

Louis Armstrong

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Louis Armstrong's stage personality matched his cornet and trumpet playing.

Background information

Born	August 4, 1901
	New Orleans, Louisiana, U.S.
Died	July 6, 1971 (aged 69)
	Corona, Queens, New York City, U.S.
Genres	Dixieland, jazz, swing, traditional pop, scat
Occupation(s)	Musician
Instruments	Trumpet, cornet, vocals
Years active	c. 1914–1971

Associated acts Joe "King" Oliver, Ella Fitzgerald, Kid Ory

Louis Armstrong (August 4, 1901 – July 6, 1971), nicknamed Satchmo or Pops, was an American jazz trumpeter, singer, and an influential figure in jazz music.

Coming to prominence in the 1920s as an "inventive" trumpet and cornet player, Armstrong was a foundational influence in jazz, shifting the focus of the music from collective improvisation to solo performance. With his instantly recognizable gravelly voice, Armstrong was also an influential singer, demonstrating great dexterity as an improviser, bending the lyrics and melody of a song for expressive purposes. He was also skilled at scat singing (vocalizing using sounds and syllables instead of actual lyrics).

Renowned for his charismatic stage presence and voice almost as much as for his trumpet-playing, Armstrong's influence extends well beyond jazz music, and by the end of his career in the 1960s, he was widely regarded as a profound influence on popular music in general. Armstrong was one of the first truly popular African-American entertainers to "cross over", whose skin color was secondary to his music in an America that was severely racially divided. He rarely publicly politicized his race, often to the dismay of fellow African-Americans, but took a well-publicized stand for desegregation during the Little Rock Crisis. His artistry and personality allowed him socially acceptable access to the upper echelons of American society that were highly restricted for men of color.

Early life

Armstrong often stated that he was born on July 4, 1900, a date that has been noted in many biographies. Although he died in 1971, it was not until the mid-1980s that his true birth date of August 4, 1901 was discovered by researcher Tad Jones through the examination of baptismal records. Armstrong was born into a very poor family in New Orleans, Louisiana, the grandson of slaves. He spent his youth in poverty, in a rough neighborhood, known as “the Battlefield”, which was part of the Storyville legal prostitution district. His father, William Armstrong (1881–1922), abandoned the family when Louis was an infant and took up with another woman. His mother, Mary "Mayann" Albert (1886–1927), then left Louis and his younger sister, Beatrice Armstrong Collins (1903–1987), in the care of his grandmother, Josephine Armstrong, and at times, his Uncle Isaac. At five, he moved back to live with his mother and her relatives, and saw his father only in parades. He attended the Fisk School for Boys, where he likely had early exposure to music. He brought in some money as a paperboy and also by finding discarded food and selling it to restaurants, but it was not enough to keep his mother from prostitution. He hung out in dance halls close to home, where he observed everything from licentious dancing to the quadrille. For extra money he also hauled coal to Storyville, the famed red-light district, and listened to the bands playing in the brothels and dance halls, especially Pete Lala's where Joe "King" Oliver performed and other famous musicians would drop in to jam.

After dropping out of the Fisk School at age eleven, Armstrong joined a quartet of boys who sang in the streets for money. But he also started to get into trouble. Cornet player Bunk Johnson said he taught Armstrong (then 11) to play by ear at Dago Tony's Tonk in New Orleans, although in his later years Armstrong gave the credit to Oliver. Armstrong hardly looked back at his youth as the worst of times but instead drew inspiration from it, “Every time I close my eyes

blowing that trumpet of mine—I look right in the heart of good old New Orleans... It has given me something to live for.”

He also worked for a Lithuanian-Jewish immigrant family, the Karnofskys, who had a junk hauling business and gave him odd jobs. They took him in and treated him as almost a family member, knowing he lived without a father, and would feed and nurture him. He later wrote a memoir of his relationship with the Karnofskys titled, *Louis Armstrong + the Jewish Family in New Orleans, La., the Year of 1907*. In it he describes his discovery that this family was also subject to discrimination by "other white folks' nationalities who felt that they were better than the Jewish race... I was only seven years old but I could easily see the ungodly treatment that the White Folks were handing the poor Jewish family whom I worked for." Armstrong wore a Star of David pendant for the rest of his life and wrote about what he learned from them: "how to live—real life and determination." The influence of Karnofsky is remembered in New Orleans by the Karnofsky Project, a non-profit organization dedicated to accepting donated musical instruments to "put them into the hands of an eager child who could not otherwise take part in a wonderful learning experience."

Armstrong developed his cornet playing skills by playing in the band of the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs, where he had been sent multiple times for general delinquency, most notably for a long term after firing his stepfather's pistol into the air at a New Year's Eve celebration, as police records confirm. Professor Peter Davis (who frequently appeared at the Home at the request of its administrator, Captain Joseph Jones) instilled discipline in and provided musical training to the otherwise self-taught Armstrong. Eventually, Davis made Armstrong the band leader. The Home band played around New Orleans and the thirteen-year-old Louis began to draw attention by his cornet playing, starting him on a musical career. At fourteen he was released from the Home, living again with his father and new stepmother and

then back with his mother and also back to the streets and their temptations. Armstrong got his first dance hall job at Henry Ponce's where Black Benny became his protector and guide. He hauled coal by day and played his cornet at night.

