



Rob Mullins

This Way Up!

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

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| 2. Wednesday
(Mullins) | 5:32 |
| 3. Work Song
(Adderly) | 3:37 |
| 4. Mrs. Robinson drinks tequila
(Simon/Rio) | 4:39 |
| 5. Tiptoe
(Mullins) | 4:33 |
| 6. Chamelion
(Hancock) | 5:20 |
| 7. Little Sunflowe
(Hubbard) | 4:48 |
| 8. Ooh La! La!
(Mullins) | 3:23 |
| 9. Ain't No Sunshine
(Withers) | 4:08 |
| 10. Island Girls
(Mullins) | 4:08 |
| 11. Freedom
(Mullins) | 2:23 |
| 12. Come Together
(Lennon/McCartney) | 4:32 |

LINER NOTES by Scott Yanow

In his busy and productive career, Rob Mullins has led a wide variety of groups ranging from straight ahead jazz to r&b at clubs and festivals, and has had strong achievements as a record producer and an educator. He is particularly proud of being Hubert Laws' keyboardist, most recently for a Carnegie Hall and Jazz Bakery-sponsored tribute to the late Chick Corea. For This Way Up, his

40th recording as a leader, his goal was simple. “I wanted to feature a really good loud party band playing fun music.”

Rob Mullins visited Colorado in late 2019, having happy reunions with associates that he knew from his years living in Denver. “One of the people I called was John Macy, a very accomplished engineer-producer in country music who also plays steel guitar. He told me that he had a new studio which was part of a huge complex. When I visited him on Valentine’s Day, 2020, he suggested that we make a live album, saying that he would love to work on a jazz project. With the pandemic coming, I knew that I would have to move fast. The Denver jazz scene has been healthy for years but during 2018-19 it really became an insider’s jazz mecca, a big scene. Denver actually has enough venues now so guys can play jazz and earn a living. Many of the local musicians are not yet well-known on the national level. When greatness is bubbling up beneath the surface and I have a chance to expose talented players to others, I’m happy to do it.” Rob called his old friend Joe Anderies to play soprano and alto flute on the project along with three younger players who had impressed him and he felt deserved the exposure: trumpeter-flugelhornist Gabriel Marvin, bassist Andrew Rose, and drummer Liam Zahm.

After just one gig to try out his charts, Rob Mullins and his quintet went into the studio on Feb. 27 at 9 in the morning and played music until 10 at night, recording the whole set in a single 13-hour session. “It was an enjoyable experience. The Fender Rhodes was in tip-top shape as was the nine-foot piano. By the end of the day I was really tired but I knew that I had something great.”

This Way Up begins with a fanfare from Rob’s keyboard that leads directly into “**Take Five**.” While the familiar Paul Desmond melody is intact, this version is a bit different than expected. Rob combines the famous 5/4 jazz groove with a phrase in 7/4 that gives it an offbeat feel. For the fun of it, at one point he quotes “My Favorite Things,” which is normally in 6/4 time. The overall effect is exhilarating.

The keyboardist’s “**Wednesday**” was originally recorded for his 1997 album Dance For The New World (Warner Bros.) and was his second biggest radio hit after “**Making Love**.” The new performance, which utilizes riffing horns and has soulful playing from the leader, gives the infectious song a fresh spin.

“I had been fooling around with a four bar rap/hip hop vamp, and one time our drummer Liam started scatting along to it. I had no idea that he could sing and that he had a great voice. He was just out of college and had not really sung

before. I knew that he would be great on '**Work Song**' which includes the vamp." Liam Zahm sounds like a confident veteran on this rendition which modernizes the Nat Adderley classic and is quite catchy.

Next up is the whimsical "**Mrs. Robinson Drinks Tequila**," an unlikely mixture of the songs "Mrs. Robinson" and "Tequila." The Latinized results make it impossible for one to sit still; be sure to yell out "Tequila" in the right spots!

