

= Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music =

Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music is a studio album by American recording artist Ray Charles , released in April 1962 on ABC @-@ Paramount Records . Recording sessions for the album took place in early to mid @-@ February 1962 at Capitol Studios in New York City and at United Recording Studios in Hollywood . Production was handled entirely by Charles and conductor Sid Feller . A departure from Charles 's previous work , the album features country , folk , and Western music standards covered and redone by Charles in popular song forms of the time , including rhythm and blues , pop , and jazz .

As his fifth LP release for ABC @-@ Paramount , Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music became a rapid critical and commercial success as it brought Ray Charles further mainstream notice , following his tenure for Atlantic Records . With the help of the album 's four charting singles , Charles earned recognition in the pop market , as well as airplay on both R & B and country radio stations . Modern Sounds and its lead single , " I Can 't Stop Loving You " , were both certified gold by the Recording Industry Association of America in 1962 , as each record had shipped 500 @,@ 000 copies in the United States .

Regarded by many critics as Charles 's best studio album , Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music has been considered by several music writers to be a landmark album in American music . The album 's integration of soul and country music bent racial barriers in popular music , amid the height of the African @-@ American civil rights struggle . In the process of recording the album , Charles became one of the first African @-@ American musicians to exercise complete artistic control over his own recording career . The album has been called one of the greatest albums of all time by publications such as Rolling Stone and Time .

= = Background = =

After his Atlantic Records contract ended , Ray Charles signed with ABC @-@ Paramount Records in November 1959 , obtaining a much more generous contract than other artists had at the time . Following his commercial and pop crossover breakthrough with the hit single " What 'd I Say " earlier that year , ABC offered Charles a \$ 50 @,@ 000 annual advance , higher royalties than previously offered and eventual ownership of his masters ? a very valuable and lucrative deal at the time . Composed by Charles himself , the single furthered Charles 's mainstream appeal , while becoming a Top 10 pop hit and selling a million copies in the United States , despite the ban placed on the record by some radio stations , in response to the song 's sexually @-@ suggestive lyrics . However , by the time of the release of the instrumental jazz LP Genius + Soul = Jazz (1960) for ABC 's subsidiary label Impulse ! , Charles had virtually given up on writing original material and had begun to follow his eclectic impulses as an interpreter .

Charles ' first hit single for ABC @-@ Paramount was " Georgia on My Mind " . Originally written by Stuart Gorrell and Hoagy Carmichael , Charles ' version was produced by Sid Feller and released in 1960 , earning Charles national acclaim and a Grammy Award . The song was Charles 's first collaboration with Feller , who also arranged and conducted the recording . Charles earned another Grammy for the follow @-@ up " Hit the Road Jack " , written by R & B singer Percy Mayfield . By late 1961 , Charles had expanded his small road ensemble to a full @-@ scale big band , partly as a response to increasing royalties and touring fees , becoming one of the few black artists to crossover into mainstream pop with such a level of creative control . This success , however , came to a momentary halt in November 1961 , as a police search of Charles 's hotel room in Indianapolis , Indiana , during a concert tour led to the discovery of heroin in his medicine cabinet . The case was eventually dropped , as the search had been undertaken without a proper warrant , and Charles soon returned his focus on music and recording .

= = Conception = =

Following his blues fusion with gospel and jazz influences on his earlier Atlantic material , which

had brought him much fame and controversy , Charles sought to experiment with country music . As noted by himself in the liner notes for What 'd I Say (1959) , Charles was influenced by the genre in his youth , stating that he " used to play piano in a hillbilly band " and that he believed that he " could do a good job with the right hillbilly song today . " At Atlantic , he attempted to incorporate this style and influence with his cover of country singer Hank Snow 's " I 'm Movin ' On " . Charles later said about the song , " When I heard Hank Snow sing ' Moving On ' , I loved it . And the lyrics . Keep in mind , I ? m a singer , so I like lyrics . Those lyrics are great , so that ? s what made me want to do it . " The " I 'm Movin ' On " sessions were his last for Atlantic .