He played in the city's frequent brass band parades and listened to older musicians every chance he got, learning from Bunk Johnson, Buddy Petit, Kid Ory, and above all, Joe "King" Oliver, who acted as a mentor and father figure to the young musician. Later, he played in the brass bands and riverboats of New Orleans, and began traveling with the well-regarded band of Fate Marable, which toured on a steamboat up and down the Mississippi River. He described his time with Marable as "going to the University," since it gave him a much wider experience working with written arrangements.

In 1919, Joe Oliver decided to go north and resigned his position in Kid Ory's band; Armstrong replaced him. He also became second trumpet for the Tuxedo Brass Band, a society band.

Career

Through all his riverboat experience Armstrong's musicianship began to mature and expand. At twenty, he could read music and he started to be featured in extended trumpet solos, one of the first jazzmen to do this, injecting his own personality and style into his solo turns. He had learned how to create a unique sound and also started using singing and patter in his performances. In 1922, Armstrong joined the exodus to Chicago, where he had been invited by his mentor, Joe "King" Oliver, to join his Creole Jazz Band and where he could make a sufficient income so that he no longer needed to supplement his music with day labor jobs. It was a boom time in Chicago and though race relations were poor, the "Windy City" was teeming with jobs for black people, who were making good wages in factories and had plenty to spend on entertainment.

Oliver's band was the best and most influential hot jazz band in Chicago in the early 1920s, at a time when Chicago was the center of the jazz universe. Armstrong lived luxuriously in Chicago, in his own apartment with his own private bath (his first). Excited as he was to be in Chicago, he began his career-long pastime of writing nostalgic letters to friends in New Orleans. As Armstrong's reputation grew, he was challenged to "cutting contests" by hornmen trying to displace the new phenom, who could blow two hundred high C's in a row. Armstrong made his first recordings on the Gennett and Okeh labels (jazz records were starting to boom across the country), including taking some solos and breaks, while playing second cornet in Oliver's band in 1923. At this time, he met Hoagy Carmichael (with whom he would collaborate later) who was introduced by friend Bix Beiderbecke, who now had his own Chicago band.

Armstrong enjoyed working with Oliver, but Louis' second wife, pianist Lil Hardin Armstrong, urged him to seek more prominent billing and develop his newer style away from the influence of Oliver. Armstrong took the advice of his wife and left Oliver's band. For a year Armstrong played in Fletcher Henderson's band in New York on many recordings. After playing in New York, Armstrong returned to Chicago, playing in large orchestras; there he created his most important early recordings. Lil had her husband play classical music in church concerts to broaden his skill and improve his solo play and she prodded him into wearing more stylish attire to make him look sharp and to better offset his growing girth. Lil's influence eventually undermined Armstrong's relationship with his mentor, especially concerning his salary and additional moneys that Oliver held back from Armstrong and other band members. Armstrong and Oliver parted amicably in 1924. Shortly afterward, Armstrong received an invitation to go to New York City to play with the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, the top African-American band of the day. Armstrong switched to the trumpet to blend in better with the other musicians in his section. His influence upon Henderson's tenor sax soloist, Coleman Hawkins, can be judged by listening to the records made by the band during this period.

Armstrong quickly adapted to the more tightly controlled style of Henderson, playing trumpet and even experimenting with the trombone and the other members quickly took up Armstrong's emotional, expressive pulse. Soon his act included singing and telling tales of New Orleans characters, especially preachers. The Henderson Orchestra was playing in the best venues for white-only patrons, including the famed Roseland Ballroom, featuring the classy arrangements of Don Redman. Duke Ellington's orchestra would go to Roseland to catch Armstrong's performances and young hornmen around town tried in vain to outplay him, splitting their lips in their attempts.

During this time, Armstrong made many recordings on the side, arranged by an old friend from New Orleans, pianist Clarence Williams; these included small jazz band sides with the Williams Blue Five (some of the best pairing Armstrong with one of Armstrong's few rivals in fiery technique and ideas, Sidney Bechet) and a series of accompaniments with blues singers, including Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, and Alberta Hunter.

Armstrong returned to Chicago in 1925 due mostly to the urging of his wife, who wanted to pump up Armstrong's career and income. He was content in New York but later would concede that she was right and that the Henderson Orchestra was limiting his artistic growth. In publicity, much to his chagrin, she billed him as "the World's Greatest Trumpet Player". At first, he was actually a member of the Lil Hardin Armstrong Band and working for his wife. He began recording under his own name for Okeh with his famous Hot Five and Hot Seven groups, producing hits such as "Potato Head Blues", "Muggles", (a reference to marijuana, for which Armstrong had a lifelong fondness), and "West End Blues", the music of which set the standard and the agenda for jazz for many years to come.

The group included Kid Ory (trombone), Johnny Dodds (clarinet), Johnny St. Cyr (banjo), wife Lil on piano, and usually no drummer. Armstrong's bandleading style was easygoing, as St. Cyr noted, "One felt so relaxed working with him, and he was very broad-minded . . . always did his best to feature each individual." His recordings soon after with pianist Earl "Fatha" Hines (most famously their 1928 Weatherbird duet) and Armstrong's trumpet introduction to "West End Blues" remain some of the most famous and influential improvisations in jazz history. Armstrong was now free to develop his personal style as he wished, which included a heavy dose of effervescent jive, such as "whip that thing, Miss Lil" and "Mr. Johnny Dodds, Aw, do that clarinet, boy!"

