# Composer and Musician of the Month

## Louis Armstrong

Born : 1901, in New Orleans
Died : 1971, in New York
Instrument : Trumpet/Cornet
Genre : Jazz

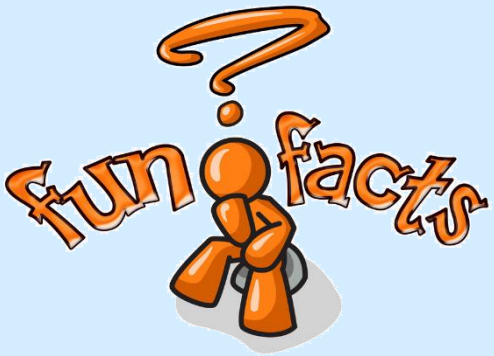


"West End Blues" Recorded in 1928 by "Louis Armstrong and his Hot Five" one of the most important recordings of Traditional Jazz!

# Early Life...

Louis Armstrong was born on 4th August, 1901 in New Orleans, USA.

When Louis was still a baby, his father left the family. For part of his childhood, Louis was raised by his grandmother. The area Louis and his family lived in was poor and it was nicknamed 'The Battlefield'. When Louis was only in the 5th grade (10-11 years old), he had to leave school and get a job in order to support his family financially.




Louis is a French name and is usually pronounced 'loo-ee'. However, in some parts of the USA, it is pronounced 'loo-wis'. On Louis Armstrong's recording of 'Hello Dolly', he says, 'This is Louis,' pronouncing it 'loo-wis', suggesting this

A family called the Karnofskys gave Louis jobs, such as delivering coal. The family often invited Louis to their home for meals. While he was with them, the Karnofsky family noticed that Louis was a talented singer and they would often ask him to sing for them.



Louis also had a job selling coal in an area of New Orleans filled with cafes and bars. It was here that Louis first heard jazz music. Louis loved the genre immediately and wanted to start performing it. Morris Karnofsky gave Louis an early payment so he could buy a cornet. A cornet is a bit like a trumpet but shorter and wider.



The Karnofsky family were Jewish. Louis noticed that the same people who racially abused him were also abusive to the family because of their religion. As an adult, Louis would wear a Star of David to honour the Karnofsky family and their faith.
*Shown in the circle in the picture (left).*

# Developing music...

Despite discovering a love of music and working hard, life was still tough for Louis. In 1912, he was arrested and sent to a home for boys. While he was at the home, a music teacher started to give Louis music lessons.





When Louis left the home in 1914, he set his mind to becoming a professional musician. Learning more about jazz from one of New Orleans' most well-known musicians, Louis soon had a job performing on the steamboats that cruised the Mississippi river.





# The Hot Five...

Louis spent time playing with bands and orchestras in Chicago and New York.

During this time, he married Lillian Harding, a pianist in one of the bands Louis played in. Lillian recognised Louis' talent and encouraged him to start making his own music.

In 1925, Louis started his own music group, the Hot Five, which would later become the Hot Seven.



"Hotter than That"

The music produced by Louis and his group is considered some of the most important in jazz of all time.

# What is Jazz?

Jazz music is a genre that started in New Orleans towards the beginning of the 20th century. It fused together musical styles like ragtime, marches and blues.

Jazz has a strong syncopated beat. Imagine you are clapping out the beat of a song, counting "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and". Syncopation involves emphasising each the "ands" in-between the numbers rather than the numbers themselves.



Trad. Jazz Band from the

Watch this video clip of a group of musicians playing "The Jubilee Stomp" a trad. jazz piece - where they each take a turn improvising around the main melody.

Tuba Skinny – "Jubilee Stomp"

Another important feature of jazz is improvisation. This is when musicians make up their own melodies in certain sections of the music. This means that every time you hear a piece of jazz music played live, it might be different because of the different musicians playing it in their own way.

# Now it's your turn...



See if you can complete your feedback sheet listening to and watching the video clip on the next slide.



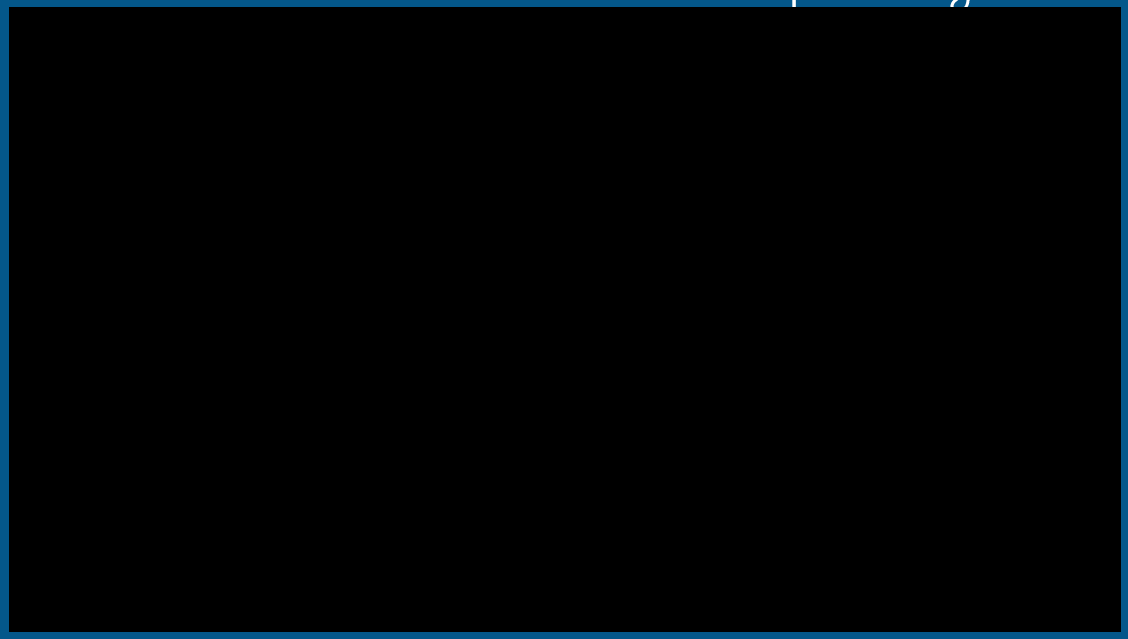
This is a clip of Louis Armstrong and his band performing with a famous singer called Bing Crosby. The piece called "Now You Has Jazz" allows you to clearly see the main instruments of a Jazz band and hear what each one sounds like.

