

FLEETWOOD MAC



THE COMPLETE ILLUSTRATED HISTORY

RICHIE UNTERBERGER



Fleetwood Mac in Los Angeles in 1969. Within just three years or so, only Mick Fleetwood and John McVie would remain in the band. Getty Images



Top: Stevie Nicks at the Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin, on July 19, 1978. Getty Images

Bottom: Fleetwood Mac backstage at the Los Angeles Rock Awards on September 1, 1977. Getty Images



Lindsey Buckingham during the Tusk tour at Madison Square Garden in November 1979. Getty Images



A triumphant Mick Fleetwood at Fleetwood Mac's Paris concert on October 11, 2013. Getty Images



The short-lived six-person lineup of Fleetwood Mac that lasted for just eight months in 1972 and 1973. Sitting in front: Christine McVie, John McVie. Standing in the middle, from left to right: Bob Weston, Bob Welch, and Dave Walker. Standing in back: Mick Fleetwood. Getty Images



Top: *Mick Fleetwood, gentleman rock star, checks out a Mercedes Benz limousine once owned by John Lennon at the Hard Rock Cafe in London on March 27, 2001. Getty Images*

Bottom: *Stevie Nicks at Fleetwood Mac's Madison Square Garden show on October 7, 2014. Getty Images*



Lindsey Buckingham in 1975, the year he and Stevie Nicks joined Fleetwood Mac and helped boost them to superstardom. Getty Images



For many fans, this is the “classic” lineup of Fleetwood Mac, when the band reached the height of their fame in the mid- to late 1970s. From left to right: Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, and John McVie. Getty Images

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BY RICHIE UNTERBERGER



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INTRODUCTION

Few bands have sold as many records as Fleetwood Mac. Yet few bands have suffered such internal turmoil. And no superstar rock act changed so much, in style and actual personnel, from the time they formed to the point at which they finally achieved superstardom a good decade later.

When that goal was reached with the mega-selling 1977 album *Rumours*, it was something of a miracle Fleetwood Mac hadn't broken up—not just once, but several times. Their founder, and original lead guitarist and principal singer-songwriter, had unexpectedly (and, to many observers, inexplicably) left the group fewer than three years after its birth. The other guitarist and frontman on their first several albums would jump ship a year later in even odder, more unsettling circumstances.

Two other guitarists and singer-songwriters would leave Fleetwood Mac in the next few years. By the end of 1974, they were down to a trio with just one singer-songwriter, who herself hadn't joined the band until the early 1970s. They were living and working in a different country than their native England; had yet to score a big hit in their adopted homeland, the United States; and had nearly lost the rights to even work under the name Fleetwood Mac. Their sudden enlistment of two Californian singer-songwriters they didn't even know seemed not so much a calculated risk as a desperate push for survival.

Fleetwood Mac not only survived, but thrived. The new quintet—their tenth lineup in less than ten years—would become one of the biggest bands



Getty Images

in the world. The first album they did together topped the US charts. The second, *Rumours*, would not only repeat the feat, but sell tens of millions of copies.

This is the version of Fleetwood Mac—with keyboardist-singer Christine McVie, guitarist-singer Lindsey Buckingham, singer Stevie Nicks, bassist John McVie, and drummer/leader Mick Fleetwood—that is by far the most familiar to audiences throughout the world. The pop-rock that was their forte had been recorded thousands of miles from the London studios in which their first albums had been cut. To many ears, it seemed *millions* of miles away from the pure blues with which they'd first made their name back in the late 1960s.

Yet for all the transformations Fleetwood Mac has undergone, some factors have remained constant throughout their nearly fifty-year career. One is their drummer, Mick Fleetwood, who's been there from the start. Another is their bassist, John McVie, who's been there virtually from the start. An equally vital thread running through their stormy path is a willingness to persevere through adversity that would have stopped almost every other band time after time. Never was the adversity worse, in fact, than when they were recording *Rumours*, during which the band nearly split up—and the two romantic couples within the band *did* split up.

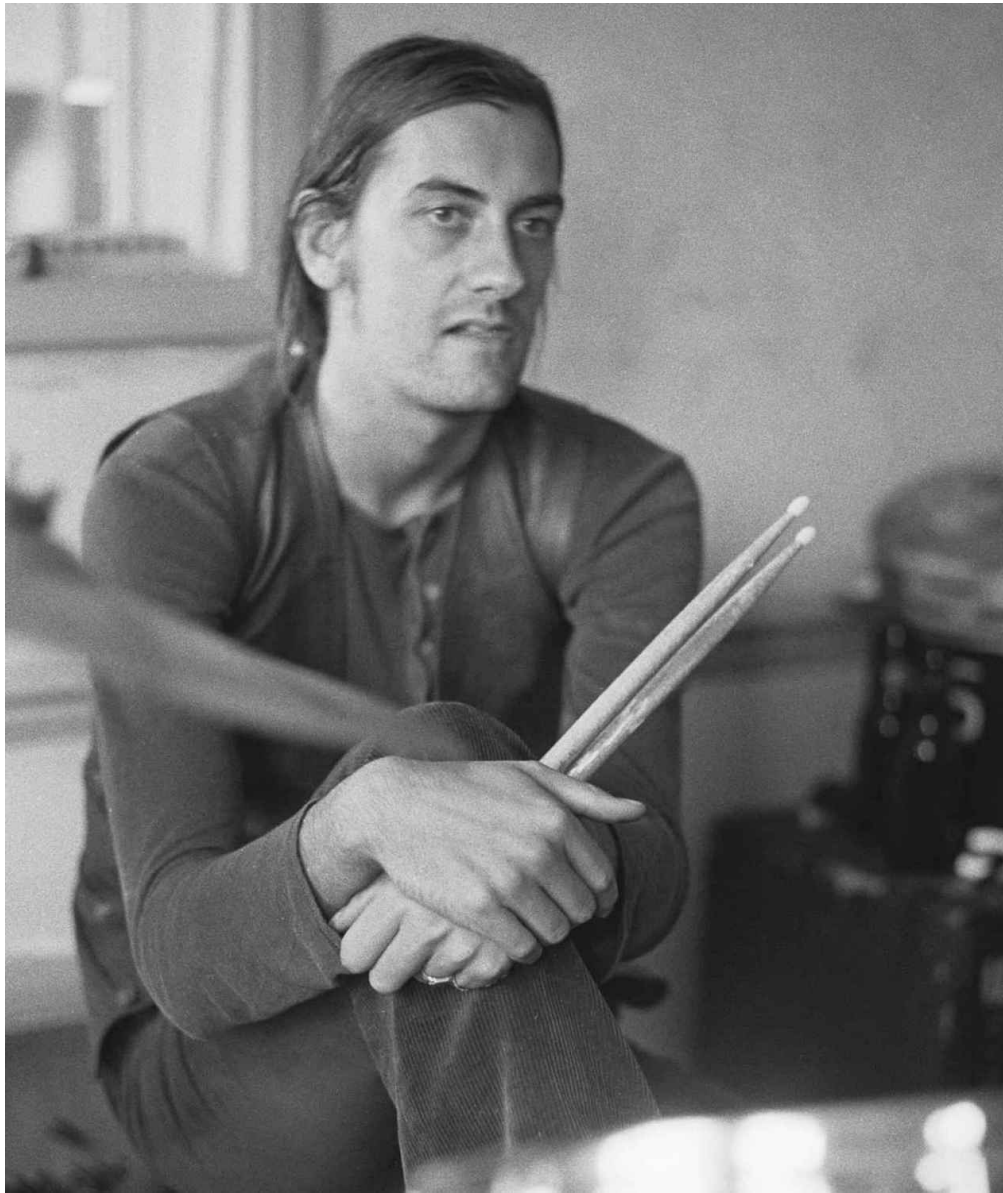
They stayed together at that crucial juncture, of course, and by the late 1970s were selling more records and filling up more stadiums than almost anyone in history. Fleetwood Mac's story began, however, not in the huge arenas and luxury touring accommodations to which they'd become accustomed. Instead, their sound was forged in the small, cramped clubs of London, as musicians in one of the many bands struggling for a foothold in Britain's exploding mid-1960s blues scene.

Chapter 1

THE ROOTS OF FLEETWOOD MAC 1963–1966

It might seem odd that the musician regarded as the leader of Fleetwood Mac has written and sung little of their material. Nonetheless, it's a title that drummer Mick Fleetwood has earned, and not only because he's the only member who's been in the band every step of the way. More than anyone else, he's been the force responsible for keeping them going in the face of what must have seemed insurmountable obstacles. He's also often taken a great deal of responsibility for the band's management, artistic direction, and business affairs, which in time would be as much of a tangle as their romantic ones.