Charles 's recording of his acclaimed studio effort The Genius of Ray Charles (1959) brought him closer to expressing his jazz and pop crossover ambitions . Described by one music critic as " the most important of his albums for Atlantic " , the record was the first to introduce Charles 's musical approach of blending his brassy R & B sound with the more middle of the road , pop @-@ oriented style , while performing in the presence of a big band ensemble . Recording of the album , as well his ABC @-@ Paramount debut , The Genius Hits the Road (1960) , a collection of place @-@ name songs devoted to parts of the United States , expanded on Charles 's thematic and conceptually @-@ organized approach to albums rather than commercially successful singles production . Inspired by this approach and his recording of " I 'm Movin ' On " , Charles originally made plans for a single @-@ less concept album .

When Charles had announced that he wanted to work on an album of country music in 1961 , during a period of racial segregation and tension in the United States , he received generally negative commentary and feedback from his peers , including fellow R & B musicians and ABC @-@ Paramount executives . The country album concept , however , meant more to Charles as a test of his record label 's faith in him and respect for his artistic freedom than as a test of social tolerance among listeners amid racial distinctions of country and R & B. Fueled by his esteem for creative control , Charles pitched the idea of a country album to ABC representatives . Following the successful lobby of the concept and a contract renewal in early 1962 , which was linked to the launching of his own Tangerine label , Charles prepared his band for the recording sessions that produced Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music .

= = Recording = =

Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music was the 18th overall LP Charles had recorded . According to him , the title of the album was conceived by producer Sid Feller and ABC @-@ Paramount 's executives and management people . The recording sessions for the album took place at three sessions in mid @-@ February 1962 . The first two sessions were set on February 5 and 7 at Capitol Studios in New York , New York , at which one half of the album was recorded and produced . The other half was recorded on February 15 of that same year at United Recording Studios in Hollywood , California . Instead of drawing what he should record from memory and his knowledge of country music , Charles asked Feller , his newly appointed A & R (Artists and Repertoire) man , to research top country standards through major country music publishers .

By canvassing premier country publishing companies , such as Acuff @-@ Rose Publishing (which featured the Hank Williams catalog) and Hill & Range Songs (most of which were located in Nashville , Tennessee) , Feller amassed around 250 songs on tape for Charles to consider recording for Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music . From New York City , Feller sent the recordings to Charles , who was living in California at the time , for him to choose . According to music essayist Daniel Cooper :

While his selections provided the album 's country and western foundation , the musical arrangements represented its contemporary influence . Eager to display his big band ensemble in studio , Charles enlisted premier jazz arrangers Gerald Wilson and Gil Fuller , while Marty Paich , who was active in the West Coast jazz scene , was hired to arrange the lush strings and chorus numbers . Despite enlisting a roster of professional arrangers and musicians , Charles intended to control the artistic direction of the recordings . To indicate specific licks he wanted emphasized for certain songs , Charles would put together voice @-@ and @-@ piano demos and pass them along

to the arrangers , informing them of what he wanted to do with specific sounds . According to Feller , at one point during recording , Charles rewrote an entire botched arrangement and dictated the parts to each of the 18 backing musicians .

= = Composition = =

The album 's themes are about heartbreak and love , while most of the material chosen by Charles were ballads as well . The concept which had originally attracted the interest of Charles to this style of music was the strength he admired in writing such a ballad 's somber or melancholy lyrics and then performing the ballad beautifully and with emotional stability ; an element he had found to be common in even the most diverse musical genres . Writer Daniel Cooper said of Charles 's adaptation of country elements , " His country forays play like a series of intricate variations or like one long meditation on the expansive qualities of music commonly described as the white man 's blues . " Allmusic 's Stephen Cook writes that " Charles intones the sleepy @-@ blue nuances of country crooners while still giving the songs a needed kick with his gospel outbursts . "

Despite the racial and social implications of R & B and country at the time , Charles did not agree with contemporary views of race records and other genres , including pop and country , as essentially different . In an interview with Ben Fong @-@ Torres of Rolling Stone , Charles said of the similarities between the blues and country music , " [T] he words to country songs are very earthy like the blues , see , very down . They 're not as dressed up , and the people are very honest and say , ' Look , I miss you , darlin ' , so I went out and I got drunk in this bar . ' That 's the way you say it . Where in Tin Pan Alley will say , ' Oh , I missed you darling , so I went to this restaurant and I sat down and I had dinner for one . ' That 's cleaned up now , you see ? But country songs and the blues is like it is . "

In an interview with music historian Peter Guralnick , Charles further elaborated on his understanding , stating " You take country music , you take black music , you got the same goddamn thing exactly . " While Modern Sounds features mostly covers of country and western music standards , its sound and musical style are marked by the heavy rhythm and blues influence of Charles 's playing . A considerable amount of the material 's melancholy lyrics and words are backed by piano and orchestral arrangements that are rooted in jazz , as well as West Coast and Charles 's style of piano blues . Charles has said that the country album was " completely different from rhythm and blues " .

