

## Mp3 Brothers 3 - Far From Home



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Traditional Irish, Scottish, and Bulgarian dances and songs performed on electric and acoustic instruments in a wide variety of styles from jazz and rock to bluegrass and Indo-Pop. 12 MP3 Songs

WORLD: Celtic, FOLK: Celtic Fusion Details: Brothers 3 has become an enormously popular fan favorite at music festivals and concert venues across Texas. Whats their secret recipe? Take 6 men and 1 woman, add over 20 different instruments ranging from washboard to wind synthesizer, blend in 6 vocal harmonies, dozens of musical styles, and season with a unique sense of humor. Apply megawatts of energy, and what have you created? Listen and find out!

ABOUT BROTHERS 3 Brothers 3 came into being in January, 1997, when following the usual Menikos family Christmas dinner Mark and Tom got to talking about their respective day jobs and musical lives. For the purposes of protecting the innocent and preventing backlash, let's just say that things could be better. Mulling over the conversation later, Mark decided that the time had come to implement a long-held dream to create a folk and world-music group that combined traditional melodies and rhythms with contemporary instruments and musical settings. Even before all the details were clear in his mind, Mark contacted Tom and they talked a long time about this idea the first time ever that these brothers would play together in an ongoing venture. The excitement started brewing. Tim was brought in, and in early the next month, Brothers 3 had its first rehearsal. At first, it was indeed just the three brothers: Mark on violin, Tom on guitar, and Tim on bass, with all three singing carefully constructed harmonies. It was a little shaky at first. Brothers 3 decided they would concentrate on music and song from the British Isles before expanding outward to include their Greek heritage and other musical traditions. The Menikos boys moved quickly to weekly rehearsal schedule. Everyone looked eagerly forward to these sessions. Later, as things began to jell, the brothers decided to expand the possibilities by moving Tom to drums and percussion and replacing him on guitar

with another player. It was a big step to add someone else. The name, "Brothers 3", would no longer be completely descriptive, and of course there was the usual issues. Would he/she get along with everyone else? be reliable? be ready to devote the time and energy to make things work? Tom suggested a player he knew and respected. Steve Jones came to rehearsal, and the rest is history. Although performing Celtic and English music was new to everyone except Mark, all players dove in with both feet and started making some really joyful noises. Steve's background in bluegrass, country, and rock stood him in excellent stead, and his clear, ringing tenor voice helped to create some beautiful vocal harmonies. Brothers 3 rehearsed and performed as a quartet for about a year, always trying to improve and polish. From the time that expanding beyond the original three brothers was decided, Mark had wanted to include keyboards for the extra melodic options and tone color possibilities, and another percussionist, who would be especially useful if/when the band began to include Latin and African music. He knew of the perfect player, someone he had known for more than twenty years, and with whom he had spent several years in the jazz fusion group Aurora: Martin McCall. Martin (whose extensive musical endeavors sometimes unfortunately keep him from performing with Brothers 3 in all settings) brought with him keyboardist Rick Johnson. Rick impressed everyone with his musical sensitivity and his ability to sight-read the sometimes complex musical scores. Martin and Rick joined Brothers 3 in early 1998. However, in a crushing blow to everyone, most especially himself, Rick developed a severe case of tendonitis in his wrists and hands. After struggling gamely for a few months, he reluctantly had to retire, not only from Brothers 3 but also from playing altogether. Beginning in late 1998, Rick began tentatively to play piano again, and his condition continued to improve. This superb musician once again is able bring people beauty with his playing. We wish him well. Mark's "vision" for Brothers 3 always had included using synthesizers for their harmonic as well as melodic contributions. A brief experiment with him switching to keyboards for some pieces was not very successful. So in October of 1998, after months of musings and discussion, the band added its next Brother: Betsy Menikos Mark's wife. Betsy has played piano and guitar for many years (though not professionally) and sung in choirs. She has a near encyclopedic knowledge of musicals and keeps Mark amused by singing around the house. Though hesitant at first, Betsy has gamely joined in and worked very hard at learning the material. We are all very glad of her inclusion, though it does mean we can't talk about our wives at rehearsal any more. In August of 1999, guitarist, vocalist, and friend Steve Jones gave his notice to Brothers 3. The responsibilities of

home, family, church, and job became too much along with weekly band rehearsals and our performance schedule. Although we entirely agree with his decision, we will miss him and his driving guitar that became so much the backbone of the Brothers 3 sound. Following Steve's last performance with us on October 10th at the 1999 Celtic Heritage Festival, Brothers 3 began working in our newest member: multi-instrumentalist and vocalist Wayne McKinzie. We met Wayne at Trinity Episcopal Church in Fort Worth, where we have performed several times. Betsy is a member there, and Mark has often sat in with the folk mass music group on special occasions to add that "something extra". It was at one of these special Sundays that Mark and Betsy got to hear Wayne on guitar and vocals. Once Steve Jones made his plans to leave known, Wayne immediately became one of the frontrunners in Brothers 3's quest to locate a replacement. In September of '99 Mark made the call to Wayne, who enthusiastically accepted the position. That enthusiasm has continued throughout the entire process of teaching him our lengthy songlist. And as if Wayne's fine tenor voice, guitar, and mandolin-playing weren't enough, Mark is altering a few existing arrangements and creating new ones to feature him on the new instruments he brings to Brothers 3: saxophone and flute. In the spring of 2000, Mark gave Steve Jones a call to ask if he would like to join the band for an upcoming special event with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. He gladly agreed. Rehearsals and more phone calls ensued. Soon, Steve called Mark to let him know that he had missed playing with the band, had made some important decisions, and had done some restructuring in his life. Was there a place for him? It was with the greatest joy that Brothers 3 welcomed our prodigal guitarist back into the fold! Alas, that joy was not to remain forever. In the spring of 2006 after 6 wonderful years of performing as a seven-piece Steve called up Mark with great regret to say that as his children grown, so had his responsibilities to his family and job. The time had come to leave Brothers 3 for good. With a new album half-finished, and performances on the books, there was no time to waste. The band had gotten used to the "big sound" and couldn't go back to a smaller group. We decided to get inventive and throw out a wide net literally. Tom posted an ad on a musicians' website and within a matter of days we began getting responses. Our first response was from Dave Ervin. Although we investigated some other possibilities, in the end there was simply no one with greater enthusiasm, ability, or style than Dave. From that first audition, we knew someone special had come into our lives. We look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with our new guitarist: Dave Ervin! People who are interested in Afro Celt Sound System Moving Hearts Bad Haggis should consider this download.

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