawrence Berger, "became the basis of [Armstrong's] success and influenced some musicians and audiences than he could possibly have entertained in a lifetime on the bandstand." The importance of the recordings, says James Lincoln Collier in Louis Armstrong: An American Genius, "cannot be overestimated" because they

"taught American musicians, and serious jazz fans, what the new music was all about."

When the pianist in Oliver's band, a classy woman named Lil Hardin, first saw Armstrong, she was decidedly unimpressed. She took one look at Armstrong's unfashionable clothes, plump figure, and old hands and decided he was a hayseller not worthy of her attention. After she heard him play, though, and realized the magnitude of his talent, she decided to take him under her wing.

She began telling Armstrong he was being overshadowed, and underappreciated, by Oliver and that he ought to move on, to a place where he could be the star. Armstrong protested that Oliver had always looked out for him. "No," said Lil. "I'm going to look out for you from now on." She arranged for two divorces—Armstrong's from Daisy Parker and her own from a young singer—so she was no longer married to Joe and on February 9, 1924, Louis and Lil were married.

Later that year, Armstrong took his wife's advice, officially and left Oliver's band. He was hired as lead cornet with the Fletcher Henderson band at the Dreamland, a large, lavishly appointed nightclub that dominated the jazz culture in Chicago. Armstrong barely had time to settle in—Henderson's band soon from Fletcher Henderson, who wanted Armstrong to come to New York to join his band at the Roseland Ballroom, the city's premier dance hall. The time Armstrong accepted and went to New York in the fall of 1924.



New York

During these years, thanks to the Prohibition Era, the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution banned the manufacture and sale of "intoxicating liquors." In many places, between including New York city officials and the police were bribed or other ways influenced to look the other way. Establishments ranging from small bars to huge ballrooms found ways to get liquor for their customers, and going out to drink—illegally—and other dance or listen to music became a glamorous and exciting thing to do.

All the clubs in the downtown Manhattan area were reserved exclusively for white customers, despite the fact that quite a few of the entertainers were black. Even in a number of cabarets up in all black Harlem, black performers played to all white audiences, who came by taxi or limousine for an exotic night out. Other theaters and clubs in Harlem did cater to blacks, but even and then their huge crowds of Harlem residents.

It was in this atmosphere that Armstrong began to make his name in New York. Although he was one of those transport players in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra, he quickly became the featured performer and had plenty of opportunities to play solos. He soon got to sing a bit, something he loved to do. And he found that the audiences loved it, too, applauding and shouting for more.

As usual, he continued to rally over everyone who heard him. "The spell Armstrong cast on the best musicians in New York can hardly be overestimated...," says Gene Gillilan in *Satchmo*. "Louis's ability to project feeling and his innumerous of musical logic were modern to ears that made everyone the sound hum and antiquated.

He taught New York to swing.

Armstrong was also busy making recordings. In addition to the more than forty sides he cut with Fletcher Henderson, he played accompaniments for some of the greatest of the blues singers, including Ma Rainey, Alberta Hunter, and the incomparable Bessie Smith. "The collaboration of Armstrong and Bessie Smith," says James Lincoln Collier, "represents one of the pinnacles of blues performances."

By the summer of 1925, however, Armstrong was growing restless in New York. Fletcher Henderson refused to take his singing seriously, many of the other musicians in the band were he was delighted that he was, and Lil, who had gone back to Chicago, wanted him to come home. She mentioned her husband with a tempting offer. She was taking a band of her own to the Dreamland, and the owner had agreed to pay her husband $125 a week, quite a large sum at that time, to be the club's featured performer.

Armstrong accepted and went back to Chicago.

SPOOR PAPERS PREVIEW

Chicago and the Hot Fives

It was now a full-blown musical ball. Its devotees numbered in the millions. They listened to jazz constantly on the radio—and they bought records.

A week after Armstrong got to Chicago, executives at Okeh Records asked him to come in for a recording session. Because of Armstrong's reputation as a soloist, the group would be recording under his name, calling themselves Louis Armstrong and the Hot Five. During the next few years, these musicians, with an occasional substitution, recorded together. They later added two more players and called themselves the Hot Seven.

What these groups played at these sessions was not just extraordinary music, it also changed the history of jazz. "The five dozen records generally titled the Louis Armstrong Hot Fives," and Gunna Lincoln Collier, "constitute one of the most significant bodies of American recorded music. . . . All across the U.S. musicians were enthralled by what Armstrong was doing, and they all wanted to do the same."