When Mick Fleetwood grew up, however, it seemed doubtful that he'd even make a living, let alone make (and lose) millions. Born on June 24, 1947, in Redruth in northern Cornwall, England, he spent some of his early years in both Egypt and Norway as his father was transferred to different posts in the military. Sent to boarding school while his family was abroad, he had such learning difficulties that he ran away from several institutions in frustration. After trying several alternatives, his family gave up on the idea of Mick qualifying for college, and he left school for good at the age of fifteen and a half.



Although Fleetwood Mac was formed by guitarist Peter Green, Mick Fleetwood has been the band's leader since Green left at the beginning of the 1970s. Getty Images

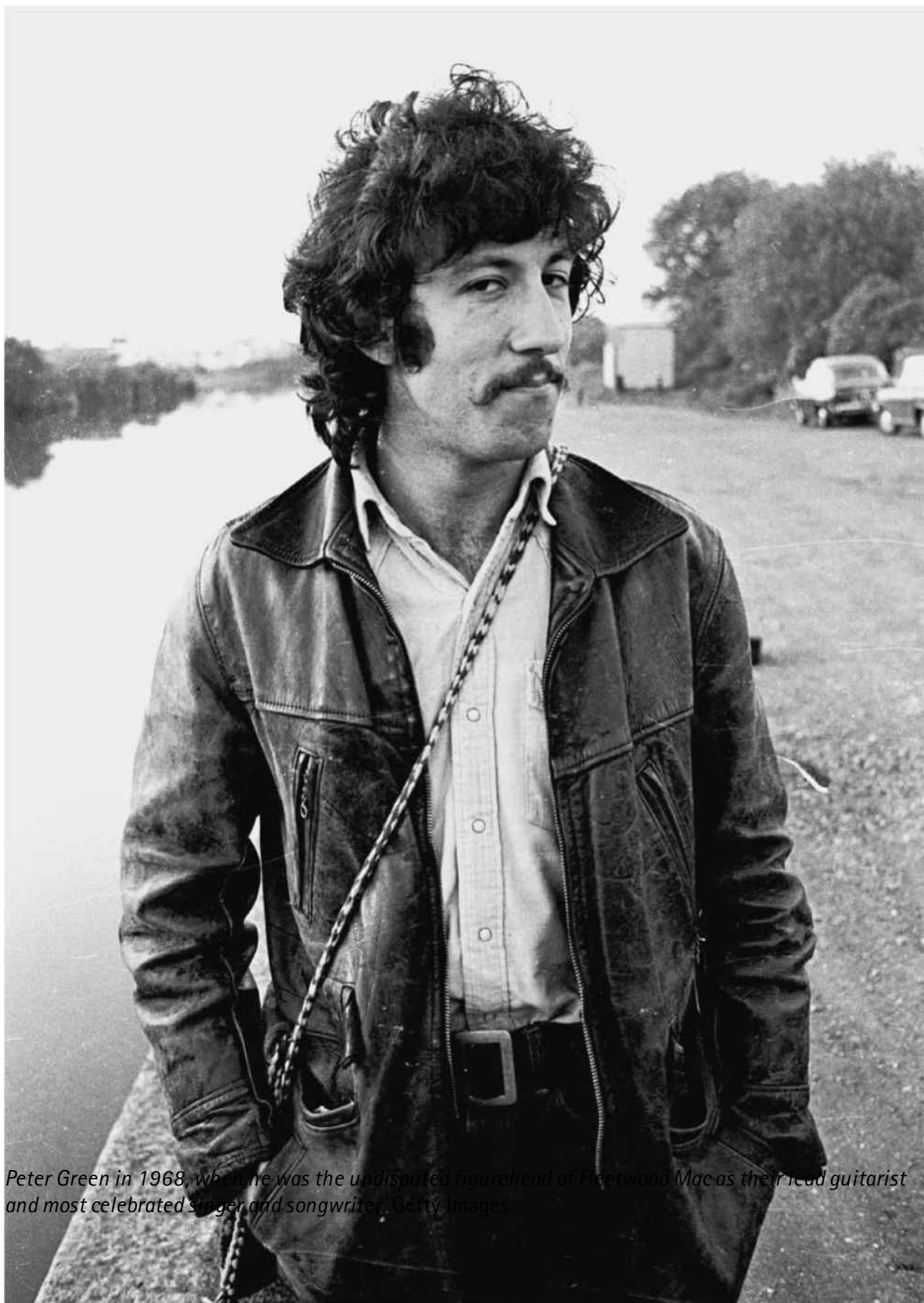
His true enthusiasm was not for studying, but for music, especially drumming. With no educational credentials, no experience in a proper band, and no conventional job waiting for him at the other end, he moved to live with his older sister, Sally, and her husband in London. A stint as a grunt in a department store didn't last long, as Mick was more interested in practicing drums in his relatives' garage. Fortunately organist Peter Bardens, who lived just a few houses away, invited Fleetwood to join his

band, the Cheynes, in the summer of 1963 after hearing him bashing away. It is likely Bardens would have eventually noticed Fleetwood around the neighborhood without having heard his drumming, as he was already well over six feet tall; his adult height of six and a half feet would make him stand out as one of the most towering musicians in all of rock.

While the Rolling Stones had only just released their first single, they'd already inspired scores of rhythm-and-blues-oriented London bands to follow in their footsteps. Fleetwood would play in, and occasionally record with, several of them over the next four years, serving a gritty apprenticeship in the numerous clubs that were starting to feature young bluesy rock acts as the Stones took off. The Cheynes got to open for some of the biggest of these rising stars, including the Yardbirds (featuring Eric Clapton on guitar) and, on a January 1964 British tour, the Rolling Stones themselves.

At the end of 1963, Fleetwood also made his recording debut on the first Cheynes single, a cover of the Isley Brothers' "Respectable." Just a couple more non-hit forty-fives followed, however (one of them, "Stop Running Around," written and co-produced by Stones bassist Bill Wyman), before the Cheynes split and Bardens joined Van Morrison's band Them. Fleetwood quickly hooked up with another R & B outfit, the Bo Street Runners, by answering an ad in *Melody Maker*, and his accomplished jazzy blues-rock drumming was well to the fore on their 1965 single "Baby Never Say Goodbye." That was the only record he made with them, however, before moving on again in early 1966, reteaming with Bardens in the all-instrumental Peter B's Looners. By this time he'd taken up with Jenny Boyd, younger sister of Pattie Boyd, who'd married George Harrison in January 1966.

Modeled on American instrumental soul band Booker T. & the MGs, Peter B's Looners would issue just one single, "If You Wanna Be Happy," which fared as poorly as the discs Mick Fleetwood had cut with his previous two bands. It was here, however, that Fleetwood made an alliance that would lead to the formation of a much more successful group than the also-rans with whom he'd honed his chops. The guitarist in Peter B's Looners was Peter Green, the musician with whom Fleetwood would form Fleetwood Mac, although that band's formation was still more than a year in the future.



Peter Green in 1968, when he was the undisputed figurehead of Fleetwood Mac as their lead guitarist and most celebrated singer and songwriter. Getty Images

Born only about half a year earlier than Fleetwood in London on October 29, 1946, Green's background was in some ways quite similar to Fleetwood's. Born Peter Greenbaum, he grew up as Peter Green after his postman father shortened the Jewish family's name in 1948. Like Fleetwood, he left school at the age of fifteen, working for a couple years as a butcher's apprentice, and then for a while as a furniture polisher. Also like Fleetwood, his real enthusiasm was music, and he did his real apprenticeship in a handful of local bands, initially playing more bass than guitar.

By late 1965, Green was getting more interested in both guitar and the blues, setting his sights on the top London blues band of the mid-1960s, John Mayall's Bluesbreakers. The Bluesbreakers already had a good guitarist, Eric Clapton, who'd signed on with Mayall after leaving the Yardbirds in early 1965. When Clapton took a surprise three-month break from the Bluesbreakers in late 1965 to travel to Greece, however, Green spied his chance.

Mayall had been limping along with a series of unsatisfactory replacements. During the weeks Clapton was away, the final hired gun joined the lineup. As Mayall told *Rock Family Trees* author Pete Frame, "This other bloke kept coming up saying 'I'm much better than him—why don't you use me?' ... and that was Peter Green. In the end, he got quite vicious about it, so I got him in—and he was better ... but three days later Eric came back and Peter was out again, which didn't make him too happy."

As it turned out, Green wouldn't have long to wait for another chance and a permanent slot in the Bluesbreakers. In the meantime, he auditioned for Peter B's Looners, Fleetwood later admitting in Martin Celmins' *Peter Green: The Biography* (1995), "I just felt that he was too restricted as a guitar player, which is my biggest screw-up probably of all time. And to be perfectly honest if it wasn't for Peter Bardens he certainly wouldn't have joined that band [Peter B's Looners]. He had a great sound and repeated certain phrases which were pretty cool: but then I thought 'What else can he do?'

