

**John Brown's Body** is an American reggae band from Boston, Massachusetts and Ithaca, New York. The band describe their sound as “Future Roots Music”. The sound is rooted in reggae rhythms and blended with a variety of other styles including dub, electronic, funk, ska, hip-hop, and dubstep.

The band’s sound has been described by the New York Daily News as being "more Massive Attack than Marley" and by the Village Voice "reverent and revolutionary at the same time.”

John Brown’s Body has performed with a variety of groups, representing a wide range of genres including well-known acts such as: Dave Matthews Band, The Flaming Lips, STS9, Furthur, Ozomatli, Broken Social Scene, and Jurassic 5.

## History

JBB released *All Time* on their own I-Town Records label. The record made Rolling Stone Magazine’s “Top 10 Indie Records List”.

- 1997–2004

JBB signed with the reggae label, Shanachie, and released three albums -- *Among Them* (1998), *This Day* (2000), and *Spirits All Around Us* (2003). The Boston Herald called them "one of the world's best roots-style reggae bands" after the release of *This Day*. The positive reviews led to an appearance at the Bob Marley Day Festival in Miami, FL., alongside Lauryn Hill and others. After their release of *Spirits All Around Us*, the band had cemented themselves as a force on the national scene. With appearances at Sierra Nevada World Music Festival, Reggae on the Rocks, and Wakarusa, they earned a reputation for high energy, air-tight live shows.(citation needed)

After The Release Of *This Day* Mike Keenan left John Brown's Body to take care of his first child, Oscar and in 2004 his second child, Damon, he returned in 2006 he also was not an "Official" Member until 2006

- 2005

JBB signed with New York City record label Easy Star and released their fifth studio album *Pressure Points*, marking a crucial point in the sonic development of JBB, evolving from a traditional roots approach to a twist on reggae and dub they titled "future roots". 'Pressure Points was critically acclaimed and the Village Voice review called JBB "reverent as well as revolutionary" while Popmatters described the record as “their strongest, most consistent effort to date.”

While Elliot Martin had only contributed a few songs to the previous albums, the balance had shifted on *Pressure Points* Martin wrote 8 of the 11 songs on that album while Kevin Kinsella wrote 3.

- 2006

Tragedy and change struck the band with the death of bassist Scott Palmer from cancer. Lead vocalist Martin and drummer/co-founder Tommy Benedetti decided to soldier on with a new energy and more focused musical attack.

The band recruited local Boston bassist Nate Edgar to replace Scott; he had been a fan since seeing Scott playing years earlier with DJ Logic's Project Logic.

Shortly after Palmer's death, John Brown's Body underwent some dramatic line-up changes with the departure of Kinsella (Vocals and Rhythm Guitar) who formally left the band on good terms, along with organist/guitarist Nate "Silas" Richardson who stepped out to spend more time with his newborn son. JBB turned to its past to replace him: they tapped guitarist Mike Keenan, who had been a member of the Tribulations, the precursor to JBB in the early '90s, that featured Kinsella, Martin and drummer Tommy Benedetti. JBB continued to tour and played to extremely enthusiastic audiences over the course of the month. By the end of the journey, they had also lost their horn section Dan Delacruz and Chris "C-Money" Welter who joined punk-reggae band Slightly Stoopid.

According to the official web site: Tommy, the only other original member left at this time, says "when Scotty passed away [on June 7, 2006], that was a breaking point for people who may have been considering leaving. With something as heartbreaking as that, there was an obvious bookend in this band's career, so it made sense for some folks to take the opportunity to leave (according to a 2008 interview).

ple was even Kinsella. Kinsella had been talking about leaving the band few006 times before that, but never took the ep. "With Scott's death, I think he wanted to close the chapter on this band he had started and tie it all up neatly," Martin says. "He wanted JBB as an entity to cease. The only problem was that Tommy and I were really enjoying playing with the new guys and still felt like there was a lot we wanted to accomplish." Even though things seemed to be falling apart around them, Martin and Benedetti both felt a powerful new energy playing with Richardson, Keenan and freshly recruited organist Matthew "Kofi" Goodwin. a lot we wanted to accomplish." Even though things seemed to be falling apart around them, Martin and Benedetti both felt a powerful new energy playing with Richardson, Keenan and freshly recruited organist Matthew "Kofi" Goodwin.

Kinsella's departure freed Martin to lead the band in new musical directions. For years, there had been a creative rift between the two primary songwriters and childhood friends. Kinsella's songs tended towards religious themes and roots reggae sounds, more in line with the group's beginnings. Martin's writing emphasized futuristic and atypical rhythms, as well as dense metaphorical imagery. "I used to think that having two songwriters and vocalists was a strength that made us unique, but it probably confused a lot of people. Now our sound is more cohesive," says Benedetti "We feel comfortable with one another and you can hear it in the music we're creating."