As the recording sessions progressed, Armstrong came to rely less on the melody as it was written and more on his own improvisations, using the underlying harmonies of the song as a foundation from which to launch his own extended improvisations. At the same time, he was playing with an exuberance saying that was beyond what anyone else in jazz could achieve.

After these recordings were released, the Hot Five became the most famous jazz band in the country, and Louis Armstrong found himself in demand all over Chicago. He played at the Dreamland with his wife's band and also at the Vendome Theatre, where he sat in with an orchestra that supplied background music for silent movies and stage acts. Afterwards he would walk off to one of the late-night integrated clubs—called black and tans—where he played until dawn. After sleeping only briefly, he would head out to a recording studio or a jazz session.

In 1926, pianist Earl Hines asked Armstrong to come join him in Carroll Dickerson's orchestra at the Sunset Cafe. Armstrong went—and it turned out to be another of his well-timed moves. The musicians' union, which of Dickerson's two saxophonists, Noel Sizer, just then became non-transport and Sizer, and recruited the young Louis Armstrong and Fletcher Henderson.

There, in addition to having star billing, Armstrong found himself at last among people who appreciated and encouraged his singing. Dickerson used to secretly, sometimes, to listen to voice more surprised at first by Armstrong's range, tones. But, as with his playing, he soon became captivated by them.

"If the vocal style was lit with the same spontaneity that shone through his transport solos," said Dave Tarnofsky, "Armstrong did not merely sing—he gambled, spoke, and toasted all complete scat lines the way a novice tosses spades. He effortlessly turned melodies into his personal property. . . ."

"Armstrong's singing," wrote Collier, "is always a source of pleasure, endlessly musical, innovative, and wholly original in concept. Nobody had ever sung popular songs this way, and nobody ever has again. Aside from the classic Blues singers, Armstrong was with out question the finest jazz singer who ever existed. . . ."

Back to New York and Broadway

Crime, and corruption during the Prohibition years had made Chicago a violent and dangerous place. A group of corrupted citizens formed the Chicago Crime Commission and began investigating ties between organized crime and local politicians. In 1928, a reform candidate for mayor was elected, and a campaign to clean up Chicago get under way.

Nightclubs, dance halls, and bars were forced to close, and hundreds of band musicians lost their jobs. Many headed for New York City, still the center of entertainment in the United States.

Tommy Rockwell, a record producer who had been recording Armstrong's work for the past two years, launched our into more agreement in 1929. He brought Armstrong to New York City and booked him into the Savoy, a huge ballroom in Harlem. Armstrong's growing fame was apparent on the night of the show," said Dave Tarnofsky. "Fans mobbed the ticket-seller outside the Savoy, thousands had to be turned away."

He played next at an important club for jazz called Connie's Inn. On the strength of his performances there, Armstrong made it to Broadway. The owner of the club, Connie Immerman, who was staging a musical revue called Hot Chocolates at the Hudson Theatre, asked Armstrong to play in the orchestra. One night he sang "Ain't Misbehavin" from the pit as a reprise between acts, and the audience loved it. The role kept expanding until he was singing the song up on the stage and also singing a comic bit called "A Thousand Pounds of Rhythm" with Edith Wilson and Fats Waller.

Armstrong recorded two songs from Hot Chocolates that would become hits and remain part of his repertoire for the rest of his career. "Ain't Misbehavin" was an immediate favorite. The other song, unexpectedly, sold better for the session "Black and Blue" was sung by a dark-skinned woman lamenting that the more she has like expected her to be lighter with a lighter hue. With a slight change in the lyrics and an increasingly massive introduction, Armstrong transformed this song into a powerful statement about racism. A poignant expression of what it was like to be black in America.

Around this he booked Armstrong into Harlem's Lafayette Theatre for a week in late June of 1929. "Never before in the history of Harlem theatricals," said the New York Age newspaper, "has any artist received a reception comparable to that accorded Louis Armstrong at the Lafayette Theatre. The audience simply rose to their chairs and cheered as this most incomparable of all musicians blew from his golden trumpet music such as has never been heard before."