= = Songs = =

" You Don 't Know Me " has a string and vocal ensemble production and themes of desirous unrequited love . The song 's narrator longs for a woman that views him as " just a friend / That 's all I 've ever been / For you don 't know me . " Allmusic editor Bill Janovitz writes of the song 's affecting narrative , stating " The genius , the pathos , and the soul that is Charles oozes into this recording [...] No matter how many times one hears the song , it still induces chills down the spine after the narrator blows any chance he might have had and is left alone at the end . "

Both composed by Hank Williams , " You Win Again " and " Hey , Good Lookin ' " are derived from Williams 's different emotional perspectives . The difference is further accentuated by Charles 's interpretations of the songs . " I Can 't Stop Loving You " , a countrypolitan ballad with lush , cushioned arrangements , was placed at the 11th spot in the track listing , assumed by Sid Feller to be the album 's weakest song , after which becoming the album 's top @-@ selling single . Charles was disappointed with him , as Feller was in charge of sequencing for the album .

A component of Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music is Charles 's creative reliance on honky tonk musician Floyd Tillman 's songwriting , covering the heartbreak ballads " It Makes No Difference Now " and " I Love You So Much It Hurts " . The Ted Daffan @-@ penned " Worried Mind " and " Born to Lose " expand his take on country balladry and feature a blend of piano blues with string arrangements .

= = Commercial performance = =

Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music became one of the best @-@ selling albums recorded by a black musician of the time , as well as one of the best @-@ selling country albums , shipping at least 500 @,@ 000 copies in its first three months of release . This achievement was due in part to the mainstream promotional efforts Modern Sounds had received from ABC prior to and following release . The album proved to be a crossover hit as well , as distributors claimed the record had been selling in pop , R & B and country music markets ; at the time , often referred to as white and black markets during the period .

Upon the album 's release in early April 1962 in both mono and stereo format , a reviewer for Billboard magazine claimed that " In addition to being powerful dealer material , this package will fracture knowledgeable jockeys who will find in it a wealth of material to talk about as well as play . " By mid @-@ April , reports of the album 's sales and radio airplay had started coming in from cities such as Dallas and Philadelphia . On June 23 , 1962 , the mono issue of Modern Sounds replaced the West Side Story soundtrack album as the number one album in the United States , knocking it off the top of the Billboard Pop Albums chart . The album spawned four charting singles , " Born to Lose " , " Careless Love " , " I Can 't Stop Loving You " and " You Don 't Know Me " , the latter two of which went number one on the Adult Contemporary chart . The hit singles quickly gained a significant amount of radio airplay on both country and R & B stations . By mid @-@ May , the album 's lead single , " I Can 't Stop Loving You " , had sold 700 @,@ 000 copies within its first four weeks of release . Record dealers began describing the album as " equal in sales action to some of the early Presley disks " and , after moving 400 @,@ 000 copies of the single , influential Atlanta record distributor Gwen Kestler told Billboard magazine that " the record is so hot in her district that people who don 't even own record players are buying it . " " I Can 't Stop Loving You " hit number one on the Billboard Pop Singles chart on June 2 , spending five consecutive weeks at the top of the chart . By the time it fell off the top , the single was reported to have reached nearly a million and a half in sales , moving over 100 @,@ 000 copies per week . In July the record spent two weeks at number one in Great Britain .

As Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music and its singles were performing well in the United States , Charles toured Europe with his big band and the Raelettes . He performed both his signature R & B and jazz material at such venues as Paris Olympia and the Hot Club de France , where he was hailed as " a true jazz artist in the tradition of Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington . " Upon his return to the United States at the end of the summer , ABC @-@ Paramount had officially recognized his achievements , presenting Charles with two gold records ? one for " I Can 't Stop Loving You " , the other for his Modern Sounds album ? during a live concert performance at the Convention Hall in Asbury Park , New Jersey . Through his ventures into country music and the European jazz scene , Charles 's white audience grew significantly at concerts . The album was quickly followed by another recording of country , western and pop standards covered by Charles , and recorded in September 1962 . Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music , Vol . 2 was released six months after the first volume and proved to be equally successful , while also earning a gold certification by the following year . Following his tenure with ABC @-@ Paramount , Charles later went on to achieve more commercial success recording country music under Warner Bros. Records throughout most of the 1970s and 1980s .