"So I took the cheap way out and said, 'Well, he's not good enough.' I remember Peter Bardens came straight back saying, '[You and Looners bassist Dave Ambrose are] both wrong. This guy's got a great talent. He's going to be great.' I was into John McLaughlin at the time and I just didn't

think Peter had enough fire. Of course, that misjudgment has been a great lesson in life for me: Peter remains my favorite guitar player, so when I listen to anyone now I tend not to be so hasty.”

Replacing Mick Parker (who’d only been in the band a month) at the end of 1965, Green wouldn’t have much opportunity to showcase his licks with Peter B’s Looners, although his solo on their lone single’s B-side, “Jodrell Blues,” is stinging and assured. The Looners had by May 1966 evolved into Shotgun Express, ditching the all-instrumental format for vocals, which were shared by Beryl Marsden and a pre-fame Rod Stewart. Green was gone, however, by the time the first of their pair of flop singles came out in late 1966. Clapton had left the Bluesbreakers again that summer, this time for good, leaping to superstardom with Cream. And when a replacement was needed, Mayall knew whom to call, Green making his debut as the band’s official lead guitarist on July 18, 1966. On bass was the same fellow with whom Green had played on his previous brief stint with the group, John McVie.

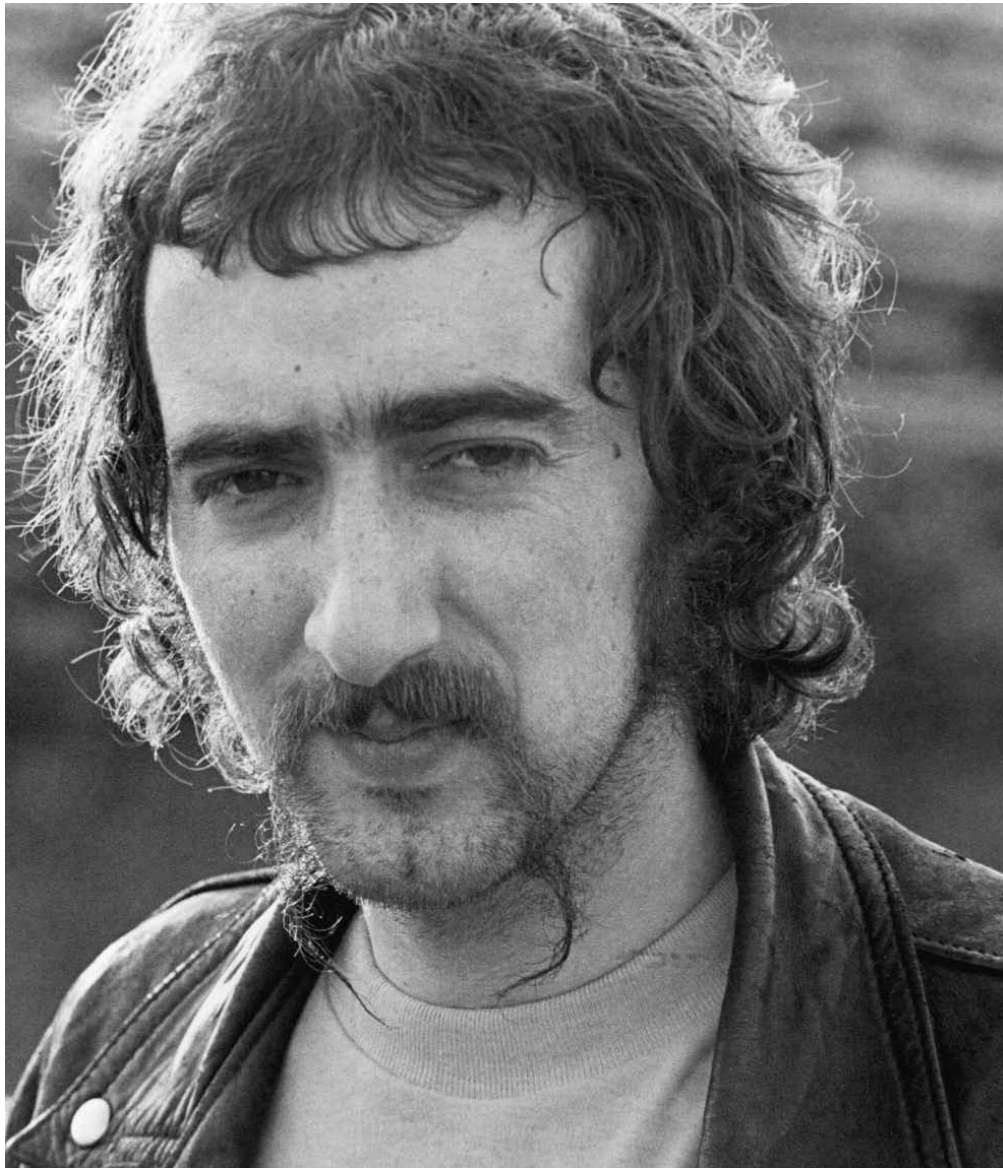
This didn’t quite mark McVie’s intro to the Fleetwood Mac saga. He’d become friendly with Fleetwood even before Green played his handful of Bluesbreakers shows in fall 1965, as Mayall and the Cheynes shared the same booking agent. This would, however, inaugurate the first period in which Green and McVie closely collaborated. As a consequence, McVie would be Green’s first choice for the bass slot when Green formed a band of his own, even if McVie didn’t join Fleetwood Mac right away when that time arrived.

Although he would be the least colorful component of the quintet that comprised Fleetwood Mac’s most famous lineup, McVie’s contributions to the band were considerable, as he brought more recording and performing experience to the group than any of the other original members. Born in London on November 26, 1945, McVie stuck it out in school a bit longer than his future bandmates. Like them, he did a bit of time in the straight world, training as a tax inspector for nine months after leaving school at the age of seventeen. “I was useless at math,” he admitted in *MOJO*. “I guess some people got some really screwed up tax returns.”

But music was as much in his blood as it was in Fleetwood’s and Green’s. He was still seventeen when he joined John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers in early 1963 after getting recommended for the position by Cliff Barton, bassist in another emerging London blues ensemble, the

Cyril Davies All-Stars. More than ten years McVie's senior, Mayall ran the Bluesbreakers with a firm hand, changing the band's personnel about ten times during McVie's four and a half years in the outfit.

It says much for McVie's skills and reliability, however, that McVie was the only guy besides Mayall to stay in the Bluesbreakers for that entire period. In fact, he was the only Bluesbreaker besides Mayall to stay for as long as four years in the 1960s (though McVie was fired for a few weeks in September 1966). It must have seemed an unlikely long-term occupancy when McVie first met Mayall, who had to explain to the youngster what a 12-bar blues was, McVie having been weaned on the sounds of the instrumental rock of the Shadows, the most popular British rock group before the Beatles.



John McVie on July 19, 1968, just a couple weeks before he married Christine Perfect, the future Christine McVie. Getty Images

Mayall stuck with the teenager, however, giving him “a pile of records,” as McVie later recalled (as quoted in *Fleetwood Mac: Rumours n’ Fax* [1978]), asking the bassist “to listen to them and try to grasp the style and feeling.” By the end of 1963, McVie had given up tax inspection to become a full-time Bluesbreaker, making his recording debut the following spring on Mayall’s first single. In December 1964, the band recorded their first LP live in London’s Klooks Kleek Club. In spring 1965, they jumped to an entirely different level when Clapton joined,

quickly establishing the Bluesbreakers as a top attraction on the British circuit.

With the mid-1966 album *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton*, McVie became the first member of Fleetwood Mac to experience commercial success, the LP breaking into the Top 10 of the UK charts. Of at least equal significance, it was an artistic groundbreaker as well, Clapton in particular playing with a high-wattage fire that put a distinctly British spin on Chicago-style electric blues. While McVie's contributions were more subtle, they were important to the music's foundation. His pumping, muscular style drove one of the record's highlights, "Parchman Farm"—a cut on which Clapton doesn't play, leaving McVie to carry much of the instrumental load.

As "Clapton is God" had become a slogan among the London in-crowd by the time the guitarist left the Bluesbreakers, Green understandably met with some resistance from fans of his new band, and fans of Clapton in particular. Reports vary as to whether Green was heckled at his first gigs as Clapton's replacement, but attendance did dip for a while as he eased his way into the Bluesbreakers lineup. In a way he had to compete with Clapton on stage *and* on the turntable, as *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton* wasn't released until just after Green joined.

