

Over the course of his six-decade-long career, Dr. John embodied a near-mythic multitude of musical identities: global ambassador of New Orleans funk and jazz and R&B, visionary bluesman, rock and roll innovator, one-time top 10 hitmaker, self-anointed and massively revered high priest of psychedelic voodoo. On *Things Happen That Way*, the six-time Grammy-winning Rock & Roll Hall of Famer otherwise known as Malcolm John “Mac” Rebennack Jr. reveals yet another dimension of his cosmically vast musicality: a lifelong affinity for classic country & western, whose songs he first encountered via the 78 rpm records frequently spun at his father’s electronics shop. *Things Happen That Way* arrives as the latest and final studio album from an artist who remained wholly unpredictable, alchemizing the charmed simplicity of traditional country into a wildly enchanting body of work.

*Things Happen That Way* marks the fulfillment of a longtime goal of the legendary singer/songwriter/pianist, who first began plotting a country inspired album decades ago. In bringing his album’s songs to life, Dr. John drew on a lineup of musicians befitting of a universally beloved luminary who worked with the likes of Van Morrison, the Rolling Stones, B.B. King, Etta James, and artists as diverse as Aretha Franklin, Ringo Starr, and Eric Clapton. Along with an elite cadre of New Orleans session players, the album’s personnel include icons Willie Nelson and Aaron Neville, as well as label mate singer/songwriter Katie Pruitt and country-rock powerhouse Lukas Nelson & Promise Of The Real. True to an artist whose music “transcended race and cultural divides”—as Black Keys frontman Dan Auerbach proclaimed in presenting Dr. John his lifetime achievement award at the Americana Music Association Honors and Awards in 2013—*Things Happen That Way* reflects both a rich sense of history and a boundless passion for defying expectation.

In part a guilelessly wise meditation on the passing of time, *Things Happen That Way* opens on the delicate surrender of the Willie Nelson-penned “Funny How Time Slips Away,” a track whose soulful harmonies and smoldering horns never overpower the sheer vulnerability of Dr. John’s performance on piano and vocals. A co-conspirator of Rebennack’s for countless years, Nelson shares a warm remembrance that perfectly encapsulates the album’s transportive power: “Dr. John had the most unique musical style and language that would take me to another time and place whenever I heard him play or sing.” Spotlighting his endless ingenuity as a song interpreter, Dr. John also masterfully reimagines Hank Williams’ “Ramblin’ Man” and “I’m So Lonesome I Could Cry,” paying loving homage to the honky-tonk hero he first discovered by way of the country-music radio program “Louisiana Hayride.” Elsewhere on the album, Aaron Neville joins in for a joyfully brass-heavy take on The Traveling Wilburys’ “End of the Line,” while Willie Nelson lends his balm-like vocals and signature guitar work to a soul-stirring rendition of the traditional gospel song “Gimme That Old Time Religion.” In a poignant turn proving Dr. John’s multigenerational appeal, Lukas Nelson and Promise Of The Real step in, backing a haunting and hypnotic, psychedelia-tinged update of “I Walk On Guilted Splinters” (a cut from Dr. John’s 1968 debut *Gris-Gris*, ranked by *Rolling Stone* as one of greatest albums of all time). “It’s a great honor to attempt to interpret the work of Dr. John,” says Lukas. “His music has inspired me since childhood. He was a friend to many, and we all miss him dearly. His music is medicine.”

Though much of *Things Happen That Way* bears an exquisitely reflective mood, the album also offers up several new uptempo originals from Dr. John: “Holy Water” (a savvy and poignant look back at his early-’60s criminal charge for narcotics and subsequent two-year prison sentence), “Sleeping Dogs Best Left Alone” (a swinging and self-aware piece that knowingly speaks to the danger in

playing with proverbial dynamite), and “Give Myself A Good Talkin’ To”(a world-weary but high-spirited reflection on the vicissitudes of human nature). With each track once again illuminating his outsize imagination and idiosyncratic yet profoundly insightful storytelling, the album then closes out with a spellbinding cover of “Guess Things Happen That Way.” In a departure from the buoyant determination of Johnny Cash’s version, Dr. John delivers an aching expression of grief and quiet hope, imbuing every line with so much unvarnished emotion. At turns devastating and triumphant, elegant and raw, with his unexpected passing, this album serves as a glorious farewell from one of the most singular, essential, and infinitely fascinating figures in music history.

*Things Happen That Way* is the first official album release of, and Executive Produced by, The Estate Of Malcolm John Rebennack, Jr.; his album is co-produced by Malcolm John Rebennack, Jr., p/k/a Dr. John and Shane Theriot; “I Walk On Guilded Splinters” is produced by Lukas Nelson and Promise Of The Real, Dr. John’s vocal track is co-produced by Malcolm John Rebennack, Jr., p/k/a Dr. John and Shane Theriot. The Estate thanks Dr. John’s fans for their decades of support which allowed him to be a “Ramblin’ Man” doing what he loved best – playing music.