Challenge : Can you match up each instrument with their jazz names that are mentioned in the song?

# Singing...

Although Louis was initially known as a trumpeter and band leader, he later became popular as a singer. Louis' voice was very rich and deep. Louis was able to 'bend notes', which means changing the pitch of a note (making it higher or lower) without taking a pause or break. Louis' singing style was similar to his trumpet style.

He was also known for "scat" singing – this is where the voice improvises with "vocables" (nonsense syllables). In scat singing, the singer improvises melodies and rhythms using the voice as an instrument rather than a speaking.



# Later Life...

Louis suffered from several health problems. His trumpet playing led to him suffering severe lip pain and he had to take almost a year's rest in the 1930s.



In 1959, Louis had a heart attack while on tour in Italy. He continued to suffer from heart and kidney problems for the rest of his life and had another heart attack in March 1971.

On 6th July 1971, a few months after performing at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, Louis died.



Louis Armstrong is considered one of the most important musicians of the 20th century.

# In the Movies...




Louis starred in many films during his career, often playing a musician and sometimes playing himself. Some of his most famous films included 'High Society' (1956), 'Hello Dolly' (1969) and 'The Glenn Miller Story' (1954), which is movie all about another famous Jazz musician – but this time Swing or Big Band Jazz.

One of the most famous pieces of music sung by Louis Armstrong is 'We Have All the Time in the World', a theme from the 1969 James Bond film.



# Honours...

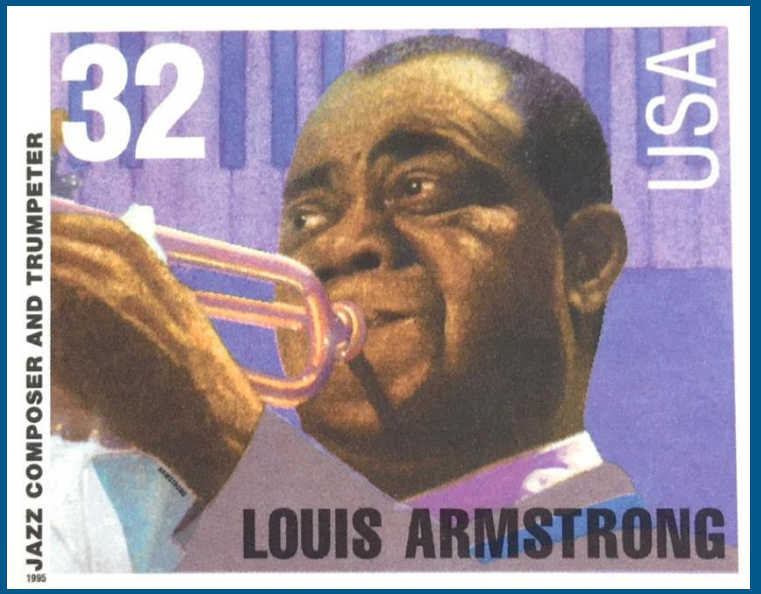
In 1965, Louis won a Grammy Award for his song 'Hello Dolly'. He was also given a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1972. Many of his records were put in the Grammy Hall of Fame. This is a group of songs that are considered to be of great significance to the history and development of music.



Statue in Louis Armstrong Park, New Orleans

In 1976, Louis Armstrong's house was made a National Historical Landmark and is now a museum.

In 1995, the US Post Office issued stamps which had Louis Armstrong's face on them.



# And finally...

Beloved for his charismatic stage presence and deep, instantly recognizable voice almost as much as for his awe inspiring trumpet-playing, Louis Armstrong's influence extends well beyond jazz music, and by the end of his professional performing career in the 1960s, he was widely regarded as a profound influence on popular music in general.
He was awarded the great honour of a star of the Hollywood Walk of Fame in August of 1960. It can be found on the famous Sunset Boulevard, in Los Angeles, California.




What was your favourite piece by Louis Armstrong?

Did you like Trad. Jazz?

Can you remember the