



## REM

**Reckoning** UNIVERSAL

Sparkling two-CD deluxe edition of the alt-rock superheroes' second album.

Few bands are as thorough in their archiving as REM – on their official website fans can even download a collection of fonts used by the band. So it's no surprise that this remastered version of their second album is a quality release that breathes new life into the original.

*Reckoning* is one of only a handful of albums to employ binaural recording techniques (others include Lou Reed's *Street Hassle* and parts of Radiohead's *In Rainbows* and Peter Gabriel's *Up*) that offers a closer double-sound that works particularly well when listening on headphones. Here the album sounds crisper, cleaner and more open than it has in the past but without losing any of the enigmatic appeal of the band during that period. The main beneficiaries are Peter Buck's sweet guitar hooks and Michael Stipe's lyrics – I swear

you can hear more words now.

Struggling to cope with the demands of their label IRS, 1984's *Reckoning* was recorded quickly (reports differ between 11 days according to guitarist Peter Buck, or 20 if we're to believe producers Mitch Easter and Don Dixon – fast either way) which makes it all the more impressive. With 22 songs demoed, the 10 that made it onto the album follow a vague water-based theme – although unravelling Michael Stipe's lyrics at this point is near impossible – with already established live favourite (*Don't Go Back To Rockville* hinting that the band were already aware bigger stages and a life far removed from Athens, Georgia lay ahead.

REM in 1984: already a force to be reckoned with.



This deluxe edition comes packaged with a live show recorded in Chicago in July 1984 featuring many *Reckoning* tracks as well as some that were yet to make it to vinyl. It lacks the sound quality of the album but provides an excellent example of their nascent genius. If you need any more (pretty) persuasion there's also some excellent sleeve notes from band biographer Tony 'Jamming' Fletcher.



Johnny Dee