

Listen to Louis II



ADDITIONAL SELECTIONS FROM PIPA BILL LISTEN TO LOUIS

The people in the pictures on this CD cover - my mother and her two brothers were, like Louis Armstrong, born at the turn of the century and became of age during the twenties - The Jazz Age. They developed a friendship, indeed a love, for Louis that grew and lasted until his death in 1971 when my uncle was one of Louis's pallbearers.

With the *Stories From Pipa Bill: Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong - Pops*, I included in the accompanying music his epochal masterworks, *West End Blues*, *Potato Head Blues* and their "siblings." My purpose was to place the reader (especially my grandchildren and their peers) at "the creation" and to demonstrate the staying power of Louis's music. The choices must have been appropriate: In Ken Burns's Jazz CD *The Definitive Louis Armstrong*, nine of the ten selections were included (He left out *Basin Street Blues*, his mistake).

Since then, I have been asked which additional ten Louis Armstrong recordings would I select, and that's the basis for this CD. As always, choices always leave great music on "the cutting room floor;" nonetheless, these are some of my favorites, and should clearly demonstrate the genius and inspiration that taught the world to swing. Ken Burns's film *Jazz* left no doubt that Louis was the greatest musical influence of the twentieth century, an argument I have ceased to make if there are still detractors.

To Louis from Hiram



Love that "Pops"

Also, I do not discuss geography with those who think the world is flat.

Louis "escaped" to Europe in the early 30's, when he became the leader in transporting America's greatest cultural export - Jazz. The continent cheered his efforts far more than the product of those expatriates Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Stein who lived among them. In the 50's, he took his All-Star group abroad for a repeat and triumphal performance. There were riots in every country when the supply of seats ran out. Ten thousand fans met his plane in Copenhagen. The "Ambassadorial Tour" prompted Ed Murrow to make a TV show and compare it to Hannibal's crossing of the Alps. So it is no surprise that several of these recordings - *All Of Me*, *The Faithful Hussar*, *Someday You'll Be Sorry*, were made before an enthusiastic European audience. *Mack The Knife* (which like *A Wonderful World*, drew even greater accolades in Europe than here) and *Muskrat Ramble* are performed by that same touring All Star group.

Armstrong is seldom referred to as a composer in the traditional sense. "The player of jazz is himself the composer, which gives him a creative and therefore more dignified status." (Bernstein) "At his best, Heifetz is as good as his material. Armstrong stands above his." (Giddins). However, he did in fact compose dozens of songs in the conventional manner, and three are included here — *Someday You'll Be Sorry*, *Struttin' With Some Barbeque*, and *Muskrat Ramble*.

ALL OF ME

All of Me is one of my all-time favorites. It was one of the early standards introduced by LA. “When first performed in February 1932, it would have been number one if Billboard had existed. It’s a sublime demonstration of a style that gives the illusion of self-accompaniment.” (Giddins)

STARDUST

LA’s *Stardust* is Ken Burns’ favorite jazz recording and certainly makes my short list. A masterpiece of virtuoso singing and playing, it is one of the countless examples of re-creation of melody that led jazz historian James Collier to write: “... there was his extraordinary imagination, that astounding ability to create novel and significant strokes of melody. At this he has never had an equal in jazz and probably not in any musical form since the great European composers of the nineteenth century.”

THE FAITHFUL HUSSAR

“... a love song we picked up from some of the cats while touring Germany ... play it crazy, Otto,” Louis tells his audience, but he could never remember the title — Der Treue Husar — which he calls “huzzy kassah” and scats. This is entertaining music and made to really swing.

MACK THE KNIFE

This is another tune with German origins (from *The Three-Penny Opera*). Louis could identify with its message, because in his

06

SOMEDAY YOU’II BE SORRY

(L. Armstrong)
Recorded 12/20/55, Milan
Other Personnel: Same as *All Of Me*

07

BLACK AND BLUE

(A. Razaf - T. Waller)
Recorded 7/22/29, New York
Other Personnel:
Homer Hobson, Trumpet;
Fred Robinson, Trombone;
Bert Curry, Crawford Wethington, A. Sax;
Jimmy Strong, Clarinet, T. Sax;
Carrol Dickerson, Violin;
Gene Anderson, Piano, Celeste;
Mancy Carr, Banjo;
Pete Briggs, Tuba;
Zutty Singleton, Drums

08

MUSKRAT RAMBLE

(K. Ory - L. Armstrong)
Recorded 1/24/56, Hollywood
Other Personnel: Same as *All Of Me*

09

I’M CONFESSIN (A.J.

