

# Rolling Stone

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## Q&A

### Julian Casablancas

The Strokes singer on the band's return, his solo album and why he'll never move to Brooklyn

By Brian Hiatt

**A**FTER A FOUR-YEAR BREAK, JULIAN Casablancas and the Strokes are back, laboring away at a fourth album and prepping for a headlining gig at Lollapalooza. But don't expect Casablancas to sound superpsyched about it. "There's many different musical things I wanna do," says the singer, who released his first solo album, *Phrazes for the Young*, last November and is touring behind it. "And I'm happy to do the Strokes thing as well." After the Lollapalooza show – and headlining dates at Outside Lands and Austin City Limits – the band will return to the studio. "I know a lot of people are excited to hear a new Strokes album," Casablancas says. "So I'm excited to do it for them."

**Fans are going nuts for old Strokes songs at the reunion gigs. What's that like for you?**

For some people, the Strokes are just this fun memory – "Get wasted and party!" That's cool, but that whole, like, [*in drunk-guy voice*] "rock & roll!" thing – I just never was into that. It's all good and fun, but it's not where my head is at. I'm always on to the new thing, even if it's a new Strokes song. I'd rather play songs I'm working on at the moment, but who the hell would want to see that?

**What led you toward the super-busy arrangements on your solo LP?**

On the first Strokes record, I wanted stuff to be simple. This time, I wanted to make it complex – two different melodies, two drum beats. Kind of a rainbow, mega thing. I originally

threw the kitchen sink in there, and actually pulled back 80 percent of it. Next time, I would probably go the other way, do it simpler. Maybe I offended some people's ears – "There's too many notes," like in *Amadeus* [*laughs*].

**Did you present these songs to the Strokes first?**

One song: "Ludlow St." It got a bit of a nonreaction.

**So that nonreaction led to you doing a solo album?**

I don't even know where to start. In the early days, I wanted to learn from the troubles of bands in the past and not bicker or be greedy, so the idea was that we'd share everything equally. I was writing all the songs, but I thought [sharing credit] would make us closer or make them appreciate me. But I think it had the opposite effect: It caused a little bit of contempt, and that's where some of the problems arose. Things became a little difficult.

The straw that broke the camel's back might have been the three solo records [from group members]. It wasn't an angry reaction on my part, it was a logical thing.

**What's the situation with the band now?**

It's in a good place now. In the end, I can't put forth my vision in the Strokes like I used to, so we're going forward as a collaboration – maybe that's better. The crazy, random ideas – I can do that with solo stuff. I can't be happy if I have to dilute things too much.

**Are you writing for your next solo project?**

I'm always writing something. I've got so much stuff, I don't know what to do with it. Some of it will be Strokes, some of it will be I don't know what – stuff for pop singers, TV themes. I've got

a jar stuffed with songs, all these ideas that are just me humming into a recording device. My next thing is I want to write the new TV theme song for the Mets. I'm totally serious – I have some ideas, I have to see if they like it. . . . I'd also love to produce a Pearl Jam song. That would be a dream, because I'm a fan.

**Your son is six months old – have you figured out what kind of dad you want to be?**

It's so funny with a baby. It's instinctual, not intellectual. It's not like you're rationalizing, "Would I jump off a cliff for my kid?" You just jump. You just want to be a loving and close family. But we'll see. Maybe I'll be a terrible dad [*laughs*]. What do I know?

**After recording your album in Los Angeles and Omaha, you went back to Manhattan. Are you ready to move to Brooklyn?**

Yeah, the cultural center – you're not allowed to be a new band if you're not from Brooklyn. It's cool and all, I dig the vibes there, but nah. I just can't do it. 20

