

A Little History...

Stone Soup has always been about bringing together great tunes from wherever they may be found, regardless of genre. Founded by Peter Kim-Fredell in the mid 90's, the group has evolved and changed over the years, but has always been made up of broadly accomplished musicians whose wide-ranging interests "add to the pot."

Things began when Peter, with his history of going back and forth between acoustic guy and rock guy, decided the acoustic side was languishing. (At this particular time he was playing in the evocatively named and fully electrified Uncle Thump, a group doing half originals, many of which he was contributing, and half rock standards.) 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. Peter had been collecting a varied mix of strong songs, to which Ed added a clutch of tunes in the very different styles of Celtic and Cajun—establishing the signature eclecticism of Stone Soup. This duo performed for several years, and there are some extant recordings from this period, but it remains largely 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 also 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. Becoming well-known for an unprecedented breadth of eclecticism, this ensemble had a notable run bringing its unique act 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 Jeff Cole came onboard, a talented bassist and backing vocalist with a couple of major label albums lurking in his past. But after more than a decade, major change was probably inevitable. Ed discovered greener grass in the Catskills and relocated, and Sonam decided to concentrate on his own considerable pursuits, leaving Peter and Jeff to carry on. Fortunately, Peter was able to enlist drummer John Bagale, a wonderfully experienced player whose mastery on the drumkit and expansive musical sensibility was a match for the unusual Stone Soup mix of styles.

Change struck again about a 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 coaxing the music in new directions, and now he and Peter were able to develop an innovative duo-core version of Stone Soup around vocals, guitar, & piano.

John and bassist Brian Terho knew each other well, having together formed the drum & bass rhythm section on many a gig in the old days, so it was a no-brainer to invite him into the fold. But Brian brought not only that kind of ensemble completion a fine bass player provides—the three musicians found that they shared a rare degree of rapport and devotion to the repertoire, resulting in the most desirable sorts of musical energy and interplay.

And so a highly distinctive evolution of Stone Soup is established once more, with the eclecticism in full force. This new format is not simply a carrying on, but rather a fresh take on the broad appeal of the Stone Soup tradition...as history begins anew.