

Jazz Set Work 1: Louis Armstrong and his Hot Fives

Background

Scat Singing

- **Vocal improvisation** – wordless
- Uses nonsense syllables and sounds
- Impersonates or mimics other jazz instruments (i.e. trumpet).
- Soft syllables like “ooo” or harsher “doo-bee” – reflects the instrument it is trying to be.

Vocal improvisation

Key Features of Jazz

- **Frontline** – instruments that play the melody line – New Orleans jazz of the 1920s used clarinets, trumpet & trombone.
- **Rhythm section** – drums, piano, banjo/guitar & double bass/tuba. Comping – ‘accompanying’ chords.
- **Walking bass** – improvised, 4 crotchets per bar (stepwise), 1950s bass lines became more adventurous with more passing notes and leaps, etc.
- **Improvisation** – prep. of basic ideas & then improv.
- **Arrangement** – not all jazz is improvised. Element of pre-composition.
- **Swing** – early = syncopation of ragtime. 1920s = began replacing straight quavers with swung ones.
- **Changes** – repeated chord patterns. Each repetition of the chord progression is known as a **chorus**.
- **Blue notes & inflections** – flattening of 3rd, 5th, 7th notes. Inflections are bent notes.
- **Tone quality** – deliberately rough or breathy tone, vibrato, mutes. Traditional mutes were hats!
- **Double time** – semiquavers instead of quavers.

Frontline, Rhythm section, Walking bass, improvisation, arrangement, swing, changes, blue notes, double time

Recording technology

- 1920 – the gramophone record was the main way of distributing music to a wider audience.
- Radio broadcasting was developed shortly after.
- Recording companies spurred on the development of jazz through competition for commercial success.
- Gramophone = poor quality, instruments couldn't be heard properly.

Gramophone, radio broadcast

Background

- Louis Armstrong is the key figure in the **New Orleans** jazz movement – a pioneer.
- He left New Orleans as a young man to find fame and fortune – **Chicago**.
- There was a period of depression in the 1930s (Great Depression) – time of economic hardship – until this time Chicago rivalled New York for theatre and cabaret.
- Most of these establishments were run by organised crime and so jazz has a bit of a reputation as being bad – this is referenced in the musical theatre show *Chicago*.
- Despite the reputation, there was plenty of work for talented jazz musicians such as Armstrong.
- As well as Chicago, he enjoyed a successful time in **New York** where he attracted much attention as a virtuosic solo player.
- Lil Hardin (Armstrong's wife) pulled him back to **Chicago** in 1925 with the promise of a job in ***Bill Bottom's Dreamland Café***. Here he was paid \$75 a week – an unusually large salary for a black musician at this time.
- Mostly worked as an accompaniment player at the cafe
- In the afternoons, he would work at the *Vendome Theatre* where there would be a whole band overture, followed by the accompaniment to a silent movie. A solo spot would occur in the interval – normally a jazz number but sometimes an opera aria.
- These events were for black audiences only. The evening Dreamland cabaret was music for a floor show of dancing – normally jazz standards or numbers from Broadway shows.
- It was mostly accompaniment work but Armstrong's solo improvisations soon attracted attention and he was quickly
- admired by many musicians in Chicago.

New Orleans, Chicago, New York, Dreamland Cafe

The Recordings

- Lil Hardin liked to keep Louis under her thumb – he was well-known for his womanising and excessive drinking and she knew about his shenanigans in New York. Having him in Chicago meant that she could keep an eye on him as well as promoting his career.
- Hardin was a successful musician herself, although being a woman made it difficult to get far. With Armstrong as the figurehead, she could push through her material and ideas.
- Together, they worked on much of the material for the Hot Five recordings – producing for the **Okeh** record company.
- As these recordings progressed, Armstrong became more and more **prominent as a soloist**. His performances became the most important focus in their recordings.
- Armstrong was a marketable product and was a big factor in their commercial success as a band.

