



LOUIS ARMSTRONG & JAM



What is JAM?

If Louis Armstrong made a lasting contribution to the world of jazz then America has been repaying her debt to him, as well as to other American jazz musicians, for - as the U.S. Congress put it - jazz is "a national and world treasure". The time to celebrate it is April - the JAZZ APPRECIATION MONTH, JAM for short .

Armstrong's Contribution

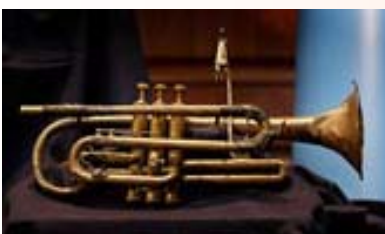
If jazz is very special for America then Louis Armstrong is very special for jazz. It would be hard to imagine modern jazz music with its "hot solos" without the virtuoso trumpet playing of Armstrong. Without his sentimental, if a little hoarse, voice, the all so familiar tune of "What a Wonderful World" wouldn't resound in our heads on the first spring walk in the park.

From Rags to Riches

Armstrong is a perfect example of the American dream come true. Born in a shabby and rough part of New Orleans to a family which couldn't provide for his needs, in his childhood he was so poor that he was sometimes forced to search for food in garbage bins. He became a celebrity, an icon, a man looked up to and admired, an international ambassador of good will and swing, one of the greatest jazz musicians of the 20th century.

All's Well That Ends Well

His career, however, was not only a matter of pure chance, coincidence and luck. Already as a small boy dancing and singing for a few cents in the streets of New Orleans he gave all his heart to music. The music was lively and honest, mystical yet endowed with an almost physical tinge. There was a little coincidence, too.



Louis Armstrong's first cornet on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History
(Photo courtesy of AP/WWP)



Louis Armstrong wearing his famous smile in his home in the Queens borough of New York
(Photo courtesy of AP/WWP)

An unfortunate event with firing a gun into the air to celebrate the New Year led him to the city's Coloured Waif's Home for Boys, but it was there that the talent of the then thirteen-year-old Armstrong was discovered by a music instructor.

All-around Musician

The adult life of Satchmo (a nickname referring to the shape of his mouth) was marked by a steady growth of his musical potential. The phenomenon of Louis Armstrong lies not only in his talent but also in the passion he had for the music he was playing. He travelled extensively, played in and led many bands and made numerous recordings. The instruments he played included cornet, clarinet, trumpet, trombone and horn. And he will always be remembered for his songs: "Mack the Knife", "All of Me", "On the Sunny Side of the Street" and above all "Hello Dolly" and "What a Wonderful World" recorded in 1968, three years before his death.

(text by AIRC Krakow)





JAM poster featuring a portrait of Duke Ellington by LeRoy Neiman
Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution

Origins and Organization of Jazz Appreciation Month:

- ⇒ Jazz Appreciation Month has been celebrated in the United States since 2001.
- ⇒ The initiative of recognizing the importance of jazz and its contribution to American culture does not come solely from audiences, musicians and academics who study the history and development of this kind of music. It is recognized on the government level as well. In 2003 President George W. Bush urged that: “musicians, schools, colleges, libraries, concert halls, museums, radio and television stations, and other organizations should develop programs to explore, perpetuate, and honor jazz as a national and world treasure.”
- ⇒ This year many U.S. governors decided to officially proclaim April a Jazz Appreciation Month in their states.
- ⇒ Jazz education is promoted through programs that are created for teachers at all levels of education, through band contests, promotion of jazz magazines, radio and television stations, meetings, exhibits, conferences and, above all, live performances by bands and soloists. A very interesting initiative of promoting jazz in local communities is by encouraging people to “collect extra or unwanted jazz recordings or books and donate them to a local high school, college, nursing home or community center.”



More information on 2006 JAM on: <http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/>

(On the basis of information on the Smithsonian Institution website)

**“Jazz will endure just as long as people hear it through their feet instead of their brains.”
John Philip Sousa**

**“I'll play it first and tell you what it is later.”
Miles Davis**

**“If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know.”
Louis Armstrong**

**“Only play what you hear. If you don't hear anything, don't play anything.”
Chick Corea**



A Few Inspired Insights Into Jazz

ALL FOOLS DAY and What Mark Twain Said...

Practical jokes, hoaxes, pranks? All allowed and indeed welcome on April 1 – All Fools Day. Whether the origins of the Day should be searched for in an ancient Roman festival – Saturnalia or earlier still with Noah sending a dove on a fools errand before the flood waters subsided; whether these were the cagey citizens of a medieval town of Gotham in Nottinghamshire, who played lunatics in order to escape the king's wrath and did it so well that the monarch decided they were too foolish to be punished or whether it should be attributed to the French, who coined an expression 'Poisson d'Avril' or 'April Fish' making a parallel between young fish that were easy to fool and catch in early spring and the easily taken in folks, one thing is certain – people have always wanted to engage in merriment and the best time for it was the awakening from the winter hibernation - the spring rebirth of nature.



Although most people seem to trace the beginnings of All Fools Day to the Georgian reform of calendar that shifted the beginning of the year from the end of March to the beginning of January and mocking those who stubbornly refused to accept the change and kept celebrating new year in spring, Mark Twain claimed the celebration was more deeply rooted. He said about April 1: “This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four.”

