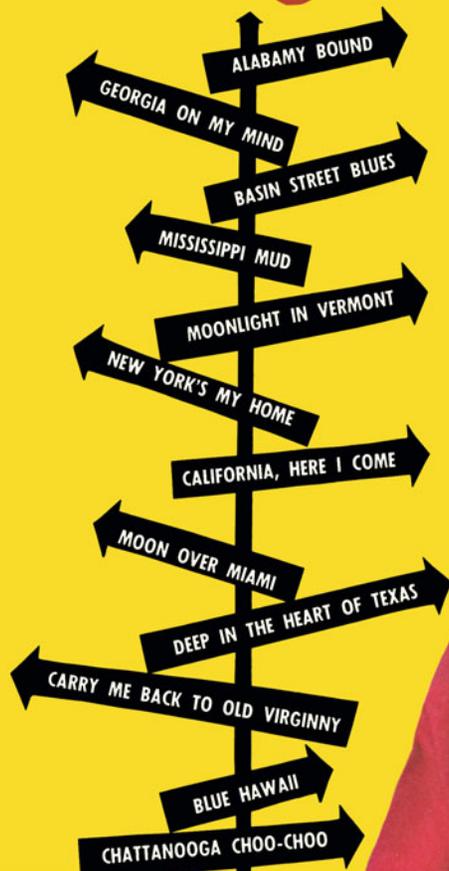
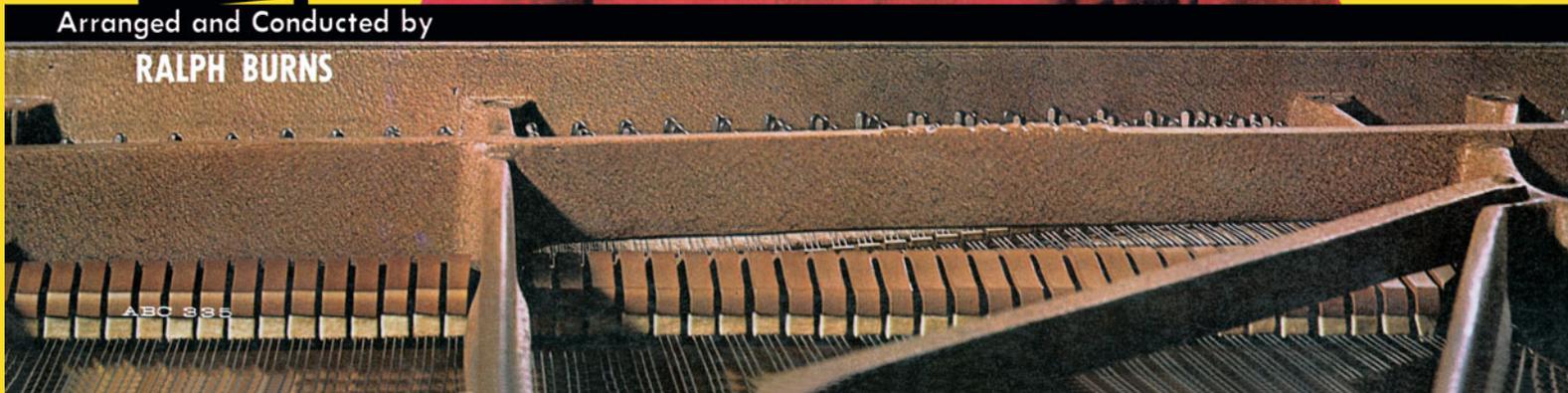


# Ray Charles *THE GENIUS* HITS THE ROAD



Arranged and Conducted by  
**RALPH BURNS**



# Ray Charles

## THE GENIUS HITS THE ROAD

1. **ALABAMA BOUND** 1:55
  2. **GEORGIA ON MY MIND** 3:35
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CONCORDRECORDS

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on #2, 5, 8, 11:

**Ray Charles**—piano, vocals  
**Edgar Willis**—bass  
**Milt Turner**—drums  
plus strings and choir

Recorded at **Capitol Studios**,  
New York City; March 25, 1960

on #1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12:

**Ray Charles**—piano, vocals  
**John Hunt**, **Marcus Belgrave**,  
**Martin Banks**—trumpets  
**David "Fathead" Newman**—tenor saxophone  
**Hank Crawford**—alto saxophone  
**Leroy Cooper**—baritone saxophone  
**Edgar Willis**—bass  
**Milt Turner**—drums  
**The Raeletts** featuring  
**Margie Hendrix**—background vocals  
(#10 only) plus unknown reeds and  
brass (#3, 9, 12) bongo (#1)

Recorded at **Capitol Studios**, New York City;  
March 25 (#3, 9, 12), March 29 (#1, 4, 6, 7, 10), 1960

Produced by **Sid Feller**

Arranged and Conducted by **Ralph Burns**

Tracks #1-12 originally released in September 1960 as  
**The Genius Hits the Road** (ABC-Paramount 335).

