

THE FLESHTONES

The Fleshtones are:

Keith Streng—guitar & vocals
 Peter Zarella—lead vocals, harmonica & organ
 Bill Milhizer—drums & vocals
 Ken Fox—bass & vocals

The gravity-defying Fleshtones are back with *Take A Good Look*, their third long-player for Yep Roc Records.

Three decades ago in Queens, New York, KEITH STRENG and Marek Pakulski found some guitars in a basement in a house they were renting. They didn't know how to tune strings or finger a chord, but they dug the rock & roll and R&B leaping from the 1950s and 1960s—most of it drowned out by the mid-1970s pabulum on Top 40—so they picked up those guitars, found some amps, and started banging out basement noise with a local drummer. One day PETER ZAREMBA, an art student friend with a harmonica, long bangs, and a manic vision, dropped by the house, lined up at the keg, and named the band THE FLESHTONES.



They debuted at CBGB in 1976, found a rock/performance-art home at Club 57 on St. Mark's Place, and signed with I.R.S. Records in 1980, adding BILL MILHIZER on drums and releasing the genre-defining garage rock classics *Roman Gods* and *Hexbreaker*. They survived punk rock, new wave, no wave, neo garage, post-punk, grunge, and more neo garage, never succumbing to temporary trendiness, scornful laughter, or non-alcoholic beer.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Fleshtones released plenty of records, toured regularly from packed clubs to large festivals, anchored the infamous Pyramid Club in the East Village, and anointed nonbelievers worldwide in bar-treading, conga-line-snaking SUPER ROCK—a greasy ball of sonic and cultural influences ranging in feel from R&B, disco, and *Lost In Space* to garage, frat rock, and Mexican horror flicks.

In 1990, Ken Fox joined the goofy mayhem on bass. Fast forward to 2008, the awe-inspiring Fleshtones are the only band that regularly played CBGB and Max's Kansas City in the mid-1970s that are still around without a single inactive year. Countless amazing live shows, 20 albums, and a bunch of singles, EP's, and compilation appearances later, the jet-set Fleshtones are back again, and with their new album they invite the garage rock faithful to *Take A Good Look*.

Zarella explains the new album's title: "‘Take a good look!’ was one of Gordon Spaeth's favorite tag lines whenever the Fleshtones were attracting unwanted (but usually warranted) attention, which was often!" Spaeth

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THE FLESHTONES [CONTINUED]

played in the band for years and is now sadly departed, but his mock-serious, cocksure attitude is alive and well in the 21st century, as the Fleshtones offer a dozen all-original tunes testifying to pride, perseverance, and sweaty good times.

Recorded in Detroit at Jim Diamond's Ghetto Recorder and in the Lower East Side of New York City at legend Ivan Julian's N.Y. Hed studio, *Take A Good Look* wears those two cities' muscled strength and sonic bravado well. Diamond, who in addition to the Fleshtones has produced albums for The White Stripes and the Mooney Suzuki raves, "The Fleshtones do it again, blast into my studio and crank out half a record's worth—in 5 days!—of kicking, rocking, thought-provoking rock & roll! Long live The Fleshtones!" Julian, a long-time NYC star who played with Richard Hell and the Voidoids as well as the Isley Brothers, Matthew Sweet, and Shriekback says, "I knew the Fleshtones from the early days of CBGB. They are a testament to the fact that not all bands that played there were doing what has become known as 'punk rock.' In fact, most weren't, but we were all playing garage! And they are still playing it and on a whole new level."

Continues Julian: "It was such a pleasure working with them because they came in and did their shit, well-rehearsed and they had SONGS. When you hear the opening bass line of 'Going Back To School' or the poetic artistry of 'This Time Josephine' you'll know that these guys are serious, very serious. They're still not afraid to make music that the neighbors will complain about and the little, itchy, bitsy iPod can't handle. And yes, all recorded on tape...fat, two-inch."

The autobiographical songs on *Take A Good Look* feature the gritty mix of raw guitars, kitschy-cool organ, and full throat sing-alongs that the Fleshtones have long-championed and mastered. And they're COMMUNICATING, baby: anthems about joys and frustrations, about their beloved NYC from Brooklyn to Coney Island; about never growin' up but maybe goin' back to school; about simply feeling good feeling. The Fleshtones take a good look out of their own windows and sing about what they see, for better or for worse: the beloved skyline, the roaming hipsters who don't know what garage music really is and the friends and loved ones everywhere.

If New York City was an engine it would sound a lot like the Fleshtones: vintage, well-oiled, loose, junky, and confident. "*Take A Good Look* is our most focused record ever, both on who we are and on the world we live in," Zarembo says. Look out, they're on their way!

— Joe Bonomo

Author of *Sweat: The Story of the Fleshtones, America's Garage Band*

(Continuum Books, 2007). Available at fine bookstores, Amazon.com, and continuumbooks.com

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