On October 29, 1929, the U.S. stock market crashed, and the country fell into a severe economic depression. The gaudy, free-spending, free-wheeling Jazz Age of the 1920s came to an abrupt end. Harlem Jazz Businesses went bankrupt, and Harlem began to decay. The music industry was hit hard. Record sales fell, theaters and nightclubs closed, and many performers were out of work. Only the most notably were able to keep working. And no one was more notable than Louis Armstrong.

"He continued to gauge his act of blues and jazz and to add majestic love songs and humorous novelty tunes. . . ," said Dave Tarnofsky. "He abandoned small Dixieland-style ensembles and instead hosted large bands with a dozen or more instruments . . . The new formula paid off. In 1930, he embarked on a nationwide tour playing dances and dance halls in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles."

Hollywood and the Movies

Armstrong arrived in Los Angeles in May of 1930. He was here to lead the band at Paul Ash's Cotton Club in Culver City, located eight miles to the MGM studio. Various movie stars came to dance to his music, frequented the place. As usual, Armstrong were there all over immediately. "Louis Armstrong is the most extraordinary trumpeter I have ever heard. . . ," said Los Angeles Evening Herald critic W. C. Jones. "In addition, he is one of the best showmen I have seen at the head of an orchestra. He has only a humble voice in singing, but he transport to his crooning. But he has a sure-fire personality and a native instinct for blues."

Sebastian took advantage of all this exhibition and changed the name of the band to "Louis Armstrong and His Sebastian New Cotton Club Orchestra." He also broadcast Armstrong's show over the radio, thereby reaching an audience of many thousands.

In 1931, Armstrong was offered his first role in a movie, a low-budget drama called Ex-Flame, in which he played and sang. The movie was easily forgotten, but Armstrong's performance was not. His blackbottom came across almost as strongly on the screen as it did in person. At a time when the movie were strictly segregated in the United States, white audiences were drawn to Armstrong in a way they were not drawn to other black performers. Movie-makers were happy to capitalize on that fact, and Armstrong became the first black performer to be featured consistently in big-budget movies.

In 1936, he appeared in Dorsey from Heaven, starring singer Bing Crosby. Armstrong's recording of the title song became a nationwide hit. The next year, he was in two movies, Artists and Models and Going Day is a Holiday, the latter a sequel to Star Wear, one of the top comic stars of the time.

Throughout his career, he appeared in nearly forty movies. The best of these were Cabin in the Sky, made in 1943, A Song is Born, in 1948, Young Man with a Horn, in 1950, The Glenn Miller Story, in 1954, High Society, in 1956, Jazz on a Summer's Day in 1959, Paris Blues, in 1961, and Hello, Dolly! in 1969.

RPO LIBRARY PREVIEW

Europe and Jazz

The jazz became popular in Europe as Al Louis Armstrong. Many of his records had been imported by European companies including the Hot Five recordings, and European jazz writers were calling Armstrong the best jazz player in America. Fans in Europe were understandably eager to hear him in person.

In July 1932, Armstrong sailed for England on the *RMS Majestic*. He first stop a two-week appearance at the Hippodrome concert hall in London. Traveling with him was his girlfriend, Alpha Smith, whom he had been seeing since 1928. It had never occurred to Armstrong to remain faithful to his wife Lil—he was, after all, away from her for more than he was with her. The affair with Alpha had lasted for four years and showed no signs of cooling off, so Lil finally told Armstrong it was time for them to go their separate ways. The two remained friends, however, and Lil continued to wear his wedding ring for the rest of her life.

Tumultuous enthusiasm greeted Armstrong's arrival in England. Melody Maker, the country's top jazz magazine, devoted publication for a day in order to run a feature story on the "Colored Trumpet King." A group of American musicians were brought over to London from Paris, and Armstrong opened before a full house. In the review of that opening night, Melody Maker called Armstrong "a unique phenomenon, an electric personality—easily the greatest America has ever so to be."

In London, Armstrong acquired a new nickname. In his onstage performances, he often referred to himself as "Satchelmouth," a reference to his enormous grin. A British journalist coining the now-immortalized Armstrong's Southern accent. He heard the word as "Satchmo" and printed it that way in his story. Armstrong loved it, and that's what he was called from then on.

