Jerry Wexler and Carolyn Franklin watch the audience respond to Aretha's breathtaking performance

experience seldom shared by whites. The song itself was a rare experience with Aretha singing at ballad tempo, something she should do more often. The film's director and members of the crew were frequently drawn in and moved to clap to the beat. Seldom finding it, they proved an amusing diversion . . . but they showed a lot of heart in trying.

Rev. Franklin was invited to speak and his voice broke with pride as he praised his daughter's talents, which he helped to develop. Aretha has often told of his patience with her, "teaching me to take my time with a song and working with it until it was mine."

Reverend Franklin emphasized that Aretha takes the church with her wherever she sings. "The way she sings in this church tonight, is the way she sings any place she sings." Aretha sat, moved with pride.

On Thursday night, Aretha sang without stopping. Friday, a mechanical problem was announced from the pulpit and Aretha went through a rear door to rest, apparently, until it was cleared up.

Behind the pulpit, in the backstage area of the converted theater, a color TV set was on low. Aretha, Carolyn, Ken Cunningham, Rev. Franklin, and a few close friends were gathered around to watch her dramatic debut on the "Room 222" series.

She was good and seemed pleased with her performance, not elated, just satisfied. Along came Rev. Cleveland, who reported, "'Retha, looks like we lied up on a problem. When you left the stage, you knocked over a cup of water, and it soaked some lines and blew out a few things."

"That'll teach you to lie in church," someone quipped.

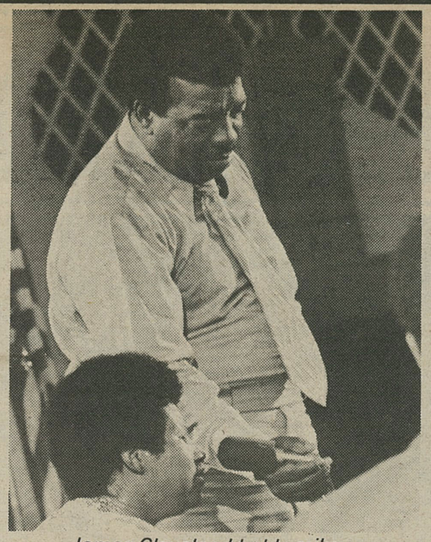
The highly sensitive, sophisticated equipment involved included the 16-track board and tape deck in the sound truck parked outside, as well as the 16-track mixing board inside the church used to blend the sound for the performance.

performance. In a matter of minutes, however, the problem was solved.

Producer and Executive V.P. of Atlantic Records, Jerry Wexler, explained the recording technique. "We're recording here tonight in the same way people worked before multi-track tape. Nowadays, in the studio, a producer is like a painter putting down the background in layers (the rhythm), and then blocking out the basic shapes (vocals, horns, melody).

"Tonight, we're recording live musix, voices and artist all at once. I feel there will be a lot more live recording in the future."

Live was right . . . and is right. This album will live a classic. Aretha proved three things with this performance. First, that she really comes alive when she's singing. Second, that her voice is magnificent singing slowly. And, third, that she is the Queen of Soul in any sense of the word.



James Cleveland holds mike while Aretha's "goin' in"

Taken by the spirit, Aretha hums through repeated choruses of "Never Grow Old"

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