Hot Five Recordings, Okeh record company

Louis Armstrong's style

- Bold & dramatic melodies
- Extended solos
- **Swung** the rhythm more than the syncopation of ragtime
- Singer with a distinguished voice
- Pioneered '**scat**' singing
- Use of rubato & delaying beats
- Trumpet: Strong, rich tone with **enormous range** & virtuosic technique
- Seemed so natural when he performed
- Despite their popularity, the Hot Five never actually performed live together – they were **purely recording artists** – importance is on **radio and record sales**.
- The players were considered to be the '**best of the best**' of the New Orleans musicians working in Chicago – proof of it's who you know, not what you can do!
- Everyone knew each other and had played in the same bands – friends of friends, relatives, etc.

- **Addition of a blues guitarist – Lonnie Johnson** – for *Hotter Than That* – he had won a talent competition with **OKeh** and was a staff musician working for the record company (the first session musicians).
- Armstrong had previously been recording under the name of *Hot Seven* and the line-up included a tuba and drums which gave a stronger accompaniment to his solos. In *Hotter Than That* there is **no percussion** and the bass is split between the trombone and the left hand of the piano.
- Main focus is on Louis Armstrong as a soloist but attention is also given to his duets with Johnson (guitar).
- Extensive solos are also given to the clarinet and the trombone.
- New Orleans polyphony/collective improvisation is used – a typical feature of New Orleans jazz.

Extended solos, dramatic, swung, scat, rubato, enormous range, Hot Five purely recording artists, radio and record sales, best players, No percussion in Hotter than that, Duet attention with Lonnie Johnson

New Orleans Style

- Collective improvisation/New Orleans polyphony
- Frontline = clarinet/trumpet/trombone
- Banjo
- Bass = tuba or trombone
- Scat singing
- Simple or no drum accompaniment
- Heavy emphasis on the frontline (improvising soloists)
- Virtuoso players
- 32-bar song form
- 12-bar blues chord structure
- Instrumental techniques such as smear, rip, fall-off, etc
- Stemmed from ragtime
- Comping crotchets in piano & banjo

Players

Trumpet/Vocal - Louis Armstrong
Trombone - Edward 'Kid Ory'
Clarinet - Johnny Dodds
Guitar - Lonnie Johnson
Piano - Lil Hardin
Banjo - Johnny St Cyr

Instrumental techniques

- Rip – a fast glissando through the harmonic series (often trumpets).
- Fall-off – slide down to an indefinite pitch from the end of the note.
- Shakes – a lip trill (a wind instrument technique)
- Vibrato – quiver in the pitch
- Terminal vibrato – fast vibrato at the end of a note (normally a long note)
- Smear – jazz term for glissando, a slide between two notes
- Clarino – middle to high range of the clarinet
- Chalameau – low range of the clarinet

Harmony

- Only primary chords are used to begin with: *Eb* major, *Bb7*, and *Ab*.

Melody

- The 32 bar chord pattern for each chorus is based on part of Tiger Rag, a standard for New Orleans players

Structure

Introduction	8 bars	0'00	Ensemble – New Orleans style <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Typical New Orleans Polyphony/collective improvisation style.● Short phrases of the trumpet melody are heard clearly.
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The clarinet plays a countermelody – balanced much further back in the mix but is more audible in its higher register or in the rests between the trumpet phrases. ○ The trombone begins in traditional tailgate style, with glissandi up to sustained semibreves. Breaks into crotchets at the end of the introduction. ○ <i>Tailgate style</i>: Very early jazz bands sometimes played on the back of a truck. The trombonist would be at the back (by the <i>tailgate</i>) so there was plenty of room to use the slide, especially when playing a glissando. <p><i>Key features: Collective improvisation, short phrases, countermelody, glissando, semibreves and crotchets</i></p>
Chorus 1	32 bars	0'09	<p>Trumpet solo (Louis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The clarinet and trombone drop out, leaving the rhythm section to accompany the trumpet solo. ○ Armstrong's solo = confident and well-shaped. ○ Beginning of each of the first four phrases there is a two-note syncopated rhythm upbeat (bars 0, 4, 8, 12 of the below example). ○ Syncopation gives a strong sense of swing to the melody. ○ First full bar of each phrase is similar in rhythm (bars 1, 5, 9, 13 of example figure) – this similarity in phrasing helps to make the improvisation highly melodic. ○ Most phrases extend over an octave, showing the soloist's agility and range. ○ Gradual ascent from Eb to Bb – when this is finally reached, there is a rip on the recording. ○ <i>Rip</i> = fast glissando through harmonic series. ○ Second half of solo is a more virtuosic pattern with less rests between phrases – use of broken chord figures and chromatic triplets. ○ Final phrase (bar 24) there is a sustained high G with a shake (lip trill).

