



# Live and kicking

It's taken nearly three decades, but REM's live act is now available to everyone

**O**nce upon a time, the live album was as much a rite of passage of a rock band's career as the ill-advised concept album, the drugs bust and the split due to musical differences. But over the past decade or so, it's become much less fashionable, and certainly not *de rigueur*, perhaps because a live track has become a bonus staple of the regular album.

It is still unusual, though, for a band of REM's longevity and stature to be only now, in their 27th year, finally getting round to their live album. Stage performance has always been at the heart of what they do. Like their closest peers, U2, they established their success on the back of constant, gruelling touring, graduating from the bars of college towns to the football stadia of the world. Guitarist Peter Buck loves it so much that last year, in between albums and world tours, at a time when most rock stars would be counting their helicopters, he was travelling the colleges of Britain in the back of a van, staying in Travelodges and playing clubs with his "hobby" band the Venus Three.

The REM album and DVD is called, with admirable clarity, *REM Live* and features 22 songs

from the group's performance at the Point Theatre in Dublin on 27 February 2005. All the hits are there as well as a previously unreleased encore knees-up, *I'm Gonna DJ*.

Michael Stipe, the group's enigmatic, mercurial frontman, talks about the new album in a special for Radio 2 this week. In his suits, shaven head and blue face stripe, Stipe is as bold on stage as he is often inscrutable off it. Like Morrissey, an old

friend, his shyness seems to slip away in front of a couple of thousand people. When I interviewed him a few years back for Radio 2, his answers were so gnomic and his body language so withdrawn that the ever-affable Buck shot me a look that said, "Sorry, but hey, that's Michael..." I'm sure he'll be more forthcoming this week.

**Michael Stipe appears on *The Music Club* with Simon Mayo, Monday Radio 2**

**GNOMIC? MOI?**  
 Withdrawn off-stage, Michael Stipe is an enthusiastic showman

## DOWNLOAD FIVE GREAT LIVE ALBUMS

- Woodstock* (original soundtrack)
- Deep Purple – *Made in Japan*
- The Who – *Live at Leeds*
- The Band – *The Last Waltz*
- Jeff Buckley – *Live at Sin-é*

