



The Roughriders

A four-piece string band made up mostly of Minot, N.D., natives, The Roughriders – despite being, in essence, a bluegrass band in instrumentation – enjoy dipping their toes into nearly every musical genre and investigating various song themes, from traditional tunes to bluegrass standards to punk songs, country classics and original compositions. The band’s unofficial slogan is that they can be enjoyed as equally at a community picnic as a back-alley dice game and all points in between.

The crew started as a three-piece band featuring Jeremiah Sanderson, Joe Andrus and Chris Bieri. Formed after the 2011 Souris River flood, the group called themselves the High Water Low Lives. On a gig at Black Nugget in Underwood, N.D., they added Micah Scott to the mix and, for the purposes that night’s show, named themselves the Roughriders (narrowly edging out the Fuzzy Faces).

Everyone in the band sings and plays multiple instruments, which allows for plenty of variety. Scott plays literally everything, from harmonica to banjo, mandolin, fiddle and upright bass but is usually featured on guitar. James, a honky-tonk specialist, plays bass and guitar. Andrus picks banjo and bass and is one of the state’s finest harmony singers. Bieri plays mandolin and guitar and brings a background in folk blues. Sanderson began playing a heavy solo schedule, so the band added Andy Rennich, who generally holds down the bass, but is also a hot-picking guitarist and dobro player.

Proud North Dakota boys, the Roughriders play several of songs by North Dakota artists, including band members, musical friends and acquaintances. Their playlist also includes a number of songs about North Dakota, including “Somewhere in North Dakota,” about the best farm in the state for an overnight stop, and “High Third Street,” about Minot’s red light district in the early 1900s.