= = Critical reception = =

Upon its release , Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music received positive reviews from music critics of both rhythm and blues and country music . Billboard called it " one of the most intriguing albums in a long time " and found its concept " wonderful " . " I Can 't Stop Loving You " subsequently earned Charles a Grammy Award for Best Rhythm & Blues Recording at the 1963 Grammy Awards , while the album was nominated for a Grammy Award for Album of the Year .

Since its initial reception , the album has been praised by critics for Charles 's style and manner of interpreting country music into his R & B musical language . Robert Hilburn of the Los Angeles

Times wrote that the " masterful interpretation of several country standards ... opened a lot of pop ears to country music and showed Nashville much about the proper use of orchestration . " Allmusic editor Stephen Cook called the album a " fine store of inimitable interpretations " , and stated , " Less modern for its country @-@ R & B blend and lushly produced C & W tone than for its place as a high @-@ profile crossover hit , Modern Sounds in Country and Western fit right in with Ray Charles 's expansive musical ways while on the Atlantic label in the ' 50s " . Chris Neal of Country Weekly commented that Charles " recast 12 country favorites in big @-@ band and orchestrated settings with a visionary ? s easy grace " , adding that he " gets to the heart of each [song] in a way that remains thoroughly modern . " John Morthland of the Oxford American called it a " landmark LP of transcendent vocals set against kitschy orchestrations that (along with early rock ' n ' roll) illuminated black @-@ white roots connections for a popular audience . "

= = = Accolades = = =

In 1999 , the album was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame , as was " I Can 't Stop Loving You " in 2001 . Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music was cited by The Recording Academy as a recording of " historical significance " . " I Can 't Stop Loving You " was ranked number 49 on Country Music Television 's list of the 100 Greatest Songs of Country Music . In November 2003 , Rolling Stone ranked the album number 104 on its list of the 500 Greatest Albums of All Time , one of Charles 's two entries and his highest ranking on the list ; it is accompanied only by his The Genius of Ray Charles at number 263 .

= = Legacy and influence = =

= = = Country music = = =

In the wake of Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music and its success , country music experienced an immediate increase in popularity . According to music writer Daniel Cooper , " the album raised the genre 's profile " , specifically Nashville sound , which Charles had covered . Benefiting from this were songwriters , music publishers , and country singers who covered the subgenre 's material . As noted by Cooper , by the end of 1962 , Nashville country publishers were being held as " the hottest source of music material in the record business these days . " Charles 's success with the stylistic fusion of country and soul on Modern Sounds led to similar efforts from artists such as Candi Staton and Solomon Burke , who were greatly influenced by the album . Many country music artists such as Willie Nelson and Buck Owens have cited Charles 's take on the genre with the album as a major influence . In an interview for Country Music Television , Nelson said that the album " did more for country music than any one artist has ever done . " Doug Freeman of the Austin Chronicle wrote of Charles 's influence through the album , stating :

Summing up on the impact Modern Sounds had on country music and listeners , writer Daniel Cooper states , " There is no telling how many people , who perhaps never paid much attention to country music or even had professed to dislike it , listened anew based on the impact of having heard what Ray Charles was capable of doing with that music . " Charles eventually earned a country music repertoire and reputation following the success of the Modern Sounds records , later country hit singles for Warner Bros. Records , and various appearances at country music events , including The Johnny Cash Show in 1970 and the Grand Ole Opry 's 58th anniversary in 1983 , the program to which he listened to as a youth .

