



R. E. M.

R.E.M., the Athens, Georgia-based combo, follows up the highly acclaimed EP *Chronic Town* (August 1982), with *Murmur* (April 1983). Along with all the critical accolades heaped on *Chronic Town*, the record was voted the #2 EP in the 1982 year-end *Village Voice* critics poll of 216 critics nationwide; it was a top 5 record at college radio for three months; and it was #41 on the year-end Top 100 records chart in *College Media Journal* (CMJ). In its December 1982 issue, *Musician* magazine said ". . . the five songs here are so completely accessible melodically that it would be hard to imagine any listener not becoming addicted eventually. In fact, the only problem with the record is that you end up wishing for a larger dose." That larger dose is now available on *Murmur*.

Produced by Mitch Easter (*Chronic Town* producer) and Don Dixon, *Murmur* is more straightforward in terms of production, and shows an evolution lyrically and musically from *Chronic Town*. Guitarist Pete Buck says the combo "wanted to make a record that is totally us so people couldn't say 'they sound like this group or that one.' We were trying to avoid all influences." Among the 12 original songs on the album are new versions of "Radio Free Europe" and "Sitting Still," two tunes the band released independently as a single in July 1981 that ended up on *The New York Times* 1981 Ten Best Singles List.

When R.E.M., which in addition to Pete Buck, is Michael Stipe (lead vocals), Mike Mills (bass, backing vocals) and Bill Berry (drums, backing vocals), got together in 1980, they had no idea they would ever achieve such a musical accomplishment. They originally intended to play one party at an abandoned church in Athens that Buck and Stipe were living in at the time. That party, however, led to others and before long the combo had a large following and was soon opening for bands in Atlanta's largest clubs. They also landed the opening slot for the Gang of Four on a series of East Coast dates, paving the way for further tours up and down that coast.

I.R.S. Records, one of several labels that had been scouting the band, signed them on May 31, 1982. The release in August of *Chronic Town* was supported with an extensive tour that took them throughout the U.S. Just prior to the release of *Murmur*, the band joined the

(english) Beat on a tour of the North- and Southeast and into Canada. Following this month-long jaunt, R.E.M. heads out on a nationwide headlining tour.

Watch for them and listen . . . there's a Murmur in the air, and it's getting louder . . .

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