

BluesWax Rating: 8
Ricci, Jason
Rocket Number 9
Electro Groove

Birth Of A Rockstar

When Eclecto Groove signed Jason Ricci everyone expected sparks to fly, and they do. But instead of Ricci exploring new shades of the Blues, he has put together a Rock band that knows how to jam. This is a band effort with Ricci playing harp, singing, and composing with guitarist Shawn Starsky, bassist Todd Edmunds, and new drummer Ron Sutton.

On "The Rocker" the band sounds like Blues Traveler, but with more tone. It's about "the paranoia and love/hate relationship an addict feels," and it rocks hard. "I'm a New Man" gets more interesting with its rhythmic changes and modulation. Then comes the Bryds-like "Loving Eyes," an eleven-minute opus; on it Ricci sounds like Roger McGuinn. This "trip" is my favorite track.

Shawn Starsky's "Dodecahedron" is a funky instrumental with saxophone by Michael Peloquin and it sounds as if it might have been influenced by Frank Zappa. Shawn Starsky's guitar solo is outstanding, as is the drum beating of Ron Sutton. "Mr. Satan" is a tribute to Sterling

"Mr. Satan" McGhee of the duo Satan and Adam. The harp solo is influenced by Adam Gussow, an early mentor of Ricci's.

"Deliver Us" is a post-9/11 prayer. "The Blow Zone Layer" is one of Ricci's signature harp instrumentals. "The Way I Hurt Myself" is a slow Blues. "The Eternal Is," written by Shawn Starsky, is an instrumental featuring Ricci's harp until Starsky takes over with a commanding guitar solo. Bassist Todd Edmunds also adds a nice solo. "Snowflakes and Horses," practically a Jason Ricci standard, is reprised again. "Sonja" is a peaceful duet between Ricci's harp and Starsky's guitar. "Rocket Number 9" is from Sun Ra, it is avant garde and it works surprising well.

The album is well produced by John Porter. It should garner Jason Ricci a new bunch of fans and could help expose a whole new generation to Blues-based music. If Blues Traveler is half and half, New Blood is heavy cream.

