



Bio information: **JOEL HARRISON**

Title: **MOTHER STUMP** (Cuneiform Rune 390) Format: CD / DIGITAL

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FILE UNDER: **JAZZ / AMERICANA / BLUES ROCK**

**Guitarist Joel Harrison Revisits His Roots Growing Up in Washington, D.C.
On Latest Cuneiform Records Release, *Mother Stump***

***Mother Stump* Highlights Harrison's Guitar Playing Over His Composing On Covers of Buddy Miller, Leonard Cohen, Al Kooper, Luther Vandross, Paul Motian, George Russell And More**

Featuring Top NY-Based Sidemen

Michael Bates (bass), Jeremy 'Bean' Clemons (drums), Glenn Patscha (keyboards)

For many years, guitarist **Joel Harrison** claimed he had no roots. Growing up in **Washington D.C.**, a place whose identity and values are always in drift, Harrison was convinced he had to "go out into the world with a shovel and plant something of my own," he says in his liner notes to ***Mother Stump***, his latest album on Washington D.C.-based **Cuneiform Records**, a fitting home for a record paying tribute to the artist's DC-upbringing.

But as we often discover, time and distance have a way of putting things in perspective. Looking back, Harrison realized that Washington D.C. was, in fact, a town whose musical gravity overpowered whatever ephemeral political and cultural winds might blow. "I had to move away and get older to see those roots," Harrison says. "You can hear them on this record."

"Washington D.C. was quite a segregated place in the 1960s and '70s, and yet the musicians were inclusive and open in their tastes," Harrison recalls. A plethora of genres were represented around town. One could hear bluegrass by **The Seldom Scene** and **The Country Gentlemen**, and soul, jazz, and funk by **Roberta Flack**, **The Blackbyrds**, **Terry Plumeri**, and **Ron Holloway**. Blues was a pervasive force represented by **Roy Buchanan**, **The Nighthawks**, and the legendary **Powerhouse Blues Band** that featured **Tom Principato**. On the folk scene were people like **Jorma Kaukonen**, **Emmylou Harris**, and **John Fahey**.

"I remember seeing psychedelic rock groups, maybe backed by a light show, at **Pipeline Coffee House** or at **Fort Reno** — bands like **Tractor**, **Tinsel'd Sin** (with **Paul Sears**), **Crank**, **Grits**, or **Grin** (with **Nils Lofgren**). There were outliers like **Root Boy Slim** and **Evan Johns**, whom I jammed with before we started shaving."

"On any given night there might be a redneck band from Southern Maryland, a hillbilly band from nearby West Virginia, or an infusion of urban blues and Philly soul. The people who affected me the most, welcomed it all into their guitar playing."

When Harrison discovered local guitarist **Danny Gatton**, he became a quick devotee. "If I ever had an idol, it was he," Harrison says. "I followed him around like a stray dog in the early and mid '70s, sometimes placing a cassette recorder on a beer-stained table in one of the many low-rent bars he inhabited." Gatton's ability to incorporate many streams of American music, such as country, blues, jazz, rockabilly, and funk, would play an important role in Harrison's own future development as a genre-crossing guitarist.

No matter what kind of music was heard in Harrison's circle of musician friends, the common thread binding it all together was a passion for musical expression in all forms. "I remember jam sessions in my friend Henry's basement where we'd play for hours in some zone between rock, soul, jazz, and country — not practiced enough yet to know enough about any single thing — open, searching."

Harrison began studying jazz with a guitarist named **Bill Harris**, who had a studio in the Northeast DC. Jazz began to take hold of him, but true to his musical upbringing, he would continue to explore across genre lines. "You'd want to play some bluegrass, learn some **Cornell Dupree** licks, pick up a slide for the **Allman Brothers** tunes, learn your bebop harmony, and then practice your **Bach** and **Albeniz** on a nylon string," Harrison recalls. This was a time of important breakthroughs for the guitar, when the instrument was becoming a generative force in new jazz contexts.

"It was an amazing time in which to come of age musically. Minds were open, blueprints were being created, invention was everywhere, and yet strong tradition anchored the experimentation. You'd go way beyond the borders, but there was still that tangle of roots that stretched beneath and across the town," Harrison says in his liners.

On ***Mother Stump***, unlike some other of Harrison's albums, the focus here is on his playing and not his writing and arranging. "It's a mixture of **Luther Vandross**, **Buddy Miller**, **George Russell**, a traditional spiritual, **Paul Motian**, **Leonard Cohen**, and in a couple of my pieces, a nod to those formative years, with six old guitars and two old amps."

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“It's a lot of history that I'm trying to make new again.”

Mother Stump is Harrison's second recording on the Cuneiform label. In 2012, Cuneiform released *Holy Abyss*, a collaborative album of original compositions by Harrison and bassist **Lorenzo Feliciati**, trumpeter **Cuong Vu**, pianist **Roy Powell**, and drummer **Dan Weiss**.

For more information on Joel Harrison:

www.joelharrison.com - www.facebook.com/joelharrisongtr - www.youtube.com/joelharrisongtr - www.cuneiformrecords.com