After a mildly successful fortnight at the Hippodrome, Armstrong and a two-piece band of local white musicians began a tour of the British Isles. Armstrong had played with white musicians before, but only casually, late at night, when one of them dropped by to sit in with his band. This was the first time he had formed an all-white band for public performances. The group played to enthusiastic audiences from Glasgow to Nottingham to Liverpool. In Paris, Armstrong's show thrilled that city's fervent group of jazz fans, and he sailed home in November with an even-more-enhanced reputation.

In 1933, Armstrong went back to England, where he opened at London's Holborn Empire in August. In October, he began a tour of Scandinavian countries, where he had a benefit of following in Denmark. 10,000 people turned out to greet him when he arrived at the Copenhagen train station. From there, he went to Holland, Belgium, France (where he stayed for an extended vacation with Alpha in Paris), Italy, and Switzerland.

A Revived career at home

Armstrong returned to the United States in 1935 with an educated by and a manager who was using him for breach of contract. Lil wanted a divorce, and Alpha wanted to get married. Before long he also discovered that he had spent so much time abroad that people in the United States were asking, "Whatever happened to Louis Armstrong?"

He needed something good to happen. And it did. Back in Chicago, he met Joe Glaser, who had been manager of the Sunset Cafe where Armstrong played from. Glaser also in love with just then, was looking for a way to get back at his last. He and Armstrong formed a partnership that became the most important professional relationship in either of their lives. As a manager, Glaser turned out to be smart, tough, energetic, and well-connected. From the time they shook hands in 1935 until Glaser's death in 1969—Armstrong's career took off again—Armstrong later said that he never had a written agreement with Glaser.

He recorded for RCA, Decca, Columbia, any record company willing to pay Glaser's asking price. He became the first black performer with a network radio series. He made movies. He published a brief autobiography called *Swing That Music* in 1936 (a later, middlebrow version called *Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans* was published in 1954). And he began the cross-country tours of one-night stands that he would enjoy for the rest of his life. Other entertainers found these tedious and exhausting, but Armstrong was exhilarated by them. A new audience to applaud him every night! What could be better than that?

In the midst of all the good fortune, Armstrong encountered two bumps in the road. Although he had grown tired of Alpha's long speaking tours, he finally gave in to her demands, divorced Lil, and married her in 1938. Almost immediately he fell in love with another woman, a young dancer named Lucille. When he had met it at the Cotton Club, Ella discussed Alpha in 1940 and married Lucille in 1942.

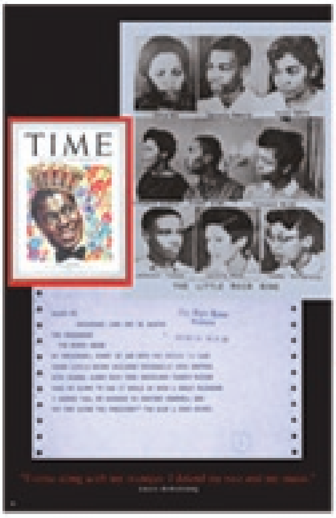
The second bump was changing tastes in music. For all his life until then, jazz had been the "new thing" and Armstrong had done it better than anyone else. Now the "new thing" was swing. Big bands playing million-selling tunes had overtaken the waning sensibilities of the jazz Armstrong had done so much to create. Even though "Armstrong, more than anybody, taught the world what it was to swing," according to James Lincoln Collier, he and his music were seemed to be passé.

Those who thought such things underestimated the box from New Orleans. He went on the United States entered World War II. Armstrong started making the rounds of U.S. military bases, where he performed for the troops. He played and sang on broadcasts sponsored by Armed Forces Radio Service. And he recorded "victory" disks just not for the government. A new generation got to know him—and to love him.

RPC FAR PAPERSHOW

Ambassador to the WORLD

In February 1960,

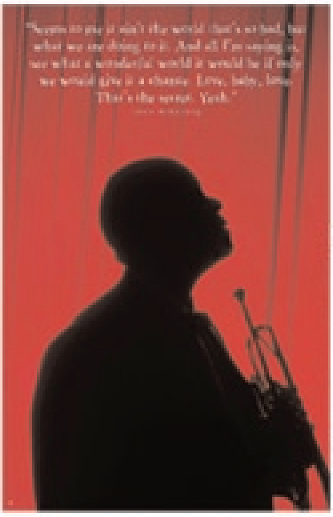


No way to slow down

On June 23, 1959,

THE END OF SATCHMO

Armstrong's death



Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong