



JASON RICCI AND NEW BLOOD

Rocket Number 9
(Eclecto Groove)

This is the first major label release for

Jason Ricci and New Blood, following a decade of relentless touring and significant sales for the self-produced, self-released *Blood on the Road*. Ricci's high-energy live shows have become legendary, offering a combination of blues and extended jams, highlighted by Jason's hyperkinetic, harmonica solos.

Five of the twelve tracks check in at over six minutes, and, compared to his high-energy live performances, this studio effort is just barely more controlled and toned down, aided by producer John Porter's master touch. All of the tracks are

penned by Ricci or his bandmates except Sun Ra's title track. Ricci, now nine years sober, uses this platform to exorcise demons. "Rocker," the opening track, nods to those days and blasts off as the title suggests. "I'm a New Man" is a triumphant, fist-in-the-air statement. This session rocks throughout, with Ricci's rough-hewn voice and soaring harp backed by Shawn Starsky's driving guitar and the rhythm section of Todd Edmunds (bass) and Ron Sutton (drums).

"Loving Eyes," however, is a melodic, extended piece, described by Ricci as "Byrds meet Junior Kimbrough." It features very unusual harp soloing with classical music elements and a tortured guitar solo from Starsky. "Mr. Satan" is an ode to Sterling Magee, the guitarist in the Satan & Adam duo. Ricci's harp solo is a nod to Satan's partner, Adam Gussow, mentor and long-time friend of Ricci's (check out the intriguing references in Gussow's book, "Journeyman's Road").

Four tunes are pure instrumentals, with "Sonja" very tenderly rendered in slow tempo. The other ballad-like bluesy tune is "The Way I Hurt Myself," while "Snowflakes and Horses" covers a similar subject matter in a rocking tempo. The Sun Ra cover, "Rocket Number 9" is, expectedly, just way out there. Hop aboard.

—Jim Hynes