



R.E.M.

★★★★★

Reckoning UNIVERSAL

25th anniversary Deluxe Edition, remastered with bonus live disc.

Recorded in a mere 12 days, *Reckoning* bore the sulphate kick of a band honed by two years' constant touring and keen to blitz through the

sanctified aura of its predecessor, 1983's *Murmur*. So while this year's remastered version of the R.E.M. debut arguably messed with the mystery that seemed integral to its allure, the similar treatment afforded its successor is far less contentious. With sharpened focus on the Berry/Mills rhythm section, *Reckoning* always rocked; who's going to quibble now it rocks a good deal louder? The uninhibited likes of Harborcoat and Pretty Persuasion hallmarked Peter Buck's post-punk refraction of folk rock guitar, while Michael Stipe's throaty holler revs up for future stardom. The live disc is a much-bootlegged July '84 show from Chicago's Aragon Ballroom, featuring early renderings of future raves *Driver 8* and *Hyena*. Small wonder this version of R.E.M. represents many fans' archetype, never bettered.

Keith Cameron