

CHRIS BERGSON & ELLIS HOOKS ~ LIVE IN NORMANDY

RELEASE DATE: JUNE 17, 2019 – 2 SHIRTS RECORDS

Chris Bergson and Ellis Hooks' new CD and DVD *Live in Normandy* - recorded in May 2018 at the BackStage Association's Nuit du Blues festival - captures the magic of Bergson and Hooks, two modern soul powerhouses, in front of a stadium crowd. Bergson, "one of the most inventive songwriters in modern blues music," (*All Music Guide*) and Hooks, a singer whose gravel and honey voice "blends the soul croon and blues growl," (*All Music Guide*) are in top form on this release, which is the result of almost a decade of collaboration and touring.

Elmore Magazine hails the Chris Bergson Band as, "one of the most talented bands playing today...From blazing rock to funk to soul to Delta blues and all that's in between." *Live in Normandy* captures Bergson and Hooks in concert backed by their longtime working European band. The dynamic performances reflect a synergy honed over years of touring together in Europe. Bergson estimates he's played over 100 concerts with the top-notch rhythm team he refers to as "The French Connection" with Philippe Billoin on keyboards, Philippe Dandrimont on bass and Pat Machenaud on drums. "I'm so happy this document exists," says Bergson as "it really captures the grooves we get into live and the joy we experience in playing together!"

The 12-track CD and DVD includes a new Bergson and Hooks original, "55 Miles from Bromley," a swampy, funky groove where Hooks looks back at the small farm town where he grew up in Alabama. *Live in Normandy* also includes crackling live versions of Bergson and Hooks originals such as "Knuckles & Bones" and "Bitter Midnight" along with a searing, extended version of "Heavenly Grass." The genesis of this song was a Tennessee Williams poem Bergson set to a Delta blues groove. It's a standout performance from Bergson, where he clearly pays tribute to two of his biggest guitar influences - Hubert Sumlin, with whom Bergson performed in his later years, and the great Freddie King. *Live in Normandy* also features blazing versions of Bergson originals "Greyhound Station" and "Float Your Mind," and Bergson and Hooks put their indelible stamp on covers of Sam Cooke's "Somewhere There's a Girl," Little Milton's "Grits Ain't Groceries," and Otis Redding's "Nobody's Fault But Mine."

Bergson and Hooks first met in New York City in 2004 when they shared a bill together at Joe's Pub. As Bergson recalls: "I was immediately blown away by his intensity of singing and his incredible groove. We talked that night about getting together to jam but nothing came of it, at first...but we kept running into each other over the years around the city and sometimes Ellis would sit in with my band and he would set the stage on fire singing a slow blues. You could really feel the intensity in the cub rise!" Bergson recalls. "We finally got together to jam on some Howlin' Wolf, Sam Cooke and Otis Redding songs and something really clicked. We started getting together every week and singing and writing together." The Stax-inspired Bergson/Hooks original "The Only One" was a product of these early writing sessions and Bergson invited Hooks to guest on his 2013 live album, *Live at Jazz Standard*. Bergson and Hooks kept writing and performing together and Hooks also appeared on Bergson's 2017 release *Bitter Midnight*. Both releases went on to be included in MOJO Magazine's Top Three Blues Albums of the Year for 2013 and 2017, respectively.

Chris Bergson & Ellis Hooks - *Live in Normandy* is available on iTunes, Amazon and CD Baby and Spotify.

