

Lew Soloff

Lew Soloff is a storied figure in American music. His virtuosity on a standard trumpet (plus piccolo trumpet, flugelhorn, and mutes) encompasses jazz, classical, pop, rock, r&b, and other styles and contexts. Showcasing remarkable range and technique, and considerable warmth of expression, he has been a pillar on the New York City music scene since the mid-1960s.

Influenced by Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, and other trumpet giants, Soloff first showed up in jazz clubs about the time he was finishing up his graduate studies in music at Juilliard. (Earlier in the 1960s he had received an undergraduate degree from the Eastman School of Music.) The Brooklyn-born trumpeter subsequently worked with first-rate Latin jazz bands (including that of “Mambo King” Machito) as well as committed jazzmen like Phil Woods, Pepper Adams, and Elvin Jones; he also played in the big bands of Maynard Ferguson, Clark Terry, Thad Jones & Mel Lewis, and Joe Henderson & Kenny Dorham. Several years with early jazz-rock band Blood, Sweat & Tears brought him to the attention of rock audiences, while, beginning in the early-1970s, touring overseas with prominent jazz bandleader-arranger-composer Gil Evans helped earn him global acclaim from fans and music critics.

Soloff has had innumerable jazz connections in recent decades, both in the recording studio and in live performances. The honor roll: Carla Bley, Dizzy Gillespie, Ornette Coleman, Kenny Barron, Wayne Shorter, J. J. Johnson, Mongo Santamaria, Tony Bennett, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, and to list just one stellar collaboration, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. He founded the popular-in-Japan Manhattan Jazz Orchestra (City Boys Allstar Andy Snitzer on saxophone), and the trumpeter has fronted his own trios, quartets, and groups of other sizes. In recent years, Soloff has employed bassists George Mraz and Francois Moutin, pianist Jean-Michel Pilc, vibes player Joe Locke, and drummers Billy Hart and Ross Pederson, among others. There are eight solo recordings in Soloff’s voluminous discography, spanning 1983 to 2003. He has said he is especially pleased with the 1998 Milestone album *With a Song in My Heart*, where he waxes poetic on standards like the title track and “Come Rain or Come Shine,” and further shines playing original compositions and film composer Dmitri Tiomkins’ “Deguello.” As an educator, Soloff is on the faculty of the Manhattan School of Music and a member of the adjunct faculty at Juilliard and the New School.

Many pop stars—Aretha Franklin, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Costello and Paul Simon, for starters--have upgraded their recordings and/or concerts with Soloff’s splendid playing. He has even collaborated with minimalist composer Philip Glass and the contemporary-classical string band called Kronos Quartet. Film soundtrack credits include *The Color of Money*, *Meet Joe Black*, and *Tender Mercies*.