Reissue produced by **Chris Clough**

Executive producer—**John Burk**

24-bit remastering—**Bob Fisher** at Pacific Multimedia

Liner notes—**Bill Dahl**

Discovery of the genius of Ray Charles gives the same effect as winning the daily double, or making a hole in one, or scoring a touch-down. His performance creates a feeling of exhilaration and warmth and a deeply personal identification with a true artist. His honest singing, with complete immodesty and abandon, makes a familiar standard song an entirely new experience. Ray gives himself wholeheartedly to a song, and his ability to express himself musically is a quality envied by persons with less creative talents.

When Ray Charles sings, you know there's nothing in this world he'd rather do. He lives a song and does far more for it than it does for him. Whether you consider Ray a pop singer, blues singer, jazz singer, or gospel singer (and he has been declared by experts to be each of these), he has more to offer than perhaps any other artist on today's record scene. Categorizing Ray's style is much less important than simply enjoying the wealth of talent he brings to your own musical environment. To paraphrase, genius by

any other name remains the same.

Sid Feller, A&R director for ABC-Paramount, who produced this album, spent three days with Ray Charles getting to know him, his habits and his likes and dislikes. Sid realized that because Ray's interpretations are so personalized, his daily routine exercised a great influence on his performing style. Discussing the music world in general, the two musicians found they had many interests in common, and the first record session was decided upon. Ray personally selected all of the songs in the album. The record date went so smoothly that Sid says, "It was just great working with Ray because he's a perfectionist. All of the sessions were happy and easy; the arrangements were wonderful, and Ray's singing and playing were tops. It made my job in the control room a cinch!"

All of these arrangements are by Ralph Burns, one of Ray's favorite arrangers. Their many joint musical efforts have developed respect and understanding between the two men. Ralph excels in tailoring arrangements for the varying

Ray Charles style. For an appreciation of Ray's range of talent, listen especially to the swinging "Alabama Bound," the softly emotional "Georgia on My Mind," and the gospel-influenced "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny." Ray sings with bubbling good humor; "Deep in the Heart of Texas" is a prime example. His unexpected prolonging of a note, a sudden gospel wail, and occasional primitive vocal harshness maintain listener interest to an exceptional degree.

Ray travels with his own band (three saxophones, two trumpets, bass, drums, and piano). Accompanying him also are the four Raeletts featured here in "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny."

Blinded by illness at the age of six, Ray was orphaned at fifteen. Leaving school, he put his musical knowledge to professional use with bands around his home town in Florida. Organizing a trio that eventually wound up in Seattle, Ray's musical sound was similar to that of Nat "King" Cole. Realizing the need for a distinct style of his own he concentrated on sincere melodic

interpretation of his own emotions. As he describes it, "I try to bring out my soul so that people can understand what I am. I want people to feel my soul."

In addition to personal performance on piano and alto saxophone, Ray is an outstanding composer. His songs have gained widespread popularity among other recording artists notably "Hallelujah I Love Her."

The creative instinct is one of nature's most compelling urges. The ability to satisfy it is a fortunate gift—and here is an artist with one of the greatest musical gifts in the world. As Ray Charles sings and plays, he exposes depths of emotion rarely captured on record. Such artistry demands an audience. You are the audience; join Ray Charles as the *Genius Hits the Road*.

—  
Rick Ward

*These notes appeared  
on the original album liner.*



Long before concept albums were an everyday occurrence, Ray Charles gathered up a dozen vintage songs about U.S. destinations and assembled them for his first album for ABC-Paramount in 1960. Charles had closed out his incredible hitmaking run at Atlantic Records the previous year; ABC offered the pianist greener pastures in the form of an extremely lucrative deal and eventual ownership of his masters, so he wisely made his move.

Its lavish orchestral backdrops the work of ex-Woody Herman arranger Ralph Burns, *The Genius Hits the Road* was aimed primarily at pop audiences rather than the masses that already snapped up Brother Ray's soul-dripping R&B singles. ABC hoped to expand his demographics the same way his Atlantic masterpiece *The Genius of Ray Charles* was then in the process of doing. *Hits the Road* featured an immortal performance that would give Charles his first number one pop single, as he made Hoagy Carmichael's "Georgia on My Mind" his for all eternity.

