

Some Stone Soup 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 (doing half originals—many of which he was contributing—and half 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 ethnomusician 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 each a percussionist in his own right, this situation allowed them to take enjoyable rhythmic turns.

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 wide-ranging 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 John had begun expressing more of his formidable musicianship by incorporating piano and wind playing, and pushing the group in new directions. And he soon had the good fortune to run into bassist Brian Terho, with whom he had played many a gig in years gone by. Though a much-in-demand player in the area, Brian was sufficiently taken with the unusual mix of music to join up—completing the ensemble beautifully with his intuitive gift for accompaniment (the mark of a great bass player) and the perfectly suited acousticism of an upright bass.

This very capable trio of Peter, John, and Brian, then, has 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.