

JULIAN SAS

VERBALS: STEVE YOURGLIVCH

JULIAN SAS IS A DUTCH-BORN BLUES ROCK GUITARIST AND SINGER WHO EARLIER THIS YEAR RELEASED HIS EIGHTH ALBUM, *BOUND TO ROLL*. THE GENERAL CONSENSUS IS THAT THIS IS THE BEST ALBUM OF HIS CAREER.

In BM65 our own Frank Leigh sang its praises, describing Julian as Europe's answer to Joe Bonamassa. We wanted the opportunity to find out a little bit more. The band should be playing their first ever UK and US shows soon and the album is about to get its US release on the specialist Grooveyard Records label.

BM: Julian, earlier this year you released a new CD, *Bound To Roll*. On the sleeve notes you say this is a very personal album based on true, emotional experiences. Are you able to elaborate at all, and how do you feel it has turned out?

JS: For me this is my most personal album ever. It's about a period in my life where I have lost a child. I tried to write songs about what you go through in this period. It's all deep emotional stuff and there are days that you can cry and days that you can laugh, and this I did together with my wife. Lots of songs on the album like *Burning Bridges* and *How Could I Have Been So Blind* are about this time. It took me two and a half years to write the songs that I really want to share with the world and my fans.

I wrote between 30 or 40 songs, but in the end these are what came onto the album, these are the best songs so I am happy with the end result, yes.

We are so sorry to hear of your loss Julian. This must have been an incredibly dark and difficult period for you to go through.

Yes it was, but it was also a time to go through and learn life's lessons, things to look back on and things to look forward to. I am a very positive person and so is my wife, so we went through this together. It came out well, at the end of the day we have a new son, Joshua, so in the end it's all positive again. Joshua is 26 months old and in love with my Gibson..

You've shared some very personal things with us. We wouldn't want to publish anything that could cause any pain to you or your family.

If I tell you it, please write it. The music that I play is honest music and I'm sharing my feelings for the music. There is no hidden messages, it's just better to explain, then people understand the music better. Wherever I play I meet people who have been through the same things. People come and talk about this with me after shows. This makes me happy because the more you can talk about it, the less painful it will be in the end. So for me it's a sort of spiritual healing, so please write whatever we talk about.

I think that this is your best release to date, there seems a strong Southern rock element mixed in with the blues. Is this a deliberate blend that you hope to continue?

I just write songs that I feel have to be written at the time. I don't write in a special style. That's what I love about Rory Gallagher, all of his albums are different, the songs are different. If you listen to *Calling Card* it is totally different to *Photo Finish* for instance. For me music comes when it comes. I have been listening to bands like The Outlaws, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Gov't Mule for a long time so that influence will always be there, but perhaps this time it's out there a little more but it's not like I planned to write in that style, it just happened.

For me, music is a 24 hour-a-day job. I'm always listening to albums, playing, jamming etc, so the music never stops. I don't always just play the blues, but if the blues feel is in the music it's OK with me. I grew up listening to Peter Green and some of his music wasn't blues, but when he hit that note it was incredible.

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Julian Sas

Bound to Roll the new album

*9 originals and 3 superb covers;
Rory Gallagher's Shadow Play,
Bob Dylan's Highway 61 Revisited
and Humble Pie's 30 Days In The Hole.*

... whole heartedly gets my highest
rating of 5 ★★★★★. Music this great
just doesn't happen everyday ...

(BLUES UNDERGROUND NETWORK - USA)

... one of Julian's best to date ...

This guy could be Europe's answer to Mr. Bonamassa on this form ...

(BLUES MATTERS - UK)

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When we decided to record a version of 30 *Days In The Hole* many of my friends said maybe it's too heavy for the album, but for me it's just a good song. I love Steve Marriott. Now we play it live and it goes down amazingly because of the feeling and emotion in there.

You also do a cover of *Highway 61* on the album which I really enjoyed.

Yes, I love Dylan, but it's very hard to sing. It's like five couplets long and then some guitar playing. I love to play it live. It's a personal dedication to Johnny Winter who was a huge influence on my guitar playing.

The songwriting and the vocals on this album sound so much stronger than before. We've talked a bit about the songwriting but are the vocals something you've worked, on or is it just down to experience?

I think it has to do with being more experienced and knowing what I can do in the studio. I have to say I honestly enjoy singing more now than I did before. About five years ago I was focused on being a better guitar player with more flashy slide work, but today I'm more into combining the two. But for me, I think what helps the vocals most on this album is that it's such a personal album and the lyrics meant so much I just wanted to sing them in the best way possible.

