

ECLECTO GROOVE

R E C O R D S

JASON RICCI & NEW BLOOD

Born Jason Joseph Ricci, February 3rd 1974 in Portland Maine. A four-year-old Jason was randomly digging near a bird fountain in the front yard of his parent's large home in Falmouth Maine. While Digging he unearthed a small, black, wooden, gargoyle that oddly showed no signs of deterioration or damage from its years in the cold Maine ground. The black solid Idol stood about eight inches high and around 3 inches wide and terrified Ricci's father. All who came in contact with this strange wooden archetype were perplexed by its story and feared it's demonic features and evil grin. The young Jason Ricci however kept it near him always, he felt it's forces as part of his own and it stood on his nightstand whenever he slept. The Gargoyle's presence only comforted the boy until it's mysterious disappearance a year or so after it's excavation. One night many years later when Jason was 21, he was in between bands and living back with his mother in Maine again. He wandered down the stairs at Three AM to find his mother still awake. They began to converse and some how the subject of the dark idol came up again for the first time since it's loss some sixteen years before. Ricci asked his mother if she knew what had happened to the gargoyle? His mother sighed and waited a moment, she told the young man she didn't know what actually had happened to the statue but that she thought Ricci's father had some how gotten rid of it. She then paused again, taking a deep breath and she looked her son in the eyes and said: "You know Jason Joseph Ricci, the strange thing about that gargoyle is: when I was a little girl growing up in Connecticut I dug up a wooden gargoyle just like that one in my yard too.

Ricci was tormented with a turbulent childhood riddled with his parent's divorce, alcoholism, institutions, a controversial and very public national court case involving Joe Ricci, Jason's father and numerous occasions of a youthful Ricci running away for home for weeks sometimes months at a time. The young man at the age of 17 was already a budding performer having worked the club circuit in Portland with various punk bands and had been playing harmonica and singing with a growing interest in the blues. Before he was 18 he quit school, got a GED and ran away for good heading west to Idaho for a short-lived colleges study of wild life management.

During this time Ricci honed his skills working as a musician, student, convenience store clerk, dry cleaner, day laborer and a doorman at a little Blues club called The Blues Bouquet in Boise. In between his formal studies at college and his part time blues apprenticeship at the club he devoured books by Joseph Campbell, Jung, Castaneda, Pascal, Kerouac, Burroughs's, Ginsberg and the essays, articles, records and books of Timothy Leary, which lead him directly to Tibetan Buddhism. When not on mystical journeys into the mountains and the mind Jason Ricci was hanging out after shows, back in hotel rooms or at parties at the feet of the touring pro's who had worked the club that night. Ricci refined his harmonica playing and singing under the changing, nightly

guidance of modern blues masters such as: Mark Hummel, Madison Slim, Sam Lay, and many others who passed through the club. Jason also joined his first blues band at this time called Street Wise and toured the North West doing a short lived stint with former John Lee Hooker bassist Jimmy Lloyd Rea as well.

After a few years in college in Idaho Jason gave up his previous aspirations in the field of wild life management to move to Memphis TN and informally study harmonica with Johnny Winter side man Pat Ramsey. Almost immediately after moving to Memphis in 1995, Jason won the Sonny Boy Blues Society Blues Contest at 21 beating out some heavy competition including a young Michael Burks. Ricci had made a journey that day to what was left of Sonny Boy's old house in Helena and made an attempt to communicate with the spirit of the great harmonica player taking a piece of rubble from the foundation and keeping it in his pocket during the show. Ricci later competed in the International Blues Competition representing Arkansas and went on to perform under his own name for the first time at the famed King Biscuit Blues festival.

Jason's study with his mentor Pat Ramsey was cut short by a job offer that came by way of Junior Kimbrough's oldest son David. Jason moved to Pot's camp Mississippi. While living with David, Ricci played full time with David's band, Junior Kimbrough, RL Burnside, Duane Burnside, Kenny Brown and countless others at impromptu juke joint Sundays and various clubs around the south. Ricci released his first solo album that year on his friend Billy Gibson's North Magnolia Music label.

Ricci later left Junior's band to start his own group in Jackson Mississippi with guitarist Eric Deaton (RL Burnside, Kimbrough, T-Model, Afrosippie). With this outing Ricci and Deaton toured most the southern states, backed up Big Bad Smitty who lived with the two young men during the time. In 1997 Jason released his second album for North Magnolia Music label "Down at the Juke" largely inspired by the North Mississippi sound and some years earlier than the North Mississippi All Stars formation. This album also featured Guitarist Enrico Crivellaro who Ricci had toured Europe with earlier that year. Also that year Ricci performed numerous times as a member of the House Rockers at the legendary Juke joint The Subway Lounge.

Although Jason Ricci's name was growing steadily and his career seemed on the rise Ricci was haunted by figurative and what he still feels as actual literal demons perhaps left from the wooden gargoyle. Ricci turned to self-medicating to deal with the failure of repeated relationships, his struggle with his sexuality, the stress of the music business and numerous spiritual and family related issues. After a battle with drugs and alcohol, which left Ricci, imprisoned for one year in Florida Jason began to rebuild his earthly and spiritual life. The now sober musician, clear headed, took a break from the music business waited tables, sold records at a used music store and worked for the popular Florida based local band called the Nuckle Busters as well as Acoustic Guitarist and singer Keith Brown. Ricci recorded several records while in Florida "Keep On Moving" by Keith Brown, Road rage by The Nucklebusters and others as well as the well received blues CD "Feel Good Funk" under his own name. During his stint in the Nucklebusters band in the year 2000 Ricci won The Mars Music National Harmonica Contest beating out 1000 other competitors and winning a host of prizes and popular performance slots.

