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English 212

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Louis Armstrong

Louis Armstrong was born on August 4th to Mary and William Armstrong in New Orleans (Timeline). In his lifetime he became one of the most influential jazz performers the world has ever seen. His sense of humor and his trademark wide grin earned Armstrong the nickname of Satchmo (PBS). Armstrong spread the language of jazz to the world during his career. His career continues to make an impact on today’s music industry.

Louis Armstrong grew up in a very poor area of New Orleans (PBS). Armstrong, as a child, joined a quartet of boys who sang on the streets for tips (Timeline). This is how Armstrong got his first taste for music that would become a life long love. In 1912 Armstrong got arrested for shooting a pistol into the air during a New Year’s Eve celebration. This act resulted in him being sent to the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs where he learned to play coronet from the band director Peter Davis (Wikipedia). When Armstrong finally returned home to his mother in 1914, his musical skills had improved and he caught the attention of Joe Oliver, one of the finest trumpet players in all of New Orleans (Timeline). Joe Oliver acted as a mentor and father figure for Louis Armstrong (Wikipedia). In 1922 Louis Armstrong moved to Chicago, following Joe Oliver, to play in the Creole Jazz Band (Wikipedia). This was the beginning of Armstrong’s lifetime of touring and recording. In 1925, Louis Armstrong is named “The World’s Greatest Jazz Cornetist” and also makes his first recording as a leader of his own group know as Louis Armstrong and His Hot Five (Timeline). During the 1930’s Armstrong traveled the country performing setting a pattern of extensive touring that continued his whole career. While touring, Armstrong stopped in New Orleans for the first time since 1922 and recorded “When It’s Sleepy time Down South” which became his theme song (Timeline). Louis Armstrong moved to New York City in 1943 where he lived from the remainder of his life (Timeline). Louis Armstrong returned to New Orleans again in 1949 to be king of the Zulus at Mardi Gras (Timeline). During the 1950’s Armstrong toured not only America, but the world. His performances appeared on television shows and he starred in movies (Timeline). In 1963, Armstrong had the honor of playing for President John F. Kennedy at his birthday celebration (Timeline). In 1964, he recorded “Hello, Dolly!” which went to claim the #1 spot on the pop chart. This made Armstrong, at the age of sixty-three, the oldest person to ever accomplish that feat (Wikipedia). A year later, Armstrong returns to New Orleans again to receive the key to the city (Timeline). Louis Armstrong died of a heart attack on July 6, 1971 while setting up band rehearsals (PBS).

Louis Armstrong is regarded as the most influential jazz musician in history. Louis Armstrong won the hearts of people everywhere with his infections smile and gravelly voice. The impact Louis Armstrong had on the music of the 20th century continues into the 21st century.

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