

**Biography**

Jake Kiszka – guitars

Josh Kiszka – vocals

Sam Kiszka – bass/keyboards

Danny Wagner – drums

Frankenmuth, Michigan – Michigan’s “Little Bavaria” - is known for its scenic farmland. Crispy chicken dinners. The State’s best indoor water parks. Picturesque wine and chocolate boat cruises. The world’s largest Christmas store.

These days it’s also home to one of the most exciting rock ‘n’ roll acts to come from the heartland, or anywhere, in many a year.

Greta Van Fleet – which took its name from one of the close-knit community’s town elders – is a hard rocking quartet whose creative ambitions and achievements reach far beyond the ages of the four band members, not all of them old enough to have voted in last November’s election. On its debut EP *Black Smoke Rising*, the group deftly straddles the line between timeless and future, sounding at once like many things you’ve heard before and also something you’ve never heard before.  The three brothers – twins Josh (vocals) and Jake (guitar) Kiszka, younger brother Sam Kiszka (bass, keyboards) and drummer Danny Wagner – have turned their rich and varied musical background into an arresting mélange of rock ‘n’ roll with flavors of metal, pop, blues and grunge, the result of years of practice, study and familial good times.

“When we were not even born yet my father played us blues music and R&B, soul music – all the good stuff,” says Sam.  Dad Kiszka was a musician himself, playing guitar and harmonica. “Our parents had a lot of vinyl laying around,” recalls Josh, so we grew up listening to that and really liked playing with the vinyl albums – putting them on the turntable and speeding them up and slowing them down. But, yeah, I really liked the blues and the soul and the funk – Wilson Pickett is the big one, and Joe Cocker, those kinds of things.”

The Kiszka kids furthered their music education during winter ski trips to Michigan’s Yankee Springs, where a plethora of family and friends would gather with instruments. Someone was playing something nearly every minute of the day, and Josh, Jake and Sam soaked it up with relish. “Every year was better than Christmas,” Josh recalls. “In the evenings or during the day, there was always music being made there, everybody getting together and experimenting with sounds, having lots of fun, making music.”  For Jake, meanwhile, it was “really awe-inspiring when you see this completely surrealistic environment, to see all these people from all over the place come together, and what brought them together was music. That was mind-blowing.”

It was Jake who turned that inspiration into Greta Van Fleet, drawing the idea from the likes of Cream, the Yardbirds, The Who and other 60s British Invasion favorites. “We liked to see how the English bands had reinterpreted the blues, and we wanted to interpret it again – Y’know, wouldn’t it be interesting if an American band came right back and reinterpreted the reinterpretation that the English did?” the guitarist explains.  “I thought there was something there that needed to be created.”

Jake gradually assembled his brothers into a band. Sam was caught up when Jake began jamming at the family home with a drummer friend from school. “It dawned on me that I needed to play bass for them,” Sam says. “Plus,” he joked, “my mom always said I looked like a bass player.” Josh, meanwhile, was studying theater, film and painting at school, with acting giving him an ease on stage, as well as a voice, that made him a no-brainer to be Greta Van Fleet’s frontman. “It wasn’t something I set out to particularly do. But it felt pretty natural,” he says now.

Danny Wagner, a friend of Sam’s since kindergarten, became the last piece of the Greta Van Fleet puzzle, joining a year after the group started, after being a regular at the Kiszka house for jams and rehearsals. “We all have similar taste in music and that helps a lot,” Wagner notes. “But at the same time we have these little differences in what we like, and when it comes together it produces this sound. It’s got that classic kind of vibe but it has a lot of soul, a lot of energy, and that’s a huge part of it.”

You won’t find a better description of the four songs on Greta Van Fleet’s EP, recorded at Rust Belt Studios in suburban Detroit with producers Al Sutton (Kid Rock, Hank Williams Jr.) and Marlon Young from Kid Rock’s Twisted Brown Trucker Band. The introduction runs a gamut from the dusty grind of “Highway Tune” to the sinewy punch of “Safari Song” and the muscular crunch of “Black Smoke Rising.” “Flower Power,” meanwhile, is a trippy sonic tapestry that weaves psychedelic and folk textures into the mix.  “No limits, no barriers, no boundaries,” Jake declares. “It was like that when we were growing up, and it’s like that when we’re making our own music.”

Listen closely and you’ll also hear the flavor of a small, tight-knit community seeping into the group’s songs. “I think it has a huge presence in the music,” Josh says. “It’s this romantic, simple, Americana kind of thing, like Tom Sawyer or Huckleberry Finn growing up outside of town in the country.”

The good news is there’s more where these four songs came from. The group has been in the studio for about two years now, with nearly 20 tracks down and more coming every day. “We’ve been writing since Josh and I were 16 and Sam and Danny were 13,” Jake says. “We have so many songs we’re working on it’s ridiculous. We’re just trying to develop and get better. That’s very important to us.” So is playing live, where Greta Van Fleet has been slaying audiences with an electrifying show that sounds more like a band that’s been around for decades rather than just a few years. The group can’t wait to take it around the country, and around the world in support of the EP, showing off the big sound this band from a little town can make whenever it hits the stage.

“It’s really happened so quickly. It’s definitely overwhelming and exciting – and it’s awesome,” says Wagner. “All these things are happening – the record deal, management, William Morris (booking agency). It’s slowly starting to build up, and we’re starting to get that fever. We’re itching to show everybody who we are and what we can do.”

04/2017