Armstrong also played with Erskine Tate's Little Symphony, actually a quintet, which played mostly at the Vendome Theatre. They furnished music for silent movies and live shows, including jazz versions of classical music, such as "Madame Butterfly," which gave Armstrong experience with longer forms of music and with hosting before a large audience. He began to scat sing (improvised vocal jazz using nonsensical words) and was among the first to record it, on "Heebie Jeebies" in 1926. The recording was so popular that the group became the most famous jazz band in the United States, even though they had not performed live to any great extent. Young musicians across the country, black or white, were turned on by Armstrong's new type of jazz.

With Jack Teagarden (left) and Barney Bigard (right), Armstrong plays the trumpet in Helsinki, Finland, October 1949

After separating from Lil, Armstrong started to play at the Sunset Café for Al Capone's associate Joe Glaser in the Carroll Dickerson Orchestra, with Earl Hines on piano, which was soon renamed Louis Armstrong and his Stompers, though Hines was the music director and Glaser managed the orchestra. Hines and Armstrong became fast friends and successful collaborators.

Armstrong returned to New York, in 1929, where he played in the pit orchestra of the successful musical *Hot Chocolate*, an all-black revue written by Andy Razaf and pianist/composer Fats Waller. He also made a cameo appearance as a vocalist, regularly stealing the show with his rendition of "Ain't Misbehavin'", his version of the song becoming his biggest selling record to date.

Armstrong started to work at Connie's Inn in Harlem, chief rival to the Cotton Club, a venue for elaborately staged floor shows, and a front for gangster Dutch Schultz. Armstrong also had considerable success with vocal recordings, including versions of famous songs composed by his old friend Hoagy Carmichael. His 1930s recordings took full advantage of the new RCA ribbon microphone, introduced in 1931, which imparted a characteristic warmth to vocals and immediately became an intrinsic part of the 'crooning' sound of artists like Bing Crosby. Armstrong's famous interpretation of Hoagy Carmichael's "Stardust" became one of the most successful versions of this song ever recorded, showcasing Armstrong's unique vocal sound and style and his innovative approach to singing songs that had already become standards.

Armstrong's radical re-working of Sidney Arodin and Carmichael's "Lazy River" (recorded in 1931) encapsulated many features of his groundbreaking approach to melody and phrasing. The song begins with a brief trumpet solo, then the main melody is stated by sobbing horns, memorably punctuated by Armstrong's growling interjections at the end of each bar: "Yeah! ..." "Uh-huh" ... "Sure" ... "Way down, way down." In the first verse, he ignores the notated melody entirely and sings as if playing a trumpet solo, pitching most of the first line on a single note and using strongly syncopated phrasing. In the second stanza he breaks into an almost fully improvised melody, which then evolves into a classic passage of Armstrong "scat singing".

As with his trumpet playing, Armstrong's vocal innovations served as a foundation stone for the art of jazz vocal interpretation. The uniquely gritty coloration of his voice became a musical archetype that was much imitated and endlessly impersonated. His scat singing style was enriched by his matchless experience as a trumpet soloist. His resonant, velvety lower-register tone and bubbling cadences on sides such as "Lazy River" exerted a huge influence on younger white singers such as Bing Crosby.

The Great Depression of the early 1930s was especially hard on the jazz scene. The Cotton Club closed in 1936 after a long downward spiral, and many musicians stopped playing altogether as club dates evaporated. Bix Beiderbecke died and Fletcher Henderson's band broke up. King Oliver made a few records but otherwise struggled. Sidney Bechet became a tailor and Kid Ory returned to New Orleans and raised chickens.

Armstrong moved to Los Angeles in 1930 to seek new opportunities. He played at the New Cotton Club in Los Angeles with Lionel Hampton on drums. The band drew the Hollywood crowd, which could still afford a lavish night life, while radio broadcasts from the club connected with younger audiences at home. Bing Crosby and many other celebrities were regulars at the club. In 1931, Armstrong appeared in his first movie, *Ex-Flame*. Armstrong was convicted of marijuana possession but received a suspended sentence. He returned to Chicago in late 1931 and played in bands more in the Guy Lombardo vein and he recorded more standards. When the mob insisted that he get out of town, Armstrong visited New Orleans, got a hero's welcome and saw old friends. He sponsored a local baseball team known as "Armstrong's Secret Nine" and had a cigar named after him. But soon he was on the road again and after a tour across the country shadowed by the mob, Armstrong decided to go to Europe to escape.

After returning to the United States, he undertook several exhausting tours. His agent Johnny Collins' erratic behavior and his own spending ways left Armstrong short of cash. Breach of contract violations plagued him. Finally, he hired Joe Glaser as his new manager, a tough mob-connected wheeler-dealer, who began to straighten out his legal mess, his mob troubles, and his debts. Armstrong also began to experience problems with his fingers and lips, which were aggravated by his unorthodox playing style. As a result he branched out, developing his vocal style and making his first theatrical appearances. He appeared in movies again, including Crosby's 1936 hit *Pennies from Heaven*. In 1937,

Armstrong substituted for Rudy Vallee on the CBS radio network and became the first African American to host a sponsored, national broadcast.

After spending many years on the road, Armstrong settled permanently in Queens, New York in 1943 in contentment with his fourth wife, Lucille. Although subject to the vicissitudes of Tin Pan Alley and the gangster-ridden music business, as well as anti-black prejudice, he continued to develop his playing. He recorded Hoagy Carmichael's Rockin' Chair for Okeh Records.

