

**R.E.M.**

Reckoning - 25th Anniversary
Deluxe Edition

I.R.S./Universal ★★★★★

Reckoning was the album that confirmed R.E.M. as a special group, with reserves of creativity way beyond their peers in the US indie scene. Far from being that difficult second album, it sounded wild and free, easy and natural. Compared to the crepuscular tone and smoky, introverted mystery of their debut *Murmur*, *Reckoning* was ebullient, the sound of a band whose self-belief was bubbling over, their chops honed to slick perfection through hundreds of one-night-stands across the US. The change was most noticeable in Michael Stipe's delivery, the enigmatic mumble maturing into an instrument of powerful yearning, if not exactly rock'n'roll fervour, while his writing retained something of the previous album's enigmatic, wordy charm in songs like "Harborcoat", little lyrical puzzles requiring a degree of interpretative effort on the listeners' part. Elsewhere, the anthemic "(Don't Go Back to) Rockville" and Byrdsy "So. Central Rain" hinted at the group's country-rock influences, while Peter Buck's sparkling arpeggios in songs such as "Pretty Persuasion" established the R.E.M. sound that would define the course of American college-rock for years to come.

DOWNLOAD THIS: Pretty Persuasion, So. Central Rain, Harborcoat, (Don't Go Back to) Rockville, Second Guessing