

## LEW SOLOFF

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 1960's, 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.

As a leader, Soloff puts his energy into some special projects including The Lew Soloff Quartet and Quintet. **Lew Soloff Presents Sunday Jazz At Rhone** was a weekly series he started for New York's trendy lower west side lounge **Rhone**. The Sunday program included his own groups and surprise special guests. The artist has 8 solo recordings to his credit. "**With A Song In My Heart** produced by Todd Barkan and Makoto Kimata is probably my favorite personal project to date," comments Soloff. "We chose some wonderful songs for this CD and I was able to weave a tranquil spirit throughout the sessions. My goal was to play the songs simply and beautifully." JazzTimes wrote about the release (Sept. 1999). "If this gem by Soloff, a musician at the peak of his maturity and expressiveness, is not one of the best records of the year, we have a surprising few months in store."

Soloff's current schedule of engagements provides a varied platform for his music. He is a regular in **Carla Bley's 4X4** group and her big band, and remains a founding member (along with leader David Matthews) of **The Manhattan Jazz Quintet** with 28 recordings to their credit (and a faithful following in Japan). Alumni of the quintet reads like 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 a constant in trombonist **Ray Anderson's** colorful ensemble **Pocket Brass Band**. As of late, Soloff finds himself exposed to the "downtown scene" working with **Bobby Previte** and his adventurous musical tribute to Joan Miró, which features Charlie Hunter, DJ Logic and harpist Zena Parkins. Soloff also records and tours with **The Absolute Ensemble**, a 19-piece chamber music group that interprets everything from Stravinsky and Bach to Zappa and Hendrix.

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 in 2002 and Soloff has been invited back to Sweden for an extended tour with the band, scheduled for 2005. 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.

**“Air”** is his latest solo effort recorded with the **Lew Soloff Quartet**. Working again with producers Barkan and Kimata, the project was released in Japan (2003) under the Keystone Korner banner. Soloff surrounded himself with old friends Victor Lewis and Larry Willis for the “Air” sessions, along with new friend Francois Moutin. “I saw Francois playing bass with Mike Stern and knew immediately I wanted to play with him. I was going through a major transition in my life during this recording and in addition to some melancholy moments, there’s also a lot of joy in this document, particularly in the song dedicated to my daughter Laura.” Plans for a North American release of “Air” are currently in progress.

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 scale I remember from Armstrong’s recording ‘I Hope Gabriel Likes My Music.’ He played this run with such finesse and beauty, without any grandstanding – 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 I had the opportunity to play 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 1960’s, 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 worldwide, 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, Teo Macero, 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; The Average White Band, Tony Bennett, Elvis Costello (including his latest "North"), Dr. John, Marianne Faithful, George Russell, Aretha Franklin, Keb Mo, Sinead O'Connor, Lou Reed, Frank Sinatra, Helen Merrill, 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 Charlie Musselwhite. A brief listing of the film soundtracks that have Soloff in the mix include; The Big Lebowski, Lethal Weapon 3, Billy Bathgate, Brighton Beach Memoirs, Carlito's Way, The Color of Money, Coming To America, The Mambo Kings, Meet Joe Black, National Lampoons Vacation, Tender Mercies, The Untouchables and Maid In Manhattan.

A respected educator as well, he continues to appear as guest soloist 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 Julliard 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."

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