

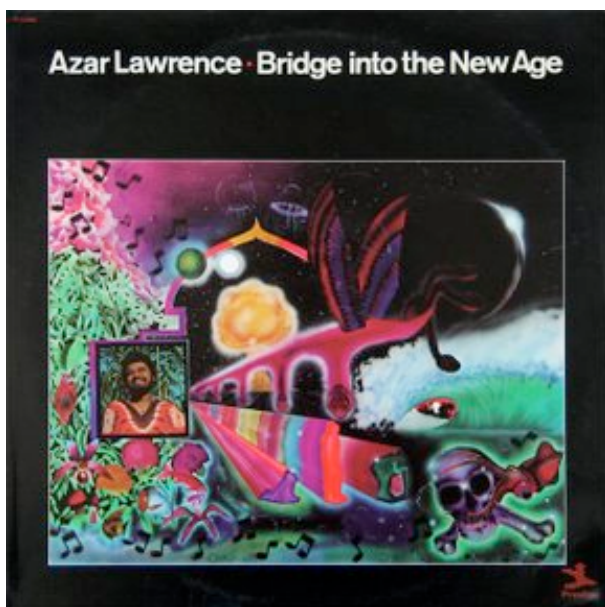
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## [Reissue Desires: Azar Lawrence's Bridge Into The New Age](#)

April 3rd, 2008 | 9:00 am est | [Thom Jurek](#)



What do Miles Davis, McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones, Horace Tapscott, Earth, Wind & Fire, Frank Zappa, Busta Rhymes, Billy Higgins, Chuck Jackson and the lost funk group Chameleon all have in common? Los Angeles saxophonist [Azar Lawrence](#), that's what.



Released in 1974 on Prestige, *Bridge Into The New Age* was the first of three albums Lawrence recorded as a leader for Prestige — all before he was 25 (this one when he

was a pup of 21). But Lawrence had logged some serious time with Tyner (getting the first notices for his work on the pianist's classic *Enlightenment* set from 1973). He had also played on Davis's freaky live funk date at Carnegie Hall, released in 1974 as *Dark Magus*. Beatheads and crate-diggers, the true cultural archeologists of our age, God bless them, have been onto this maddeningly out-of-print licorice pizza for years.

Hardcore jazz fans were hip to Lawrence and excited about him as a leader. The lineup here is enough to make your mouth drop open in an extended "Whooooooooaaaaaa": besides the leader playing soprano and tenor saxophones, this date hosts Julian Priester (trombone), Woody Shaw (trumpet), Hadley Caliman (flute), Arthur Blythe (alto saxophone), Joe Bonner (piano), John Heard, Woody Murray, and Clint Houston (variously on bass), Billy Hart (drums), Leon Chanler, Mtume or Kenneth Nash (percussion), and on two tracks, the title and "The Beautiful And Omnipresent Love," the beguiling Jean Carn appears to grace them with her gloriously soulful vocals. Lawrence, despite his deep debt to John Coltrane (along with every other tenor and soprano player in the 1970s), uses it to take the music to a different level. Here one will find the true roots of post-bop jazz, spiritual soul jazz, Latin Jazz, Afro Cuban jazz, funky acoustic modal jazz, and much more. The set has a complete identity for all of its ambition, which makes it even more impressive; it is as worthy as anything on the highly collectible Strata East Or Black Jazz labels. It is as balanced and nearly perfect an album as one is likely to find. The aforementioned beatheads are drawn to the furious jazz dance jam "Force Of Nature" that combines Afro-Cuban and Nuyorican salsa rhythms and melodies in a wide harmonic spread that makes it compositionally enthralling as well as rhythmically driven. But this is one of five flawless cuts. "Fatisha" is one of the more beautiful ballads of the spiritual jazz era with gorgeous work by Bonner, and "Warriors Of Peace," contains some of the most focused incendiary horn work by the saxophonists driven by a rhythmic pulse that combines Yoruba drumming, salsa beats, and hardcore Cuban son time signatures.

Besides his two other excellent leader dates for Prestige (*People Moving* and *Summer Solstice*, which are also great -- and currently unavailable), he wrote songs with Chuck Jackson, played on Earth, Wine and Fire's *Powerlight* set, formed Chameleon with Patrice Robinson (a.k.a Chocolate from Graham Central Station) and recorded for Elektra, played with Zappa, Tapscott, and Higgins and appeared in Busta Rhymes' "In the Ghetto" video wailing on his tenor. Lawrence is out there on the bandstand almost every night in the greater Los Angeles area and he is still a monster of a player. You can check his whole story on his web page as well as samples of his work right [HERE](#).



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## Comments

- [July 8th, 2008 @ 5:04 pm est | leroy jones](#)

I do trust bridge into the new age ,will be reissued.my dad played the record WOW...that A TABLE OF CREATIVE FOOD.2 ME EYE THOUGHT, I WAS IN NEVER NERVER LAND....SITTING ON GOD`S LEFT HAND.

- [August 1st, 2008 @ 5:38 pm est | rcdupre](#)

Released on CD as a mini-LP in Japan on 9-24-08... Can't wait to hear it!!!!

- [September 27th, 2008 @ 11:54 pm est | brad neal](#)