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History of Rock ‘n’ Roll

Ray Charles

“Georgia on My Mind” by Ray Charles is the artist that I chose to write my paper on. Ray Charles voice drew me in with its soft and soulful sound. I chose his song “Georgia on my mind” because it is a very soft and slow song. You are able to hear his emotions in his lyrics. You can also hear the thoughtfulness behind every instrument and the way he sang the words to create a blues sound.

There is a live performance of “Georgia on My Mind” on YouTube and this is what I used to help guide me through finding all of the musical concepts like S.H.M.R.F. When performing, Ray Charles uses a sound of orchestral strings and an accompanying chorus mixing in a deep personal blues to create a soulful vibe. The harmony of “Georgia on My Mind” goes from happy to sad, and joyful to melancholic. The song starts out with the orchestra and then during the bridge the guitar is introduced and so is the accompanying chorus. During the bridge there is a more haunting melody. The haunting melody gives the song the harmony the happy to sad feeling.  You can also hear the sounds of a drum in the background, they are using a high hat cymbal. The melody of “Georgia on My Mind” is very simple. Oney writes in an article, “Two-note motives (ascending, then descending) followed by long rests distinctly set apart the name "Georgia," literally painting the premise that this name alone encompasses the whole of the singer's thoughts.” (Oney) The melody of “Georgia on my mind” is very relaxing and not very complex. There is a rhythm of a 4/4 time signature for “Georgia on my mind”; there is also 105 beats per minute. This song has the form of AABA and the lyrics have a very simple term. People actually argue over if Ray Charles wrote this song about a lady or the state of Georgia. The other artist contributed to “Georgia on My Mind” by making it homier. They gave it another quality that makes the song fit together.

Ray Charles was born on September 23, 1930 in Georgia, his family moved to Florida when he was an infant. Charles had a very traumatizing childhood. He witnessed his younger brother’s death; he gradually lost his sight and by the age of 7 he had lost it all together. His mother died when he was just 15 years old, He also soon became a heroin addict. Charles’s mother sent him to a school for the Deaf and the Blind when he lost his sight. It was there where his intrest in music sparked. Biography.com writes, “Where he learned to read, write and arrange music in Braille. He also learned to play piano, organ, sax, clarinet and trumpet. The breadth of his musical interests ranged widely, from gospel to country, to blues.” After his Ray Charles mother passed away he moved to Seattle to start making music. His first single hit the R&B charts in 1949 helping him create his distinctive sound, because soon after he signed with Atlantic Records and soon after that he had another hit R&B single with the label, "Mess Around." By the late 1950s Charles was entering the world of jazz and gospel. He was soon given the nickname “Father of Soul” because when Ray Charles sings your goose bumps rise and the back of your neck tingles. He also go the nickname because that was the genre that he kept throughout the years mixing it into the other genres. Ray Charles had this talent of mixing different kinds of music together perfectly. His most famous song for this is “What'd I Say." it made number six on the pop charts and number one on the R&B charts. Ray Charles had a successful career. He won some Grammys for his music, and he became an icon for gospel music. He used the Tin Pan Alley music style in his favor.

Ability Magazine wrote an article on Ray Charles in a very high tone of voice. They saw him as an amazing person. They talked about how he was a genius in all of the things that he accomplished. Ability Magazine writes, “The emerging sound was unmistakable, brand-new, yet ancient as the woods, the country church of Ray's childhood. The breakthrough was close at hand.” Ray cared a lot about his music, and it defiantly showed when he performed. Ability Magazine gives us an example of this, “You know you're getting a good show when Ray's socks fall down...his feet are going up over the piano. One sock falls half-mast. It's because of all the energy he expands. That's his exercise.” When you get an artist that loves what he is doing, it makes a huge difference in the quality of the music and the performance. A lot of artist struggle to bring the audience alive and that’s what makes a good artist, when you can touch your audience with your lyrics, emotions, and your energy. You can created a beautiful moment and fan base. The audience will come back for more concerts and buy more albums. This is what Ray Charles did, he cared about the quality of his performance, Ability Magazine writes, “Music is powerful," Ray says. "As people listen to it, they can be affected. They respond. But when I was doing this album, I wasn't trying to create an overall message. It just turned out that we got some songs that had something to say.” Ray Charles died in 2004 because of a liver disease, yet his song “Georgia on My Mind” is the state song for Georgia, and he still has a worth 100 million dollars. People love him because he took the time to care about his lyrics and his performance.

Ray Charles defiantly had a difficult life but he made the most of it. He actually cared. That makes a big difference in any career and I think it benefited him a lot. Ray Charles is an artist to remember and he definitely made sure people would remember him.

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