Neiberg - D. Daugherty - E. Reynolds)
Recorded 8/19/30
Other Personnel:
Leon Elkins, Trumpet;
William Franz, T. Sax;
Harvey Brooks, Piano;
Ceele Burke, Banjo;
Reggie Jones, Tuba;
Lionel Hampton, Drums

10

WHEN YOU’RE SMILING

(W. Fisher - J. Goodwin - L. Shay)
Recorded 12/12/56, New York
Other Personnel:
Trummy Young, Trombone;
Edmond Hall, Clarinet;
George Dorsey, A. Sax;
Lucky Thompson, T. Sax;
Dave McRae, B. Sax;
Billy Kyle, Piano;
Squire Lersh, Bass;
Barrett Deems, Drums

01 ALL OF ME (S. Simons - G. Marks)
Recorded 12/20/55, Milan
Other Personnel:
Trummy Young, Trombone;
Edmond Hall, Clarinet;
Billy Kyle, Piano;
Arvell Shaw, Bass;
Barrett Deems, Drums

02 STARDUST (H. Carmichael - M. Parish)
Recorded 11/3/31, Chicago
Other Personnel:
Zilner Randolph, Trumpet;
Preston Jackson, Trombone;
Lester Boone, Clarinet, A. Sax;
George James, Clarinet, S&A Sax;
Albert Washington, Clarinet, T. Sax;
Charlie Alexander, Piano;
Mike McKendrick, Banjo, Guitar;
John Lindsay, String Bass;
Tubby Hall, Drums

03 THE FAITHFUL HUSSAR
(H. Frantzen; Arr. by L. Armstrong)
Recorded 12/20/55, Milan
Other Personnel: Same as *All Of Me*

04 MACK THE KNIFE (K. Weill - B. Bracht - M. Blitzstein)
Recorded 9/28/55, New York
Other Personnel: Same As *All Of Me*

05 STRUTTIN' WITH SOME BARBEQUE (Lil Hardin Armstrong - L. Armstrong)
Recorded 12/9/27, Chicago
Other Personnel:
Edward "Kid" Ory, Trombone;
Johnny Dodds, Clarinet;
Lil Armstrong, Piano;
Johnny St.Cyr, Banjo

youth he had known many Macheath type characters which enabled him to "hit the ground running" with his performance. Compared to the original, LA's rendition is a remarkable transposition, exciting enough to hit the charts and become the most heavily covered song of its time, recorded by Ella Fitzgerald and Bobby Darin, among others. Louis became good friends with Lotte Lenya (the widow of Kurt Weill, the composer) and he inserts her name in his lyrics. In the liner notes for a Bobby Darin CD, Wayne Newton writes, "In 1959, Bobby used his genius and sang a song (M the K) that set a standard for the entire industry." While it is a great performance - made #1 on the charts - it was not the standard. Darin's plagiarism - an obvious copy from Louis - shows neither the courtesy nor even the intelligence to omit Lotte's name.

STRUTTIN' WITH SOME BARBEQUE

This piece, perhaps the best known of LA's compositions, is played by numerous groups, and Louis too recorded it often. It floats in some controversy. It is one of the pieces he allowed his second wife, Lil, to claim. It seems probable to me that LA conceived it but she, a well educated musician, put it on paper. The meaning is also arguable. Some claim it means showing off a pretty girl. At one time, Louis speaks of its food connection. A great tune, controversy notwithstanding, and this is the original recording (the best, I think) which includes both Louis and Lil.

SOMEDAY YOU'LL BE SORRY

Louis wrote this great ballad — a wonderful musical ADIOS that swings as his divorce from third wife, Alpha, took form.

BLACK AND BLUE

At a concert in Ghana, when LA sang this Fats Waller song, it brought tears to the eyes of U.S. educated Kwame Nkrumah, the future president. Clearly one of the most memorable protest songs of the century, it is also great music and helps dismiss the argument that Louis was an “Uncle Tom.”

MUSKRAT RAMBLE

This was Louis's first (in 1926) “hit,” and it spans his career — a career that was longer than anyone's — Jolson, Crosby, Sinatra, Presley — and the music still endures to be celebrated. While Kid Ory gets official credit for its composition, Louis always insisted he wrote it, and most of the jazz cognoscenti agree.

I'M CONFESSIN'

This was one of LA's favorites. It is included here partly for nostalgia — he sang it with my Uncle Dite at Ravinia (Chicago) in the 50's — but it is nonetheless an enduring ballad performance.

WHEN YOU'RE SMILING

It is probably fair to say that no music collection and no discussion of Louis Armstrong should end without this message. That he achieves this interpretation with one of his most outstanding upper register trumpet solos, only confirms its appropriateness. Louis taught the world to swing, but also to smile.