

Mp3 Joel Mabus - Thumb Thump

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An album of acoustic blues ragtime guitar. Songs of hard luck, gambling, booze, lust, gluttony, jealousy, sloth and other deadly sins. Crying, bragging, moaning and shouting glory, all to the tune of a syncopated guitar played with a strong right thumb 13 MP3 Songs in this album (43:21) ! Related styles: BLUES: Acoustic Blues, FOLK: Folk Blues People who are interested in Jorma Kaukonen Dave Van Ronk Pat Donohue should consider this download. Details: Joel Mabus has a wide and varied repertoire. A fixture on the folk and roots music scene, he is also known as a songwriter and an accomplished instrumentalist. Born in Southern Illinois in the 1950s to a musical family, Joel has been touring nationally and recording since 1978. His dad was a champion fiddler and his mother a banjo player they both worked road shows for the WLS National Barn Dance during the Great Depression (see Joels album available on CD Baby The Banjo Monologues). Mabus has been featured at festivals such as Kerrville Folk Festival, Vancouver Folk Festival, Philadelphia Folk Festival, The Boston Folk Festival, Californias Strawberry Festival and many others. He has appeared on public radios A Prairie Home Companion, and his composition Firelake is longtime theme song for syndicated radio show, The Folk Sampler with Mike Flynn. Joel has appeared in concert on many stages: The Ark in Ann Arbor, Freight Salvage in Berkeley, Passim in Cambridge, Old Town School in Chicago and many more. He has taught guitar, songwriting and banjo at many music camps: Puget Sound Guitar Workshop, California Coast Music Camp, Augusta Heritage in Elkins, WV and Summer Acoustic Music Week in NH, to mention a few. Thumb Thump was conceived as a blues and ragtime project, and released in 2002, added to CD Baby and other digital outlets in 2009. Here is a review from 2003: BLUES REVUE april/may 2003 (p.99) Soloist Joel Mabus works an acoustic beat far from any highway. His new collection of standards (Frankie and Albert, Big Rock Candy Mountain) and originals (Shake Them Hard Luck Blues, Struttin to Tootsies) hits the mark his blues and ragtime playing is imaginative, spontaneous, and informed without being scholarly. Instrumentals Red Dog Rag and The Creeper are packed with mind-blowing runs and rhythms; even the vocal tracks have there share of incredible instrumental flourishes. And Mabus weathered voice is a great folk-blues instrument. Just the move from free time to a steady meter leading into East St. Louis is a thing of beauty. Named for its

fingerpicking style, the exquisitely recorded Thumb Thump (Fossil 1402) is irresistible in a Mississippi John Hurt way unless your blues have to be all low-down, all the time, you should love it. THE COMPLETE LINER NOTES: The thump of my right thumb ties this album together. These songs generate from two fiery styles of syncopated music incubated in America's late 19th century - blues ragtime. All the popular genres that followed - tin-pan alley, jazz, country, bluegrass, r&b, rock roll, etc. - owe a big debt to this early integration of African and European music. The sassy flash of ragtime and the smoldering passion of the blues lit the fuse for 20th century music. It was all there 100 years ago. But I didn't come here to shake out musty exhibits from the blues museum. It's ironic, but to truly honor the spirit of a tradition, one must not be shackled to an idealized replica of the past. My philosophy is simple - do your homework, but then play. So you won't hear re-fabrications of early recordings here. In fact a few of these numbers are originals; the rest are personal interpretations of some very old songs. These have been stewing on my back burner for many years, and have taken on a bit of my own personality in the boil-down process. No apologies for that. Perhaps the most vital aspects of this music are imagination and spontaneity. At least that's what I shoot for. I would have a thousand guitar players to thank if I were to list them all, but a few individuals deserve mention. My guitar heroes as a youngster were first Earl Scruggs and later Doc Watson. (Scruggs is famed for his banjo, but is also an excellent finger style guitarist.) Add to them Brownie McGhee and Lightning Hopkins - both of whom I spent some precious time playing with during my college years. John Hurt, Maybelle Carter, Merle Travis, Chet Atkins and a slew of other great pickers are also in my personal pantheon of guitar greats. For this album I also tip my hat to the poet Carl Sandburg - no great shakes as a guitar player, but a wonderfully rough-hewn singer and collector of earthy folk songs whose 1927 publication, *The American Songbag*, informs several of my arrangements. The Mississippi River runs through this album, too. The tip of southern Illinois is often called "Little Egypt." (The land just north of it - up to a line drawn from East St. Louis to Centralia - was once called "Greater Egypt.") In early pioneer days, the river-washed bottomland along the Mississippi - below the confluence of the Missouri Illinois Rivers and above the meeting of the Wabash Ohio - was likened to the fertile Nile. It's also been called "The American Bottoms." This was my boyhood home, and a fertile land for music, too. Some of my earliest memories of St. Louis - the big city across the river - come from window-shopping trips my family would take during holiday seasons when I was a little boy. We would cross the tall, spindly Eads Bridge to hear old black men playing loud steel-bodied guitars on

