NAXOS JAZZ LEGENDS

# LOUIS ARMSTRONG

VOL. 8

## Sing It, Satchmo

Original Recordings
1945-1955



# LOUIS ARMSTRONG *Vol. 8*
## 'Sing It, Satchmo' Original Recordings 1945-1955

Although Louis Armstrong is best remembered as a pioneer of jazz trumpet and musical innovations, his contributions to popular vocals are not to be underestimated. In fact, it can be argued that Armstrong and pal Bing Crosby are the singers most responsible for defining the American popular song style in the 20th century. This collection showcases some of Satchmo's best vocal work during the decade beginning after the settling of the American Federation of Musicians' strike during World War II.

In January 1945, while preparing to travel to New Orleans to play in the second *Esquire* All-American Jazz Concert, Armstrong attended a recording session for Decca in New York. During the war, he had been actively supporting U.S. troops; making V-Discs, performing on Armed Forces Radio, and touring military bases, and so at this brief session, Armstrong recorded **Jodie Man**, a slang term blacks used to refer to slackers who move in on servicemen's wives during their husbands' absence. Also at this session was a cover of Pvt Cecil Gant's hit ballad, **I Wonder**, which signalled Armstrong's intent to not only pursue a crossover audience, but to emphasize his vocal style. Billy Butterfield plays the understated trumpet obbligato.

In August 1947, Armstrong officially launched his All-Stars, a group of rotating jazz veterans that would be his chief musical vehicle for the rest of his career. At a live concert in Boston's Symphony Hall on 30 November, Armstrong and duet partner Velma Middleton clowned their way through the oft-covered **That's My Desire**, one of the top ballad hits of the year. Listen for drummer Sid Catlett's imitation of a galloping horse after Pops sings the line 'it's time to go'.

After another AFM strike in 1948, Armstrong and the All-Stars hit the road, performing up to 300 nights each year. In the studio, Armstrong was assigned to arranger/conductor Gordon Jenkins, whose lugubrious arrangements and vocal choruses were used on many Decca recordings during this time. **Blueberry Hill** was a pop song written for a Gene Autry film in 1940. Armstrong's vocal answers to the chorus are very tastefully done, although you don't hear nary a note from his trumpet on the record, a portent of a continuing trend in his career. On the flip side, the hard-working Armstrong no doubt identified with **That Lucky Old Sun**, with its declaration of the hardships of never-ending labour.

Billie Holiday had worked with Armstrong on the 1946 film, *New Orleans* (in which she was unfortunately cast as a maid) and the two were paired up for a session in September of 1949. Both Holiday and Armstrong respected each other's work; the two appeared to have a great time on **My Sweet Hunk O' Trash**. One thing

should be pointed out about Armstrong's many duets; he often turned the performances into ad-libbed conversations, different from the stiff way duets had been performed in the past. Satchmo's duets are always a delight.

The June 1950 session featured two songs with French titles. Armstrong's affinity for the French and for love songs is reflected in his performances of **C'est Si Bon** (then a hit for Danny Kaye) and Edith Piaf's signature song, **La Vie En Rose**, both accompanied by Sy Oliver's orchestra. Oliver was better suited for Armstrong as an arranger than Jenkins with his jazzier charts, but his arrangement of the latter song was noticeably restrained. It's too bad Armstrong didn't learn enough French to sing Piaf's French lyrics – the English translations of such songs (this one was by Mack David) are never as effective as the original. The song also reunited Armstrong with his Hot Seven pianist, Earl Hines.

Magic was in the air in 1950 when Decca's other Louis (Jordan) joined Armstrong on the Satchmo standard, **You Rascal You**. Louis Jordan was a reigning top-seller on the Decca roster and the two came up with a swinging version of the song. You can hear Jordan answering Satch's vocals on saxophone a few steps back of the microphone while Armstrong does the same on trumpet when Jordan is singing.

**I Get Ideas**, a top ten hit for Tony Martin, is given a vintage Satchelmouth treatment, complete with a fiery trumpet solo. As a vocalist, Armstrong defied the convention that jazz singers with gravelly voices often sound unconvincing on slow love songs (witness the work of Fats Waller, Louis Prima, and Wingy Manone). He is perfectly convincing on this song.

Bing Crosby often brought out the best with whoever he performed with, and his casual style and friendship with Armstrong were showcased on their bravura 1951 performance of **Gone Fishin'**, an otherwise ordinary pop song by the Kenny Brothers (Charles & Nick). The priceless ad-libs of 'Mr. Satch & Mr. Cros' are better than the lyrics. Crosby would pay tribute to Armstrong in 1971 by serving as one of his pallbearers.

