

From the Shadow to the Screen: ‘Little Satchmo’ Documentary Unveils Secret Daughter of Louis Armstrong

Upcoming film shows introduces unknown side of Jazz icon



Saint Petersburg, Dec 15, 2020 (IssueWire.com) - Eight years ago today, the daughter of one of America's most celebrated and beloved icons stepped out of the shadows of her legendary father and into public view for the first time with the publication of a memoir that opened the door to the first complete understanding of an entertainer whose personality is emblazoned onto the American conscience.

The memoir, *Little Satchmo: Living in the Shadow of My Father, Louis Daniel Armstrong*, by the jazz legend's daughter Sharon Preston-Folta, dispels the myth that Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong died childless and details Armstrong's previously unknown side as a family man and devoted father. The book is now in production as a documentary, continuing a journey of discovery for Preston-Folta and the unfolding of a more complete biography of an American icon.

Little Satchmo makes its screen debut in 2021, directed by John Alexander with Preston-Folta, daughter of the icon and author of the memoir, providing narration and interviews over a collection of family – and American – memorabilia and film reels.

The project has garnered significant momentum throughout production, receiving nonprofit fiscal sponsorship from the Southern Documentary Fund and a letter of support from REEL South, a PBS Documentary series focused on Southern stories and culture. In November, The Library of Congress accepted into their collection a series of personal correspondences from Armstrong to Preston-Folta and her mother detailing her familial ties.

While the circumstances surrounding Preston-Folta's birth and young life were a secret to nearly everyone, she was raised knowing that she was the daughter of jazz royalty.

"My mother and I were a very important part of my father's life," says Preston-Folta. "We were not an afterthought or a situation in the back of his mind but a constant presence in his heart. He was very proud of his little family and making sure we were taken of."

"I'm thrilled that my collection of letters and other memorabilia from my father will now be a part of his public legacy at the Library of Congress."

Little Satchmo Director John Alexander says the film is an opportunity to show a fuller and more realistic view of the man the world called 'Satchmo.'

"The world has always assumed that Louis Armstrong was deprived of being a father. His image has solidified as the avuncular and virtuosic 'happy-go-lucky black man with the trumpet', remembered and loved for putting the world at ease, and not much more," says Alexander.

"But was his life really that simple? It turns out the loved ones who were dearest to his heart were also some of his closest-kept secrets. He was not, in fact, deprived of being a father, but rather deprived tragically of telling the world he was one."

Production continues on *Little Satchmo*, with an upcoming trailer this winter. To coincide with the anniversary of the publication of the memoir, the production team is encouraging followers to join their journey via newsletter and social media @littlesatchmodoc. The team is also fundraising this holiday season, with donations tax-deductible to the extent of the law through the film's fiscal sponsor, Southern Documentary Fund.

Concludes Alexander, "We believe that the world is now ready to accept a more loving, three-

dimensional version of an icon, arguably the most famous American, who in reality loved little more than he did his Little Satchmo.”

To learn more and join this uplifting journey, including ways to support the project, please visit littlesatchmodoc.com and on social media [@littlesatchmodoc](https://twitter.com/littlesatchmodoc).

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Media Contact

Carroway + Rose

briggs@carrowayrose.com

8435019128

260 First Avenue S

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