ABC-Paramount was a major label (albeit a relatively recently

established one), not a cozily run indie like Atlantic where the owners doubled as producers. *The Genius Hits the Road* marked Ray's first album-length collaboration with in-house A&R man Sid Feller, who had been producing Lloyd Price. Charles and Feller would happily work together for decades to come.

"That was the first album we made," said the late Feller. "He wanted to do songs about either states or cities. A lot of material he knew himself, standard material he knew himself. He'd give me some titles, and then check through catalogs and publishers for other ones that had names of cities or names of states. I would call publishers, and they'd send me copies of the things. They'd send me either demo tapes or records of them, so if he wasn't too familiar with the lyrics or the melodies all the way through, he could listen to them and find out if he liked something.

"With each project, I would gather material in the vein that he wanted—in that case, states or cities—and send him a tape with demo records of the songs, which had the lyrics, of course. He relied on

tapes more than music sheets because he couldn't see the music sheets. So he had to learn them by listening."

Although these venerated Tin Pan Alley chestnuts may seem well removed from Ray's seminal "I've Got a Woman" and "What'd I Say," this wasn't an example of a cold and calculated record company imposing its old school artistic vision on a newly pacted artist. In the studio, Brother Ray was most definitely in charge.

Like *The Genius of Ray Charles* (incidentally, Genius was a handle that Atlantic hung on him and not self-proclaimed), *Hits the Road* alternated brass-driven big band arrangements with stately choir-and-strings treatments. They weren't as sharply divided as they were on the Atlantic LP, where the big band tracks occupied all of side one and the Burns-arranged violin-enriched sides sat wholly on the other.

*Hits the Road* was recorded at two lengthy New York sessions on March 25 and 29 of 1960. Brother

Ray was late arriving at Capitol Studios the first night, when label prexy Larry Newton, instrumental in bringing him onto ABC's roster, was in attendance. But he got down to business in a hurry once he got there. "Georgia on My Mind" was first on the evening's agenda.

"'Georgia' was one of his favorite pieces," said Feller. "It was a favorite of his, but he still needed to check it out. I don't know if he ever sang it publicly before. He probably knew the song very well, could do it by himself if he wanted to. But I don't know if he ever performed it before he recorded it." Once he recorded the song, his version would forever be definitive.

Burns's sumptuous arrangement is atmospheric in the extreme, elegant strings, and a choir framing Charles's infinitely soulful vocal and heartbeat piano. Lyricist Stuart Gorrell actually found his lyrical inspiration in Carmichael's sister Georgia rather than the state itself, but the words were ambiguous enough to pay tribute to either.

Hoagy recorded it in 1930 and band-leader Frankie Trumbauer enjoyed success with the song the next year. But it was Ray's version that the public fell hardest for. ABC got Ray's permission to release "Georgia" as a single. It was Charles's first number one pop hit, winning him a Grammy.

"They were surprised when that one was a standout," said Feller. "I mean, you don't know about it until after it's out, and people are playing it. It wasn't something that we'd play and say, 'Hey, we made a hit!' It was a long, slow song."

"Moonlight in Vermont," the next piece tackled that night, has a similarly mellow feel, the luxuriant strings and voices underscoring the picturesque lyrical images (John Blackburn and Karl Suessdorf composed it in 1943). Burns also provided a lush backdrop for "Moon Over Miami," a 1935 composition by Joe Burke and Edgar Leslie that was previously associated with Eddy Duchin. "Blue Hawaii" served as the title song to a 1961 Elvis Presley flick, but Ray beat him to the tune,

penned by Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger for the 1937 movie *Waikiki Wedding* starring Bing Crosby. Ray's treatment seems to have been recorded in two distinct pieces: lilting and violin-enriched to the halfway point, brassy and swinging after that.

After that, the violinists and choir were cut loose, Burns's charts strictly incorporating the big band. "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" had debuted in the 1941 film *Sun Valley Serenade* and was a huge smash that year for the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Ray's having fun here, the brass bold and bright as the Genius rolls like a locomotive through the Mack Gordon/Harry Warren copyright.

In the celebratory swinger "Basin Street Blues," normally the terrain of Dixieland bands, composer Spencer Williams paid tribute to a place "where all the light and dark folks meet" (in 1926, no less). Charles finds room for a brief but highly effective piano break. The first night of recording ended with a harbinger of things to come: "Deep in



in the Heart of Texas” was crooned by Western star Gene Autry after June Hershey and Don Swander wrote it in 1941, although Perry Como and Bing Crosby had popular versions too. An uncredited narrator with a resonant deejay voice keeps asking Ray precisely where he’s talking about all the way through the song.