= = = Social impact = = =

Following the album 's release , Charles quickly earned an influx of white listeners and audiences at concert venues , without experiencing any fall @-@ out from his predominantly black audience . Writer Daniel Cooper later said of the album 's effect , " It 's an idea as corny as any country song

you can think of , and one that Charles knew to be true ; music unites people . It just really does . " Throughout the years following its initial reception , Modern Sounds gained further acknowledgment of its impact on the music industry and society . Through conceiving and recording the album , Charles became one of the first African @-@ American musicians to receive and practice artistic control bestowed upon by a mainstream record company . In a 1998 interview , country musician Raul Malo acknowledged the album 's influence , calling it " one of the most important records of our time , not only because of its content , but also due to its social and political ramifications . " In a July 8 , 2004 article for Rolling Stone magazine , music journalist Robert Christgau praised the impact and influence that the Modern Sounds recordings had on music , stating " In the world it created , not only could a black person sing the American songbook Ella Fitzgerald owned by then , but a country black person could take it over . Soon Charles 's down @-@ home diction , cotton @-@ field grit , corn @-@ pone humor and overstated shows of emotion were standard operating procedure in American music , black and white . "

In addition to its social implications , the musical integration of soul and country into popular format by Charles changed and revolutionized racial boundaries and restraints in music , and contributed to the historical Civil Rights Movement . Robert Fontenot of About.com was one of several writers to praise the album 's musical and social implications , stating " Arguably one of the most brilliant interpretive albums ever released , it did more to integrate modern American music than almost any other LP in history . " In paying tribute to the magazine 's selection of the 100 Greatest Singers of All Time , which had selected Charles at # 2 , singer @-@ songwriter Billy Joel noted the album 's racial and social impact in an article for Rolling Stone , stating " here is a black man giving you the whitest possible music in the blackest possible way , while all hell is breaking loose with the civil rights movement . " Another article for Rolling Stone , written in honor of Charles and his achievements , later stated that through his Modern Sounds recordings , Ray Charles " made it acceptable for black people to sing country & western music , in the process doing almost as much to break down racial barriers as did the civil @-@ rights movement . "

= = = Subsequent work by Charles = = =

In addition to the album 's legacy as one of the most influential recordings of all time , Modern Sounds also had an effect on Charles 's later work . According to writer Nate Guidry , the recording marked the zenith of Charles 's popularity and success . By the mid @-@ 1960s and continuing into the 1970s and 1980s , the majority of his musical output was focused onto more middle of the road and pop releases , featuring less of his recognizable , trademark soul and R & B , and more of the crossover and fusion tendencies of Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music . On the album 's influence , columnist Spencer Leigh of The Independent stated that " Numerous artists followed Charles 's lead , but it must be said that Charles himself repeated the trick much too often . " The period of releases following Modern Sounds , which includes the musician 's later recording years as well , has been recognized by music writers and critics as a " critical slide " and the weakest in his recording career . Several of the LP albums from this period have yet to be reissued and have remained rare among record collectors , if not out of print . Charles 's final studio album Genius Loves Company (2004) would later be released shortly after his death , and proved to be a comeback success , in terms of sales and critical response , as it quickly became Charles 's first top @-@ 10 album in forty years and the best @-@ selling record of his career .

On October 27 , 1998 , Rhino Entertainment issued a four @-@ disc box set entitled The Complete Country & Western Recordings : 1959 ? 1986 , which chronicles Charles 's country and western recordings . The collection features the two volumes of Modern Sounds , as well as his later country singles for Warner Bros. Included in the set is a hardcover booklet of essays by producer Sid Feller , writer Daniel Cooper , and Ray Charles , along with liner photography by Howard Morehead and Les Leverett . On June 2 , 2009 , both volumes of Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music were reissued as a single package by Concord Music . The reissue was also included as a download in the iTunes Store .

= = Track listing = =

All tracks were produced by Ray Charles and Sid Feller .

Reissue bonus tracks

The album was later reissued on compact disc by the specialty record label Rhino Entertainment in October 1988 with three bonus tracks .

= = Personnel = =

Ray Charles ? piano , vocals , producer

Additional musicians

Hank Crawford ? alto saxophone

Gil Fuller , Gerald Wilson ? arrangements (big band)

Marty Paich ? arrangements (strings)

Technical personnel

Frank Abbey ? engineering (tracks 1 , 3 , 5 , 8 , 10 , 12)

Joe Adams ? production (track 14)

Bob Arnold ? engineering (track 15)

Hugh Bell ? photography

Johnny Cue ? engineering (track 13)

Todd Everett ? liner notes

Sid Feller ? production

Bill Inglot ? remastering

Michael Ochs Archives ? photography

Ken Perry ? remastering

Bill Putnam ? engineering (tracks 2 , 4 , 6 , 7 , 9 , 11 , 15)

Gene Thompson ? engineering (tracks 1 , 3 , 5 , 8 , 10 , 12)

= = Charts = =

Albums

Singles