Chris Bergson

Chris Bergson was inducted into the New York Blues Hall of Fame at B.B. King's Blues Club in February 2015. With MOJO Magazine's #1 Blues Album of 2008, *Fall Changes*, (recorded at Levon Helm's studio in Woodstock, NY, #2 Blues Album of 2011, *Imitate the Sun*, #3 Blues Album of 2014, *Live at Jazz Standard* and *Bitter Midnight*, #3 Blues Album of 2017, New York guitarist/singer Chris Bergson has established himself as "one of the most inventive songwriters in modern blues music" (*All Music Guide*.) Chris Bergson has performed and/or shared the stage with Hubert Sumlin, Levon Helm, B.B. King, Norah Jones, John Hammond, Etta James, and Bettye LaVette, to name just a few. The Chris Bergson Band's virtuosic musicianship seamlessly marries inventive songwriting with electrifying improvisation, creating unforgettable live shows. The Chris Bergson Band has sold out renowned venues such as NYC's Jazz Standard and become an international festival favorite.

www.chrisbergson.com

Management: Brian Blatt & Matt Lehrer, B Side Management: brian@bsidemanagement.com,
matt@bsidemanagement.com

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All Music Guide writes of **Ellis Hooks**, who has recorded critically acclaimed albums as a leader for Evidence and Artemis Records, sung with Stax legends Steve Cropper and Little Milton and performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival and Italy's Porretta Soul Festival: "Until the arrival of Ellis Hooks on the 21st century blues and soul scenes with his now-signature meld of R&B, blues and Southern gospel, it seemed that the great stories surrounding these musics had already been told and passed into antiquity...Not so...Hooks is the true continuum in the celebrated Southern traditions of soul, blues, and gospel; his voice, while reminiscent of some of the greats, is nonetheless his own, and his phrasing is a trademark. Given the powerful nature of his recordings and his now-storied intensity in concert, Hooks may indeed be the artist who brings these historic traditions back into the musical dialogue and onto the charts in the 21st century."

Notable past performances include: Moulin Blues (Holland), Groningen Rhythm & Blues Night (Holland), Festival Blues en Loire (France), The Blues Party (France), Salaise Blues Festival (France), Bain de Blues Festival (France), Ingolstadt Bluesfest (Germany), Harvest Time Blues (Ireland), Rhino Jazz Festival (France), Sweet Cotton Blues Festival (Spain), Burlada Blues Festival (Spain), Swing Wespelaar (Belgium), GeVarenwinkel Festival (Belgium), Blues in Hell (Norway), Leicester Blues Festival (UK), Waterfront Blues Festival (Portland, OR), Saratoga Jazz Festival (NY), Levon Helm's Midnight Rambles (Woodstock, NY), River to River Festival (NYC), City Winery (NYC), Joe's Pub (NYC), The Blue Note (NYC), Jazz Standard (NYC), John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (DC), SXSW, and opening for B.B. King at B.B. King's Blues Club (NYC).

Selected Press

"Gut-busting, horn-bedecked NY blues." - *MOJO*

"The Only One" is an original co-written by Bergson & Hooks, features Ellis swapping Sam & Dave-ish vocals with Chris—so well-paired that it's hard to discern where one ends and the other begins. Even better is the short but tasty Steve Cropper-styled solo by Bergson." - *Living Blues*

"He [Bergson] takes elements from the blues, soul and country canons that American music history is rich of, giving his own meaning to it. One time, the party sounds Little Feat, other times like The Band or The Allman Brothers Band." - *Jazzism (NL)*

"Over the past decade, Chris Bergson has become one of the most interesting blues-inspired songwriters. He describes the streetscapes and nightscapes of city life, painting small, memorable pictures, a kind of Edward Hopper of the blues." - *The Blues Magazine (UK)*

"Chris Bergson plays the kind of guitar you can build a house on - it's B.B. meets Steve Cropper meets John Scofield." - *ROLL Magazine*

"Until the arrival of Ellis Hooks on the 21st century blues and soul scenes with his now-signature meld of R&B, blues and Southern gospel, it seemed that the great stories surrounding these musics had already been told and passed into antiquity...Not so...Hooks is the true continuum in the celebrated Southern traditions of soul, blues, and gospel; his voice, while reminiscent of some of the greats, is nonetheless his own, and his phrasing is a trademark." - *All Music Guide*

"Authentic but not stifled by tradition...Bergson is the classic triple threat." - *Jambands.com*

"The Chris Bergson Band sets a bold new standard for roots music..." - *Hittin' the Note*

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