Yet Green quickly established himself as his own man with his own style, playing at a lower volume and with less flash than Clapton had, at least at first. By the time he recorded his first single with the band at the end of September, he'd developed his own following. The album he'd record with the group in October and November, *A Hard Road*, established Green as one of Britain's hottest rising guitarists, reaching the Top 10 in March of the following year.

In hindsight, Green's assets were rather underplayed on *A Hard Road*, the newcomer taking fewer and shorter solos than Clapton. When he did get a chance to stretch out on the covers of "Someday After a While (You'll Be Sorry)" and the instrumental "The Stumble" (both originally performed by American blues great Freddie King), he unleashed some of the chops that were making him a name to be reckoned with—in the UK, at any rate, Mayall still being largely unknown in the United States. Although Mayall took most of the lead vocals and wrote most of the band's original material, Green also unveiled budding talents as a singer and songwriter on the three tracks that gave him some leeway to do so.

Most impressive of all was the Green-penned instrumental “The Supernatural,” on which Green tore off some searing sustain-laden licks—licks that, within a couple of years, would be a big influence on another emerging guitarist on a different continent, Carlos Santana. By modifying the pickup of his Gibson Les Paul guitar, Green was generating a timbre unlike Clapton or any other rock guitarist, also adding some reverb to his amplifier for another layer of eeriness.

“I like to play very slowly, and feel every note,” said Green in one of his first interviews, conducted with *Record Mirror* in summer 1967. “It comes from every part of my body and my heart and into my fingers. I have to really feel it. I make the guitar sing the blues—if you don’t have a vocalist then the guitar must sing. Only a few people in this country can really do this.”

“His notes were like B. B.’s [King’s], but he already had his own phrasing—legato,” wrote Santana of *A Hard Road* in his autobiography, *The Universal Tone* (2014), written with Ashley Kahn and Hal Miller. “He was just letting the notes hang. His sound grabbed me in a headlock and wouldn’t let me go. And his tone! On ‘The Supernatural’... Green’s guitar sound was on the edge of feedback. That track left its mark on me. I think it was the first instrumental blues that showed me that the guitar could really be the lead voice, that sometimes a singer is not necessary. And I loved that tone.”



One of Fleetwood Mac's earliest publicity photos. In front: Jeremy Spencer. In back, left to right: Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, and Peter Green. Getty Images

Noted *Rolling Stone* when *A Hard Road* was issued in the United States, “Peter Green stands out just as much as Mayall on this album, as he is such a clear contrast to Eric Clapton [on the *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton* LP]. Green makes impeccable use of great phrasing above anything else; his style comes out in many places as very relaxed as opposed to Clapton’s strong attack.” On the slow songs in particular, reviewer Mike Saunders added, “His style on the stuff like this is beautiful and relaxed, a real contrast to Clapton’s savage frantiness.”

Like Clapton, Green was proving to be about as vital a second-in-command to Mayall as the head Bluesbreaker could have hoped. And as with Clapton, it was quickly becoming apparent that Green's burgeoning skills—not just as a guitarist, but also as a singer and songwriter—could not be contained within the Bluesbreakers format. Some of Green's best moments with the band were buried on outtakes (some recorded without Mayall), a Bluesbreakers single of instrumentals cut without their leader, and a B-side that gave him more space to wail, both vocally and instrumentally.

In particular, the Green-composed B-side “Out of Reach” was a magnificent, despondent downer of a blues classic, both for Green's tortured vocal and the icy, reverberant guitar tone that would become one of his trademarks. Not released until he was out of the band (and, in fact, out of Fleetwood Mac) in late 1971, “Missing You” (again with Green on vocals and songwriting credits) and “Please Don't Tell” were the equal of almost anything on *A Hard Road* or the handful of non-hit singles Green did as part of the Bluesbreakers. A shift in Bluesbreakers personnel would soon find the core trio of the original Fleetwood Mac playing together for the first time.

When *A Hard Road* drummer Aynsley Dunbar (later to play with Frank Zappa, David Bowie, Journey, and Jefferson Starship) left Mayall in April 1967, this time it was Green's turn to know whom to call. His old bandmate Mick Fleetwood was out of work, the Shotgun Express having run out of steam a couple months earlier after a couple flop singles (one of which, “I Could Feel the Whole World Turn Round,” featured Rod Stewart sharing lead vocals with Beryl Marsden). The A-sides of those records were orchestrated pop; it was only on the R & B instrumentals on their flips that Fleetwood played the music that was far closer to his heart. His only work after the demise of Shotgun Express had been painting his sister Sally's home. Now he'd get his chance to play pure blues as the new drummer for the Bluesbreakers.

On paper Fleetwood seemed like an ideal replacement, especially as he'd already played with Green and struck up a friendship with McVie. That friendship was cemented at Fleetwood's very first gig with his new group, when McVie quieted hecklers asking for Dunbar by stepping up to the mike and yelling, “Why don't you fuck off and listen?” As Fleetwood remembered in his second autobiography, *Play On* (2014), “I really loved

it, mostly because McVie and I became tighter as a rhythm section with each passing show. I have, as a true dyslexic, always played slightly behind the beat in a very idiosyncratic manner. John plays just slightly ahead of the beat which isn't exactly perfect either, but when you put us together, it is.

“These aren't things you can teach someone to do. When you find that kind of musical marriage, typically it's a beautiful coincidence. That's how it is between John and me; we've never had more than one or two conversations about how to play together or how we should play together in forty odd years. We just do what we do with no premeditation required.” On the road, however, things didn't work out quite as planned. Unhappy with Fleetwood's excessive drinking, Mayall fired him in early May, less than six weeks after the drummer had joined the Bluesbreakers.



Standing about six-and-a-half-feet tall, Mick Fleetwood is one of the tallest rock stars, dwarfing other members of his band in this photo from June 1968. Getty Images

Fleetwood did at least get to record one single with the band, doing a capable job on a forty-five pairing covers of Otis Rush's “Double Trouble” and Elmore James’ “It Hurts Me Too.” That April 19 session

would also turn out to be Green's last as a Bluesbreaker. In early June, he left Mayall's employ, telling *Record Mirror*, "I didn't agree with the kind of material being played. It was becoming, for me, less and less of the blues. And we'd do the same thing night after night. John would say something to the audience and count us in, and I'd groan inwardly." Less than a year after Green had joined, Mayall had to advertise for a replacement. Not that he was left too badly in the lurch, hitting pay dirt by hiring a teenage Mick Taylor, who'd be a crucial part of the Bluesbreakers before replacing Brian Jones in the Rolling Stones two years later.

Upon handing in his notice, Green briefly considered traveling to Chicago with an eye to becoming part of that city's thriving electric blues scene. He even hoped to bring McVie along, as the bassist had also given his resignation to Mayall at the end of May, though McVie quickly reconsidered and stayed with the Bluesbreakers. "What I really wanted was to go there and find out if the younger guys playing blues then still had that old Chicago blues feeling," Green remembered in the liner notes to *The Complete Blue Horizon Sessions*. "But then an American girl told me that I wouldn't be able to play anywhere without a work permit, so I decided not to go."

Such was Green's stock in the business, however, that he was assured of a record deal if he got a new band together. Which Green did, naturally making Fleetwood his first recruit. Although McVie couldn't be convinced to sign up, he did lay down some tracks with Fleetwood and Green for Bluesbreakers producer Mike Vernon, who wanted a class act for the new label he was launching, Blue Horizon.

Probably around the time Green left Mayall, the trio cut a few tracks with Vernon in the studio of Decca Records. (According to some accounts, these recordings took place a little earlier, when Fleetwood was still in the Bluesbreakers.) A few of these would eventually find release in 1971, including a propulsive moody instrumental that gave all three players a chance to strut their stuff. As a tribute to his friends and future bandmates, Green named the song "Fleetwood Mac."

"The name just came to me," explained the guitarist in *Peter Green: The Biography*. "I thought Fleetwood sounded like an express train and groups were starting to call themselves after musicians. Then, we were in the studio recording an instrumental that sounded like a train." When he also used that title as the name of his new band, Fleetwood Mac was born.



A poster for Fleetwood Mac's concerts at Detroit's Grande Ballroom on December 26 and 27 in 1968, with the Rotary Connection billed as support band.

Chapter 2

THE PETER GREEN ERA

1967–1970

When Fleetwood Mac reached megastardom in the mid-1970s, relatively few American listeners knew they'd actually been big stars in their native United Kingdom in the late 1960s. The first incarnation of the band might very well have gone global had they stayed together longer. Had that happened, Fleetwood Mac might be known today as a blues-rock band, and their most famous figure might not have been Mick Fleetwood or Stevie Nicks, but the guitarist who founded the group, Peter Green.

