

New orleans jazz essay

[Psychology](#), [Success](#)



Music is known to be universal but the jazz music emanated from slavery as African slaves came with their sounds which they fused with the church sounds and folk songs and songs from Europe in a bid to find consolation in their new surroundings. In the midst of everything it was used to unite the people. While Jazz music is being credited to gaining recognition through Buddy Bolden, the story of Jazz music cannot be discussed without one way or the other inadvertently coming back to Louis Armstrong whom many have claimed to be the greatest of Jazz musicians. He was a joy to behold and it was easy to tell by watching or listening to him that he really loved and enjoyed what he was doing as he demonstrated a musical mind that could not be surpassed by anyone in the Jazz industry and only Charlie Parker came anywhere close.

Louis Armstrong

Louis came from a poor home in New Orleans and went to reform school where he learnt to play the cornet. After school his love for music grew and he listened to bands like the Funky Butt Hall and was given his break by Joe “King” Oliver. His singing took him away from New Orleans for a while where he joined the Fate Marable’s band in 1919 but he returned in 1921 to play for Zutty Singleton (Daniels, n. d.). A year later and at the inquest of his mentor he joined the Creole Jazz Band in Chicago and there became a sensation thanks to his great playing abilities. Love found him there and he married a piano player named Lillian Hardin and this ambitious and intelligent woman made him leave the band to find greener pastures. He moved to New York and sang with many other greats and recorded many blues and jazz songs. Many collaborations and managers later Louis was now becoming a very big

star in the late 20s. Louis experienced racism, many divorces and a move to England that would all become a part of his success story.

What a Wonderful World

One of the songs that Louis Armstrong is mostly remembered for is “ What a Wonderful World.” While this song was recorded towards the end of Louis Armstrong’s Jazz career it still remains as one of his most recognisable songs. This song was written in an era where it was okay to add words to jazz music. This song was recorded at a time when Armstrong was a household name and a Jazz legend – a man that was proficient in trumpet playing and having many songs and some movies credited to him. He had also enjoyed the success and fame that his number 1 hit Hello Dolly brought him in the early 60s which culminated in a Grammy win. What a Wonderful World however took a more difficult and different route to acclaim.

While this song did relatively well in the charts it was not till two decades later that the song really became a worldwide hit finding itself as soundtracks to movies and being rerecorded by numerous other artists and has to this day remained a fan favourite. The beautiful melody and simple lyrics was just the magnet needed to be attached to the powerful vocals of Louis Armstrong to make it a masterpiece. His voice now old and cracked brought with it the feel of a man who had lived life and experienced the highs and mostly lows of a black man living in segregated America but deciding to still see life as beautiful and precious. The song it seemed had the power to stir up an emotion in its listeners. In its day it was believed that the song would bring peace and calm to a distraught nation and many

decades later the smooth and silky tones of Armstrong's vocals in the song is still doing the same today.

Hello Dolly

Evident in this song from the onset is everything that makes Louis the lovable musician he is and that alone sets him apart. Louis was able to turn a show tune into a song that had all the trappings of bluesy jazz. For one to enjoy the contrast in the song and the pain in the voice of the great musician the song needs to be watched. For in doing so one sees that although this song sounds like a simple fun and happy song, the pain etched in the face of the singer tells the story of a man that has lived life and experienced every bump along the way. Just like with his other songs, Hello Dolly has its fair share of great instrumentals. Hello Dolly is another song that shows the essence of jazz music with its simple and repetitive lyrics, great instrumentals and fusion of various forms and genres of singing.

Jelly Roll Morton

Jazz has always being seen as a hybrid of musical influences that many believed came from Africa in the mouths of slaves that arrived in New Orleans. These sounds became refined to be the sounds we heard from the composers of the day. If there was anything Jelly Roll believed, it was the fact that he invented jazz – as we know it today (National Park Service 2013). Jelly Roll was a real composer and he was the originator of a number of compositions that have formed the jazz repertory. Jelly was born into a middle class Creole family as Ferdinand Joseph Le Menthe who was able to receive some guitar lessons at a young age. In his twenties he had become

some sort of travelling musician and wrote and published the Jelly Roll Blues. He laid the foundation for the evolution of jazz and the swing.