During the subsequent thirty years, Armstrong played more than three hundred gigs a year. Bookings for big bands tapered off during the 1940s due to changes in public tastes: ballrooms closed, and there was competition from television and from other types of music becoming more popular than big band music. It became impossible under such circumstances to support and finance a 16-piece touring band.

The All Stars

Following a highly successful small-group jazz concert at New York Town Hall on May 17, 1947, featuring Armstrong with trombonist/singer Jack Teagarden, Armstrong's manager Joe Glaser dissolved the Armstrong big band on August 13, 1947 and established a six-piece small group featuring Armstrong with (initially) Teagarden, Earl Hines and other top swing and dixieland musicians, most of them ex-big band leaders. The new group was announced at the opening of Billy Berg's Supper Club.

This group was called Louis Armstrong and his All Stars and included at various times Earl "Fatha" Hines, Barney Bigard, Edmond Hall, Jack Teagarden, Trummy Young, Arvell Shaw, Billy Kyle, Marty Napoleon, Big Sid Catlett, Cozy Cole, Tyree Glenn, Barrett Deems, Joe Darensbourg and the Filipino-American percussionist Danny Barcelona. During this period, Armstrong made many recordings and appeared in over thirty films. He was the first jazz musician to appear on the cover of Time Magazine on February 21, 1949.)

In 1948, he participated in the Nice Jazz Festival where Suzy Delair sings for the first time in public C'est si bon by Henri Betti and André Hornez. Love this song, Armstrong asked the editor if he can make a recording in America what the publisher allows it. Armstrong recorded the first American version of C'est si bon June 26, 1950 in New York with English lyrics by Jerry Seelen. On its release, the disc becomes a worldwide success.

In 1964, he recorded his biggest-selling record, "Hello, Dolly!", a song by Jerry Herman, originally sung by Carol Channing. Armstrong's cover of the song, which lasted 22 weeks on the Hot 100, longer than any other record that year, went to No. 1 on the pop chart, making Armstrong (age 62 years, 9 months, 5 days) the oldest person to date to ever accomplish that feat. In the process, Armstrong dislodged The Beatles from the No. 1 position they had occupied for 14 consecutive weeks with three different songs.

Armstrong kept up his busy tour schedule until a few years before his death in 1971. In his later years he would sometimes play some of his numerous gigs by rote, but other times would enliven the most mundane gig with his vigorous playing, often to the astonishment of his band. He also toured Africa, Europe, and Asia under sponsorship of the US State Department with great success, earning the nickname "Ambassador Satch " and inspiring Dave Brubeck to compose his jazz musical The Real Ambassadors

While failing health restricted his schedule in his last years, within those limitations he continued playing until the day he died.

Death

Armstrong died of a heart attack in his sleep on July 6, 1971, a month before his 70th birthday, 11 months after playing a famous show at the Waldorf-Astoria's Empire Room. He was residing in Corona, Queens, New York City, at the time of his death. He was interred in Flushing Cemetery, Flushing, in Queens, New York City. His honorary pallbearers included Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie, Pearl Bailey, Count Basie, Harry James, Frank Sinatra, Ed Sullivan, Earl Wilson, Alan King, Johnny Carson and David Frost. Peggy Lee sang The Lord's Prayer at the services while Al Hibbler sang "Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen" and Fred Robbins, a long-time friend, gave the eulogy.

Personal life

Pronunciation of name

Judging from home recorded tapes now in our Museum Collections, Louis pronounced his own name as “Lewis.” On his 1964 record “Hello, Dolly,” he sings, “This is Lewis, Dolly” but in 1933 he made a record called “Laughin’ Louie.” Many broadcast announcers, fans, and acquaintances called him “Louie” and in a videotaped interview from 1983 Lucille Armstrong calls her late husband “Louie” as well. Musicians and close friends usually called him “Pops.”

In a memoir written for Robert Goffin between 1943 and 1944, Armstrong states, "All white folks call me Louie," suggesting that he himself did not. That said, Armstrong was registered as "Lewie" for the 1920 U.S. Census. On various live records he's called "Louie" on stage, such as on the 1952 "Can Anyone Explain?" from the live album *In Scandinavia* vol.1. It should also be noted that "Lewie" is the French pronunciation of "Louis" and is commonly used in Louisiana.

Family

On March 19, 1918, Louis married Daisy Parker, a prostitute from Gretna, Louisiana. They adopted a 3-year-old boy, Clarence Armstrong, whose mother, Louis' cousin Flora, died soon after giving birth. Clarence Armstrong was mentally disabled (the result of a head injury at an early age) and Louis would spend the rest of his life taking care of him. Louis' marriage to Parker failed quickly and they separated in 1923.

On February 4, 1924, Louis married Lil Hardin Armstrong, who was Oliver's pianist and had also divorced her first spouse only a few years earlier. His second wife was instrumental in developing his career, but in the late 1920s Hardin and Louis grew apart. They separated in 1931 and divorced in 1938, after which Louis married longtime girlfriend Alpha Smith. His marriage to his third wife lasted four years, and they divorced in 1942. Louis then married Lucille Wilson, a singer at the Cotton Club, to whom he was married until his death in 1971.

