

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Zarmedia / Los Angeles, CA, July 6, 2009 / Azar Lawrence / Music in the Clouds / Azar Lawrence – Blue Skies Smiling At Me – Swinging In The Big Blue Sky

When Irving Berlin composed Blue Skies one has to wonder if Montana was on his mind. Berlin wrote Blue Skies in 1926, it was featured in the first feature-length talkie, *The Jazz Singer* and became a hit. Montana is known as Big Sky Country because of its beautiful mountains and healthy terrain, yet topography is not Montana's only attraction. With Montana's rich music and arts scene it can also be called Big Jazz Country. On the heels of the International Choral Festival in Missoula Montana renowned jazz saxophonist Azar Lawrence will be performing at Daly Jazz to fill the skies with swing.

Composer, arranger and saxophonist Azar Lawrence is back in the thick. He's producing and collaborating with musicians from an array of backgrounds. In June he joined Priest (Wu Tang Clan), D.J. Kentyah Fraiser, Mike Clark, Airta Moreira, Mike Stern, Charnett Moffett, Eddie Henderson, Brian Jackson, Vince Wilburn and Missy Galore to form Legba's Light.

The event at the annual Harmony Festival in Santa Rosa, Ca. was titled the Spirit of Miles. The result was electrical and inspiring. Priest's conscious floetry with Kentyah's mellow scratching along with Mile's standards such as Bitches Brew caused the diverse audience of Mile's and hip hop lovers to go wild. The elders and youth came together and displayed a wonderful phenomena that old can meet new when the art is deep.

A veteran jazz musician Azar became a member of McCoy Tyner's band at the age of 19. While touring with Elvin Jones during the late 70's early 80's he was snatched up by Orion Pictures and Fantasy Records becoming a prolific studio writer and producer.

He can be heard on a plethora of notable musicians productions such as Marvin Gaye, Miles Davis, Maurice White, Earth, Wind & Fire, Roy Ayers, Denise Williams, Patrice Rushen, Eddie Henderson, Oscar Brashear, Chuck Findley, George Bohanon, Ernie Watts, Buddy Collette, Jerry Peters, Skip Scarborough, Michael Stanton, Lee Ritenour, John Rowin, Paul Jackson, Busta Rhymes and many others.

When the Blue Skies smile down upon DalyJazz along with Azar will be renowned pianist Benito Gonzalez, 2005 winner of the Great American Piano Competition. Benito plays piano on Azar's new CD to be released this Fall, *Mystic Dreams*. Azar and Benito came together in New York when Azar heard him at Iridium with Kenny Garret in New York.

Benito toured with jazz master, Kenny Garrett for two years, he added numerous festivals and international jazz club dates to his credit. Benito has shared the stage with Curtis Fuller, Pharaoh Sanders, Bobby Hutcherson, Christian McBride, Ignacio Berroa, Roy Hargrove, and many more. His multi-cultural talents have led to frequent recording dates; from American jazz masters to West African musicians to Latin bands. He has also served as musical director for several Venezuelan recording artists.

Azar and Benito will be backed up by two of Montana's stellar jazz musicians Craig Hall and Sam McKenzie the first call guys in the state. Sam is the drum Line Coordinator for the acclaimed University of Montana (UM) Marching Band, senior marimba soloist; and member of the hot Missoula based funk band Reverend Slanky.

Sam is a babe in jazz years and has big chops, he got a standing ovation for his solo from 400 people at the Jazz Festival recently. The entire audience just stood up in the middle of the tune. This will probably be Sam's last Daly Jazz gig in July; he's headed to Akron on a full ride jazz scholarship.

Craig has played with just about every major jazz name that's visited Montana, a student of of guitar and vibraphone and UM alumni he's worked with several artists and groups from the intermountain region of Montana. Craig is a very tasteful player, a beautiful feel, Jim Hall lineage on guitar. His bass playing is rock solid, and especially dialed in because of his equal ability as a soloist and chordal player. Craig's

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name appears on more than thirty six music CDs of regional artists as arranger of string orchestrations and guitarist. Craig is also a recipient of a Montana Arts Council Fellowship.

The critics have this to say about Azar:

"Jazz needs to retrieve as many Azar Lawrence's as possible, mature, tested musicians who have, for whatever reason, receded into the woodwork for way too long. Prayer for My Ancestors is proof of that. Bill Shoemaker, Point of Departure, June 2009

"...he's still the same physical, gritty, pentatonically inclined tenor and soprano saxophonist. Lawrence made his name with the music he played in the '70s..... He should get it back with the music he's playing today.", Chris Kelsey, JazzTimes, May 2009

"Today, Azar Lawrence burns like a bright, hot flame at the altar of his muse. Given the ever-present fire danger in the Southland, a fire truck should remain on call when Lawrence blows. " ..... "it is a medicinal injection of peace and joy to hear Azar Lawrence burning it up again." Chuck Koton, AllAboutJazz, January 2009

"Back with a vengeance", says Leonard Herring of Clarion Records; not only can Azar's recent releases (Prayer For My Ancestors, Speak The Word and Legacy and Music of John Coltrane) be heard on the airwaves nationally; his music is jazzing up international broadcasts as well. The jazzy skies of Missoula Montana will be smiling on and swinging at Daly Jazz July 24 – 25, 2009 with the sweet sax sounds of Azar Lawrence with a standup rhythm section.

Azar Lawrence Quartet, featuring Benito Gonzalez, Azar Lawrence, t, s, sax; Benito Gonzalez, p; Sam McKenzie, d; Craig Hall, b; will perform:

Fri., Jul 24 – Sat. Jul. 25 – Azar Lawrence Quartet featuring Benito Gonzalez – Azar Lawrence, t, s, sax; Benito Gonzales, p; Craig Hall, b; Sam McKenzie, drums – Daly Jazz, 240 Daly Ave., Missoula, Montana tickets \$25 reservations required via [dalyjazz@gmail.com](mailto:dalyjazz@gmail.com). Doors open 7:00p, Set times: 7:40p, 9:30p, [www.myspace.com/dalyjazz](http://www.myspace.com/dalyjazz),

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