As different as the music Fleetwood Mac made with Green at the helm was from *Rumours* or *Tusk*, any overview of the group must devote a great deal of attention to the Peter Green era. It was during these three years—approximately mid-1967 to mid-1970—that the band made some of their finest music and first rose to prominence in the UK and Europe, also starting to make some dents in the US market. It was also in this period that the two men for whom the band was titled made their first mark, enabling Fleetwood and McVie to keep the Fleetwood Mac name as the group evolved through many lineup changes (and almost as many stylistic ones) in the years to come.



Fleetwood Mac in 1969. When Danny Kirwan (back, second from the right) expanded the lineup to a quintet, they had three guitarists who were also singers and songwriters. Getty Images

Despite playing on Fleetwood Mac's first recording session, McVie wasn't even in the band to begin with, leaving Green and Fleetwood to fill out the lineup with additional musicians. Although Cream's quick rise to stardom had demonstrated there was a market for blues-rock trios, Green was not intent on hogging the spotlight as the lead guitarist and principal singer-songwriter. At the suggestion of producer Mike Vernon, he contacted Jeremy Spencer, a Birmingham guitarist who'd share some of

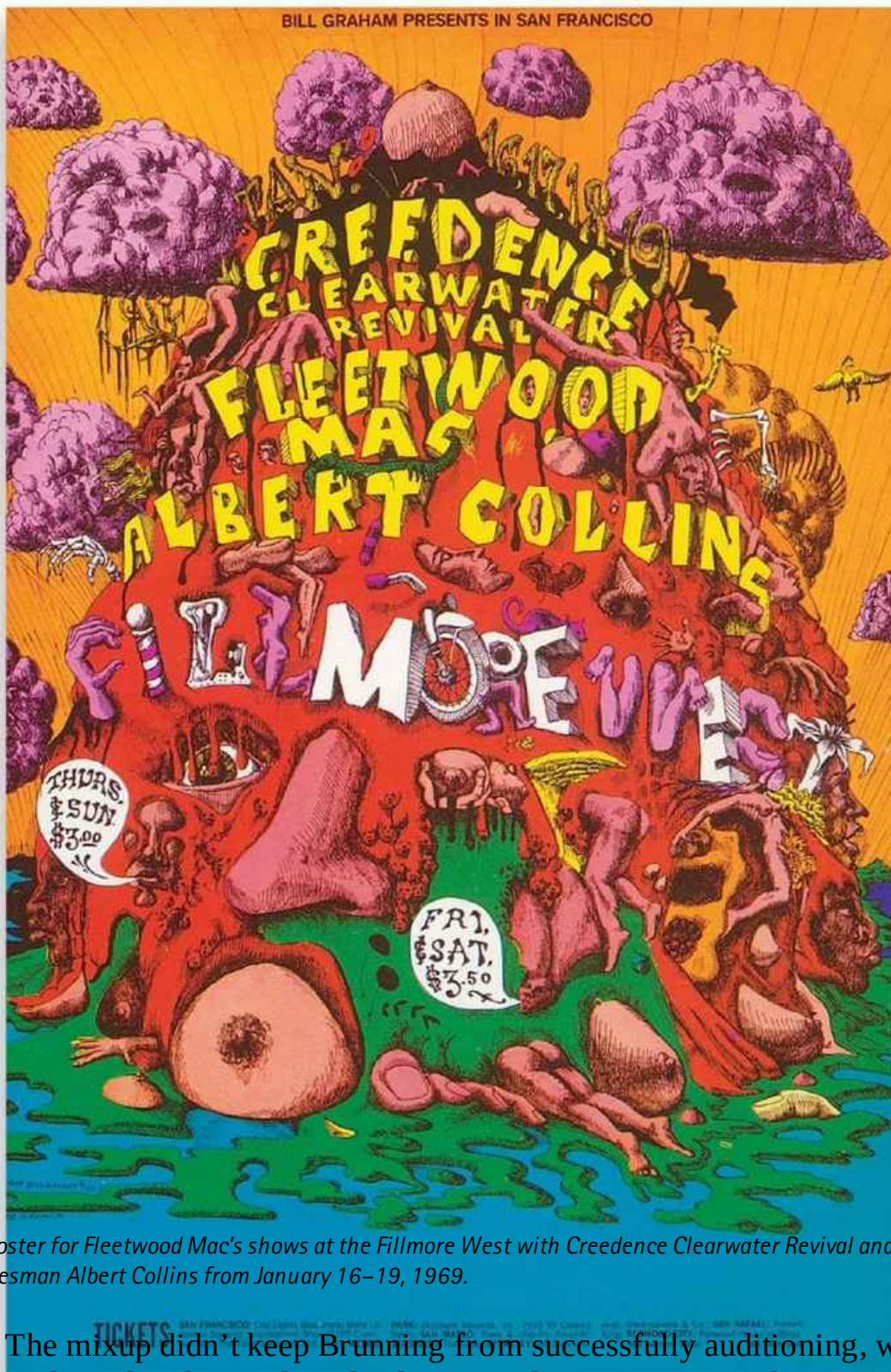
the band's vocal and composing duties, becoming a second frontman of sorts to the band's founder.

Born July 4, 1948, Spencer met Vernon when his band, the Levi Set, failed an audition for the producer's fledgling Blue Horizon label. As diminutive as Fleetwood was statuesque, Spencer was not so much a blues fanatic as a fanatic of one American bluesman in particular, Elmore James—the same James whose “It Hurts Me Too” Green and Fleetwood had recorded as part of John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers.

“They were just a trio, and the bass player and drummer were untight and really rather laughable,” remembered Vernon in Samuel Graham's *Fleetwood Mac: The Authorized History* (1978). “With that rhythm section, it was catastrophic. Jeremy was totally convinced that they were the right musicians for him to work with, but [engineer] Gus [Dudgeon] and I were rather loath to even offer the demo to Decca.” But Spencer, he added, “really blew me away.... He was playing Elmore James songs—he even sang like Elmore James.”

While James' rugged voice and superb slide guitar work had been an influence on several leading British musicians (especially Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones), Spencer took his adulation to the extreme. Not only did he play and sing in much the same style, he did so at every opportunity. In time that would become a limitation as Fleetwood Mac expanded beyond a strict blues format. But, at the outset, he was a valuable foil to Green, his slide guitar, energetic stage presence, and knack for comedy complementing the leader's strengths and expanding the band's versatility.

Filling the bass slot was more difficult, especially since the *Melody Maker* ad for the position (reading in its entirety “Chicago blues band seeks bass guitarist. Transport essential”) misprinted Green's phone number. Among the eventual applicants were Dave Ambrose, who'd played with Green and Fleetwood in Shotgun Express; Ric Grech (later of Family and Blind Faith), who declined to pursue the position after a rehearsal or two; and future Elvis Costello bassist Bruce Thomas. The job ended up going to Five's Company bassist Bob Brunning, who got off on the wrong foot when he went to meet Green and asked the guy who answered the door if he'd heard of a guitarist who had the same name. “You bloody idiot,” Green responded, “I *am* Peter Green!”



A poster for Fleetwood Mac's shows at the Fillmore West with Creedence Clearwater Revival and bluesman Albert Collins from January 16–19, 1969.

The mixup didn't keep Brunning from successfully auditioning, with the awkward understanding that he was only a temporary solution until

such time as McVie could be convinced to join the new band. By midsummer, the quartet was rehearsing at the Black Bull pub and the Windsor home of Green's girlfriend, Sandra Elsdon. Their first concert would also take place in Windsor, at the seventh National Jazz, Pop, Ballads & Blues Festival on August 13. For that appearance and other early shows (and even their first record releases), they were billed as Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac, indicating the real leader of the group at their birth. Even at this point, Fleetwood was shouldering his share of the load by acting as their manager, though the load would lighten by the end of 1967, when Clifford Davis began managing Fleetwood Mac.

It was hardly a low-pressure debut, with the festival also featuring Cream, Donovan, the Jeff Beck Group, John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers, and numerous other rock, folk, and jazz stars—as well as another new British blues band, Chicken Shack, with the future Christine McVie (then Christine Perfect) on piano and vocals. Fleetwood Mac acquitted themselves well in such august company, and *Beat Instrumental* hailed their performance as “an excellent debut for the group.... Jeremy Spencer was featured on four Elmore James numbers, and got very, very close to Elmore's great bottleneck sound.” Watching their entire set from the side of the stage was John McVie, who still couldn't be convinced to join the band after crossing paths with Fleetwood and Green backstage.