(Text by AIRC Krakow)



2005 solar decathletes: Eighteen collegiate teams from the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico at the Opening Ceremony in Washington
Photo by Stefano Paltera/Solar Decathlon

The Beginnings

The idea of the Solar Decathlon originated in the U.S. Department of Energy (it is run among others in cooperation with National Renewable Energy Laboratory and the American Institute of Architects) and is connected with the growing concern about shrinking energy resources and a belief that bright young students are capable of helping solve very serious global problems. Like the Olympic decathlon, there are ten contests set before selected teams of students testing various, all-around skills. The task is clearly defined: to design, build and maintain the most livable and energy-efficient solar-powered home.

The Events

The ten contests include: architecture, dwelling, documentation, communications, comfort zone, appliances, hot water, lighting, energy balance and getting around (read: a solar-powered car!). Mysterious as some of these contests may sound – they all relate to our everyday usage of energy and finding means to economize. The teams which participate in the contest must design and build homes that run solely on solar energy.



Students of Univ. of Colorado mount solar panels on their home's roof
Photo: Solar Decathlon



Solar-powered cars on a parade drive
Photo by Stefano Paltera/Solar Decathlon



The Home of the winning team: the University of Colorado.
Photo by Stefano Paltera/ Solar Decathlon

For all to see

Teams are selected from around the world and they have to construct the home and work out the technologies to run it efficiently and economically. Then, for a week in October their constructions are transported to the National Mall in Washington, D.C. – in the vicinity of the White House – where they are open to the public. Then they close for one day for competition purposes to allow judges to choose an overall winner.

Long-range planning

There is no Solar Decathlon planned for 2006, yet the twenty carefully selected teams are busy working out strategies, brainstorming, calculating how to wisely spend the \$100,000 they have at their disposal, in short, preparing for the 2007 contest. This is going to be the third after the contests in 2002 and 2005. The winner of the last competition - the University of Colorado, Denver and Boulder will do its best to defend its title. Though most teams represent American universities there are also teams from outside the U.S.; in 2007 there will be Canadian, German and Spanish teams.

Some achievements

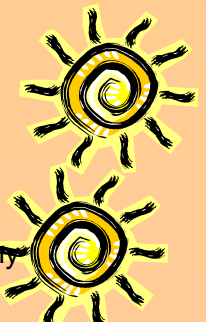
Each Solar Decathlon contest introduces new solutions and interesting technologies, for example, translucent walls that provide light and insulation, solar heated fluid that flows under floors to provide warmth and fiber optic cables that transmit light from solar collectors into a home.

Decathlon vs. decathlon

Strength, precision, perseverance. Which of these nouns best relate to the Olympic and which to the solar decathlon? This may be a matter of interpretation. One thing, however, seems obvious. Neither leaves any room to chance.

Text based on info. on U.S. Dept. of Energy website

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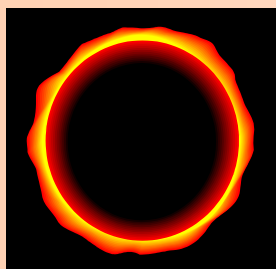


Veldher Tulip Farm Holland, Michigan. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Win a Prize!

To win a prize answer this question:

What do you call the phenomenon illustrated below?



Send your answer to zoom@usinfo.pl.

Give your name and address.

The deadline is April 30.

The winners from the previous issue will soon receive their prizes by mail.

ZOOM

in on america

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This year we celebrate the 36th anniversary of Earth Day.

Do you know which country celebrated it for the first time?

1. Read the text below and supply it with the words (all beginning with "d") which were removed from it and decide what part of speech they are:

"I did feel a little ... when they set sail and left me on that island all on my own. I soon discovered, however, that the other part of the island was not a ... but fertile land covered in lush vegetation. I climbed a coconut tree and prepared a delicious ... , which livened up my spirits. Life on a island has at least one good side: everything belongs to you.

I decided not to ... this part of the ... island, avoid the ... and eat nothing but ... - at least until this cultural ... gets a little civilized."

2. **BONZA BOTTLER DAY** is the day which has the same number as the month.

When in April does Bonza Bottler Day befall?
Is there a name for such a day in your language?

Glossary

Here you will find explanation of some more difficult words from the April ZOOM:

cagey - deliberately not give much information about something

economize - save money

errand - a short trip to do a job for somebody

have something at your disposal - you can do with it whatever you want

Forefather - (usually: Forefathers) - ancestors

hoax - a trick in which somebody tells people something that is not true

insulation - a thick layer of substance that keeps something warm, especially a building

merriment - laughter, joy (old-fashioned)

perpetuate - cause something to continue

perseverance - quality of continuing with something even though it is difficult

proclaim - make something known to the public

prank - (old fashioned) a childish trick

translucent - (about some material) - it means that some light can pass through it

vicinity - (in the v.) - in the nearby area

Group Activity

3. Read about an initiative of the U.S. government 'The Solar America Initiative' on http://www1.eere.energy.gov/solar/solar_america

In groups discuss the following questions:

- A) What are the advantages of solar energy?
- B) How important is it for world governments to initiate, sponsor and promote programs like this?
- C) What do you know about solar energy programs in your country?
- D) Why is/isn't solar energy a plausible alternative to traditional energy sources in your country?

4. Finally, choose the correct answer:

1. 'Scat singing' is:
 - A) a choir singing out of tune
 - B) singing in the street for money
 - C) vocalizing that pretends instrumental break
2. A type of syncopated piano music is called:
 - A) a ragtime
 - B) a serenade
 - C) a ballad

Find answers to activities on this page at www.usinfo.pl/zoom/