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Reckoning
The Grateful Dead
1981, Arista Records and Tapes

One of the most difficult things to do, I think, is to review an album by a group such as The Grateful Dead. For years, I have been an avid follower of the Dead, concert after concert, living and breathing their music. It may be that I am slightly biased. But I still have my likes and dislikes when it comes to their newest recordings.

Go To Heaven and *Shakedown Street* didn't excite me at all. It seemed as if the Dead had lost the studio recording "touch," and the magic lyrics. With the latest Dead record, *Reckoning*, I have had some of my listening joy restored.

Reckoning is a live acoustic double album recorded from shows in the Warfield Theater, San Francisco, and Radio City Music Hall, New York, 1980. It

consists of familiar "dead-tunes" and previously unreleased material.

"Dire Wolf," "It Must Have Been The Roses," "Dark Hollow," "China Doll," "Been All Around This World," "Cassidy," "To Lay Me Down," "Bird Song," and "Ripple" are all on earlier albums. With the exception of "Dark Hollow" and "Been All Around This World," the older album versions are all electric. Hearing them done acoustically is a new and pleasing experience.

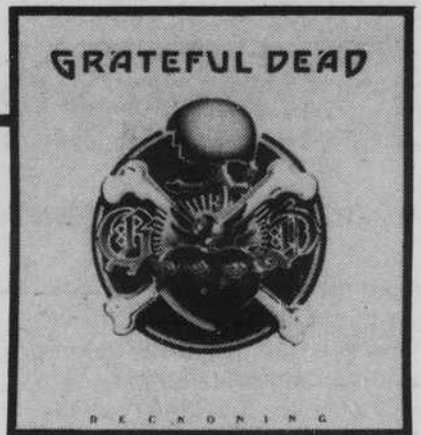
Lead guitarist Jerry Garcia's vocals are still as acceptable as ever and still blend with rhythm guitarist Bob Weir's voice in a unique, strangely melodic way. Keyboardist Brent Mydland's back-up vocals are worthless, but that may come from still hearing ex-group member Donna Godchaux's backup vocals in my head. Phil Lesh's bass playing is barely discernible and Bill Kreutzmann's and Mickey Hart's drumming are limited. Nevertheless, it is good to hear these old songs done again and again.

Among the new material is "The Race Is On," by Don Rollins. Weir does vocals in this tune with chorus harmonies sung by Garcia. It is fairly fast-moving and has a dancing beat.

"Oh Babe It Ain't No Lie" is a light blues tune by Elizabeth Cotten. Garcia's vocals are soft and low and almost hard to hear. They enhance the mellow, bluesy mood of the song. Mydland's piano is gentle and not overpowering. This song could almost be a lullabye.

As Weir says on the album, "The Monkey And The Engineer" is a song about "narrowly averted tragedy." I have heard this song before on early "dead-tapes," and am glad to hear it updated. It is not, however, an overly exciting tune.

"Jack-A-Roe," the final song



on the first record, is a traditional ballad done in the past by Joan Baez, if not others. Garcia's vocals sound a little strained, but loving "dead-heads" are used to this and it has never destroyed the mastery of the music.

Another traditional tune, "Deep Elem Blues," has been played by the Dead before at earlier concerts. There is a particularly fine version on the Fillmore East tape, 1970. On the new album, the song does not sound quite bluesy enough, and Mydland's back-up vocals are fortunately unintelligible.

"Rosalie McFall," a Charlie Monroe tune, is done fast and efficiently by the Dead and has also been featured on earlier tours.

The last of the new material is another traditional song entitled "On The Road Again." It has a pleasing beat to it. The lyrics are hard to make out, but the Dead members were never big on enunciation.

I would say that *Reckoning* is a good buy for those who are not saturated with the Dead. For those of us who are, the new material makes the album worth listening to.

There are many of us who think that there is nothing better than the Dead's old stuff, and this is true, but it is not 1968 and we must have open minds. It is enough for me that the Dead have not yet passed into history.

— C.Hanson

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Yes, fair readers, it is raining once again. Not so much cats and dogs, but definitely those wet howls we all hear in the night and dread in the morn. But, as a fine, up-standing citizen once told me on the Carson Hall steps between the fourth and fifth floors: "Ahh, that's what keeps it so green." "Right," I said grimacing. Dreams of cement blocks ran through my mind as I sloshed along Pre's Trail two years ago in the hail.

Returning to this rainy day two years later, (though, the weather report only said, "rain through Thursday") you may notice a "change of face" for the ol' **TR**: that's right, ya' know, turning over a new (soggy) leaf.

Finally, just let me dribble a drop of information in your ear: **Thursday Revue stuff** needs to be in my staff box by the **THURSDAY** before publication — this includes the Calendar info. Thanks, Cin (or was it Sin?) and crew. — Erzsi.

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