			<i>Key features: Lip trill, chromatic triplets, broken chord figures, virtuosic, rip, extended range, similar phrases, syncopation, upbeats</i>
Chorus 2	32 bars	0'45	<p>Clarinet solo (Dodds)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The blues sound of Johnny Dodds' first note (using a smear) makes a striking contrast with Armstrong. ○ Clarinet begins in the high clarino range. ○ Dodds was known for his bright and assertive tone – very piercing in top register. ○ Use of fast vibrato (very fashionable in jazz playing of the 1920s) – also uses terminal vibrato. ○ Emphasises the crotchet beat in the first few bars – another contrast to Armstrong's syncopated solo – then moves to swung quavers. ○ Longer notes all make expressive use of the smear technique – adding to the blues feel. ○ Accompaniment is in the banjo & piano only. ○ Energetic comping by Lil Hardin – bass octaves in the left hand mostly alternating tonic/dominant. This is similar to the 'oom-pah' of the bass in a brass band. ○ The bass does begin to move between registers after a few bars and the right hand chords also move to a higher register – making for a more varied texture <p><i>Key textures: Blues sound, smear, high clarion, piercing top register, fast vibrato, crotchet emphasised, swung quavers, banjo and piano only, comping, tonic dominant LH, varied textures</i></p>
Chorus 3	32 bars	1'21	<p>Vocal solo (Louis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Break at the end of Chorus 2 introduces Armstrong's singing for the first time on the recording. ○ Piano drops out of the accompaniment, leaving the banjo to comp and Lonnie Johnson improvising countermelodies on the guitar. ○ Scat singing – scat solos were very popular with the public.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is said that Armstrong made up scat singing by mistake when he was recording the <i>Heebie Jeebies</i> in 1926 and he accidentally dropped his lyrics on floor, forgetting the words. He was then forced to make it up in order to complete the recording. ○ his scat choruses were very much a planned part of the compositions. ○ Scat was brought to the wider music scene through the Hot Five's recordings. ○ Armstrong gives the scat solos many of the same qualities as heard in the trumpet solo of Chorus 1 – the first 16 bars have the same overall shape and he even imitates the trumpet rip to the high Bb previously heard. ○ He constantly uses smears, fall offs and vibrato. ○ Melody becomes smoother in the triplet section which contrasts the rhythmical opening of the vocal solo. ○ Second half of the solo = rhythmically remarkable. Sings a succession of 24 dotted crotchets, covering nine bars. This creates a polyrhythmic affect against the crotchet beat of the rhythm section. <p><i>Key features: Break, banjo comp, guitar countermelody, scat singing, imitates trumpet rip, smears, fall offs, rubato, triplets, dotted crotchets, polyrhythmic, rhythmic freedom and invention</i></p>
Duet	16 bars	1'56	<p>Vocal+Guitar Lonnie Johnson duet/no rhythm section</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rhythm section remains silent as voice and guitar exchange two-bar phrases with each other – a call & response style. ○ Strong flavour of blues. ○ Beginning of each phrase, use of a variation of smears and microtonal inflections on the 3rd degree of the scale (G or Gb). ○ The different tunings of G is a feature of their dialogue – exploits the expressive flexibility of blues tuning, compared to the western classical approach to intonation.

