

Scott Spearly & The Knuckle Dusters – articles, interviews, press, quotes, and public information

Updated: 12/29/25

HARDCOPY PRINT SOURCE LIST FOR BAND INFORMATION:

1/13/00 – The Williamsport Sun-Gazette – Franco's Features Bluesman Swing Band

“The group performs a raw mix of blues, swing, early jazz and original tunes. The Knuckle Dusters perform in the southern Pennsylvania western Maryland region and was a feature band at last year's Mardi Gras celebration.”

2/1/01 – The Morning Herald – The Knuckle Dusters: Rooted in the Blues

“Playing most every musical style east of grunge, Spearly and his bandmates prefer Civil-War era sounds to the louder wails of heavy metal. We pretty much cover all the bases,” Spearly, 30, said last week in advance of a charity show at the Martinsburg, WV, Veterans Administration Hospital today. The Mercersburg Pa. resident is a teacher at James Buchanan Middle School by day. After that he is music man, playing his harmonica, writing songs, and preparing for gigs. Spearly said he, Mackrell, and Mitchell get along so well in part because of their passion for music and respect for what they each bring to the mix. “I couldn't even measure how much they've taught me,” he said, when we work as threesome the music is very tight and very interesting.”

3/15/01 – Public Opinion – Knuckle Dusters Offer Vast repertoire – Club Scene – Rue's

“Since forming in 1997, The Knuckle Dusters have performed in Mercersburg, Williamsport, Centre County, Carlisle, Shippensburg, Harrisonville, Greencastle, Hagerstown, Funkstown Md., and Keyser W.Va.”

3/29/01 – Williamsport Sun-Gazette – Knuckle Dusters Return to Bullfrog Brewery

“Spearly has been playing and singing the blues for the last 10 year and his credits include more than 40 original compositions. He is said to be most at home playing Chicago and Country Blues harmonica. Mackrell has performed music in the three-state area for almost 20 years. His old-time banjo style has earned him many awards, including a first-place finish at the Deer Creek Fiddler's Convention in 1999. Mackrell plays guitar, mandolin, harmonica and other instruments as well. Mitchell, on the other hand, has mastered a number of styles on the guitar, including many of the styles the band plays. He has performed at square dances, Civil War reenactments, night clubs and taverns.”

11/15/02 - Patriot news – Area Band's Debut Cd Receives National Attention – Jennifer Sholly

“Spearly's wry humor is evident on the band's CD liner notes, aptly titled “About this Music.” There, he fondly recalls his introduction to the harmonica: “Years ago I used to ramble in old field-beater trucks, junkers with bald tires and wires sprawling from the dashboard... a hole where the radio once played. One evening a sympathetic friend offered me a harmonica to pass the time on the drive home from his house. 'Take it with you he said' ... His kind gesture, coupled with a handful of Sonny Boy Williamson recordings, changed my life's direction. For months, my job, weekends and women all took a backseat to Sonny's command of the blues harp.”

5-14-02 - Jazziz Magazine – What Jazz Isn't ?

“Hailing from Pennsylvania folk-and-fiddle country, The Knuckle Dusters might not be a jazz band, per se, but they sure can swing. Fronted and masterminded by an enigmatic cowboy named Scott Spearly, the trio's independently released CD, What Jazz Isn't, is a collection of 12 original tunes, each informed by one or more strands of American roots music. Spearly – a fine guitarist and harmonica player – writes lyrics that are both wry and spare. Along with bandmates Tim Mitchell (guitar, mandolin) and Paul Mackrell (banjo, guitar), and a handful of guests, Spearly has reeled off a debut sure to please anyone interested in raw, true Americana. To buy or for more information, visit www.knuckledusters.com “

7/30/03 - Fulton County News – Edward Jones Investments Concert

“Live Blues, Country, & Old-Time Fiddle. Thursday July 31st 5:30-8:30 pm. Courthouse Square, McConnellsburg. Open to the public – bring your lawn chairs.”

5/27/04 – The Morning Herald – Band Will Fiddle Through Halls of VA Center

“None of The Knuckle Dusters is old enough to remember when jazz and swing were in their heyday, but their renditions of 1940s tunes brings pleasure to those who remember that era in popular music. “We do it to support the people that support us in the military” said Mitchell, who said his favorite musical styles are swing and old-time fiddle music. Leader and founder Scott Spearly, 33, of Mercersburg, said that the band played at the VA two years ago on Veteran's Day. “It was a lot of fun; heartwarming and sometimes funny,” he said. In one room one of the nurses introduced us to an elderly

gentleman who had been a blues and jazz musician in the 1950s. We played a tune or two and I swear I could see tears welling up in the guy's eyes. He could barely move in his bed, but he tried to sit up and say goodbye.”

8/23/18 – What's NXT – Herald Mail – Knuckle Dusters Still Going Strong After 21 Years

WN: First of all, for what kind of music are The Knuckle Dusters known?

Spearly: I think most of what we do nowadays falls under the genre of Americana. To me, it's all about American roots music. A large chunk of our repertoire comes from old-time fiddle traditions. My dear friends, Paul Mackrell, Richard Pryor and Robbie Caruthers, all Washington County natives more or less, grew up wanting to play old-time music. But we're also fond of Texas swing, boogie-woogie, country, ragtime and acoustic blues and classic rock, too. We've also played many events where Irish music is desired, and Robbie and Rich are masters of melody in this genre, too.

