

LEW SOLOFF

“One often chooses to listen on the presumption that it will transcend the infelicities of society, ameliorate anxiety or transport one to another emotional space. If this is the lift one seeks, the pleasures to be derived from the artful trumpet of Lew Soloff are guaranteed.”

Zoë Ang/Bomb Magazine

A consummate fixture on the New York jazz scene, Lew Soloff's career is filled with a rich history of renowned sessions and world-class collaborations. From the time he eased into the east coast world of trend setting musicians in the mid 1960s, Soloff's creative ventures have resulted in a respected body of work that places him in a category of true accomplishment and keeps his elegant and lyrical signatures in constant demand. Whether interpreting a standard or improvising on an original composition, his phrasing and note choices exemplify his unique voice. Soloff is known as a virtuoso with tremendous range and superior technical command, yet he exudes a wisdom for quietness and melody. Soloff's expertise includes trumpet, flugelhorn, harmon mute, plunger mute and he is particularly recognized for his work on piccolo trumpet.

Soloff's current schedule of engagements provides a varied platform for his music. Reaching back to his roots in Latin music, **Lew Soloff And The Afro Cuban Ensemble** is creating excitement around New York City. One of his early mentors was the acclaimed Cuban bandleader **Machito** and the lessons learned in that context have become an integral part of Soloff's repertoire. Stepping into the Gillespie tradition of melding American jazz and African-based Cuban rhythms, Soloff adds his own signature to this exciting ensemble, which features timbales, congas, electric bass and keyboards with traditional Cuban-style vocal harmonies. “This is one of the most wonderful bands I have ever played with, full of fire and beauty and capable of going in many directions,” explains Soloff. “When I was 21 and first came to New York I was very lucky to work with **Machito**, one of the best Afro-Cuban bands around. To top things off, the musical director was the great Cuban instrumentalist **Mario Bauzá**.”

The Lew Soloff Quartet, an all-star unit, which tours Europe regularly, features **Jean-Michel Pilc** (piano), **Billy Hart** (drums) and **François Moutin** (upright bass). Besides work with his quartet and the Afro-Cuban Ensemble, he is a regular in **Carla Bley's Big Band** and remains a founding member, along with leader David Matthews of **The Manhattan Jazz Quintet** (with 30 recordings to their credit and a faithful following in Japan). Alumni of the quintet reads likes a who's who of New York's jazz elite; Steve Gadd, George Young, Charnett Moffett, Eddie Gomez, John Pattitucci, Dave Weckl, Peter Erskine, Danny Gottlieb, Bill Evans and Victor Lewis. Soloff is also part of Matthews' **Manhattan Jazz Orchestra**, whose body of work includes nearly 20 album releases.

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Soloff has joined the contemporary quintet **Manhattan Brass**, which performs a wide repertoire of material. The group performs traditional classical works by composers J.S. Bach, Monteverdi and Gesualdo and also newer music by David Dzubay, Daniel Schnyder as well as jazz material by Wynton Marsalis and Paquito D’Rivera. Recent recordings by The Manhattan Brass include “**The Music of David Dzubay**” and “**New York Now**” which includes interpretations from “West Side Story” and pieces by Leonard Bernstein, Marsalis and D’Rivera.

His longtime collaboration with the late **Gil Evans** resulted in a new relationship with the Bohuslän Big Band in Sweden. The orchestra invited Soloff to perform George Gershwin’s **Porgy And Bess**, originally arranged by Evans for one of Soloff’s important influences, Miles Davis. The suite was recorded and filmed live at The Göteborg Concerthouse and released in 2009. As a solo artist, Soloff has 8 recordings to his credit as a leader. “**With A Song In My Heart**” produced by Todd Barkan and Makoto Kimata is filled with some of my favorite ballads and is one recording that I am particularly fond of,” comments Soloff. “I was able to weave a tranquil spirit throughout the sessions. My goal was to play the songs simply and beautifully.”

Besides his association with Gil Evans, Soloff considers his work with **Ornette Coleman** to be particularly pivotal. In addition to being a featured trumpet soloist on several occasions with Coleman, he was also asked to perform with Coleman and **The Kronos Quartet** on a commission for trumpet and strings. Soloff was also the lead trumpeter of the **Carnegie Hall Jazz Band** under the direction of **Jon Faddis** during its entire tenure and spent six years as first trumpet in the **Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra**.

Born in Brooklyn, on February 20, 1944, Soloff was raised in Lakewood, New Jersey and started studying piano at an early age. He took up the trumpet when he was 10 and his interest in the instrument surged, thanks to the record collections of his grandfather and uncle. Exposed to artists such as Roy Eldridge and Louis Armstrong as a youngster, Soloff recalls, “there was a high scale I remember from Armstrong’s recording ‘I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music.’ He played this run with such quiet finesse and beauty, I wanted to play like that.” Soloff spent several years at **Juilliard Preparatory** until he entered the **Eastman School of Music** in 1961. Already a professional musician, he had spent his summers as a teenager playing hotels and country clubs in the Borscht Belt (the Catskill Mountains of New York). After graduating from Eastman, where he found himself in practice bands with fellow students such as **Chuck Mangione**, he spent a year in graduate school at Julliard. It was the mid-1960’s and the fertile jazz scene in New York City ignited Soloff’s full-time career.