During the tense last months with Kinsella, Martin decided to make an attempt to bridge the gap between him and his old friend, writing three rootsier tracks ("Give Yourself Over," "Speak Of The Devil," and "Be At Peace"). When Kinsella quit, Martin found himself with three anchors for the next album, and for the first time, much less pressure to make everything fit within a perceived JBB sound. Feeling unrestrained, Martin next wrote "The Gold," a more up-tempo drum & bass-inflected tune featuring a guitar line reminiscent of an Ennio Morricone spaghetti western soundtrack, and "Make Your Move," which takes the group closer towards hip hop. The title track was actually one of the oldest musical ideas to come to fruition on the record. Martin says, "The seeds for that one are five years old. It was originally a hip hop beat, like a Funkadelic song. The bass line was the same, but much more slinky. I didn't know what it would become, but I knew it should be the lead for this record."

- 2007

The band went into the studio to work on their sixth record at More Sound a recording studio owned by their live sound engineer Jason “Jocko” Randall in Syracuse, NY.

During that time Elliot began to notice problems with his vocal strength and endurance; after months of doctor’s visits and vocal training, the problem was finally revealed to be vocal polyps, which threatened the band’s ability to soldier on once more.

- 2008

Martin had surgery in early 2008 to remove polyps on his vocal cords and he also began voice training to teach him to put less strain on his throat. According to the band's official website: “I feel better every day. Each show back after surgery, I could feel myself getting stronger. Now I think I’m doing things I couldn’t even do before,” Elliot says. “Add that to the energy of the new line-up and this new batch of songs.”

The band released *Amplify* on New York City label Easy Star Records. *Amplify* debuted at #1 on Billboard’s Reggae charts. #10 on CMJ's World Music Chart, and made the “iTunes best of 2008” list for reggae records.

JBB toured across the entire USA for the first time in nearly 2 years.

All Music Guide writes: “Elliot Martin has taken firmer control of the group, and it is now a completely different organism: although the John Brown's Body sound is still distinctly reggae-ish, it's denser, swirlier, sometimes downright funky, and loaded with more powerful melodic hooks.”

- 2009

JBB released their first remix EP *Re-Amplify* (Easy Star) hit the stores, also debuting in the Billboard Reggae top 10. *Re-Amplify* featured remixes by artists from around the world including Dubmatix (Toronto), WrongTom (London) and their friend Disashi Lumumba Kasongo from Gym Class Heroes (US).

After a few different incarnations, the horn section was settled, featuring trombonist Scott Flynn, Drew Sayers on saxophone and Sam Dechenne on trumpet.

2009 brought the band to the United Kingdom for 16 shows with label mates Easy Star All-Stars, and 11 shows in New Zealand with The Black Seeds, also Easy Star labelmates. The tour leads to a musical brotherhood with The Black Seeds and they performed together at the 2010 Grassroots Music Festival in Ithaca, NY.

In December 2009 JBB covered “Bankrobber” by The Clash for a charity record named “Shatter The Hotel: The Songs of Joe Strummer in Dub”. All proceeds from the record went to benefit Strummerville,: The Joe Strummer Foundation for new music. As Of August 2013 it is the most popular song on Shatter The Hotel

- 2010

JBB performed on Jam Cruise off the coast of Jamaica and Grand Cayman Island.

In April and May 2010 the group performed their first tours of [France](#), [Belgium](#), [Germany](#), the [Netherlands](#), and [Canada](#) at festivals and headlining clubs.

- 2013

On April 16, 2013, JBB released the first studio album in several years, titled *Kings and Queens*. Neil Kelly of *PopMatters* wrote of the album, "Where they have stayed true to their roots on previous releases, JBB incorporates many electronic embellishments and elements on *Kings and Queens*, giving the album as a whole a modern, American touch." The studio album featured 12 new tracks, and was released in the following formats: iTunes download, [CD](#), and 180 gram vinyl [LP](#). The vinyl release was the first JBB on vinyl that was readily available for fan consumption.

## Musical style and influences

Artists that Elliot Martin listened to extensively—and was influenced by—while writing *Amplify* include [Sigur Rós](#), [Batch](#), [Toumani Diabate](#), [Sly and Robbie](#), [Radiohead](#), [Talib Kweli](#), [Aswad](#), [Funkadelic](#), [King Tubby](#), [Roots Manuva](#), [Masaru Sato](#) and [Midnite](#) (whose lead singer, [Vaughn Benjamin](#), lends a vocal to the end of "Speak Of The Devil"). Certainly not the typical play list for a reggae band, but the band's deep reggae roots are not hard to find amongst all of the other influences.

"I think that the strongest reggae was coming out of the UK in the 70's and early 80's," Elliot explains. "It was the best produced, had the most complex songwriting; it's the most progressive reggae that's been made. [Steel Pulse](#), [Aswad](#), [Reggae Regular](#), [Misty in Roots](#), [Mikey Dread](#), [Dennis Bovell](#) and [Linton Kwesi Johnson](#) were doing groundbreaking stuff. I want to pick up where those artists left off. Of course, we don't come close to what those artists did, but I think that's where the idea comes from—that reggae can take other forms. I guess I'm just saying that I see our music as progressive reggae." (Interview 2008).