

A Little History

In the beginning, there was a body of acoustic music put together by Peter KF over many years. Although at the time he was playing in the evocatively named and fully electrified Uncle Thump (the songbook comprised of ½ originals—many of which he was contributing—and ½ R&R standards), he was not satisfied. The acoustic side was languishing. He had taken the acoustic music out in solo fashion from time to time, but he decided that it was time to flesh out the guitar and vocal arrangements with more instrumentation. In a canny founding stroke—one that would set a precedent for the kind of inventiveness that has always defined the group—he skirted convention and hooked up with accordionist Ed Marris, forming the original Stone Soup. They performed as a two-piece for several years, adding some Celtic and Cajun numbers that Ed brought to Peter's already eclectic mix of songs. There are some extant recordings from this period, but to a large extent it remains undocumented.

Seeking to make the rhythmic dimension more explicit, they brought in ethno-musician Sonam for percussion, and over time worked in his multi-instrumental wind and horn playing, and a choice selection of the ethnic music he brought along. Since Ed and Peter were both percussionists as well, this situation allowed them to take rhythmic turns too.

An unprecedented breadth of eclecticism now became the signature of the group. Playing together for over a decade, this ensemble brought a totally unique mix of music to the premier venues for acoustic music in the region, getting booked on concert schedules alongside any number of fine and famous acts on the circuit. In 2001 the group released a critically acclaimed CD album.

Eventually another player came to the group's attention, and was pulled in—Jeff Cole, a talented bassist and backing vocalist with a couple of major label albums lurking in his past. A couple years went along in four-piece fashion, producing some memorable shows.

After more than a decade, major change is probably inevitable. Ed Marris discovered greener grass in the Catskills and relocated, and Sonam decided to concentrate on his own pursuits, leaving Peter and Jeff to carry on. But Peter was able to enlist John Bagale, whose mastery on the drumkit and expansive musical sensibility was a match for the unusual Stone Soup mix of styles.

Change struck again about year later when Jeff took his leave. But by then, in a kind of fated serendipity, John had revealed himself to be a full-fledged multi-instrumentalist in the best Stone Soup tradition, demonstrating his formidable musicianship by incorporating both piano and wind playing. He was also pushing the group in new directions. Now he and Peter were able to develop an essential duo-core version of Stone Soup, where the strong rapport behind the simplified ensemble brings a very direct engagement with the outstanding material they choose, for the audience and the performers alike.

Thus is established a highly distinctive evolution of Stone Soup and the famous Stone Soup eclecticism--not simply carrying on, but propelling the tradition by delivering a new take on eminently engaging music of far reach and broad appeal...as history begins anew.