**A Kiss To Build A Dream On** was written for the Marx Brothers film *A Night at the Opera* in 1935 but never made the final cut. It wouldn't become a hit until Armstrong performed it in the 1951 film, *The Strip*. The tasteful trombone accompaniment is by Cutty Cutshall.

On **Because Of You**, Armstrong accompanies his own vocal on trumpet through the use of double tracking, an oft-used device in the early 1950s. The song was an early hit for Tony Bennett, and Armstrong finished off the recording with a scat chorus and an Annette Hanshaw-esque 'dat's de end' to top it off.

In anyone else's hands, the ancient tango **Kiss Of Fire** would have sounded ludicrous, but Satch gives it the same light-hearted treatment Fats Waller might have given it if he were handed the hackneyed chestnut. Had he heard it, Waller would have nodded in approval of Louis' tag: 'Ah, boin me!'

There are those who thought Gordon Jenkins' lush arrangements to be over the top, but his

treatment of Armstrong's theme song, **When It's Sleepy Time Down South**, was right on the mark; with the swooping strings imitating the 'wind blowing through the pinewood trees' and the slowly moving river. By 1951, lyrics with images of 'darkies' had been sanitized by replacing the word with 'folks' and other such words, but Armstrong was hard-pressed to do so, and the 'darky' reference, still more romantic to Louis than racist, remained.

**Takes Two To Tango** was all Louis, as Sy Oliver's orchestra remained in the background throughout. That year saw Louis' pal, Pearl Bailey, have a hit with the song as well.

Armstrong spent much of 1948 denigrating the new bebop style, calling it 'jujitsu music' and 'that modern malice'. By 1949, his stance had softened somewhat; a quote in *Time* that year had Armstrong saying 'bop is nice to listen to for a while, but not all night'. On his 1954 recording of **The Whiffenpoof Song,** Louis used the song to parody bebop, painting a picture of a scene in 'Boidland' where bearded musicians ('po' little cats') with funny hats 'beat their brains out till their flatted fifths are gone'. Dizzy Gillespie, always a good sport, took the satire in stride. We find it great fun.

The African novelty, **Skokiaan**, (named for a Zulu tribal beverage) which supposedly originated in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), comes off as a delightful second-line romp when played by Armstrong and Sy Oliver's gang, featuring the soprano sax of Omer Simeon. Once again, the anglicized lyrics (by folk singer Tom Glazer) devalued the effect of the record.

Armstrong was one of several singers (Bobby Darin, Ella Fitzgerald) who made **Mack The Knife** from Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera* popular, but Satch's first-hand knowledge of shady characters like the vicious Mackie Messer (aka Macheath) in the lyrics made his version a tad more authoritative. The All-Stars provide a swinging conclusion after Louis' lyric.

We conclude our survey of classic Armstrong vocal performances with a selection from the 1955 *Satch Plays Fats* LP on Columbia. Louis had the original hit on the Fats Waller / Andy Razaf / Harry Brooks song **Ain't Misbehavin'** back in 1929 when he played in the pit orchestra for the hit revue, *Connie's Hot Chocolates*. His performance became so popular that soon he was playing it from the stage. In this version, Louis trades licks with the virile trombone of Trummy Young and Edmond Hall's clarinet in the delicious rideout ensemble chorus (listen for Satch's inspired mini-quote from *Rhapsody in Blue*).

*Cary Ginell*
*– a Grammy nominated writer and winner of the 2004 ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for music journalism)*

Original monochrome photo of Louis Armstrong from Michael Ochs Archives / Redferns

1. **Jodie Man** *3:14*
(Doris Roberts–Fred Fisher)
Louis Armstrong & His Orchestra;
Bob Haggart, conductor
Decca 18652, mx 72692-A
Recorded 14 January 1945, New York

2. **I Wonder** *2:58*
(Pvt Cecil Gant–Raymond Leveen)
Louis Armstrong & His Orchestra;
Bob Haggart, conductor
Decca 18652, mx 72693-A
Recorded 14 January 1945, New York

3. **That's My Desire** *2:36*
(Helmy Kresa–Carroll Loveday)
Louis Armstrong with Velma Middleton, vocal, & The All-Stars
Decca 28372, mx W83032
Recorded 30 November 1947, Symphony Hall, Boston

4. **Blueberry Hill** *2:53*
(Al Lewis–Larry Stock–Vincent Rose)
With Gordon Jenkins & His Orchestra & Chorus
Decca 24752, mx W 75228-A
Recorded 6 September 1949, New York

5. **That Lucky Old Sun** *3:04*
(Beasley Smith–Haven Gillespie)
With Gordon Jenkins & His Orchestra & Chorus
Decca 24752, mx W 75227-A
Recorded 6 September 1949, New York

