

Elmore

SAVING AMERICAN MUSIC



CHRIS BERGSON BAND

Fall Changes

(2 Shirts Records)

There's a lot to hear on *Fall Changes*, and

it just gets better with every play. Bergson has recruited top-drawer musicians, most with jazz roots, to play soulful songs behind his growly vocals and bluesy guitar, with irresistible results. Bergson's voice (it's just a rumor he was raised by wolves) and his soaring guitar are just a few of the elements that lift up this collection. There are nine original songs about city life and love, and a few interesting covers of great ones from the vaults of artists as diverse as Bob Dylan ("When I Paint My Masterpiece") Jimi Hendrix ("Are You Experienced?") and Ray Charles ("Drown in My Own Tears.")

When Bergson sings about Brooklyn street life ("Gowanus Heights," "The Bungler"), you can smell the gritty streets and feel the craziness waiting around the corner. And his charming love songs ("Sanctuary" and "Rain Beatin' Down") are touching and real, as songs written by the recently wed often are. His spare and lovely guitar parts, particularly on these songs, are a tour de force. But on nearly every track Bergson's secret weapons are the amazing musical skills of his bandmates.

Jay Collins' sweet saxophone phrases intertwining with Bruce Katz's sparkling piano manage to be both hot and classy, and on the title track, in the space of a few bars, they transform a melancholy reverie on change and loss to a hopeful celebration. On Collins' "The Engine," Chris Berger's acoustic bass holds the song's signature riff over Tony Leone's angry beat while Bergson snarls the lyrics. Nearly everything about this record is fresh and inventive, but it's also a treat to dig Bergson's homage to Jimi (and Duane) on "Are You Experienced?" over Leone's rolling drums.