

The song seemed to demonstrate a renewed faith Aretha had found, and from that point on her career soared to even greater heights.

The rest of the music world seemed to take heart also, and everyone with a mouth began to seek God and a salvation in music, through recording . . . but no one could do it like Aretha. Even the friendship in "Bridge Over Troubled Water" became a religious experience in her hands, so it is only with a moot question one can view her ten-year cycle and return to gospel — "What took so long?"

Throughout the two years since Rev. Cleveland formed the Southern California Community Choir, Aretha has always greeted him with, "James, when are we going to get together and do that album?" And for two years, Cleveland smiled and replied, "Whenever you're ready, Baby."

Last November, the same conversation took place, but James Cleveland was most surprised to hear from Atlantic Records one week later. First a date was chosen, then contracts drawn up, then a place chosen. "Pretty soon," laughs Rev. Cleveland, "I decided I'd better call Aretha and see what she wanted to sing."

"She gave me a list of thirty tunes, then her secretary called to add six more, then she called back with four more. Of course she gave me a final list two weeks ago."

"On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we rehearsed, with no arrangements. Aretha just told us what she wanted and we tried to do it. Thursday we recorded. We've never done anything like this before."

The choir expects some recognition and travel may come of the session, but they are most satisfied with being chosen by Aretha to work with her, that means more than anything else.

Rehearsals

"Aretha has always sung gospel," said Clara Ward, standing in the doorway of Reverend James Cleveland's Cornerstone Institutional Baptist Church, where the rehearsal was going on. "She's kept her same style since she was a child, only the words were different." Clara Ward had come by to hear the arrangements of her "Old Landmark" and "How I Got Over" that Aretha had selected for the new album.

Carolyn Franklin bounded in next, and made a bee-line for the fried chicken, the usual mischief twinkling in her eyes. "No, I'm not gonna sing on this one," she laughed. "I'm gonna try to keep my mouth shut and just watch and listen."

It was Wednesday evening, and the last rehearsal session before the recording sessions would begin at New Temple Missionary Baptist Church on Broadway in the heart of L.A.'s ghetto, and everyone was ready to let loose.

Aretha wandered around the room



During rehearsals Aretha mapped out the arrangements with the band and choir. Nothing had been previously written out

shyly, smiling here, chatting there, politely avoiding any deep conversations. She sat for a while with an acquaintance discussing children and offering coffee, and then returned to the microphone. The choir was seated and the band took to their instruments . . . Chuck Rainey on bass, Bernard Purdy on drums, Cornell DuPree on guitar, Dick Richards on congas. Reverend Cleveland was at the piano, and eighteen year old Kenneth Lupper rotated with Dave Crawford on organ.

Kenny is the church organist and

has been playing piano and organ for fifteen years, mostly in church. He studies music in college, occasionally going on the road with a singer and seeking studio work. He plays remarkably.

The choir director, Alexander Hamilton, took command and the rehearsal began. Aretha sang softly, as did the choir, using the opportunity to find their notes and learn the arrangements, saving the vocal power for Thursday night. Producer Jerry Wexler was nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly a tune stood out from all the others. Aretha began the familiar

lyrics of "You've Got A Friend." Well, that has a religious feeling, one thinks, it kind of fits, but this was supposed to be an all gospel album, surely the tune could have been held.

And then the "something special" happens; the choir begins to come in with "Precious Lord." To say it was a chilling experience is to underestimate it badly. The potential of that well-used pop tune had never before been so fully realized, not even in the version recorded by it's author Carole King (who also wrote Aretha's hit "Natural Woman").

Thursday evening found many

Volume 6 No. 22

PUBLISHERS KEN JONES — REGINA JONES
MANAGING EDITOR JUDY SPIEGELMAN, ART DIRECTOR BERNIE ROLLINS, CONTRIBUTING WRITERS JANELLE ANDERSON, LEAH DAVIS, CAROL DECK, SELINA DYE, JACKYE SHAUN, PETER HASSINGER, CHUCK SILER, BERNARD COMAS, STANLEY WILLIFORD, SHARRYN WATTS, LYGIA CRAIN, PHOTOGRAPHERS HOWARD L. BINGHAM, ROLAND CHARLES, JOE FLOWERS, WILLIE BILL FORD, JR., WIN MULDROW, GWEN PHILLIPS, CORRESPONDENTS HOLLYWOOD — WALTER BURRELL; CHICAGO — RICHARD PEGUE; TRINIDAD — RUDY TAYLOR; NEW YORK — G. FITZ BARTLEY, SUBSCRIPTIONS C. DELGARDO, ADVERTISING DIRECTOR RON WILLIAMS, ASSISTANT ADVERTISING DIRECTOR CHERYL DAWSON, NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION DISKIN DISTRIBUTING, INC., 264 S. ROBERTSON BLVD., BEVERLY HILLS, CALIF. 90211.

SOUL
America's Most Soulful Newspaper

February 28, 1972

SOUL IS PUBLISHED BI-WEEKLY EXCEPT ONE ISSUE IN APRIL BY SOUL PUBLICATIONS, INC. EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING OFFICES ARE LOCATED AT 8271 MELROSE AVE., LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90046. (213) 653-7775. COPYRIGHT 1971. SOUL PUBL. INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, WHICH MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY RETURN POSTAGE. SUBSCRIPTIONS ONE YEAR, \$4 (25 ISSUES). SALE PRICE: 25 CENTS IN LOS ANGELES; 35 CENTS ELSEWHERE. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: SUBSCRIBERS SHOULD ALLOW FOUR WEEKS FROM DATE OF NOTIFICATION AND SEND BOTH OLD AND NEW ADDRESSES, INCLUDING ZIP CODES. CHANGE OF ADDRESS NOTICES, UNDELIVERED COPIES AND ORDERS FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS SHOULD BE SENT TO 8271 MELROSE AVE., SUITE 208, LOS ANGELES, CALIF. 90046. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CALIF.