Armstrong's marriages never produced any offspring, though he loved children. However, in December 2012, 57-year-old Sharon Preston-Folta claimed to be his daughter, from a 1950s affair between Armstrong and Lucille "Sweets" Preston, a dancer at the Cotton Club.[46] In a 1955 letter to his manager, Joe Glaser, Armstrong affirmed his belief that Preston's newborn baby was his daughter, and ordered Glaser to pay a monthly allowance of \$400 to mother and child.

Personality

This section possibly contains original research. Please improve it by verifying the claims made and adding inline citations. Statements consisting only of original research should be removed. (November 2011)

Armstrong was noted for his colorful and charismatic personality. His own biography vexed some biographers and historians, as he had a habit of telling tales, particularly of his early childhood, when he was less scrutinized, and his embellishments of his history often lack consistency.

He was not only an entertainer, Armstrong was also a leading personality of the day. He was beloved by an American public that gave even the greatest African American performers little access beyond their public celebrity, and he was able to live a private life of access and privilege accorded to few other African Americans during that era.

He generally remained politically neutral, which at times alienated him from members of the black community who looked to him to use his prominence with white America to become more of an outspoken figure during the Civil Rights Era of U.S. history.

Nicknames

The nicknames Satchmo and Satch are short for Satchelmouth. Like many things in Armstrong's life, which was filled with colorful stories both real and imagined, many of his own telling, the nickname has many possible origins.

The most common tale that biographers tell is the story of Armstrong as a young boy dancing for pennies in the streets of New Orleans, who would scoop up the coins off of the streets and stick them into his mouth to avoid having the bigger children steal them from him. Someone dubbed him "satchel mouth" for his mouth acting as a satchel. Another tale is that because of his large mouth, he was nicknamed "satchel mouth" which became shortened to Satchmo.

Early on he was also known as Dipper, short for Dippermouth, a reference to the piece Dippermouth Blues and something of a riff on his unusual embouchure.

The nickname Pops came from Armstrong's own tendency to forget people's names and simply call them "pops" instead. The nickname was soon turned on Armstrong himself. It was used as the title of a 2010 biography of Armstrong by Terry Teachout. They also called him the king of jazz.

Armstrong and race

Armstrong was largely accepted into white society, both on stage and off, a privilege reserved for very few African-American public figures, and usually those of either exceptional talent or fair skin tone. As his fame grew, so did his access to the finer things in life usually denied to a black man, even a famous one. His renown was such that he dined in the best restaurants and stayed in hotels usually exclusively for whites.

It was a power and privilege that he enjoyed, although he was very careful not to flaunt it with fellow performers of color, and privately, he shared what access that he could with friends and fellow musicians.

That still did not prevent members of the African-American community, particularly in the late 1950s to the early 1970s, from calling him an Uncle Tom, a black-on-black racial epithet for someone who kowtowed to white society at the expense of their own racial identity. Billie Holiday countered, however, "Of course Pops toms, but he toms from the heart."

He was criticized for accepting the title of "King of The Zulus" for Mardi Gras in 1949. In the New Orleans African-American community it is an honored role as the head of leading black Carnival Krewe, but bewildering or offensive to outsiders with their traditional costume of grass-skirts and blackface makeup satirizing southern white attitudes.

Some musicians criticized Armstrong for playing in front of segregated audiences, and for not taking a strong enough stand in the civil rights movement.

The few exceptions made it more effective when he did speak out. Armstrong's criticism of President Eisenhower, calling him "two-faced" and "gutless" because of his inaction during the conflict over school desegregation in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 made national news.

As a protest, Armstrong canceled a planned tour of the Soviet Union on behalf of the State Department saying "The way they're treating my people in the South, the government can go to hell" and that he could not represent his government abroad when it was in conflict with its own people. Six days after Armstrong's comments, Eisenhower ordered Federal troops to Little Rock to escort students into the school.

The FBI kept a file on Armstrong, for his outspokenness about integration.

Religion

When asked about his religion, Armstrong would answer that he was raised a Baptist, always wore a Star of David, and was friends with the Pope. Armstrong wore the Star of David in honor of the Karnofsky family, who took him in as a child and lent him the money to buy his first cornet. Louis Armstrong was, in fact, baptized as a Catholic at the Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in New Orleans, and he met popes Pius XII and Paul VI, though there is no evidence that he considered himself Catholic. Armstrong seems to have been tolerant towards various religions, but also found humor in them.

Personal habits

Purging

Armstrong was also greatly concerned with his health and bodiliness. He made frequent use of laxatives as a means of controlling his weight, a practice he advocated both to personal acquaintances and in the diet plans he published under the title *Lose Weight the Satchmo Way*. Armstrong's laxative of preference in his younger days was Pluto Water, but he then became an enthusiastic convert when he discovered the herbal remedy Swiss Kriss. He would extol its virtues to anyone who would listen and pass out packets to everyone he encountered, including members of the British Royal Family. (Armstrong also appeared in humorous, albeit risqué, cards that he had printed to send out to friends; the cards bore a picture of him sitting on a toilet—as viewed through a keyhole—with the slogan "Satch says, 'Leave it all behind ya!'") The cards have sometimes been incorrectly described as ads for Swiss Kriss.

In a live recording of "Baby, It's Cold Outside" with Velma Middleton, he changes the lyric from "Put another record on while I pour" to "Take some Swiss Kriss while I pour."

