

A R E T H A F R A N K L I N

AMAZING GRACE



**MOVIE
MOMENTS**

Nick and Carol Pollard from EthosMedia.org share thought-provoking reflections on the latest films.

Glimpsing the face of God?

‘Extraordinary’, ‘transcendent’, ‘spine-tingling’. This is just some of the praise from reviewers of *Amazing Grace*, the film of Aretha Franklin’s 1972 recording of what became the best-selling live gospel album of all time. Intimately filmed in a small church before a local congregation and brought to our screens just as it was recorded almost fifty years ago, why has the film provoked such a positive response from contemporary film critics?



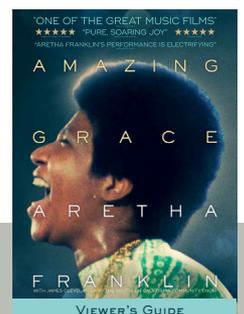
Its huge impact is clearly due to Aretha’s deeply personal rendition of so many powerful gospel songs such as ‘What a friend we have in Jesus’ and ‘Precious Lord take my hand’.

Singing at the church pulpit, with a cross in front of her and a mural of Jesus behind her, Aretha uses her amazing vocal mastery and artistic excellence not to draw attention to herself but rather to draw out the message of the music. No wonder Rolling Stone magazine says: ‘It will make you feel as if you’ve seen the face of God’.

Halfway through, her father Rev C.L. Franklin, gives a short talk in which he refers to criticism of Aretha that she should come back to church (until 1961 she had mainly sung gospel songs, but in the intervening decade she had recorded a string of ‘secular’ hits). Quite rightly, he says, ‘she never left the church.’



Certainly, Aretha faced many trials and challenges in her life and faith. And one can palpably feel them through this intimate recording of her emotional rendition of these powerful songs. Watching it on the big screen, we are not distant observers of a slickly packaged musical performance. Rather we feel right there with her, in the midst of the intimate reality of an open-hearted woman honestly expressing, through her music, the grace that she has received – the amazing grace through which we glimpse the face of God.



**ETHOS
MEDIA.org**

EthosMedia.org provides free resources to help people explore spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues through the latest feature films.

**Special Screenings and
Viewer's Guide at
EthosMedia.org/AmazingGrace**