



BIOGRAPHY

Matt Jenson was raised in the back woods of New Hampshire where he absorbed the wisdom that can only be found when in direct contact with the natural world. As a young child and teenager, he pursued his passions of music and sports, and after finishing his undergraduate studies he was faced with making a decision between trying for the US men's National Rowing Team or to go to graduate school for music. His musical calling proved deeper and received a Masters degree in Jazz Composition from the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston (1991) studying most notably with **Geri Allen**.

After graduation from the Conservatory his 'street' training began, first with a deep involvement with the blues. For many years he concentrated on soul, blues and rock influenced piano and Hammond organ, working with such greats as **Ronnie Earl and the Broadcasters**, legendary R&B singer **Johnny Adams**, **Mighty Sam McClain**, **Cyril Lance**, **Johnny Neel**, and **Julien Kasper**. Matt is never far away from the blues.

The call to Afro-Cuban styles has always occupied a strong current in his musical demeanor. In answer to this, he began a courtship with Latin music in 1995 studying the rhythmic basics of Salsa styles on a set of used timbales. Later Matt returned to the piano and in 1998 formed the popular Latin dance sextet, **Combo Sabroso**, regularly working with Boston's best Latino musicians including **Ernesto Diaz**, **Alex Alvear** and **Manolo Mairena**, **Pablo Bencid**.

The Summer of 2001 Matt received an incredible opportunity to study with one of his idols, **Eddie Palmieri**, at the Salsa Meets Jazz seminar at Goddard College (VT). Not only did Matt quadruple his understanding of Afro-Cuban music but he was introduced to Palmieri's timbale player, **José Claussell**, and the two have become friends and partners in an exciting new musical project called "**Rebel Tumbao**". (see below)

Bob Marley was a simmering musical vibration in Matt's early years, but it wasn't until a trip to Belize (during his graduate school tenure) that he became OBSESSED! For years Matt absorbed all that he could about Marley's life and music because Marley crystallized so much of what Matt feels, not only as a musician, but as a keen observer of socio-political events and a life-long drive to raise human consciousness. He began writing his own reggae compositions, rehearsing his own bands, but, with such broad musical interests and talents, and a disposition quite opposed to being defined by any narrow stylistic (cultural, religious or political) category, to become a pure reggae musician was not in his destiny. Matt has always been one to blaze his own trail.

His first attempt at the merging of musical interests came in the form of what he calls, "Acid Reggae." He recorded a CD of original material (1997) entitled "**One Drops, Spirituals and Riddim**," where he infuses the one drop reggae style with a heartfelt jazz influence. On this recording he introduces himself as a singer as well. The development of that project now stands with the **Acid Reggae Xperience Band** which has grown into a neo-dub group combining rock, blues and jazz influenced soloing/arranging over reggae and neo-soul grooves and incorporates plenty of experimentation with electronic textures and multi-media integration.

The Fall of 2001 Matt joined the faculty at **Berklee College of Music** in the piano department, teaching studio piano and a Latin piano lab. Matt's calling to Marley presented him with an amazing opportunity to help further Marley's legacy which resulted in his creating a performance studies class entitled, "**The Music and Life of Bob Marley**". His involvement with the class has presented him with some rare opportunities such as partaking in performances with **Judy Mowatt**, the publishing of two articles in **The Beat Magazine** and two extensive research trips to Jamaica where he met and played with many who knew and worked with Marley including Chinna Smith, Neville Garrick, David Madden, Skill Cole, Mortimer Planno, Sharon Marley, Ernest Ranglin. Also, Matt was invited by **Rita Marley** to be a guest speaker at the Africa Unite 2006 event in Ghana, West Africa celebrating Bob Marley's 61st birthday. While there he also auditioned young Ghanaian musicians to receive scholarships to Berklee's 5-Week Summer program!

Lastly, Matt has now turned most of his attention to what is an obvious direction for him: he has embarked on the pursuit of a project that merges Marley's music with Afro-Cuban arranging along side Matt's brilliant original compositions, naming the endeavor "**Rebel Tumbao**." (Rebel "GROOVE") With this project Matt is bringing forth his statement as an artist to the larger public, a 'coming out' as it were. He has formed a close relationship with **José Claussell** (timbalero for Eddie Palmieri) and the two of them are now working tirelessly to bring this inspired project to an international audience!

