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Aretha – Live At Fillmore West – Speakers Corner Records

by [Audiophile Audition](#) | Jun 21, 2023 | [Jazz CD Reviews](#), [SACD & Other Hi-Res Reviews](#) | [0 comments](#)



The Queen Of Soul shines on this updated live vinyl!

Aretha – Live At Fillmore West – Atlantic Records SD 7205 (1971)/Speakers Corner Records (2023) 180-gram stereo vinyl, 48:34 ****1/2:

It is nearly impossible to accurately describe the artistic contribution of Aretha Franklin. Considered by many critics to be ‘the greatest singer of all time’, the aptly named ‘Queen Of Soul’ charted well over 100 singles. Her gospel-inspired vocal style was passionate and visceral. After a modestly successful stint at Columbia Records, Franklin moved to the r & b-centric label Atlantic to establish her iconic legacy. By 1968 with songs like ‘Respect’, ‘Baby I Love You’ and ‘(You Make Me feel) Like a Natural Woman’, Aretha became the top singer in the world. Her undeniable talent and musical charisma reached across many different audiences. Additionally her music became a symbol of the Civil Rights movement. Along with Ray Charles, there was never another singer who commanded the level of admiration from songwriters and fellow performers.

Speakers Corner Records has released a 180-gram vinyl of her 1971 concert, *Aretha Live At The Fillmore West*. With Franklin on vocals and Fender Rhodes, an all-star band including Billy Preston, Bernard Purdie and King Curtis back her in



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superb fashion. The concert opens with a supercharged version of Otis Redding's "Respect". All of the elements of soul are present, Franklin's mesmerizing vocals, muscular horns, gospel backup singers and furious tempo. A soulful vocal interlude is accompanied by Preston as The Queen greets the enthusiastic San Francisco audience. Next up is a cover of the Stephen Stills hit, "Love The One You're With". Franklin preaches the power of love in a Memphis-style groove fest. Preston and The Memphis Horns provide many hooks and the vocals are unrelenting. Franklin and the band wail and the percussion tandem of Purdie and Pancho Morales drive the momentum. Paul Simon's elegiac song, "Bridge Over Troubled Water" is transformed into a Sunday morning hymnal with trademark slow-burning intensity. Aretha executes a nimble electric piano intro. It feels like the song was written with her voice in mind. "Eleanor Rigby" was a sorrowful, string and voice hit for The Beatles. Of course, Aretha turns it into a gritty soul revue with vocal call and response framed by horns and Cornell Dupree's guitar riffs. Another early 70's pop song, "Make It With You" becomes more of a big production soul ballad. Back on the groove train, "Don't Play That Song" is quintessential Franklin that bristles with soulful countenance and a dynamic horn arrangement. The intensity of this band is palpable.

On Fender Rhodes, Aretha captures slowed-down blues inspiration on an original composition, "Dr. Feelgood". Her depth of emotion is expressed in the growling, sensual vocals. Like "Respect", she combines earthy resonance with spiritual fluency. In another blues groove, "Spirit In The Dark" (also written by Franklin) showcases dense horn flourishes amid exhortative singing. Her performance is magnetic. Eventually there is an explosive transition to a frenetic gospel pace. In an amazing reprise of "Spirit In The Dark", she is joined by none other than Ray Charles. His unique vocals and keyboard flourishes drive the audience into a frenzy. This is a historical performance from arguably the best singers in history. Ray simply grooves with this band and shares the "testimony" with The Queen. The final vocal exchange is pure magic. Franklin concludes with the solo Diana Ross hit, "Reach Out And Touch (Somebody's Hand)", written by Nickolas Ashford and Valerie Simpson. The blues waltz tempo is maintained, but with a significant dose of religious fervor.

This vinyl upgrade of *Aretha Live At Fillmore West* is excellent. The vibrant sound mix is centered around Franklin's powerful voice. The vinyl pressing has little surface noise and no hisses or pops.

—Robbie Gerson

Aretha – Live At Fillmore West

TrackList:

Side One:

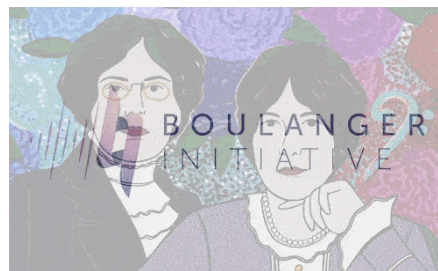
Respect;
Love The One You're With;
Bridge Over Troubled Water;
Eleanor Rigby;
Make It With You;
Don't Play That Song

Side Two:

Dr. Feelgood;
Spirit In The Dark;
Spirit In The Dark (Reprise with Ray Charles);
Reach Out And Touch (Somebody's Hand)

Performing Artists:

Aretha Franklin – Fender Rhodes, vocals;
Cornell Dupree – guitar;
Jerry Jemmott – bass;
Truman Thomas – piano;
Billy Preston – organ;
Bernard Purdie – drums;
Pancho Morales – congas;
King Curtis – saxophone, orchestra leader;



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Jun 3, 2023

A jazz legend's legacy is showcased on Craft Recordings' vinyl re-mastering.



Pharaoh Sanders – Live... – Pure Pleasure Records

May 27, 2023

This vinyl upgrade is a fitting homage to a jazz legend.



The Oscar Peterson Trio – On A Clear Day/Live In Zurich, 1971 – Mack Avenue Music Group

May 23, 2023

Mack Avenue Music Group celebrates the genius of Oscar Peterson with a previously unreleased live album.

Charlie Parker – Bird In LA – Universal Music Group

Ray Charles – electric piano, vocals;
Brenda Bryant – backup vocals;
Margaret Branch – backup vocals;
Pat Smith – backup vocals;
The Memphis Horns — Horn arrangements by Arif Mardin, Larry Wicox, Tom Dowd



May 18, 2023
It's always a celebration when unreleased Charlie Parker music is unearthed.

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