

Gregory Tardy

After earning the praise of several jazz masters including Elvin Jones, Tom Harrell, Rasheed Ali and Billy Hart, tenor saxophonist Gregory Tardy makes his Impule! Records debut with an impressive combination of traditional be-bop and blues appropriately called Serendipity.

Born in one of the true music capitals of the world, New Orleans, Tardy was destined for a career in music. His parents sang opera, and he began his career as an awards winning classical clarinetist. However, when his mother switched to jazz and invited him to play with her, his career direction was changed, and he eventually switched to sax. "It was a painful transition from classical to jazz," Tardy recalls, "and people didn't take me seriously at first. Then when they heard me play years later they were freaked out because they couldn't believe how serious I was."

Tardy studied music at several schools including the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music and the University of New Orleans, and upon meeting Ellis Marsalis in St. Louis, he became a student of the patriarch of the famous Marsalis family and moved back to New Orleans with virtually no money to support himself. He played on street corners and passed the hat to make ends meet. Tardy remained passionate about his music, and survived the sacrifices necessary to achieve his goal of becoming a serious jazz artist. He played with a wide variety of bands, and endured tough times as he continued to hone his skills. He paid his dues and improved with continuous practice, and his hard work paid off when he recorded his first solo album Crazy Love that was distributed locally in New Orleans. His first big break occurred when the musical director of the Elvin Jones Jazz Machine, Nicholas Payton, invited him to join the group.

"Playing every night with one of the greatest drummers ever was a high pressure situation and helped me become a more consistent musician," Tardy remembers. "It was like running in front of a steam roller. Either you stay with the flow or you get run over," he laughs. "It was inspiring to play with someone with that incredible energy and intensity."

Now Gregory Tardy displays that same energy and intensity on his own solo CD Serendipity that he recorded last year in New York City where he now lives. "Serendipity" has become the word that reflects how he achieved his goal of becoming a promising solo artist on a legendary jazz label. "If you had told me ten years ago this would happen," Tardy comments, "I would have said you were crazy! When I was a teenager I said a prayer one day I would be playing with some of the greatest musicians in the world and have a recording career. To me this project proves the saying that 'God answers our prayers, not in our time, but right on time'. I got what I wanted and it's unfolding even greater than I expected."

With the encouragement of accomplished performers Ellis Marsalis and Bobby Watson, and the experience of playing with great musicians like Elvin Jones, Wynton Marsalis and Roy Hargrove, some of Gregory Tardy's dreams have now become reality.