Love of food

The concern with his health and weight was balanced by his love of food, reflected in such songs as "Cheesecake", "Cornet Chop Suey," though "Struttin' with Some Barbecue" was written about a fine-looking companion, not about food. He kept a strong connection throughout his life to the cooking of New Orleans, always signing his letters, "Red beans and ricely yours..."

Writings

Armstrong's gregariousness extended to writing. On the road, he wrote constantly, sharing favorite themes of his life with correspondents around the world. He avidly typed or wrote on whatever stationery was at hand, recording instant takes on music, sex, food, childhood memories, his heavy "medicinal" marijuana use—and even his bowel movements, which he gleefully described. He had a fondness for lewd jokes and dirty limericks as well.

Social organizations

Louis Armstrong was not, as is often claimed, a Freemason. Although he is usually listed as being a member of Montgomery Lodge No. 18 (Prince Hall) in New York, no such lodge has ever existed. Armstrong states in his autobiography, however, that he was a member of the Knights of Pythias, which is not a Masonic group.

Music

Horn playing and early jazz

In his early years, Armstrong was best known for his virtuosity with the cornet and trumpet. The greatest trumpet playing of his early years can be heard on his Hot Five and Hot Seven records, as well as the Red Onion Jazz Babies. Armstrong's improvisations were daring and sophisticated for the time, while often subtle and melodic.

He often essentially re-composed pop-tunes he played, making them more interesting. Armstrong's playing is filled with original melodies, creative leaps, and subtle relaxed or driving rhythms. Armstrong's playing technique, honed by constant practice, extended the range, tone and capabilities of the trumpet. In these records, Armstrong almost single-handedly created the role of the jazz soloist, taking what was essentially a collective folk music and turning it into an art form with tremendous possibilities for individual expression.

Armstrong's work in the 1920s shows him playing at the outer limits of his abilities. The Hot Five records, especially, often have minor flubs and missed notes, which do little to detract from listening enjoyment since the energy of the spontaneous performance comes through. By the mid-1930s, Armstrong achieved a smooth assurance, knowing exactly what he could do and carrying out his ideas to perfection.

He was one of the first artists to use recordings of his performances to improve himself. Armstrong was an avid audiophile. He had a large collection of recordings, including reel-to-reel tapes, which he took on the road with him in a trunk during his later career. He enjoyed listening to his own recordings, and comparing his performances musically. In the den of his home, he had the latest audio equipment and would sometimes rehearse and record along with his older recordings or the radio.

Vocal popularity

As his music progressed and popularity grew, his singing also became very important. Armstrong was not the first to record scat singing, but he was masterful at it and helped popularize it. He had a hit with his playing and scat singing on "Heebie Jeebies" when, according to some legends, the sheet music fell on the floor and he simply started singing nonsense syllables. Armstrong stated in his memoirs that this actually occurred. He also sang out "I done forgot the words" in the middle of recording "I'm A Ding Dong Daddy From Dumas."

Such records were hits and scat singing became a major part of his performances. Long before this, however, Armstrong was playing around with his vocals, shortening and lengthening phrases, interjecting improvisations, using his voice as creatively as his trumpet.

Colleagues and followers

During his long career he played and sang with some of the most important instrumentalists and vocalists of the time; among them were Bing Crosby, Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson, Earl Hines, the singing brakeman Jimmie Rodgers, Bessie Smith and perhaps most famously Ella Fitzgerald.

His influence upon Bing Crosby is particularly important with regard to the subsequent development of popular music: Crosby admired and copied Armstrong, as is evident on many of his early recordings, notably "Just One More Chance" (1931). The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz describes Crosby's debt to Armstrong in precise detail, although it does not acknowledge Armstrong by name:

Crosby... was important in introducing into the mainstream of popular singing an Afro-American concept of song as a lyrical extension of speech... His techniques—easing the weight of the breath on the vocal cords, passing into a head voice at a low register, using forward production to aid distinct enunciation, singing on consonants (a practice of black singers), and making discreet use of appoggiaturas, mordents, and slurs to emphasize the text—were emulated by nearly all later popular singers.

Armstrong recorded two albums with Ella Fitzgerald: Ella and Louis, and Ella and Louis Again for Verve Records, with the sessions featuring the backing musicianship of the Oscar Peterson Trio and drummers Buddy Rich (on the first album),

and Louie Bellson (on the second). Norman Granz then had the vision for Ella and Louis to record Porgy and Bess which is the most famous and critically acclaimed version of the Gerswhin brothers' masterpiece.

His recordings for Columbia Records, Louis Armstrong Plays W.C. Handy (1954) and Satch Plays Fats (all Fats Waller tunes) (1955) were both being considered masterpieces, as well as moderately well selling. In 1961 the All Stars participated in two albums - "The Great Summit" and "The Great Reunion" (now together as a single disc) with Duke Ellington. The albums feature many of Ellington's most famous compositions (as well as two exclusive cuts) with Duke sitting in on piano. His participation in Dave Brubeck's high-concept jazz musical The Real Ambassadors (1963) was critically acclaimed, and features "Summer Song," one of Armstrong's most popular vocal efforts.

In 1964 his recording of the song "Hello Dolly" went to number one. An album of the same title was quickly created around the song, and also shot to number one (knocking The Beatles off the top of the chart). The album sold very well for the rest of the year, quickly going "Gold" (500,000). His performance of "Hello Dolly" won for best male pop vocal performance at the 1964 Grammy Awards.