“When I first settled in the city it was my association with **Machito**, which made my reputation in the Latin jazz community. About the same time, I started playing in rehearsal bands that brought me in contact with players like Phil Woods, Eddie Gomez, Pepper Adams, Duke Pearson and Frank Foster,” the artist explains. Jam sessions with the likes of Philly Joe Jones, Paul Chambers, and Elvin Jones solidified Soloff’s bebop skills.

By 1966, he was performing with **Maynard Ferguson** and soon became a regular in the **Joe Henderson / Kenny Dorham Big Band**. That year he also joined the Gil Evans Group, an affiliation he considers his most influential. “I first met Gil Evans when I was 22 and he became my musical Godfather,” remembers Soloff. It was a creative relationship that lasted until Evans’ death in 1988. In the large bands of the 1960s, Soloff received his continuing education, joining groups led by Clark Terry, Tito Puente, Eddie Palmieri including the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Band. But it was in the popular groundbreaking group **Blood, Sweat And Tears** that Soloff’s trumpet solos became an indelible part of American culture. He was an integral part of the band from 1968 to 1973, racking up 9 Gold records, a Grammy for “**Record of The Year**” (1969) and creating those searing horn lines in “Spinning Wheel.”

Following his time with Blood, Sweat And Tears, Soloff demonstrated his distinguished abilities in the studio. The depth of recordings that include his work illustrate why he is consistently in demand. Some of those projects include releases by; Roy Ayers, Bob Belden, George Benson, Benny Carter, Stanley Clarke, Paquito D’Rivera, Miles Davis/Quincy Jones (Live At Montreux), Mercer Ellington, Grant Green, Lionel Hampton, Bob James, Herbie Mann, Tania Maria, Carmen McRae, Laura Nyro, Jaco Pastorius, Mongo Santamaria, Little Jimmy Scott, Wayne Shorter and Stanley Turrentine.

This classically trained jazz player however is indeed a chameleon in front of the microphone, participating in sessions and concerts for some of pop’s most respected figures namely; Tony Bennett, Elvis Costello, Marianne Faithful, Aretha Franklin, Lou Reed, Frank Sinatra, Paul Simon and Barbra Streisand. Defying strict classification, he can also be heard on recordings by Phillip Glass and Kip Hanrahan as well as Blues legends John Mayall and Dr. John. A brief listing of the film soundtracks that have Soloff in the mix include; The Big Lebowski, Lethal Weapon 3, Brighton Beach Memoirs, Carlito’s Way, The Color of Money, Coming To America, The Mambo Kings, Meet Joe Black, National Lampoon’s Vacation, Tender Mercies, and Maid In Manhattan.

Also a respected educator, he continues to appear at universities around the country where he utilizes the Gil Evans arrangements that have been an essential element of his repertoire through the years. He has been on the faculty of the **Manhattan School of Music** for nearly 20 years and has been an adjunct faculty member at Juilliard and **New School**.

“I want to continue developing my own personal artistic ventures,” notes Soloff. “There are a thousand ideas I have for collaborative efforts. Music can be choreographed or spontaneous and I am most inspired when I have the opportunity to perform in a variety of settings.”

Lew Soloff plays exclusively on Sonaré Bb trumpets made by Blessing.

Solo Discography

Air On A G String	Crown (Japan) / 2003
Rainbow Mountain	32 Jazz / 2000
With A Song In My Heart	Milestone / 1999
But Beautiful	Evidence / 1993
Little Wing	Triloka / 1991
My Romance	King (Japan) / 1989
Yesterdays	ProJazz / 1986
Hanalei Bay	ProArt / 1983

Special Touring and Recording Projects

Lew Soloff and The Afro-Cuban Ensemble

Pedro Martinez, timbales & vocals, Axel Tosca, keyboards & vocals, Alvaro Benavides, electric bass, Jhair Sala, congas

Manhattan Jazz Quintet (current line-up)

David Matthews, piano, Lew Soloff, trumpet, Victor Lewis, drums, Andy Snitzer, tenor saxophone, Francois Moutin, upright bass

Manhattan Brass

David Taylor, bass trombone, Lew Soloff, trumpet, Mike Seltzer, trombone, Wayne Dumaine, trumpet, RJ Kelly, French horn

Ray Anderson's Pocket Brass Band

This colorful ensemble includes Ray Anderson, trombone, Lew Soloff, trumpet, Bobby Previte, drums and Matt Perrine, sousaphone

Harmonie Ensemble conducted by Steven Richman

Lew Soloff featured soloist, current project “Sketches Of Spain”

The Absolute Ensemble conducted by Kristjan Järvi

This 18-piece chamber music group based in New York interprets everything from Stravinsky and Bach to Zappa and Hendrix.