A refocused Ricci began a new probation free life in Nashville Tn in 2001 when he took his first national touring gig with Zydeco, blues rockers Big Al and the Heavy Weights. Ricci garnered excellent national press with this band and Blues Access Magazine published a four page article about him titled: "Playing from the Heart" which author DR. Adam Gussow writes: "I am convinced Ricci along with New Jersey's Dennis Gruenling is the best harmonica player of his generation. Jason Played all over the country, appeared twice on Emeril Legassi's cable show "Emeril Live", Picked up numerous endorsements and learned how to book, manage, and run a band by watching the self made Big Al Lauro.

In 2002 Jason Ricci left Big Al and The Heavy Weights and bravely came out of the closet as the first openly gay blues musician starting his own nationally touring road band Jason Ricci and New Blood. The band toured heavily 300 days a year, year after year. In 2004 for three weeks the bands hard worked paid off when a bootlegged recording from a Jersey club (Mexacali Blues) was the most down loaded live show in the world over the Grateful Dead, Phish and other popular jam bands clocking over 21,000 thousand down loads in two weeks. The same year they released a live album titled "Live at Checkers Tavern." In 2005 Jason Ricci won the Muddy Waters Award for most promising new talent and later in 2006 the band released the CD: "Blood On The Road". "Blood On The Road" was an independently produced CD that topped the XM radio charts as a top ten "Pick For Click" for a solid month that year and sold over 12,000 copies from the stage alone. The Independent CD Blood On The Road was also listed in the Mercury News as the top ten albums of 2007 along side Green day and Prince. 2007 saw the band nominated for band of the year by Blues Wax Magazine and had the group expanding into Canada and Europe.

Jason Ricci and New Blood have always been a unit, a band and a collective group. There was one bass player before Todd "Buck Weed" Edmonds, MR. Slim Louis and the band has had at least four full time drummers over the years but t group has always grown together, written together and no one member is or has ever been musically in charge. "Buck Weed" has been a driving force in the Jazz-fusion styled arrangements of the band as well as a contributing songwriter. Todd Buck Weed Edmonds Plays Tuba, Upright Bass, Electric Bass, and Bass Harmonica and for the most part has been as much a part of this group as Ricci himself. On that note Shawn Starski has been in the group from within it's first year on the road and his star has risen on it's own right within and beyond new Blood itself and Shawn has written on his own and with Ricci the bulk of the groups play list. Touring, writing and performing together over 300 days a year since 2002 had this band tight and ready and in 2008 they were given their first big chance when they were signed by Rand Chortkoff to Eclecto Groove Records a subsidiary of Delta Groove Records. 2008 saw Jason Ricci and new Blood releasing their first in stores everywhere album: "Rocket Number Nine." Rocket Number Nine was produced by multiple Grammy award winning producer John Porter (The Smiths, Los Lonely Boys, Clapton etc.) and climbed the Billboard Blues Charts to arrive at Number Four for multiple weeks as well making the "Pick to Click top ten on XM and Sirius Radio charts again and was chosen as album of the year by Gibson Guitars. The press was hefty too with a feature story and interview with Jason in Blues Review Magazine, and Shawn Starski being nominated as one of "The Top Ten Hottest New guitar Players In The World" by Guitar Player Magazine. Ricci remained an in demand studio musician as usual with guest appearances on Albums with Cedric Burnside and Lighting Malcolm's CD: "Two Man Wrecking

Crew”, Motor City Josh’s: “Tribute to Howling Wolf”, and Walter Trout’s CD “The Outsider” among others. Later in 2008 Ricci would join Walter in Europe on tour with his band The Radicals for some critically acclaimed shows and a partnership that continues today.

In 2009 Jason Ricci and New Blood finished up work on their latest offering for the Eclecto Groove label titled “Done With The Devil”. This is their most ambitious album yet produced by Grammy Award winner Phil Wolfe (Alabama) featuring ten original songs by the band and two covers spanning the distance between Sun Ra and the Misfits. The CD like Rocket Number Nine is an even greater expansion on an eclectic mix of Rock, Blues, Jazz, fusion, folk, funk, eastern, carnival, punk and jazz often within one tune or solo for that matter. Lyrically Jason expands on some of the drug abuse related themes of Rocket Number Nine in this new outing but ventures further away from the egoless Tibetan Buddhist influence lyrics on songs like Loving Eyes and takes a decidedly darker and more esoteric approach to spirituality on Done With The Devil.

2009 had Ricci and company up for a second nomination for “Band of the Year” by Blues Wax Magazine, Jason won The Blues Critic’s award for “Harmonica Player of the Year” beating his heroes Rick Estrin, Mark Hummel, Steve Guyger, Billy Gibson and Willie Big Eyes Smith, Ricci also stole a literary award for “Article of the Year” from Blues Wax Magazine, and biggest of all he has been nominated for the first time for the B.M.A. (Formerly Handy) Award for Best Instrumentalist: harmonica. Shawn Starski signed an endorsement for Category 5 Amplifiers has agreed to interview with Vintage Guitar Magazine and is in constant demand from gear companies all over the world to play their equipment.

In the end awards, history and accolades aside Jason Ricci and New Blood are an organic band that plays music together, beyond musical category, adhering to no rules or genres restrictions, fusing the forces of good and evil, light and dark and positive and negative into an alchemy of spirit evoking, musical sorcery that stirs emotions, provokes thought, bends will and channels demons and angels nightly before falling asleep unafraid next to black wooden gargoyles dug up from the cold ground.