6. **C'est Si Bon** *3:01*
(Jerry Seelen–Andre Hornez–Henri Betti)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 27113, mx W 76529-A
Recorded 26 June 1950, New York

7. **La Vie En Rose** *3:22*
(Louis Guglielmi–Edith Piaf–Mack David)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 27113, mx W 76528-A
Recorded 26 June 1950, New York

8. **My Sweet Hunk O' Trash** *3:17*
(James P. Johnson–Flournoy E. Miller)
With Billie Holiday, vocal, & Sy Oliver's Orchestra
*Edited version; see Producer's Note, next page*
Decca 24785, mx W 75343
Recorded 30 September 1949, New York

9. **(I'll Be Glad When You're Dead) You Rascal You** *3:03*
(Sam Theard)
With Louis Jordan, vocal & His Tympany Five
Decca 27212, mx W 76745-A
Recorded 23 August 1950, New York

10. **I Get Ideas** *3:24*
(Dorcas Cochran–Lenny Sanders)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 27720, mx W 81308-A
Recorded 24 July 1951, New York

11. **Gone Fishin'** *2:30*
(Nick & Charles Kenny)
With Bing Crosby, vocal, & John Scott Trotter's Orchestra
Decca 27623, mx L 6262
Recorded 27 April 1951, Los Angeles

12. **A Kiss To Build A Dream On** *3:00*
(Bert Kalmar–Harry Ruby–Oscar Hammerstein II)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 27720, mx W 81307-A
Recorded 24 July 1951, New York

13. **Because Of You** *3:12*
(Arthur Hammerstein–Dudley Wilkinson)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra; trumpet obbligato by 'Satchmo' Himself
Decca 27816, mx W 81635-A
Recorded 27 September 1951, New York

14. **Kiss Of Fire** (adapted from 'El Choclo') *3:04*
(Lester Allen–Robert Hill)
Louis Armstrong & His Orchestra
Decca 28177, mx W 82703-A
Recorded 19 March 1952, Denver, Colorado

15. **When It's Sleepy Time Down South** *3:13*
(Leon Rene–Otis Rene–Clarence Muse)
With Gordon Jenkins & His Orchestra
Decca 27899, mx WL 6551
Recorded 28 November 1951, Los Angeles

16. **Takes Two To Tango** *2:55*
(Al Hoffman–Dick Manning)
With Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 28394, mx W 83302-A
Recorded 25 August 1952, New York

17. **The Whiffenpoof Song** (The Boppenpoof Song) *2:56*
(Meade Minnigerode–George S. Pomeroy–Tod Galloway–Rudy Vallee)
With Gordon Jenkins & His Orchestra & Chorus
Decca 29153, mx W 86148
Recorded 5 April 1954, New York

18. **Skokiaan** (African Song) *4:57*
(August Musarurgwa–Tom Glazer)
With Omer Simeon, soprano sax, & Sy Oliver's Orchestra
Decca 29256, mx W 86652/3
Recorded 13 August 1954, New York

19. **Mack The Knife** (A Theme from The Threepenny Opera) *3:22*
(Kurt Weill–Berthold Brecht–Marc Blitzstein)
Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars
Columbia 40587, mx CO 53818-1
Recorded 28 September 1955, New York

20. **Ain't Misbehavin'** *4:04*
(Fats Waller–Harry Brooks–Andy Razaf)
Louis Armstrong & His All-Stars
Columbia CL 708, mx CO 53254
Recorded 3 May 1955, New York

Vocal on all tracks by Louis Armstrong

Transfers & Production: David Lennick
Digital Restoration: Graham Newton

## Producer's Note

When **My Sweet Hunk O' Trash** was originally issued in 1949, some listeners thought Louis uttered a forbidden word. Jazz scholars are generally of the opinion that Satchmo was too much of a professional to do this, that Billie Holiday wouldn't have continued the recording and that Decca would never have released a record containing a profanity. But producer Milt Gabler nonetheless went back into the studio and spliced the master tape, with a slight change in quality, so that Louis now clearly says "How come, baby?" The edited version is on this CD, and the original can be heard on Naxos Jazz Legends 8.120750, *Billie Holiday: You're My Thrill*. The word is (or isn't) at 2:51, so you can judge for yourself.