Like many younger blues rock guitarists you started out listening to hard rock bands and from there got into blues players. Which classic guitarists have had the biggest influence?

I grew up with the British blues from the 60s. Peter Green, Mick Taylor, John Mayall and everyone connected from his bands, Alexis Korner was a big influence.

Van Morrison and Them were important and of course, Rory. A very important album to me was *Chicago Blues Session* by Fleetwood Mac. From that I found out about Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy. My favourite blues player of all time is John Lee Hooker.

There was also a link to bands like Chris Farlowe, Colosseum, Clem Clepson and Cream. It was like throwing a stone into the water, the music got wider and wider. When I was about 13 or 14, I was listening to Freddie King and Frank Zappa a lot. When it comes to heavy rock AC/DC, Motorhead, Judas Priest and Iron Maiden. But I'm also a traditionalist, I like Blind Willie McTell, Robert Johnson and Charley Patton. I was like a

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sponge absorbing everything I heard. Later on I discovered bands like Jethro Tull and Yes.

You have certainly taken influences from a wide spectrum of music, not just the blues.

Blues fans can be very narrow. Lemmy and Angus Young have been as much an influence on me. People like Howlin' Wolf and Hound Dog Taylor were playing the heavy music of their time. It could be very dark music. The first time I heard Howlin' Wolf I thought 'Wow, this is the real deal'.

When I saw Buddy Guy live in 1991 his support act was John Campbell and he had all the voodoo image. I saw him about five times in Holland and the emotion with which he played was incredible, very spooky. I think his acoustic playing was outstanding. I am a big fan, he had an immense style of his own.

What about the newer younger players, who do you think are having a big impact, and you admire?

I think Ian Siegal is amazing. I've played with him a couple of times. I was lucky enough to do a jam session with Matt Schofield, a wonderful guitar player and very interesting musician. From America my favourite is Derek Trucks. His band sound like they could be the new Allman Brothers or Grateful Dead. The feel was there, the family feel. He is really the man right now.

I notice that you have played some acoustic gigs. Do you enjoy those and how different are they to perform?

I love doing acoustic gigs because it's just the audience and me, and it's bare naked playing. I've always had a love of acoustic blues players since I was 10 years old. To be a good electric guitar player you also have to be a good acoustic player. I think playing acoustic shows are more difficult. I usually play those in Holland at small theatres, but it's only about three or four times a year.

Your band members, Tenny Tahamata and Rob Heijne have been with you for a long time now. Apart from being great players, what do they bring to the package?

Tenny has been with me for eleven years and Rob for almost seven.

Tenny brings in quite an influence, he is very down to earth. He loves jazz bass players, he can play lots of different styles. Rob is a powerhouse drummer, very rock based. He is very enthusiastic in everything he does, he has very high energy levels. Tenny is the glue that keeps it all together, he stops us going over the top, he keeps us on the tracks.

“IN BRAZIL THERE ARE JULIAN SAS TRIBUTE BANDS”

What about songwriting?

It's a very democratic process. I write all of the lyrics and bring the guitar riffs, they then play what they feel is right at that moment. Most often that turns out to be the best.

You are known as an incredibly hard working guy. I know you are hoping to arrange some shows in the UK in the early part of 2013. What other plans are there for the year ahead?

We should be playing in Germany, France, Poland and Scandinavia. I have been talking to a promoter about possibly playing at a festival in Brazil. Hopefully as well we could be performing in Texas for some gigs. We have never played in either the UK or USA before so they will be a first for us.

In Brazil there are Julian Sas tribute bands doing our stuff, they send me tapes and DVDS!

The new album is your 8th, so you have a lot of material. How do you decide what makes it into your live shows?

Most of the time we go into a rehearsal room and we each write a list of 25 songs than check out what we have all written. We always play a few covers and a few old ones. *Hey Joe* is a cover we play that never sounds the same twice. When we took it out once the fans demanded it back. We have to play *Sugarcup Boogie* from the first album, its an old favourite, as are *Blues For J* and *Lost And Found*. *Burning Bridges* is becoming a live favourite from the new album.

You first got into guitar at a very early age and you are now considered one of Europe's top blues rock guitarists. What advice do you give to aspiring players?

First of all believe in yourself. And second just do it out of love for the music, not to be famous or make lots of money. Whatever decisions you have to take let it be for the music you play. That is how I did it. Get a good basic start and never forget who you are or where you came from. 🎸

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