the busy street corners downtown. They would sing near the doorways of the fancy department stores such as Scruggs-Vandervoort Barney or Famous-Barr. These were big men shouting the blues and selling pencils from the tin cups welded to their instruments. I was just a little boy, and not yet a guitar player, but the impression is still vivid more than forty years later. St. Louis had been the epicenter of the ragtime era. Scott Joplin worked there. Songs sprang from local headlines. It was there that Duncan (a black man) shot Brady (a corrupt white cop) and a riot erupted. A few years later, on October 15, 1899, Miss Frankie Baker shot her teenaged lover, Al Britt, at 22 Targee Street. (She was acquitted of the murder, but the popular song that cropped up drove her insane, it's claimed.) When W.C. Handy reminisced about his early career touring with the black minstrel shows he recalled sleeping on the St. Louis levee in 1892, and hearing "shabby guitarists picking out a tune called 'East St. Louis.' It had numerous one-line verses and they would sing it all night." (Handy wrote his famed "St. Louis Blues" some 20 years after.) Of course, if one walked all the way from E. St. Louis to town in those days, it would mean the long, dizzying - albeit free - hike over Mr. Eads' new bridge. Most preferred to ride one of the trusty ferries that would charge ten cents to cross the river. I don't claim any "ragtime osmosis" from my youth in the American Bottoms, but many of my family were itinerant musicians in southern Illinois. Songs like "My Bucket's Got A Hole In It" - a traditional New Orleans number from the Buddy Bolden era that migrated up river - and fast novelty blues akin to "Shake Them Hard Luck Blues" were staple fare along with fiddle tunes and sentimental weepers for my parents' touring "hillbilly" band in the 1930's. I started playing in the early 1960's, and learned the bluegrass versions of "Train That Carried My Girl From Town" and "Paul and Silas" but filled in some holes later as I mined the older music. Some of the instrumental guitar pieces here could use a word or two of explanation: "Red Dog Rag" is named for my red Australian Shepherd, Scout, who listened patiently while I wrote it. And "Struttin' To Tootsie's" is my homage to those heady days of yesteryear when a guitar picker at the Grand Ole Opry might step out the stage door of the Ryman Auditorium over to the back room of Tootsie's Orchid Lounge for a quick snort between spots on the radio. The infectious "Old Joe" is an old Missouri fiddle tune that seems at home on the guitar, and "The Creeper" just named itself. The song I call "What Kind Of Pants Does A Gambler Wear" has been named for practically every line in the song, from biscuits to crawdads, sugar to honey and back again. It's a great example of American folk music. A classic passed from mouth to ear over generations, we all can claim it as our own, even if we change it a little now and then. It is black white, old young,

north south, east west. You can gussy it up or strip it down, but as long as you give it a strong thump with a well-placed thumb you'll be all right. Speaking of being all right, the recitation that precedes "Big Rock Candy Mountain" is from Uncle Dave Macon, but not the song itself. It's not a blues or a rag, but it is of the era. (The history is fuzzy. Apparently Harry McClintock either wrote or learned his earliest version as a teenage drifter singing in medicine shows and saloons circa 1897.) My version draws from a dozen different sources, among them Burl Ives. Now that I'm a little thinner on the top and thicker in the middle, I'm getting even more of the "you remind me of Burl Ives" comments than I used to. Ives was another son of Southern Illinois - and his sister-in-law was my mother's best friend during the late 1930's. But I'm not Burl. I'm also not Joe Maphis - the late great thumb-thumping guitar picker who is no relation but happens to have a name that sounds exactly like mine when spoken over a bad telephone connection. Nope, I'm still Joel Mabus, and hope to hold that position for a few more years. JM - May 2002

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