## Personnel *Except tracks 4–5, 11, 15 & 17*

*Tracks 1–2:* **Louis Armstrong,** trumpet, vocal; **Billy Butterfield**, trumpet; **Sid Stoneburn, Jules Rubin**, clarinet, alto sax; **Bill Stegmeyer, Arthur Rollini**, tenor sax; **Paul Ricci**, baritone sax; **Dave Bowman**, piano; **Carl Kress**, guitar; **Bob Haggart**, bass, arranger & conductor; **Johnny Bowers**, drums

*Track 3:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Jack Teagarden**, trombone; **Barney Bigard**, clarinet; **Dick Cary**, piano; **Arvel Shaw**, bass; **Sid Catlett**, drums; **Velma Middleton**, vocal

*Tracks 6–7:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Red Solomon, Bernie Privin, Paul Webster**, trumpets; **Morton Bullman**, trombone; **Hymie Schertzer, Milt Yaner**, alto sax; **Art Drellinger, Bill Holcombe**, tenor sax; **Earl Hines**; piano; **Everett Barksdale**, guitar; **George Duvivier**, bass; **Johnny Blowers**, drums; **Sy Oliver**, director

*Track 8:* **Louis Armstrong & Billie Holiday**, vocals; **Bernie Privin**, trumpet; **Sid Cooper, Johnny Mince**, alto sax; **Art Drellinger, Pat Nizza**, tenor sax; **Billy Kyle**, piano; **Everett Barksdale**, guitar; **Joe Benjamin**, bass; **Jimmy Crawford**, drums; **Sy Oliver**, director

*Track 9:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Aaron Izenhall**, trumpet; **Louis Jordan**, alto sax, vocal; **Josh Jackson**, tenor sax; **Bill Doggett**, piano; **Bill Jennings**, electric guitar; **Bob Bushnell**, bass; **Joe Morris** as **Christopher Columbus**, drums

*Tracks 10, 12:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Cutty Cutshall**, trombone; **Milt Yaner, George Dorsey**, alto sax; **Freddy Williams, Al Klink**, tenor sax; **Billy Kyle**, piano; **Sandy Block**, bass; **Bunny Shawker**, drums; **Sy Oliver**, director

*Track 13:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Charlie Holmes, George Dorsey**, alto sax; **Harold Clark, Dave McRae**, tenor sax; **Don Abney**, piano; **Everett Barksdale**, guitar; **Frank Goodlette**, bass; **Jack 'The Bear' Parker**, drums; **Sy Oliver**, director

*Track 14:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Russ Philips**, trombone; **Barney Bigard**, clarinet; **Donald Raeffel**, tenor sax; **Marty Napoleon**, piano; **Dale Jones**, bass; **Cozy Cole**, drums

*Track 16:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Hymie Schertzer, Dick Jacobs**, alto sax; **Babe Fresk, Melvin Tax**, tenor sax; **Bill Holcomb**, baritone sax; **Billy Kyle**, piano; **Everett Barksdale**, guitar; **Joe Benjamin**, bass; **Bobby Donaldson**, drums; **Sy Oliver**, leader

*Track 18:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet vocal; **Charlie Shavers, Taft Jordan, Abdul Saloum**, trumpets; **Alfred Cobbs, Elmer Crumbley, Paul F. Seiden**, trombones; **Barney Bigard**, clarinet; **Omer Simeon**, soprano sax; **Dave Martin**, piano; **Danny Barker**, guitar; **Arvell Shaw**, bass; **Barrett Deems**, drums

*Track 19:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet, vocal; **Trummy Young**, trombone; **Edmond Hall**, clarinet; **Billy Kyle**, piano; **Arvell Shaw**, bass; **Barrett Deems**, drums

*Track 20:* **Louis Armstrong**, trumpet vocal; **Trummy Young**, trombone; **Barney Bigard**, clarinet; **Billy Kyle**, piano; **Arvell Shaw**, bass; **Barrett Deems**, drums

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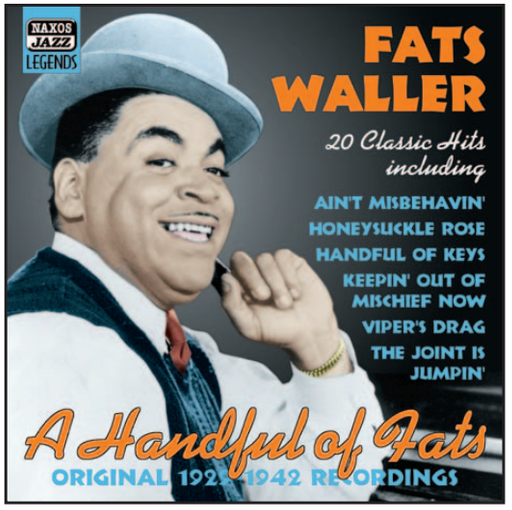
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NOTES AND FULL RECORDING DETAILS INCLUDED

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Total Time *64:58*

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