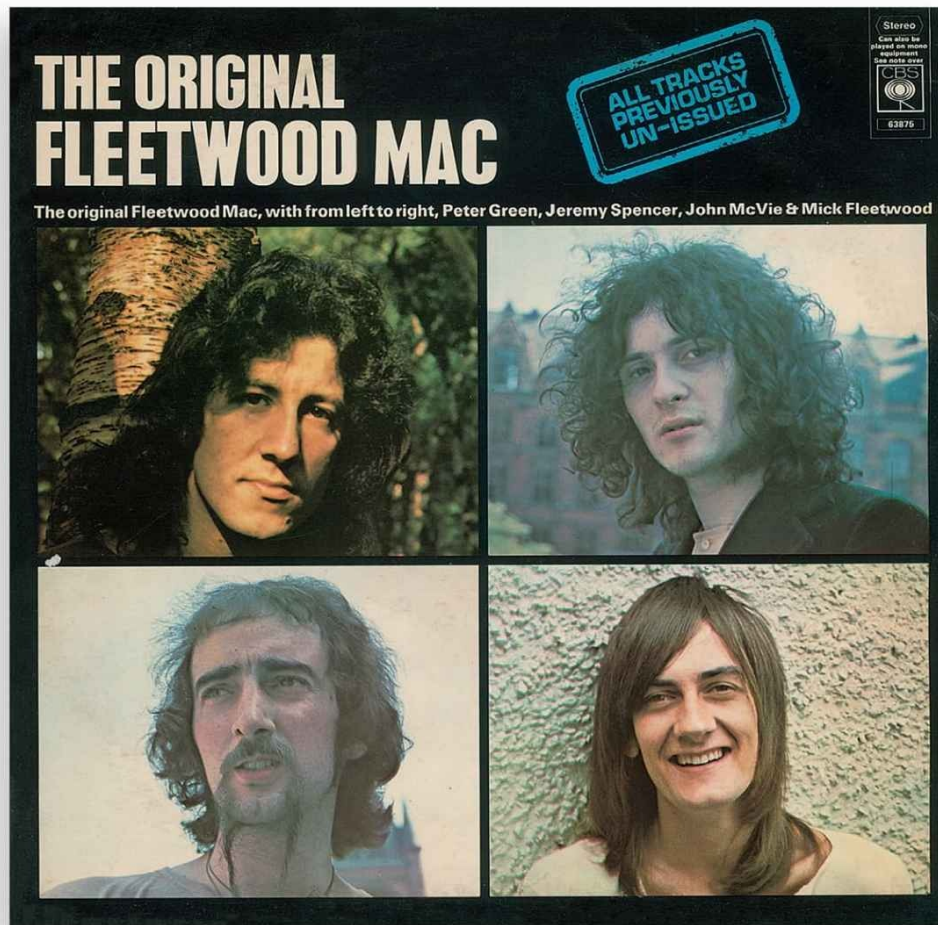
Fleetwood Mac began building a following in clubs throughout England, starting with the most prestigious such venue just a couple days after the festival, when they played the Marquee in central London. Remarkably, a tape of the performance survives—testifying to the pure and powerful blues of the band at their outset—with the band mixing original material with covers of American classics, including a few by Spencer's idol, Elmore James. It also testifies to Spencer's importance within the original unit, Spencer taking as many lead vocals as Green. Even at this point, however, Jeremy sat out songs spotlighting Green's lead guitar, reducing the act to a trio—a deficiency that would prove to be more of a problem as Fleetwood Mac expanded their audience and their sound.

With Fleetwood Mac demos recorded illicitly late at night in Decca Records' studio (some of which would show up on the 1971 compilation *The Original Fleetwood Mac*), Vernon was soon able to land a distribution deal with CBS for his new Blue Horizon label, on which the band would be

the main act. By September 9, they were finishing their debut single at London's CBS Studios, pairing a Green composition, "Rambling Pony," with a cover of Elmore James' "I Believe My Time Ain't Long."

Brunning's time, alas, was definitely not long; although he played on these tracks, he was subsequently replaced by John McVie, who'd finally decided to leave the security of John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers and cast his lot with his buddies.

In his second autobiography, Fleetwood speculates that McVie made up his mind to join the newcomers while watching their set at the Windsor festival, Fleetwood musing in retrospect that "it felt like we were auditioning for him." Simmering dissatisfaction with his role in the Bluesbreakers, however, also played a part in McVie's decision. "I thought that Mayall was getting too jazzy, after he brought about three horns in," he told *Record World*. "We were doing a gig in Norwich, and we did a sound check, working some arrangement out—this was when I was still a very hard-core blues addict, with the 'There is nothing outside of the blues' attitude.



Released in 1971, The Original Fleetwood Mac featured outtakes from the band's earliest recording sessions, including the "Fleetwood Mac" instrumental that gave the group its name.

““So one of the horn players asked, ‘What kind of solo do you want in this section?’ And I’ll always remember, John said, ‘Oh, just play free-form.’ I thought to myself, ‘OK, that’s it.’ We used to do two sets, so during the interval I went out and phoned up Greenie and said, ‘Hey, you need a bass player?’”

Brunning might not have had long to go even if McVie wasn’t available. As Green told Samuel Graham, “Bob Brunning wasn’t really adequate. All he did was look at girls’ tits all night when we played.”

Brunning soon joined another emerging British blues-rock act, Savoy Brown, and kept active in the British blues-rock scene with stints in several more obscure groups, such as the Brunning Sunflower Blues Band. He

also wrote several books about British blues and Fleetwood Mac before dying in 2011, at the age of sixty-eight.

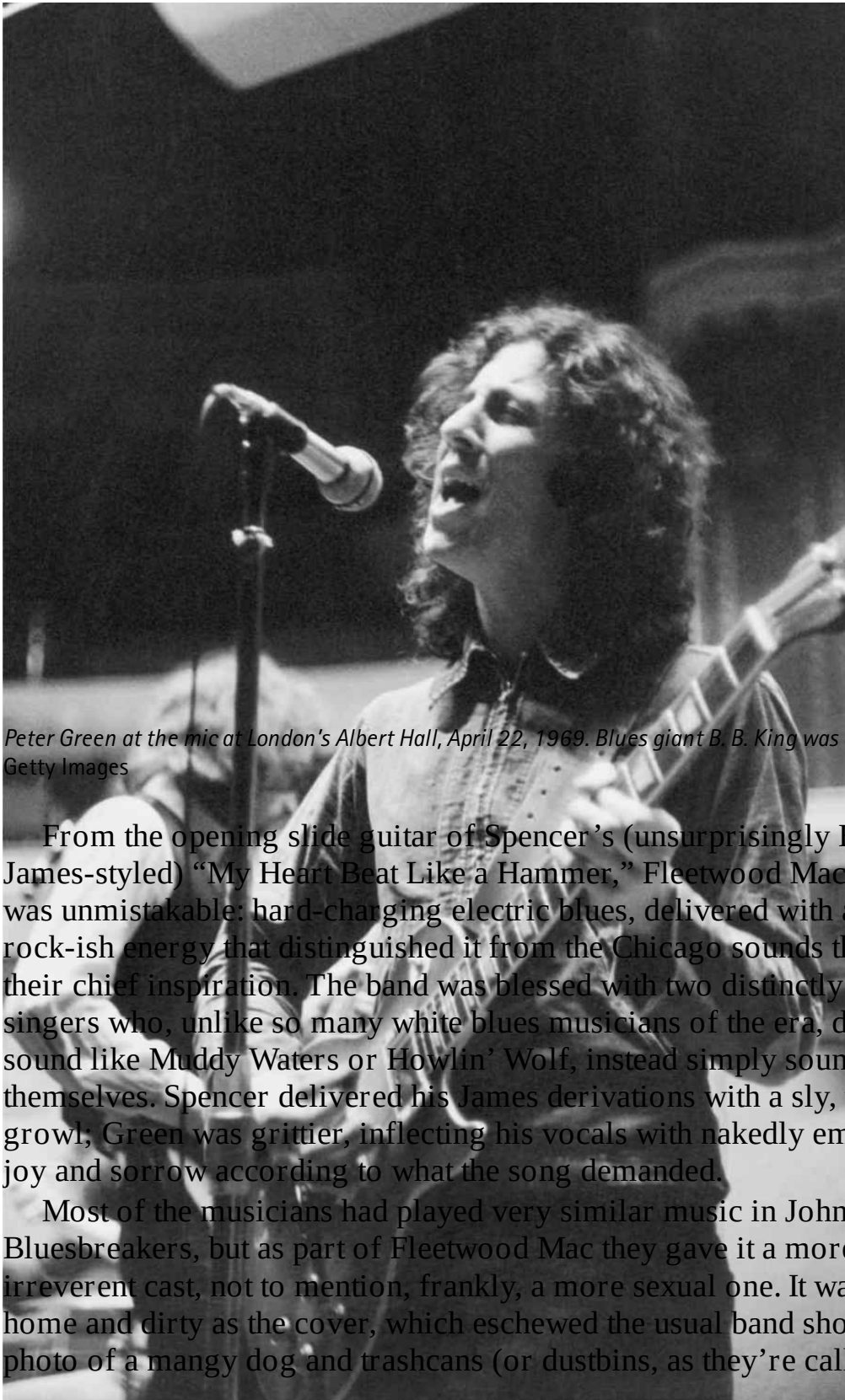
Also on September 9, Green's status as a top axeman was confirmed by *Melody Maker*, who anointed him as one of the "Magnificent Seven" British guitarists—the others being Clapton, Pete Townshend, Jeff Beck, Jimmy Page, Stevie Winwood, and Jimi Hendrix (who, though American, had first risen to stardom in the UK). Green, declared the weekly music paper, was "the newest, toughest and meanest of the guitar cowboys." Despite serving four years in the Bluesbreakers, McVie, in contrast, was still struggling to get his name spelled right; an ad for a September 24 appearance in Nottingham billed him as "John McVeigh." But John likely had other things on his mind that month, having met Christine Perfect at their September 17 show (also featuring the Bluesbreakers and Chicken Shack) at the Saville Theatre in London, which inaugurated a romance that would culminate in marriage the following year.