			<i>Key features: No rhythm section, call and response, blues, smears, microtonal inflections on G/Gb</i>
Link	4 bars	2'14	Piano (Lil Hardin), a tempo <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 4 bars of piano solo provide a link to the final chorus.
Chorus 4	16 bars 16 bars	2'18 2'36	Trombone solo (Kid Ory) Full ensemble – New Orleans style <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This chorus brings the music back to the original mood and tempo of the piece. ○ First half = Kid Ory's trombone solo (4 phrases of 4 bars each). ○ Use of the slide to decorate the pitches of the melody with three techniques: a glissando up to the note, a fall-off at the end of a note, a slide between notes. ○ Rhythm section is energetic and driving. ○ Piano decorates the harmony in the background – Hardin's style is typical of ragtime piano with an elaborate countermelody in the right hand register. <p><i>Key features: Piano link, trombone solo, slides, glissando, fall-off, decorated piano melody</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The break brings Armstrong back as the main focus – he leads to the second half of the chorus with an unaccompanied ascending scale in straight quavers – chromatic to rising over an octave to a high Bb. ○ New Orleans polyphonic style – trumpet, clarinet and trombone improvising together: trumpet is syncopated, clarinet plays the counter-melody, trombone plays a different countermelody & provides some bass notes in the texture, rhythm section continues to comp. ○ Strong finale with return of full band. ○ Dramatic sequence of stop time. ○ <i>Stop time</i> = accompaniment plays short staccato chords, separated by silences which builds up the anticipation for the ending.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Trumpet solo uses the syncopated dotted crotchets from the scat solo (Chorus 3). ○ Avoidance of the full band ending that is expected – a return of the ideas explored during the duet section: call & response between trumpet and guitar. ○ Reminiscent of the blues style dialogue previously heard – ends on a diminished chord which is both intriguing and inconclusive. <p><i>Key features: Break, unaccompanied ascending scale in straight quavers, New Orleans polyphonic style, comping, stop time, syncopated dotted crotchets, return of ideas, call and response, blues style, diminished chord</i></p>
Coda	4 bars	2'51	Vocal+guitar duet

Re-cap of Key features in each section

Intro	Chorus 1	Chorus 2	Chorus 3	Duet	Chorus 4
Key features: <i>Collective improvisation</i>	Key features: <i>Lip trill</i>	Key textures: <i>Blues sound</i>	Key features: <i>Break</i>	Key features: <i>No rhythm section</i>	Key features: <i>4 bar piano link</i>
<i>short phrases</i>	<i>chromatic triplets</i>	<i>smear</i>	<i>banjo comp</i>	<i>call and response</i>	<i>Break</i>
<i>countermelody</i>	<i>broken chord figures</i>	<i>high clarion</i>	<i>guitar countermelody</i>	<i>blues</i>	<i>unaccompanied ascending scale in straight quavers</i>
<i>glissando</i>	<i>virtuosic</i>	<i>piercing top register</i>	<i>scat singing</i>	<i>smears</i>	

<i>semibreves and crotchets</i>	<i>rip</i>	<i>fast vibrato</i>	<i>imitates trumpet rip,</i>	<i>microtonal</i>	<i>New Orleans</i>
		<i>crotchet emphasised</i>	<i>smear</i>	<i>inflections on</i>	<i>polyphonic style</i>
	<i>extended range</i>	<i>swung quavers</i>	<i>fall offs</i>	<i>G/Gb</i>	<i>Comping</i>
	<i>similar phrases</i>	<i>banjo and piano</i>	<i>rubato</i>		<i>stop time</i>
	<i>syncopation</i>	<i>only comping</i>	<i>triplets</i>		<i>syncopated dotted</i>
	<i>upbeats</i>	<i>tonic dominant LH</i>	<i>dotted crotchets</i>		<i>crotchets</i>
		<i>varied textures</i>	<i>polyrhythmic</i>		<i>return of ideas</i>
			<i>rhythmic freedom and</i>		<i>call and response</i>
			<i>invention</i>		<i>blues style</i>
					<i>diminished chord</i>