

## Ray Charles Last Wish Granted

Written by Robert ID1893

Thursday, 15 September 2005 06:22 -

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One of Ray Charles' final requests before his passing in 2004 was that the songs he recorded in 1998 for an album of superstar duets be completed and released. Rhino Entertainment fulfills Charles' final artistic vision with *GENIUS AND FRIENDS*. Due to arrive September 20 -- three days before Charles would have turned 75 -- this collection of 14 new and previously unreleased duet recordings, a birthday gift from Ray to his fans, will be available at all retail outlets.

Charles is in stellar form and so are his partners as they trade lines from memorable originals and covers on *GENIUS AND FRIENDS*. Produced by acclaimed producer Phil Ramone and overseen by Atlantic Records Founder, Ahmet Ertegun, the album features beautifully crafted 1990s Ray Charles master recordings, completed by the most acclaimed singers spanning three generations.

Among the album's highlights are Charles singing the poignant ballad "It All Goes By So Fast" with Mary J. Blige and the sound of the Andrae Crouch Singers joyfully raising their voices alongside Charles and Patti LaBelle on the gospel original "Shout." Charles teams up to cover two very different classics on the upbeat swing version of "You Are My Sunshine" with Chris Isaak and the powerful funk/rock groove of "Compared To What" with neo-soul vocalist Leela James.

*GENIUS & FRIENDS* includes Charles' collaborations with Alicia Keys in her stirring rendition of "America The Beautiful," from the 2005 Super Bowl, soul legend Gladys Knight on "You Were There," as well as "Touch" by rising star John Legend. Idina Menzel, from the Tony-Award-winning Broadway musical *Wicked* and the motion picture and original Broadway production of *Rent*, joins Charles on "I Will Be There." Additionally, George Michael lends his vocals to the Stevie Wonder/Syreeta Wright penned "Blame It On The Sun," and Charles' longtime friend Willie Nelson joins him on "Busted" from the 1991 Ray Charles 50 Years In Music television special.

The album also showcases international star Laura Pausini on "Surrender To Love" and music icon Diana Ross on "Big Bad Love." Angie Stone opens the CD with the seductive "All I Want To Do," while Ruben Studdard movingly covers the John Lennon classic "Imagine." Ray Charles' legacy reached new heights last year with the release of *Ray*, the lauded film biography, which has grossed more than \$70 million since its release. The film's soundtrack went platinum, and *The Very Best of Ray Charles* went gold. In addition, *Genius Loves Company* -- an album of duets Charles recorded shortly before his death in June 2004 -- sold

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more than three million copies and earned eight Grammy® Awards, including Best Album of the Year and Best Record of the Year.

Listening Party Audio Links:

Genius & Friends:

[http://www.rhino.com/fun/listeningparties/73185\\_PartyPlayer.lasso](http://www.rhino.com/fun/listeningparties/73185_PartyPlayer.lasso)

Ray Charles E-Card:

<http://www.rhino.com/flashcards/ray75>

GENIUS AND FRIENDS Track Listing/Sequence:

ALL I WANT TO DO – with Angie Stone

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE – with Chris Isaak

IT ALL GOES BY SO FAST – with Mary J. Blige

YOU WERE THERE – with Gladys Knight

IMAGINE – with Ruben Studdard

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I WILL BE THERE – with Idina Menzel

BLAME IT ON THE SUN – with George Michael

TOUCH – with John Legend

SHOUT – with Patti LaBelle & The Andrae Crouch Singers

SURRENDER TO LOVE – with Laura Pausini

BUSTED (Live) – with Willie Nelson

AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL – with Alicia Keys

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