

1. Streams (7:31)
2. D.R.A. (6:54)
3. Hot Music (9:35)
4. Everybody Loves  
the Sunshine (6:20)
5. The Walkup (5:27)
6. Wise Ton J (10:13)
7. Cinnamon Lenses (7:14)
8. Hoodwink (7:19)

Total running time: 60:42

All compositions by John Jeffrey Ray†  
(Wiston J Music, ASCAP) except  
*Hot Music* by Soho (Kool Groove) (arr. Jeff Ray) and  
*Everybody Loves the Sunshine* by Roy Ayers  
(Roy Ayers Ubiquity, Inc., admin. by  
WB Music Corp., ASCAP) (arr. Jeff Ray)

Produced by Tony Haywood

Recorded by Peter Karl, July 2-3, 2002  
at Peter Karl Studio, Brooklyn, NY  
Mixed & mastered by Philippe Allaert,  
Mantrax Studio, West New York, NJ

Photography by Alan Haywood  
Assistant photographer: Danny Titus  
Styling by Keia K  
Grooming by Ron Caldwell  
Location: The Brownstone, 2032 Fifth Avenue, Harlem  
Graphic design by Kathy Ridl

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[www.jeffray.net](http://www.jeffray.net) [www.hipnotic.com](http://www.hipnotic.com)

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Jeff Ray, electric guitar  
Aaron Swinn, Hammond B3 organ  
& Rhodes keyboard  
Darryl Hall, electric bass  
Victor Wise, drums

HIPNOTIC

JEFF RAY THE WALKUP

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JEFF  
RAY

THE  
WALKUP







It's a long way from Toledo, Ohio to Harlem, USA. But guitarist Jeff Ray made that particular journey and, by dint of hard work, gained the love and respect of the local music community. How does a former college punter and centerfielder wind up in Sugar Hill? Read on.

Born in 1970, Ray picked up the guitar at age 14. A few years later he had his mind blown by the likes of Wayne Shorter, Dexter Gordon, and Kenny Burrell. After attending Ohio's Miami University on a football scholarship, he went on to earn a music degree from Ohio State. Before long he found himself at Rutgers, seeking jazz wisdom at the graduate level with Kenny Barron and the late Ted Dunbar. After Rutgers, it was on to Harlem.

Along the way, Ray established a connection with Philadelphia-based clarinetist (and fellow Rutgers student) Darryl Harper. "Our group entered the Notre Dame Jazz Competition," Ray recalls. "We did a Ralph Bowen arrangement of 'Tricotism.' Darryl and I were playing lines together and we realized the clarinet and guitar sounded cool. So later, Darryl hired me for his project, The Onus."

Ray would soon appear on The Onus's self-titled 1996 debut, as well as the 2000 follow-up, *Reoccurring Dream*. "I was happy to play some really well-developed straightahead stuff and also bring in my own compositions," he says. Not only did Ray put his emergent writing voice on display (giving the second album its title track and also the epic, R&B-informed 'Letter To My Brother'); he also drew the attention of Hipnotic's Tony Haywood, who set in motion plans for the guitarist's own debut CD - the one you hold in your hand.

The Walkup refers in part to the ten-block distance from Ray's apartment to St. Nick's Pub, one of Harlem's best-known jazz nightspots. It was there, while sitting in one night, that Ray met drummer Victor Wise. "Victor really made a difference," Ray admits, also crediting keyboardist Saeed Dupree and bassist Tony Russell as important early associates. With these players and many others, Ray began to work the funk, soul, and R&B circuit in earnest. "I was really into the funk thing where I was coming from, in Ohio," he explains. "I loved the rhythmic approach and the crowd interaction. In Harlem, people come out to hear music, not just to hang out. That puts pressure on you, and you have to deliver." Ray's skills have been consistently put to the test in venues such as Perks, P.J.'s, the Sugar Shack, Jimmy's Uptown, the now-defunct 22 West, and Wyatt Tee Walker's Canaan Baptist Church.

While plotting the direction of his album, Ray drew upon all his life's lessons - even the ones learned on the playing field. "I love the dynamism in sports," he remarks. "Wynton talks about basketball and jazz, the dynamic interaction and all. I saw Michael Jordan play twice, and he looked either like a shadow or a jellyfish. Flow and balance. So much that you couldn't even take it all in. It was so beautiful to watch." Ray also finds that dynamism in modern dance, citing Philadanco, Ron Brown's Evidence, and Rennie Harris Puremovement as favorites. "The link between sports and dance, music and art - I love that about New York. You can get it all."

With these influences in mind, Ray began to write. "I wanted music that would be a great vehicle for all the players - something well-organized that could get across to the crowd but present challenges to the musicians at the same time." Victor Wise was a natural choice on drums. "He goes way back," Ray explains. "He used to be in a band with Jason Mizell, the late Jam Master Jay. He also played with Keith Sweat, Lonnie Smith, the Gap Band, Chuck Brown. Victor's deep into hip-hop and has a huge pocket when he plays."

Wise introduced the leader to Aaron Swinn, heard here on Fender Rhodes and Hammond organ. "Aaron was in Korea with the military for a few years," notes Ray, "and he was playing jazz seven nights a week. When he got back here he was killing it. He's really strong in the rhythmic and harmonic areas, and he knows how to use technology."

Bassist Darryl Hall, who had worked intermittently with The Onus, was the final peg to fall into place. A formidable upright player, he won the 1995 Monk competition and has worked with young luminaries such as Ravi Coltrane, Orrin Evans, and Carla Cook. His electric bass towers over this session, almost like a second drum kit. Ray sums up simply: "Darryl walked into the first rehearsal and just nailed it."

Aside from a laid-back rendition of the Roy Ayers classic "Everybody Loves the Sunshine" and an open-ended cover of the club single "Hot Music," all these tracks are Ray originals. First there's the breezy groove of "Streams," built on a catchy, cyclical three-bar phrase. Then there's "D.R.A." or "Drama Reversal Agency," opening with melancholy cadences but going on to incorporate a spirited, three-way round of solo exchanges on the brighter C section. Both the title track and "Cinnamon Lenses" use thunderous bass riffs to surround passages filled with a slinkier harmonic movement. "Wise Ton J," a collaborative sketch involving the aforementioned Tony Russell, sits at the trippy end of the spectrum, while "Hoodwink" sends listeners off with a dose of frenetic funk, adding a half-time hook in the B section for good measure.

The grooves are airtight but the interplay is loose, rippling with creative push and pull. Ray's instrument speaks with both glassy clarity and rock-n-roll bite, revealing traces of Larry Carlton and Stevie Ray, Scofield and Hendrix, and yes, even a bit of Dexter and Kenny Burrell.

Though he's found a home in Harlem, Ray has his sights set on the road. "I totally want to take this music to the jam band audience," he exclaims. "I'd be thrilled to play for those crowds. The openness and intelligence and positivity of that scene is fabulous. I don't want to play for people who tap their feet and clap politely. I want to play festivals and larger venues and make people dance." But no matter where the music takes him, Ray leaves little doubt that he'll stay close to his roots. "I don't want to represent my voice as a Harlem voice," he clarifies. "But I do want to be true to my Harlem experience - true to the musicians who've given me most of the concepts that I use on this record."

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