Fleetwood Mac after Danny Kirwan joined in 1968. Most fans of the band's blues-rock incarnation consider this their best lineup. Getty Images

With McVie finally aboard, Fleetwood Mac spent the rest of 1967 gigging around England and recording the bulk of their debut album. While their November 3 debut single failed to chart, it introduced their brand of electric blues to the record-buying public, with Spencer handling the lead vocal and slide guitar on “I Believe My Time Ain’t Long.” Green sang and played lead guitar on the flip side, “Rambling Pony” (actually a stark adaptation of the blues standard “Rollin’ and Tumblin’,” which had been featured on Cream’s debut album a year earlier).

In December, Green also found time to play ghostly guest guitar on his ex-boss John Mayall’s solo single “Jenny”; nearly a year later, he’d do the same for a track on Mayall’s *Blues from Laurel Canyon* album, “First Time Alone.” The whole band was enlisted to back visiting Chicago blues pianist-singer Eddie Boyd (with whom Green, as part of the Bluesbreakers, had done some recordings in early 1967) on a Vernon-produced January 1968 session, resulting in Boyd’s *7936 South Rhodes* album. Several sessions for BBC Radio also did their part to raise the band’s nationwide profile, but Fleetwood Mac didn’t really start to catch on throughout Britain and Europe until the February 1968 release of their debut album, *Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac* (often referred to simply as *Fleetwood Mac*). Although Green had asked Vernon if the band could do a live LP, it ended up being an all-studio affair, the sessions spanning a period of months in late 1967.



Peter Green at the mic at London's Albert Hall, April 22, 1969. Blues giant B. B. King was also on the bill.
Getty Images

From the opening slide guitar of Spencer's (unsurprisingly Elmore James-styled) "My Heart Beat Like a Hammer," Fleetwood Mac's mission was unmistakable: hard-charging electric blues, delivered with a raw, rock-ish energy that distinguished it from the Chicago sounds that were their chief inspiration. The band was blessed with two distinctly different singers who, unlike so many white blues musicians of the era, didn't try to sound like Muddy Waters or Howlin' Wolf, instead simply sounding like themselves. Spencer delivered his James derivations with a sly, witty growl; Green was grittier, inflecting his vocals with nakedly emotional joy and sorrow according to what the song demanded.

Most of the musicians had played very similar music in John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, but as part of Fleetwood Mac they gave it a more youthful, irreverent cast, not to mention, frankly, a more sexual one. It was as down-home and dirty as the cover, which eschewed the usual band shot for a photo of a mangy dog and trashcans (or dustbins, as they're called in

Britain) in a litter-strewn, dilapidated alley in central London's Soho district. And while it was dotted with covers of classics by Howlin' Wolf, Robert Johnson, and (again, to no one's surprise) Elmore James, eight of the twelve tracks were written by Green or Spencer.

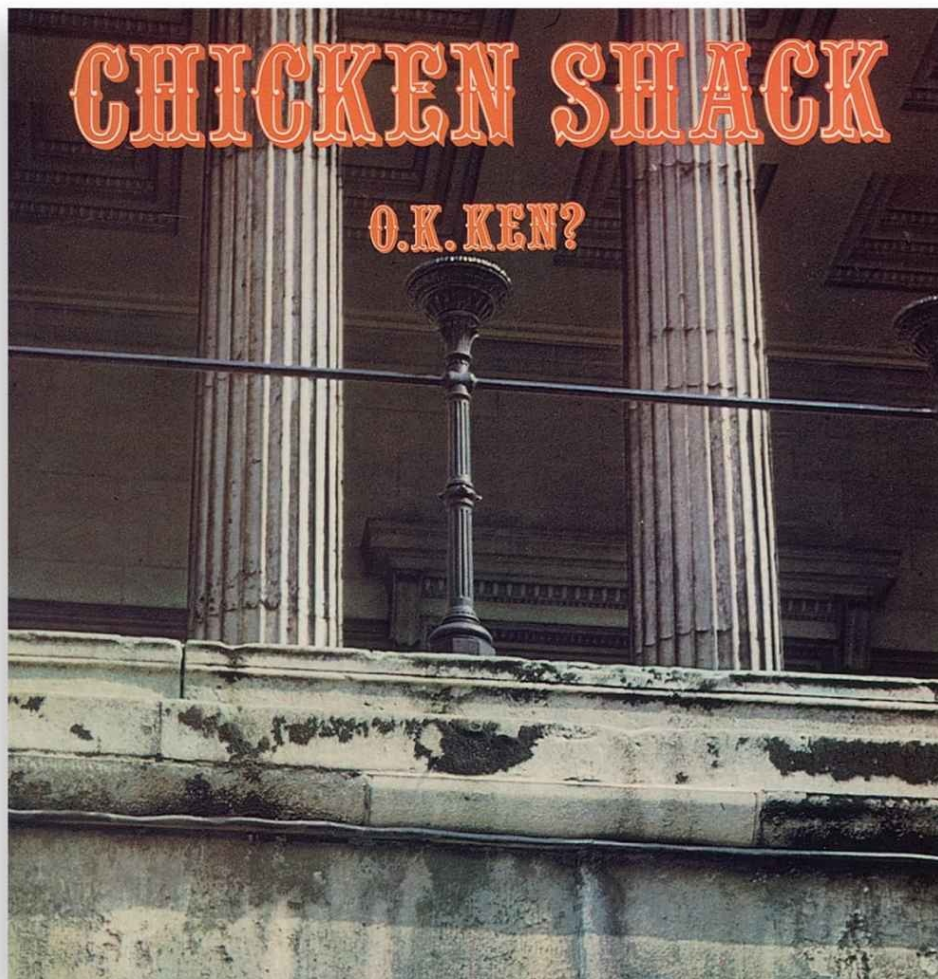
Most of the original material was pretty straight blues; Green, after all, had left Mayall at least in part because the Bluesbreakers were getting less bluesy. Yet even at this point, Peter was showing signs of expanding beyond the limitations of the usual 12-bar blues format and chord progressions. "The World Keep On Turning" was wholly acoustic, foreshadowing the questioning, almost tormented ambience that would become an increasingly frequent trademark of his compositions. On "Looking for Somebody," he didn't even touch his guitar, delivering a doleful lyric to an equally doleful harmonica and the stuttering, sparse, hypnotic beat of the McVie-Fleetwood rhythm section. Most notably, he opted for a minor-keyed melody and Latin-flavored beat on the arrestingly haunting "I Loved Another Woman"—devices he'd use to even greater and more memorable effect on their next single.

Even without a hit single, *Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac* was a quick hit with both audiences and critics. Enthused *Melody Maker*, "They blow committed blues and aren't afraid to rock. From the first bars of 'My Heart Beat Like a Hammer' the music is kept at white intensity, or a warm, red glow for the medium-paced outings." *New Musical Express* awarded the LP four stars, exclaiming, "I loved this bluesy, jazzy group... They get a nice relaxed sound into their playing which combines late-night jazz and exciting blues." *Beat Instrumental's* reviewer went so far as to proclaim, "I would say that this is the best English blues LP ever released here."

