

# New Strokes album impresses

Noor Al-Sibai

naalsiba@unca.edu - Freelance

On first listen, “Angles,” the fourth studio release from New York City rockers the Strokes, was lackluster in the way only a Strokes album can be—easy on the ears, but missing the “oomph” of 2001’s “Is This It” or 2003’s “Room on Fire.”

The album’s first single, “Under Cover of Darkness,” was promising enough, but lacked the innocence, the freshness of “Last Nite” or “What Ever Happened,” replacing it with frontman Julian Casablancas’ signature world-weariness accompanied, as usual, by optimistically jangly and repetitive guitars.

Upon further listen, however, one thing became apparent: the sound, that obligatory Strokes sound, has never been as rife with self-acceptance or self-definition as on “Angles.”

The album delivers a maturity tempered by an indifference that can only be achieved by having been to the heights of indie rock stardom—the sound they were going for on 2006’s “First Impressions of Earth,” but fell short. The single “Under Cover of Darkness,” is the Strokes barely legal, Casablancas moaning over the familiar and affirming jangling of guitarists Nick Valensi and Albert Hammond, Jr. “Everybody’s been singing the same song for 10 years,” croons Casablancas, a tongue-in-cheek jab at the critics and fans who want the lo-fi “Soma” back.

It’s not all optimism and light guitar riffs, though. “Taken For a Fool” stands out as the album’s greatest achievement, at once

## Album review

dark, urgent and resigned. Added bonus: it sounds more like the Strokes everyone fell in love with in 2002 than any other song, while still managing to sound new and grown up.

They don’t stick to the Strokes sound throughout “Angles” and, in doing so, avoid the boredom or forcedness that would have occurred if they had. “Games” and album opener “Machu Picchu” are reminiscent of Casablancas’ solo album, “Phrazes for the Young,” while “Call Me Back” opens more simply than any Strokes song with the exception of the demo “I’ll Try Anything Once,” leaked late 2010. The darkness of “Call Me Back” is counteracted immediately by the near-insurgence of positivity and perfect guitars on “Gratification,” sounding more ’70s than anything else on the album.

Closing with the lower-tempo, sexy, “Life is Simple in the Moonlight,” Casablancas’ singular depressed insistence is communicated through the song’s vocals, low-tempo and quieter than normal and Valensi’s guitar solo, circa 1985. With “Angles,” the Strokes are back, not with a vengeance, but with a noncommittal shrug.

Longtime fans will rejoice in the return to the Strokes sound, while new fans will be attracted to the refined sound and the inherent coolness of the album.

“Angles” is the reluctantly triumphant return of a beloved and often-criticized band, 10 tracks not of pure gold, but something close to it.

## BAND

continued from page 6

really unique, twangy toy piano sound,” Rafferty, an art student said.

Burch said their music does not seem to fit a specific genre.

Also, the band contains two classically-trained musicians that add a different flair to their sound, Burch said.

Fans can agree on the band’s sound. **Zach Monard, a sophomore at UNCA**, saw the Baby Rattlesnakes play at The Werehouse.

“Their instrumentation made their sound really fresh and original. Their style refuses to be subjugated to a single genre,” he said.

The band’s songwriting process is sometimes collaborative. “We come up with ideas as individuals and piece it all together,” Burch said.

Norton is almost like a father in the songwriting process, because he is what keeps them working on it, Burch said.

Covers are familiar to the band. Some of their favorites include “Tonight You Belong to Me” and “Little Red Riding Hood.”

As for inspirations, the band rattles off quite a few. Burch and Flynt both said Beyonce. Norton cited Steve Martin as an influence and Choe said pianist Claude Debussy.

All participants in the group came to UNCA for a vari-

### Baby Rattlesnakes

**Founded in:** December 2010

**Members:** Luke Norton (banjo and guitar), Andrew Choe (piano), Rebecca Flynt (violin and backup vocals), Molly Burch (ukulele and lead vocals), JP Furnes (tuba), David Grubba (clarinet) and Glenn Yoder (drums)

**Next Show:** PEOPLE Fest, Thursday on the quad  
Battle of the Bands, Saturday on the quad

ety of reasons. Burch said she did not know much about the school. After her mother moved to Wilmington, Burch chose UNCA for its in-state tuition.

Norton came here to be in the mountains where there was a city.

Choe said, “It was the only state-school I liked.”

The Baby Rattlesnakes do not have set plans for their future together.

“We are going to take one thing at a time,” Flynt said.

Norton said, “Hopefully, we’ll be playing shows together.”

The band has a demo CD expected to be out by the end of the semester. Their next performance will be at 5 p.m. on April 2 at UNCA’s Battle of the Bands on the quad.

To learn more about The Baby Rattlesnakes, check out their page at [facebook.com/Babyrattlesnakes](http://facebook.com/Babyrattlesnakes).

## PEOPLE

continued from page 6

PEOPLE Fest as an opportunity.

“Religious organizations aren’t necessarily judgmental, and they aren’t all trying to change your religious views. It’s just an opportunity to grow or not grow and just listen, and it gives the religious groups an opportunity to step back and see what their actions truly mean—are they truly inviting as people, or are they judgmental?” Sanford said.

Sanford said she hopes most of the attendees will be students who are not affiliated with the campus ministries.

“It’s just a fun activity, something to do on campus that is different. It can also act as a learning experience for those who choose to visit the tables and find out what they want to know,” Sanford said.

Sanford said the campus ministries are often very different from the perceptions students may have of them.

“It’s not like (what) people usually experience in their home parishes or churches growing up, having to go to church and that kind of thing. It’s understandable that people might be against these groups because they might not get what it’s about, but that’s why connecting is key,” Sanford said.

According to McGaha, this

event is tailored for everyone in the UNCA community, not just those with religious affiliations.

“I want this festival to be inviting to everyone. I don’t want it to be all the Christians or religiously affiliated students coming out on the quad. I want it to be the entire UNCA campus community coming together and chilling,” McGaha said.

McGaha also said she is hoping for cooperative weather so her intricately-planned events can go on uninterrupted.

“We are having two bands on-stage from 8:30 p.m. to 10 p.m., Piedmont and Baby Rattlesnakes. I’m going to have games set up on the quad starting at about 7 p.m. assuming the weather cooperates. We will

have volleyball, ladder golf, frisbee and cornhole, and there will be food provided for everyone too,” McGaha said.

**Rebecca Flynt, 20-year-old music student at UNCA**, is a member of Baby Rattlesnakes, one of the two bands performing for PEOPLE Fest, and she said she supports the event.

“I fully support diversity in all aspects, especially with music and people. This is a really important event to bring the community together through music, to celebrate everyone as they are,” Flynt said.

Flynt also explained what type of music their audience can expect from the Baby Rattlesnakes on Thursday.

“We have five members, all

UNCA students, and we play old-timey jazz and folk with hints of doo-wop and soul. We play several instruments, banjo, guitar, ukulele, violin, clarinet, viola, piano, tuba and drums,” the music student said.

McGaha said she has worked incredibly hard to pull off PEOPLE Fest, and she hopes students will come together, be themselves and enjoy the setup.

“I don’t want people to be scared into thinking this is an event for religious people only. It’s meant to be fun and promote equality. A lot of work has gone into this and we are confident that it will be an awesome time, so come hang out and enjoy the setup,” McGaha said.