

Louis Armstrong

1901-1971

Armstrong's historic contributions include:

A. Solo improvisation. He was the first great jazz soloist. His intelligently developed and musically effective solos eclipsed the notion of group improvisation.

B. Rhythmic Refinements:

1. Abandoned the stiffness of ragtime.
2. Employed swing 8ths better than any musician of his time.
3. Used "rhythmic displacement" or the syncopation of selected phrases. (Placing them slightly behind the beat.)

C. He was a great **musical architect**. He simplified his music, polishing each phrase to perfection, while keeping his strength for the knockout punch.

D. He played with a **superb sense of drama**. The pacing was always carefully calculated, allowing the solo to build to the climax.

E. He **created new melodies** in his improvisations not relying on the tunes original melody for ideas. (This later becomes the most popular approach to soloing.)

F. He was a **virtuoso trumpet player**. He peeled off top Cs as easily as breathing (unheard of previously) and pulled out technical *tours de force* which never degenerated into notes for their own sake.

G. He **extended the vocabulary** for the Jazz soloist.

H. He **influenced popular singers** with his vocal styles.

I. And for good measure he **invented the "scat singing" style** when he dropped his music during a recording session.