

# Pop reissue

## REM

Reckoning



(Universal) £12.72

How confident in their abilities were REM as the mid-80s ticked over? An answer comes with the July 1984 live recording that accompanies this remastered edition of their second album: they open their set with a lovely, lambent reading of the Velvet Underground's *Femme Fatale*, as if to say: "We are already sure our work bears comparison with the best-loved alternative group in pop history, and we will not be overshadowed." That self-assurance is apparent on *Reckoning*, too. Although never quite the equal of its mysterious predecessor, *Murmur*, it is the sound of a band refusing to rest - "a waste of time, sitting still," as one of the songs has it. Opener *Harborcoat* demonstrates a growing mastery of the studio - Peter Buck's almost formal playing on the verses giving way to sheets of harmonies and guitars on the chorus; *So. Central Rain* demonstrates an ability to make an emotional connection, even as Michael Stipe happily obfuscates at the same time. Wonderful stuff, and even better was yet to come. **Michael Hann**