



SALUTE TO POPS

LOUIS DANIEL ARMSTRONG, popularly known as Satchmo, but just plain Pops to intimates, is currently sharing top billing at the Riviera Hotel—a fact we are sure will come as no surprise to most of you. Discounting the Beatles (and one should), Louie can proudly claim the best-selling single recording in the United States in "Hello, Dolly."

A living legend, an indestructible man, Pops made his first recordings in the early 1920's. Today, more than forty years and tens of thousands of record and album releases later, he is still tops on the spinning platters and in person.

The most vital figure in jazz—but more than that—Louis Armstrong, in our humble opinion, has done as much as any other American in any walk of life to convey to the rest of the world the very best our country represents and has to offer. As with many greats, the Satch's secret is his complete and unadorned simplicity—the hallmark of heavyweight talent. Interpreters are unnecessary when this man puts his horn to his lips, opens his mouth or just stands there and is himself.

Your Bearded Boy has had the pleasure to know and work with Louis Armstrong down through the years and the next few columns will be a nostalgic view of this giant as seen through my eyes, mind and heart.

During the mid-1930's, I worked for an uncle who installed sound systems for parties, banquets, meetings and such. He also ran sound trucks to herald some coming event or extoll the virtues of a product or political candidate. We used phonograph records to attract attention and that started me as a record collector. My former mate must still have a formidable selection of the best jazz and other shellac marketed a quarter-century ago.

BACK IN THOSE DAYS, the Armstrong orchestra was heard on radio in our neighborhood at 11 p.m. and my cousin and I were allowed to "stay up" until Louie signed off 15 minutes later. Luckily, my Uncle Phil also was an Armstrong buff. He would sit with us and point out some of the technically incredible

REP. DAWSON UNDER FIRE

Rep. William L. Dawson's bid for re-nomination as a Democratic Congressman from Illinois has generated the threat of a national boycott against Democratic candidates in November.

A group of Chicago

civil rights advocates headed by school boycott leader Lawrence Landry and entertainer Dick Gregory supporting Dawson's opponent, A. A. Ryner, Jr., has vowed to promote such a boycott if Dawson wins and there is strong evidence of election fraud.

things that Louie did and still does with his horn.

One of the recordings that I used to warm up our equipment was entitled, "Dusky Stevedore." (I wonder if Pops remembers making that one?) It was on a yellow-label Bluebird put out by the RCA-Victor people. Louie's trumpet intro, his vocal, the ensuing chorus and unbelievable ending turned me to the trumpet. I've already related how bad I was. My suffering neighbors never knew it was all Louis Armstrong's fault that they had to put up with those ghastly sounds. But it was my early training in commercial amplification and my great admiration for Pop's talent that led to my long association with the various recording companies—RCA, Decca, Coral, Cadence and Audio Fidelity, among others. (Incidentally, playing the trumpet was never part of my duties with these companies!)

The highpoint of my relationship with the Satch was the recording of the "Louie and the Dukes" album for Audio Fidelity at Webster Hall in New York City during the spring of 1960. Spontaneity was the keynote of this endeavor. Neither Louie nor the Assunto brothers—no one connected with the project except myself—knew in advance what was going to be recorded. I alone had the list and the titles were given to them one at a time. All of the routines were set on the spot and it is a tribute to Louie and the Dukes that many of the selections required only one take! Nothing was written, nothing preconceived. Each artist merely showed up at

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the studio with his instrument, his experience and talent and went to it. Several titles were later discarded, but the end result was a great satisfaction to everyone concerned. If, perchance, you haven't heard the album, I'm sure it would be well worth your time.

THIS PROJECT WAS an immense thrill for the Assuntos as well as myself because it represented the fulfillment of a promise made almost ten years earlier by Pops to Frank and Fred as teenagers when the Dukes were working on Bourbon Street in New Orleans and their sounds had not yet been heard outside the Crescent City. The boys were to follow Satch's footsteps to Chicago and the big time. The closest personal relationship remains to this day.

Actually, this was a second album. The first was made in Chicago during the summer of 1959 and is still "in the can". Unfortunately, that one may never be released. I'll tell you about that session next week.

In my next take, I also intend to reminisce about Pops' first meeting with Al Hirt and the late Dan Levy, and his long association and friendship with Joe Glaser, the head of Associated Booking. Joe has been Pops' closest ally and biggest booster since those days in the Roaring Twenties when the young man with a horn left his native New Orleans to join King Oliver's band, play a major role in revolutionizing jazz and become this nation's entertainment ambassador to the world.

In the meantime, I'll see you at the Riviera.

"INCOME TAX" TIME AGAIN!

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