

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF LIL HARDIN

Good Evening. This is The Life And Times of Lillian Hardin Armstrong. She was born February 3, 1898 in Memphis, Tennessee. After high school Lil went to Fisk University where she received a diploma in music, then she returned to Memphis in 1917 and in August 1918 she moved to Chicago. There she became a sheet music plugger at "Jones Music Store" for three dollars a week. After awhile she moved up to the "Dreamland Ballroom" where she met King Oliver and joined his band in 1921. This evening all of the music we will be playing was written by Lillian Hardin.

WORKING MAN BLUES

(2)

The piece we just played was "Working Man Blues" written for a recording date in 1923. It was recorded by Joe Oliver known as King Oliver. And for this record date the band was known as "King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band". At the time of this recording a young boy who would be known far and wide by the name of Louis Armstrong had just joined the band on second coronet. One year later on February 4 of 1924 he married the piano player one Lil Hardin. At this time the "Creole Jazz Band" was composed of King on first coronet, Lil on piano, Louis on second coronet, Honore Dutray on trombone, Johnny Dodds on clarinet, Stomp Evans on C-Melody saxophone and the great Johnny St.Cyr on six string banjo. You will see and hear one of these very soon.

(3)

Tonight you will hear an outstanding New York jazz band. Conal Fowkes on piano, Jon-Eric Kellso on trumpet, Jay Rattman on clarinet and the wonderful multi-instrumentalist John Gill on everything. So now let's play Lil's "Lonesome Blues". This was recorded by Armstrong's famous "Hot Five" on June 23, 1926. The band was composed of Louis Armstrong, cornet, Johnny Dodds, clarinet, Kid Ory, Bone, Johnny St. Cyr, banjo, and Lil on piano. We will start with Jay playing the part of Johnny Dodds.

LONESOME BLUES

DROP THAT SACK

(4)

This last tune "Drop That Sack" was recorded May 28, 1926. It had the same personnel as "Armstrong's Hot Five" which recorded on the Okeh record label. But this recording was released on the Vocalion record label under the name of "Lil's Hot Shots" instead of the "Armstrong's Hot Five".

Now the next tune recorded in April of 1927 is called "New Orleans Stomp". It is listed as written by Lil and Louis Armstrong. Originally it was recorded by several different bands. The two biggest recordings were by "King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band" and "Johnny Dodd's Black Bottom Stompers".

NEW ORLEANS STOMP (Fast)

(5)

But this song when it was re-recorded by Louis in the mid 1960s changed my whole “musical life”. Louis had made a number one hit out of the song “Hello Dolly” (which by the way replaced the Beatles as number one on the hit parade). Just after “Hello Dolly” became a hit, Louis recorded an album called “Hello Louis” with his All Stars. Up to that time “New Orleans Stomp” had always been recorded as a “Hot Jazz” tune and I had been a “musical copier”. However, on this album “New Orleans Stomp” was recorded as a beautiful, slow ballad. Louis didn’t play the entire tune but what he did play “laid me in the weeds”. With what Louie did to this tune, I began to understand what it means to “make a tune your own”. So here is the song that made me understand this — “New Orleans Stomp.”

NEW ORLEANS STOMP (Slow)

(6)

The hearing of New Orleans Stomp as a ballad gave me a new perspective on Lil’s tunes. So when I started playing this next tune with Woody Allen he pointed out what a beautiful song it was. So I wrote some words about it. On this recording the “Hot Five” had added different members and was really a “Hot Six”. Manzie Carr replaced St. Cyr on banjo, Zutty Singleton was on the drums and Earl “Fatha” Hines replaced Miss Lil on piano. By this time Louis and Hines had started doing some duets like on the song “Weatherbird Rag”. So I thought about the title of this song which is “Two Deuces” and I wrote words about Louis and Hines and here are those words.

TWO DEUCES (Sing a chorus with original words) Woody said "no, no, no, that's a beautiful love song, let's hear some love words". So now I call this song "Baby You're The Best".

BABY YOU'RE THE BEST (Sing It)

(7)

Soon for Lil the 30s came and went. And Louis went to New York City and bigger bands that featured him out front. He and Miss Lil got divorced and Lil started fronting her own big swing bands and singing. So now we've picked four of Lil's vocal swing tunes and I've asked one of my favorite singers to do them for you. Here's the great pianist you've been listening to taking over for Lil's swing period. He always performs in Woody Allen's films and won a Grammy for his piano playing and vocals as the part of Cole Porter in Woody's "Midnight in Paris". How about a nice hand for Conal Fowkes.

DOIN' THE SUZIE Q

SAFELY LOCKED UP IN MY HEART

LET'S CALL IT LOVE

(8)

Well to finish Lil's story, in the 1940s she wrote "Brown Gal" which was recorded by the Ink Spots. She also wrote a song called "Bad Boy" which has a long, strange history which ends up with Ringo Starr.

She wrote another song which became her biggest hit and was recorded by the likes of the wonderful "Peggy Lee" and the great "Ray Charles". You won't know this tune, but you should.

JUST FOR A THRILL

(9)

The great Louis Armstrong died in 1971. Two months later Lil died on the band stand while playing a tribute to Louis.

STRUTTIN' WITH SOME BAR-B-QUE