Hits and later career

Armstrong had many hit records including "Stardust", "What a Wonderful World", "When The Saints Go Marching In", "Dream a Little Dream of Me", "Ain't Misbehavin'", "You Rascal You", and "Stompin' at the Savoy". "We Have All the Time in the World" was featured on the soundtrack of the James Bond film *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, and enjoyed renewed popularity in the UK in 1994 when it featured on a Guinness advert. It reached number 3 in the charts on being re-released.

In 1964, Armstrong knocked The Beatles off the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart with "Hello, Dolly!", which gave the 63-year-old performer a U.S. record as the oldest artist to have a number one song. His 1964 song "Bout Time" was later featured in the film *Bewitched*.

Armstrong performed in Italy at the 1968 Sanremo Music Festival where he sang "Mi Va di Cantare" alongside his friend, the Eritrean-born Italian singer Lara Saint Paul. In February 1968, he also appeared with Lara Saint Paul on the Italian RAI television channel where he performed "Grassa e Bella," a track he sang in Italian for the Italian market and C.D.I. label.

In 1968, Armstrong scored one last popular hit in the United Kingdom with "What a Wonderful World", which topped the British charts for a month; however, the single did not chart at all in America. The song gained greater currency in the popular consciousness when it was used in the 1987 movie *Good Morning, Vietnam*, its subsequent re-release

topping many charts around the world. Armstrong even appeared on the October 28, 1970, Johnny Cash Show, where he sang Nat King Cole's hit "Rambling Rose" and joined Cash to re-create his performance backing Jimmie Rodgers on "Blue Yodel No. 9".

Stylistic range

Armstrong enjoyed many types of music, from blues to the arrangements of Guy Lombardo, to Latin American folksongs, to classical symphonies and opera. Armstrong incorporated influences from all these sources into his performances, sometimes to the bewilderment of fans who wanted him to stay in convenient narrow categories. Armstrong was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an early influence. Some of his solos from the 1950s, such as the hard rocking version of "St. Louis Blues" from the WC Handy album, show that the influence went in both directions.

Literature, radio, films and TV

Armstrong appeared in more than a dozen Hollywood films, usually playing a band leader or musician. His most familiar role was as the bandleader cum narrator in the 1956 musical, *High Society*, in which he sang the title song and performed a duet with Bing Crosby on "Now You Has Jazz". In 1947, he played himself in the movie *New Orleans* opposite Billie Holiday, which chronicled the demise of the Storyville district and the ensuing exodus of musicians from New Orleans to Chicago. In the 1959 film, *The Five Pennies* (the story of the cornetist Red Nichols), Armstrong played himself as well as singing and playing several classic numbers. With Danny Kaye Armstrong performed a duet of "When the Saints Go Marching In" during which Kaye impersonated Armstrong. Armstrong also had a part in the film alongside James Stewart in *The Glenn Miller Story* in which Glenn (played by Stewart) jammed with Armstrong and a few other noted musicians of the time.

He was the first African American to host a nationally broadcast radio show in the 1930s. In 1969, Armstrong had a cameo role in the film version of *Hello, Dolly!* as the bandleader, Louis, to which he sang the title song with actress Barbra Streisand. His solo recording of "Hello, Dolly!" is one of his most recognizable performances.

Armstrong played a bandleader in the television production "The Lord Don't Play Favorites" on Producers' Showcase in 1956

He was heard on such radio programs as *The Story of Swing* (1937) and *This Is Jazz* (1947), and he also made countless television appearances, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, including appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*.

Many of Armstrong's recordings remain popular. More than four decades since his death, a larger number of his recordings from all periods of his career are more widely available than at any time during his lifetime. His songs are broadcast and listened to every day throughout the world, and are honored in various movies, TV series, commercials, and even anime and video games. "A Kiss to Build a Dream On" was included in the video game *Fallout 2*, accompanying the intro cinematic. It was also used in the 1993 film *Sleepless in Seattle* and the 2005 film *Lord of War*. "Melancholy Blues," performed by Armstrong and his Hot Seven was included on the Voyager Golden Record sent into outer space to represent one of the greatest achievements of humanity. Most familiar to modern listeners is his ubiquitous rendition of "What a Wonderful World". In 2008, Armstrong's recording of Edith Piaf's famous "La Vie En Rose" was used in a scene of the popular Disney/Pixar film *WALL-E*. The song was also used in parts, especially the opening trumpets, in the French film *Jeux d'enfants* (*Love Me If You Dare*.)

Argentine writer Julio Cortázar, a self-described Armstrong admirer, asserted that a 1952 Louis Armstrong concert at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris played a significant role in inspiring him to create the fictional creatures called Cronopios that are the subject of a number of Cortázar's short stories. Cortázar once called Armstrong himself "Grandísimo Cronopio" (The Great Cronopio).

Armstrong appears as a minor fictionalized character in Harry Turtledove's Southern Victory Series. When he and his band escape from a Nazi-like Confederacy, they enhance the insipid mainstream music of the North. A young Armstrong also appears as a minor fictionalized character in Patrick Neate's 2001 novel *Twelve Bar Blues*, part of which is set in New Orleans, and which was a winner at that year's Whitbread Book Awards.