The second session commenced with two unlikely vehicles: “Mississippi Mud” and “Alabama Bound.” The first, by James Cavanaugh and Harry Barris, had been introduced by the Paul Whiteman Orchestra in 1928, while Ray Henderson, Buddy DeSylva, and Bud Green wrote the latter in 1924 for vaudeville (Al Jolson famously belted it). Both jump merrily, the big band storming as Brother Ray transforms the ancient ditties into something fresh. He does the same with “California, Here I Come,” a 1924 composition by Jolson, DeSylva, and Joseph Meyer. On Gordon Jenkins’s “New York’s My Home,” an anonymous Raelett asks Ray why Chicago,

Hollywood, and San Francisco don’t measure up to the Big Apple, and they’re off to the races.

Burns couldn’t have had much to do with arranging Ray’s treatment of “Carry Me Back to Old Virginny,” written by African-American minstrel man James Bland way back in 1878. It sounds like a vintage Atlantic track, swaying steady in the earthy gospel groove that Charles so favored, with only the Raeletts and Ray’s rhythm section (bassist Edgar Willis and drummer Milton Turner) behind him.

Brother Ray’s greatest road song of all wasn’t on the album but leads off this disc’s bonus tracks. Percy Mayfield, one of L.A.’s top postwar R&B stars before a disfiguring auto accident sidelined him, brought Ray the uproarious “Hit the Road Jack.” Ray’s second pop chart-topper (it paced the R&B charts as well) is a sassy dialog between a slick-tongued Charles and his fed-up Raeletts (led by Margie Hendrix, they’re all hellbent on tossing him out the door). It was cut July 5, 1961

at New York's Bell Sound with Ray arranging, his righteously swinging small band—five horns, bass, and drums—backing him up.

Charles was always experimenting with rhythmic inventions, even on Bill Monroe's bluegrass classic "Blue Moon of Kentucky" in 1965. "At that time, bossa nova came out. So I had a thought of doing it backwards. Instead of the first beat rests, do it the other way. Just a beat off. And I thought we'd call it a "swingova," said Feller. "It made it sound like something unique." Ray's luxurious 1966 rendition of "Sentimental Journey" found the Raeletts joined by a deep-voiced male background singer. Always

remaining contemporary, Ray took on the Beatles' majestic "The Long and Winding Road" in 1971 and sang John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" (complete with multi-tracked Ray vocals), and Tony Joe White's forlorn "Rainy Night in Georgia" the next year, inevitably placing his own stamp on all of them.

*The Genius Hits the Road* vaulted to #9 on *Billboard's* pop album charts during a 50-week run that began in October of 1960, fulfilling ABC-Paramount's projections for their new artist. But this particular road was just the beginning of a new journey for Brother Ray.

—Bill Dahl  
July 2009

#### SOURCES

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*Ray Charles: Man and Music*, by Michael Lydon  
(New York: Riverhead Books, 1998)

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(Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 1991)

*Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Albums 1955-2001*, by Joel Whitburn  
(Menomonee Falls, WI: Record Research Inc., 2001)



1. **ALABAMA BOUND** 1:55  
(Buddy DeSylva-Bud Greene-Ray Henderson)
2. **GEORGIA ON MY MIND** 3:35  
(Hoagy Carmichael-Stuart Gorrell)
3. **BASIN STREET BLUES** 2:47  
(Spencer Williams)
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(James Cavanaugh-Harry Barris)
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11. **BLUE HAWAII** 2:59  
(Leo Robin-Ralph Rainger)

12. **CHATTANOOGA CHOO-CHOO** 3:06  
(Mack Gordon-Harry Warren)

### BONUS TRACKS

13. **HIT THE ROAD JACK** 2:00  
(Percy Mayfield)  
from **Genius - The Ultimate Ray Charles Collection** (CRE-31293-02)
14. **SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY** 2:58  
(Les Brown-Benjamin Homer-Bud Green)  
from **Ray's Moods** (CRE-31411-25)
15. **BLUE MOON OF KENTUCKY (SWINGOVA)** 2:13  
(Bill Monroe)  
from **Country & Western Meets Rhythm & Blues** (CRE-31468-25)
16. **RAINY NIGHT IN GEORGIA** 6:16  
(Tony Joe White)  
from **Through the Eyes of Love** (CRE-31456-25)
17. **THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD** 3:14  
(John Lennon-Paul McCartney)  
from **Volcanic Action of My Soul** (CRE-31409-25)
18. **I WAS ON GEORGIA TIME** 3:28  
(Ray Charles)  
from **Do I Ever Cross Your Mind** (CRE-31475-25)
19. **TAKE ME HOME, COUNTRY ROADS** 3:34  
(Bill Danoff-John Denver-Taffy Nivert)  
from **A Message from the People** (CRE-31406-02)

on #2, 5, 8, 11:

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**Edgar Willis**—bass

**Milt Turner**—drums

plus strings and choir

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**Leroy Cooper**—baritone saxophone

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**The Raeletts** featuring **Margie Hen-**  
**drix**—background vocals

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March 29 (#1, 4, 6, 7, 10), 1960

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**Ralph Burns**

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Reissue produced by **Chris Clough**

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24-bit remastering—**Bob Fisher** at  
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Liner notes—**Bill Dahl**

Project assistance—**Abbey Anna,**

**Rikka Arnold, Bill Belmont,**

**Larry Blake, Jennifer Peters,**

**Jeffrey Spector**

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**Marketing Group, Ray Baradet,**

**Joel Dufour**



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MONO—ABC-335  
STEREO—ABCS-335

# RAY CHARLES

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All of these arrangements are by Ralph Burns, one of Ray's favorite arrangers. Their many joint musical efforts have developed respect and understanding between the two men. Ralph excels in tailoring arrangements for the varying Ray Charles style. For an appreciation of Ray's range of talent, listen especially to the swinging "Alabama Bound," the softly emotional "Georgia on My Mind" and the gospel-influenced "Carry Me Back to Old Virginny." Ray sings with bubbling good humor; "Deep in the Heart of Texas" is a prime example. His unexpected prolonging of a note, a sudden gospel wail, and occasional primitive vocal harshness maintain listener interest to an exceptional degree.

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RICK WARD

## SIDE ONE

	Time
1. ALABAMA BOUND (B. G. DeSylva-B. Green-R. Henslerston) (Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.-Ross Jungschickel, Inc.-both ASCAP)	1:53
2. GEORGIA ON MY MIND (H. Carmichael-S. Gorrell) (Peer International-BMI)	3:37
3. BASIN STREET BLUES (Spencer Williams) (Mayfair Music-ASCAP)	2:45
4. MISSISSIPPI MUD (J. Cavanaugh-H. Barris) (Shapiro, Bernstein & Co.-ASCAP)	3:25
5. MOONLIGHT IN VERMONT (J. Blackburn-K. Suessdorf) (Michael H. Goldsen, Inc.-ASCAP)	3:02
6. NEW YORK'S MY HOME (Gordon Jenkins) (Leeds Music-ASCAP)	3:04

## SIDE TWO

1. CALIFORNIA, HERE I COME (A. Jolson-B. DeSylva-J. Meyer) (M. Witmark & Sons-ASCAP)	2:06
2. MOON OVER MIAMI (E. Leslie-J. Burke) (Boarne, Inc.-ASCAP)	3:20
3. DEEP IN THE HEART OF TEXAS (J. Hershey-D. Swander) (Melody Lane Pub.-BMI)	2:25
4. CARRY ME BACK TO OLD VIRGINNY—featuring The Raelites (James A. Bland) (P. D.)	2:00
5. BLUE HAWAII (L. Robin-R. Rainger) (Famous Music-ASCAP)	3:00
6. CHATTANOOGA CHOO-CHOO (M. Gordon-H. Warren) (Leo Feist, Inc.-ASCAP)	3:00

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

### MONOPHONIC (High Fidelity)

Users of wide-range frequency playback systems should adjust their equipment to the standard RIAA curve (Turnover 500 R—Roll-off 13.7). Minor variations from this standard should be made according to one's ear and to the tonal nature of each particular recording. The concept of ABC-Paramount's exclusive Full Color Fidelity revolves around the reproduction of true musical sounds rather than "sounds for sound's sake." ABC-Paramount monaural records may be played on a standard monaural phonograph unless equipped with a compatible cartridge.

### STEREOPHONIC

RIAA EQUALIZATION CURVE: Crossover, 50 cps; Roll-off, 13.75 db at 10 kc; Low Freq. Capabilities, 20 cps; High Freq. Capabilities, over 20 kc; RIAA playback equalization should be used for this record in order that the ultimate performance capabilities may be realized. ABC-Paramount stereophonic records should not be played on a standard monaural phonograph unless equipped with a compatible cartridge.

**ARRANGED AND  
CONDUCTED BY  
RALPH BURNS**

PRODUCED BY *Sid Feller*