Hesitation Blues

Jelly Roll has been known to not just depend on his skills in his singings but rather what set him apart from others was the amount of soul he always infused in his works. His piano playing skills come to play in this song and just at the background of the song you can hear a rhythm tap. Singing was more than just raising his voice or playing his instruments but it was a collaboration of everything he had that could be used to impact his songs and this song was no different. Hesitation Blues begins off like its title as Jelly hesitantly plays some bars and as was common in his era he spent some seconds talking about the piece in some vocal intro. About a half minute later he starts singing, making sure to hold back as he steadily sings the easy going and held back song. While songs today can be made to be too busy with so many things happening at once, jazz musicians believed that less was more and Jelly Roll demonstrated it perfectly in this song. He sang repeating a phrase again and again but changing the lyrics to pass his message across about the hesitation that were experienced by women. He sings this for a couple of minutes before he goes into a piano solo and here really jazzes up his singing before he returns again to sing as his singing leads to the end of the song. In Hesitation Blues Jelly infused his love of jazz with blues and using his voice to prove just why he believed it when he claimed that – he invented jazz.

Black Bottom Stomp

This song is a very good example of a song that displays the difference between New Orleans Jazz and Dixieland. This song used instruments in a way that they functioned simultaneously without creating a musical hash. It relied completely on ensemble polyphony which Jelly Roll was able to balance the solos and the instrumentals in a way that this song showed in its essence the true spirit of New Orleans. The song is reminiscent of rhythmic melodies that bring to bear the call and response style of a preacher and his congregation. He used his great mastery of combination to create a song that had traces of ragtime, marches, blues and stomps to create a sound that was uniquely his. Jelly Roll does not forgo his repetitive method of singing which he uses smoothly at the end to increase the tension as he repeats his themes which he heightens through the use of trombones. So the listener hears what is said the first time and then it is repeated again for emphasis but this time around it has been transformed.

Sidney Bechet

Sidney Bechet may not be as known outside the jazz world as Louis Armstrong but his contributions are not any less important. He was responsible for the use of the soprano saxophone in jazz and an amazing soloist. He grew up in a Creole family where he often participated in music in a family that played instruments. From the very young age of ten Bechet had mastered the clarinet and he taught himself how to play the saxophone (Pick 1991). He was seen as many to be the first real saxophonist in the history of jazz musicians as well as an amazing clarinet. Sidney Bechet was never able to gain the sort of acclamation and stardom that Louis Armstrong achieved

in the United States but he was more successful in Europe and settled in France where he became a national hero.

Summertime

Bechet's version of this song remains as one of the standout recordings in the history of jazz music. The combination of Bechet's soprano and the commentary created by Teddy Bunn's guitar is reminiscent of the blues recording of Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith. The solos in this song used rasps and growls and vibrato while Bunn's responds with vernacular particular to blues recordings. While this song had been sung by Billie Holiday it was Bechet's authoritative take on the song that exposed its New Orleans roots. Using his arsenal of growls and blues and the guitar he delivered a song that could be termed as the Negro "folk opera".

Bix Beiderbecke

Many music lovers and critics' today claim that Bix might be the only jazz musician who never copied or sampled other musicians. He could sit and listen to Louis Armstrong and Joe Oliver, enjoy it immensely but went off and practically pulled his own music out of the sky without copying a single lick (Raeburn 2012). He was one of the most sought after cornetists of the 1920s and was most commonly associated with Trumbauer. His addiction to alcohol killed him at a young age and made it impossible for him to really see his fame grow.

Singing the Blues

While it is true that Bix has a lot to be thankful to Louis Armstrong for, it was Trumbauer that made the difference in Bix's claim as a jazz great. Often

known as Tram and Bix they worked well together to produce this masterpiece. Tram's opening solo provided the stability that Bix needed to tell the unfolding story. A story that was infused with so much feeling that it ascended singing for just dancing sake or showing off one's virtuosity. Bix changed jazz with his ballads and this song showed the restraint he demonstrated when his song was led by beautiful melody as opposed to chords and tempo.

New Orleans Jazz and the Chicago Style

Music has never been a luxury in New Orleans but rather a way of life. As far back as the 19th century New Orleans was known for its diverse ethnic culture and the French, African, Italian and Germans always fell back to music as a unifying force. The beginning of the century started to experience a new form of music that combined blues, spirituals, marches and the “tin pan alley” of a people celebrating their African heritage through this form of music that came to be called jazz. This form of music would go on to flourish in New Orleans because the community life made music a necessity with events like funerals, nightly dances, weekend picnics and weekend camping made the music scene a thriving one (National Park Service 2013). While these jazz musicians were mostly African Americans or Creole, the white jazz musicians found themselves moving to Chicago in a bid to find fame and fortune. Although it did not prove to be a cakewalk to get the Chicagoans to be interested in the New Orleans jazz, the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was more successful than most. The jazz age of the roaring twenties saw jazz become cool in the eyes of the youngsters. Although many of these jazz

greats like Armstrong, Bechet, Oliver, Morton and the Dodd's left home for greener pastures, they will always be legends of New Orleans Jazz.

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