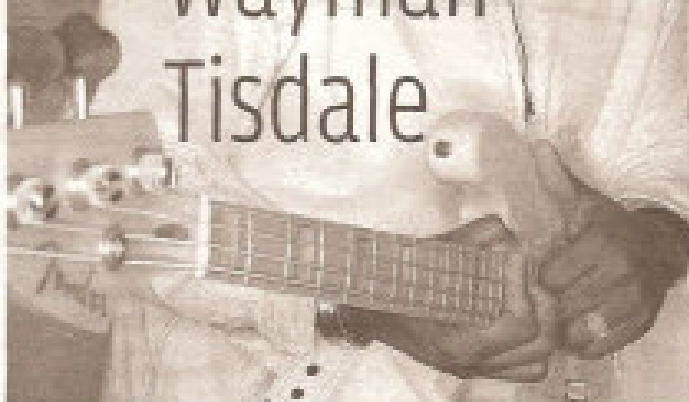


MUSIC

Music career
was no
slam dunk for

Wayman Tisdale



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Guitars & Saxes
With Wayman Tisdale,
Mindi Abair, Jeff Golub
and Warren Hill

When: 8 p.m., Friday
Where: The Pageant, 6161 Delmar
Boulevard
How much: \$25 (a special \$95.50
package includes two tickets and a
pre-show reception featuring the
artists at 6 p.m.; it features hors
d'oeuvres and early admission to
the concert, and benefits Harris
Stowe College)
More info: 314-726-6361 or Ticket-
master, 314-421-4400

By Kevin C. Johnson
POST-DISPATCH POP MUSIC CRITIC

The music industry is littered with CDs from athletes who think they're recording artists, including football's Deion Sanders, basketball's Shaquille O'Neal and boxing's Roy Jones. And don't even mention hoopster Allen Iverson's lambasted, unreleased CD.

Music brought a bit of added attention to the sports stars, though prospects of longevity in the recording industry were always suspect.

But such has never been the case with former National Basketball Association star Wayman Tisdale, who is one of the headliners on the 10th anniversary of Guitars & Saxes. The tour visits the Pageant on Friday with guitarist Jeff Golub and saxophonists Mindi Abair and Warren Hill. Tisdale, who plays bass guitar, has several jazz CDs to his credit, and his music career dates back to 1995's "Power Forward."

Tisdale encourages other sports stars to pursue a career in music but offers a caution: "You can lose a lot of money really quickly. You have to be careful about how you approach it, and your first attempt has to be very polished material."

Tisdale doesn't believe his NBA reputation gave him a free

ride into the music industry.

"One thing about the public: You can't fool them or make them like something just because you're an athlete," Tisdale says. "I always just prayed the public would look at my career and take it seriously, and from Day One, my fans have been with me. And over the years, I've been able to gain more fans."

"I had to go through the same things everyone goes through as far as artists are concerned — going up through the ranks, starting at the bottom, not getting sound checks at performances — in order to get to where I am now."

The Oklahoma native sowed the seeds of his music career while still with the Phoenix Suns, the team he retired from in 1997. During his last three years with the Suns, he worked both careers simultaneously.

"It was wild," he says. "I'd finish 100 games, then start establishing myself and sacrificing. I knew what I wanted to do after basketball. I wanted something established because I knew the ball wasn't going to bounce forever. And when I left the court, I never looked back, never wavered. I knew it was time to leave. I'm glad I had music to go to because, after 12 seasons, I'd had enough. It was time to move to the next phase of my life."

That next phase has included

such jazz CDs as 2001's "Face to Face," 1998's "Decisions" and 1996's "In the Zone." "Hang Time," Tisdale's latest, is his first release on Dave Koz's Rendezvous Entertainment label.

"When Dave asked me to go on tour with him and asked what label I was on, I told him, 'I'm going to do it on my own,' and he said, no, I gotta let him do it," Tisdale says.

He calls "Hang Time," which includes covers of Smokey Robinson's "Cruisin'" and McFadden and Whitehead's "Ain't No Stopping Us Now," his ultimate summertime record — the CD you want to put on while chillin' at a cookout around the pool with family and friends.

"When you hear it, you want to get out and put steaks on the grill," says Tisdale, who is often compared to Stanley Clarke.

Tisdale's success also has allowed him to release a gospel CD, 2003's "21 Days," nominated for an NAACP Image Award.

"I'm very proud of that record. I'd been wanting to do it for a long time," says Wayman, whose father was a Baptist minister. "That's my roots, where I started. You can't talk about Wayman and basketball and Wayman and music unless you talk about church first."

kjohnson@post-dispatch.com | 314-345-8191