There is a pivotal scene in *Stardust Memories* (1980) in which Woody Allen is overwhelmed by a recording of Armstrong's "Stardust" and experiences a nostalgic epiphany. The combination of the music and the perfect moment is the catalyst for much of the film's action, prompting the protagonist to fall in love with an ill-advised woman.

Terry Teachout wrote a one-man play about Armstrong called *Satchmo at the Waldorf* that was premiered in 2011 in Orlando, Fla., and has since been produced by Shakespeare & Company, Long Wharf Theater, and the Wilma Theater. The production ran off Broadway in 2014.

Awards and honors

Grammy Awards

Armstrong was posthumously awarded the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1972 by the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. This Special Merit Award is presented by vote of the Recording Academy's National Trustees to performers who, during their lifetimes, have made creative contributions of outstanding artistic significance to the field of recording. Grammy Award

Year	Category	Title		Genre	Label	Result
1964	Male Vocal	Performance	"Hello, Dolly!"	Pop	Kapp	Winner

Grammy Hall of Fame

Recordings of Armstrong were inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame, which is a special Grammy award established in 1973 to honor recordings that are at least 25 years old, and that have "qualitative or historical significance." Grammy Hall of Fame

Year recorded	Title	Genre	Label	Year inducted	Notes
1929	"St. Louis Blues"	Jazz (Single)	OKeh	2008	with Bessie Smith
1928	"Weather Bird"	Jazz (Single)	OKeh	2008	with Earl Hines
1930	"Blue Yodel No. 9 (Standing on the Corner)"	Country (Single)	Victor	2007	Jimmie Rodgers (Featuring Louis Armstrong)
1932	"All of Me"	Jazz (Single)	Columbia	2005	
1958	Porgy and Bess	Jazz (Album)	Verve	2001	with Ella Fitzgerald
1964	"Hello Dolly!"	Pop (Single)	Kapp	2001	
1926	"Heebie Jeebies"	Jazz (Single)	OKeh	1999	
1967	"What a Wonderful World"	Jazz (Single)	ABC	1999	

1955	"Mack the Knife"	Jazz (Single)	Columbia	1997	
1925	"St. Louis Blues"	Jazz (Single)	Columbia	1993	Bessie Smith with Louis Armstrong, cornet
1928	"West End Blues"	Jazz (Single)	OKeh	1974	

Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame listed Armstrong's West End Blues on the list of 500 songs that shaped Rock and Roll.

Year recorded	Title	Label	Group
1928	West End Blues	Okeh	Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five

Inductions and honors

In 1995, the U.S. Post Office issued a Louis Armstrong 32 cents commemorative postage stamp.

Year inducted	Title	Results	Notes
2007	Louisiana Music Hall of Fame		
2007	Gennett Records Walk of Fame, Richmond, Indiana		
2007	Long Island Music Hall of Fame		
2004	Nesuhi Ertegün Jazz Hall of Fame at Jazz at Lincoln Center		
1990	Rock and Roll Hall of Fame	Early influence	
1978	Big Band and Jazz Hall of Fame		
1952	Down Beat Jazz Hall of Fame		
1960	Hollywood Walk of Fame Star at 7601 Hollywood Blvd.		

Legacy

The influence of Armstrong on the development of jazz is virtually immeasurable. Yet, his irrepressible personality both as a performer, and as a public figure later in his career, was so strong that to some it sometimes overshadowed his contributions as a musician and singer.

As a virtuoso trumpet player, Armstrong had a unique tone and an extraordinary talent for melodic improvisation. Through his playing, the trumpet emerged as a solo instrument in jazz and is used widely today. He was a masterful accompanist and ensemble player in addition to his extraordinary skills as a soloist. With his innovations, he raised the bar musically for all who came after him.

Though Armstrong is widely recognized as a pioneer of scat singing, Ethel Waters precedes his scatting on record in the 1930s according to Gary Giddins and others. Billie Holiday and Frank Sinatra are just two singers who were greatly indebted to him. Holiday said that she always wanted Bessie Smith's 'big' sound and Armstrong's feeling in her singing. Even special musicians like Duke Ellington have praised Armstrong through strong testimonials. Duke Ellington said, "If anybody was a master, it was Louis Armstrong." In 1950, Bing Crosby, the most successful vocalist of the first half of the 20th century, said, "He is the beginning and the end of music in America."

In the summer of 2001, in commemoration of the centennial of Armstrong's birth, New Orleans's main airport was renamed Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport.

In 2002, the Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings (1925–1928) are preserved in the United States National Recording Registry, a registry of recordings selected yearly by the National Recording Preservation Board for preservation in the National Recording Registry of the Library of Congress.

The US Open tennis tournament's former main stadium was named Louis Armstrong Stadium in honor of Armstrong who had lived a few blocks from the site.

Today, there are many bands worldwide dedicated to preserving and honoring the music and style of Satchmo, including the Louis Armstrong Society located in New Orleans, Louisiana.

House

The house where Louis Armstrong lived for close to 28 years was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1977 and is now a museum. The Louis Armstrong House Museum, at 34-56 107th Street (between 34th and 37th Avenues) in Corona, Queens, presents concerts and educational programs, operates as a historic house museum and makes materials in its archives of writings, books, recordings and memorabilia available to the public for research. The museum is operated by the City University of New York's Queens College, following the dictates of Lucille Armstrong's will.

The museum opened to the public on October 15, 2003. A new visitors center is planned.