Rob Mullins' original "**Tiptoe**" would make for a very suitable movie theme. It was composed years ago in response to a roommate who used to wake up everyone in the middle of the night, knocking over items and "walking through the house like a lumberjack on his way to a bar after work." The attractive song has notable solos by Joe Anderies on alto flute and Rob on piano.

"**Chameleon**," which Rob Mullins has been playing in his club shows since the 1970s, is given a particularly joyful treatment. His arrangement takes the famous Herbie Hancock recording as a point of departure and infuses it with his own complementary ideas. There is an excellent spot for Anderies on soprano, a rollicking statement by Rob and, as is true throughout the album, the valuable contributions of bassist Andrew Rose should not be overlooked.

Freddie Hubbard's "**Little Sunflower**" is a feature for Gabriel Marvin on flugelhorn. "Gabriel perfectly nailed everything. But then again, how can one go wrong if your trumpet player's name is Gabriel?" Rob Mullins' arrangement, which adds additional chords to the bridge, clearly inspires the other musicians, giving added depth to the standard.

The joyful calypso "**Ooh La La!**" was written for Denver club owner Janet Poth who often uses that expression. The combination of flute and trumpet is particularly attractive on that piece.

Bill Withers' "**Ain't No Sunshine**" is given new life as a reggae tune and uplifted by Liam Zahm's very effective vocal.

One of the most popular songs in Rob Mullins' live shows is his "**Island Girls**" which he first recorded in 1997. The new version of this lightly funky and danceable number is filled with heated ensembles and a melodic lick that will stay in one's head long after the performance is over.

"Freedom" is a change of pace, a moody and atmospheric electronic fantasy that is reminiscent of the more experimental music of Miles Davis, Chick Corea and especially Joe Zawinul. In addition to the keyboards, Rob plays drums on

that tune.

This Way Up concludes with a spirited orchestral version of "**Come Together**" that is a real tour-de-force for Rob. "I thought this would be a fun finish for the album, the idea that after this horrible period, we can all finally come together."

With the pandemic gradually ending, Rob Mullins would love to expand the band on This Way Up with a few more artists and perform the music at festivals and club gigs. "This Way Up captured a lot of what I try to achieve during a live performance. It was exciting to record everything live with interaction between great players who are really involved in the music, capturing a moment in time. I want everyone to take this music with them and have as much fun at their parties as I did when I was making this record."

Scott Yanow, jazz journalist/historian

ARTIST NOTES by Rob Mullins

When I started recording my songs in 1981, I never dreamed that 40 years later I would still be writing and recording my original songs.

Yet, here it is already 2021 and at the risk of sounding like my grandparents I have to say "time flies when you're having fun" and "If you love what you do, you never work a day in your life."

I knew going in it was going to be a rocky road and a hard life in many ways, but I'm not unhappy about my choices. I just keep going always looking ahead, and only looking back to the fond memories, good times, and my songs many of which have stood the test of time.

What I am most happy about after all these years is that I still find life interesting and full of wonder. My close friends and I spend most of our time cracking up and making fun of each other which keeps everyone's spirits up.

Having the opportunity to share music, food, ideas, and stories while getting paid to go all over the world is a blast! You should try it sometime!

This album is party music for older fans and coming generations who may be just discovering me for the very first time.

I hope you all will love it. This was a magic day in the studio and I'm happy every time I hear the result.

Final quote summing up my recording career? Hmmmmmm.....how about this:
40 Years. 40 Albums. No Regrets.

Rob Mullins
1981-2021

Special thanks go to:

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So many wonderful folks I've met around the world over 4 decades, god bless all of you! Let's keep it rollin' -ROB MULLINS LA, CA July 2021

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Rob on Spotify: <https://open.spotify.com/artist/5NKSRdekb2j6410umCwy1D>

Rob at Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/s?k=rob+mullins&i=digital-music&rh=n%3A163856011&ajr=0&ref=nb_sb_noss

TIDAL: <https://tidal.com/browse/artist/3672155>

PLANETMULLINS PODCAST: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3UcaTaV7dve_HWLqR9omkq8WwYmao6ly