WN: Scott, when you contacted us, you said The Knuckle Dusters are now in their 21st year. What do you think has kept the band together for long?

Spearly: We started gigging regularly as a trio back in 1997. Over the years we branched out, sometimes using different fiddle players here and there as needed. A few friends gigged with us as vocalists for a few years in the mid-2000s. I also grew an upright bass player in that time, my son, Matthew Spearly, and he has gigged with us since he was in ninth grade. What has kept us going so long is that we are more than bandmates, we're friends, we love each other, we go to concerts together, go fishing together, camp together, float the river, etc. Beyond that, musically, our diversity in genre has been our strength. When you play just one style of music, sometimes you're suited for only certain venues or events. We're highly adept and adaptable and most of the time our eclectic mix of music is what draws people in. And it's often fun, festive, high energy music. People come up to us between sets and say 'you guys really enjoy yourselves, don't you? You play for each other as much as the crowd.' I think that's entirely true.

INTERNET SOURCE LIST FOR BAND INFORMATION:

9/19/13 – CBS WASHINGTON LOCAL – Best Local Bluegrass Bands in Washington DC

“The group also routinely features other guest performers including guest fiddlers Robbie Caruthers, Evan Price, Steve Hickman, Alexander Mitchell and Richard Pryor and vocal talents Mindy Morris and Gary Peck. The Knuckle Dusters has been featured in *Jazziz Magazine* and several other publications and names Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Uncle Dave Macon as responsible for influencing the band's unique take on various 20th century American genres.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20151127014743/http://washington.cbslocal.com/top-lists/best-local-bluegrass-bands-in-washington-dc/>

8/23/18 – The Herald Mail's What's NXT Interview with Scott Spearly

Scott Spearly shares thoughts and general information about his band The Knuckle Dusters, as well as information about his original albums, including his most recent studio work “Walkin' Dog” with fellow vocalist and musician Shelby Boggs. Full Interview links:

<https://archive.org/details/whats-nxt-interview-text-8-23-18>

11/15/19 - Calvert Marine Museum

“While some bands are “jam” bands, the Knuckle Dusters just might be America's best “museum band”, with performances at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the Textile Museum in Washington, DC, the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester, Virginia.”

<https://www.calvertmarinemuseum.com/calendar.aspx?PREVIEW=YES&EID=1350>

10/13/2019 – Southern Maryland News – By Michael Reid

“We'll play different styles of Americana music; it's going to be heavy with some old-time fiddle music, some foot-stomping music that certainly has energy, and the same thing with some of our numbers, which is kind of a swing style mixed with boogie-woogie and really old old-school jazz stuff that can get funky. We've played at a lot of really great venues and put on some really good concerts, but a couple weeks ago we played the United States Botanic Gardens,” he said. “But my own personal venue I'll just keep coming back to it was at one of the Smithsonian museums. It was a great day and a great venue and the nicest premier indoor facility in D.C. It was kind of like a notch in our belt that ‘Hey, that was a pretty special venue. We're doing OK.’”

https://www.somdnews.com/recorder/news/briefs/knuckle-dusters-set-to-play-marine-museum-stage/article_6755281c-5943-57ce-95d6-d6708b22e85a.html

11/15/19 – www.dcmilitary.com

“The Knuckle Dusters are colorful characters with a deep repertoire matched only by their miles of musical experience.”
https://www.dcmilitary.com/calendar/tester/maritime-performance-series-the-knuckle-dusters/event_eaa3ff38-0011-11ea-a628-a3aceb305f03.html

The Maryland State Arts Council

Scott Spearly and the Knuckle Dusters can be found on the touring roster for the state of Maryland. Robbie Caruthers of Boonsboro, Maryland and Richard Pryor of Hagerstown, Maryland round out the core trio of the band. Other Maryland residents who have played with the band in the past include Paul Mackrell and Tim Mitchell of Hagerstown, Maryland as well as Mindy Morris Andros of Keedysville, Maryland. The band has also utilized the talents of Matthew Spearly, James Calhoun and Ralph Gordon on upright bass, as well as guest fiddlers Steve Hickman and Alexander Mitchell.
<https://msac.org/directory/artists/knuckle-dusters>

Bialeks Music – Booking Agency Washington D.C.

Accepting bookings for dinner theaters, festivals, corporate functions, universities, taverns, square dances, weddings and just about any private endeavor under the sun, The Knuckledusters offer vintage Americana true-to-form. Join them as they continue to preserve American musical traditions and perform for a variety of audiences.
<https://bialeksmusic.com/portfolio/the-knuckledusters/>

www.Zola.com

Formed in 1996 by harmonica player & songwriter Scott Spearly, guitarist Tim Mitchell and claw-hammer banjo champion Paul Mackrell, the combo initially performed as a steadfast trio throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland and West Virginia for nearly ten years. As their name and reputation as a hard-driving old-time hillbilly-jazz band has grown, The Knuckledusters now perform mostly as a group of five, taking to the interstates and stretching performances from Washington D.C. to New York.

<https://www.zola.com/wedding-vendors/wedding-bands-djs/the-knuckledusters-bluegrass>