In the US, *Rolling Stone* wasn't quite as enthusiastic, but its review was still positive. "Their music retains an unaffected rough quality," concluded Barry Gifford. "They play well, and if it sounds a little scratchy at times it's because that's the way they happen to feel at that particular moment. The licks they've copied from other performers are natural enough—it's more of a tribute than an imitation. The English continue to prove how well into the blues they really are, and know how to lay it down and shove it back across the Atlantic. Fleetwood Mac are representative of how far the blues has penetrated—far enough for a group of London East-Enders [Gifford seemingly unaware that only Green was from the East End] to

have cut a record potent enough to make the South Side of Chicago take notice.”

At a time when albums by rock bands without hit singles had only recently been able to scale the British charts (the Bluesbreakers having done much to pave the way in that regard), *Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac* rose to #4 in the UK listings. It stayed in the Top 10 for a remarkable seventeen weeks, helping to spark a late-1960s British blues boom that also saw hit LPs by Ten Years After, their old mates the Bluesbreakers, and Chicken Shack, featuring McVie's new girlfriend, Christine Perfect. Yet when it was issued in the United States on the CBS subsidiary Epic in May 1968, their debut album would fail to even reach *Billboard's* Top 200, starting a seven-year struggle to land a big American hit.



O.K. Ken?, the second and final LP Christine McVie (then known as Christine Perfect) recorded as part of *Chicken Shack*, made the UK Top 10.

Just two days before the LP was issued in Britain, Fleetwood Mac recorded a song that *would* be a big American hit—but not for them, and not for almost three years. The session was for Green’s “Black Magic Woman,” which developed the tentative Latin minor blues he’d explored on “I Loved Another Woman” into a tour de force. His wavering sustain wove a sorcerer-like spell wholly in keeping with the magic woman lamented in the lyrics—actually Green’s real-life girlfriend Sandra, whose own spell of celibacy was causing Green no end of frustration. Or as she so indelicately put it decades later in the documentary *The Peter Green Story: Man of the World* (2009), the song’s magic stick “is his cock.”

Although it marked a definite break from the 12-bar blues that had been Fleetwood Mac’s mainstay, “Black Magic Woman” had its roots in the unusual minor-keyed blues of Chicago blues great Otis Rush. The rolling Latin rhythm, and even the break into a more evenly spaced shuffle near the end, strongly recall the tempos employed on Rush’s 1958 single “All Your Love”—a song Green undoubtedly would have been familiar with, as it kicked off the *Bluesbreakers with Eric Clapton* LP (on which McVie played). “One of the things [Mayall] said was that if you really like something, you should take the first lines and make up another song from them,” admitted the guitarist in *Peter Green: The Biography*. “So that’s what I did with ‘Black Magic Woman.’”

Even so, Green and the band put a lot of their own personality into “Black Magic Woman,” which has an almost basement/garage feel in comparison to the much more famous cover by Santana. Featuring the lead guitar work of a star who counts Green among his greatest influences, Santana’s version reached the Top 5 in the United States at the end of 1970. Inexplicably, the original version made only #37 in the UK (and failed to chart at all in the US), and many fans of both bands remain unaware to this day that Fleetwood Mac did it first.

Hit singles were highly desirable if the band was to climb to the next commercial level and break into the international market. It wasn’t long before they tried again with a cover of soul singer Little Willie John’s “Need Your Love So Bad,” suggested to Green by Mayall. As both a concession to commerciality and an adventurous wish to explore

something beyond the blues barriers, strings were used in the arrangement (by American guitar great Mickey Baker, who as half of Mickey & Sylvia had a big 1957 hit with “Love Is Strange”).

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PETER GREEN'S FLEETWOOD MAC

By DOMENIC PRIORE

As a band, the idea behind Fleetwood Mac was to play a more subtle form of blues than was happening on the English scene, something that could convey a lyric, or notes, and get to their meaning, depth, or soul. Peter Green had recorded a standout instrumental, “The Supernatural” on John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers’ *A Hard Road* LP. Mayall then turned toward a larger-band sound, as Green desired moving closer to the interior. Leaving the Bluesbreakers, Green organized a session featuring John McVie and Mick Fleetwood who, for a short time, had all been in the Bluesbreakers together. Dubbing the trio Fleetwood Mac, after the rhythm section and not himself, was also a twist more internal in nature, away from the grandstanding of Cream or Jimi Hendrix Experience members.

The slow, sexy, and desperate groove of “Looking for Somebody” and similarly sparse tribute to Howlin’ Wolf, “No Place to Go” come from the first June 1967 demo session for Green’s dream group. The latter is immediate, direct, and features great harp playing. McVie opted to stay back in the Bluesbreakers, but the group expanded in July when Green added slide guitarist Jeremy Spencer, then bass man Bob Brunning. Only “Long Gray Mare” on the LP comes from mid-July sessions with Brunning, as McVie came back full time in September.

Green’s solo reading of Robert Johnson’s “Hellhound on My Trail” and then the original composition “The World Keep On Turning” are raw and unsettling in how quick they transport you to train station images of ye olde Southern Americana. His own “I Loved Another Woman” takes on another guitar tone, closer to “The Supernatural,” swathed in reverb and echo, and rhythms that seem bedrock to what would later become more famous in “Black Magic Woman.” “I Loved” is less dependent on a full band sound—its cool bass and brush drums pull the guitar and voice into the center—a very intimate performance.



Boasting some of the earthiest images of any rock album from the era, Fleetwood Mac's debut LP was a big hit in their native UK, though it failed to make the US charts.

Spencer's featured numbers are welcome—if routine; he breaks into Elmore James-style slide guitar. His standout track is a cover of James' "Shake Your Moneymaker" that could have fit onto the dance floor of any early-1960s London discotheque, a separate style from the late-1960s blues groups. Spencer's rousing LP opener, "My Heart Beats Like a Hammer," along with his other selections are fun, but seem thinner with repeated listening.

Author and *All Music Guide* contributor Richie Unterberger offers *Fleetwood Mac* praise as "the best of the late '60s British Blues Boom," while blues club expert James Porter of Chicago's *Roctober* magazine suggests Fleetwood Mac as "one of the few UK white bands of that era who could play the blues convincingly." Elvis Costello may have best summed up Green's contribution: "He's still one of my favorite singers... and wrote the most original, almost like another version of rock music that never really got picked up by anybody. He was a songwriter, and he had this sort of strange, fatalistic, romantic sound which appealed to me."



Poster for Fleetwood Mac's show at Vancouver's Pacific National Exhibition Coliseum on August 11, 1970, sharing the bill with Jethro Tull.

There was still plenty of blues and soul in Green's vocals and delicate, heart-rending guitar, though he felt, as he let slip in the liner notes to *The Complete Blue Horizon Sessions*, "it would have been a hit without those

old age strings added.... It sounds like really old blokes were playing it... or old women.” Recorded, like “Black Magic Woman,” without Spencer—something that would happen more and more as the 1960s drew to a close—it did hardly better than “Black Magic Woman,” peaking at #31 in the UK.

The absence of a hit single didn’t stop Fleetwood Mac from playing their first shows outside the British Isles in May, when they did a short Scandinavian tour. Of greater significance to the band was their first American tour, taking on shows (some with the Who and Pink Floyd) in California, Detroit, and New York in June and July of 1968. The trip didn’t kick their debut album into the charts, Clifford Davis later claiming (in the documentary *The Peter Green Story: Man of the World*) that the man who ran Blue Horizon in the US, Seymour Stein (later one of the most powerful executives in the record business as president of Sire Records), wouldn’t give them money. The tour did give them a chance to win over audiences at venues on the exploding American psychedelic rock circuit, such as LA’s Shrine Auditorium, Detroit’s Grande Ballroom, and New York’s The Scene club. In San Francisco they got to hang out with another band just starting to make an international name for themselves, the Grateful Dead, with Green sitting in on guitar at shows with Ten Years After and Paul Butterfield at the Fillmore Auditorium.

During a lengthy August break, Spencer married his girlfriend Fiona, with whom he already had a young son. On August 3, John McVie married Christine Perfect, to whom he’d proposed at London’s Bag O’ Nails club just a couple weeks or so earlier. In fact, Perfect had already started playing keyboards on some Fleetwood Mac sessions, making her debut in that capacity on April 11, 1968, for the recording of “Need Your Love So Bad.” But, for the time being, she’d remain in Chicken Shack, which had just landed their first British Top 20 LP and were, like Fleetwood Mac, produced by Vernon for the Blue Horizon label. It would take a couple years for Christine McVie to officially join Fleetwood Mac’s ranks, and the same month she and John McVie wed, the first of the band’s wholly unexpected personnel shifts took place.

For some time, Spencer’s musical limitations had been a growing concern as the band grew out of the strict blues that had dominated their early repertoire. As Vernon put it in *Peter Green: The Biography*, “He was amusing but when all’s said and done, his talent was to copy Elmore

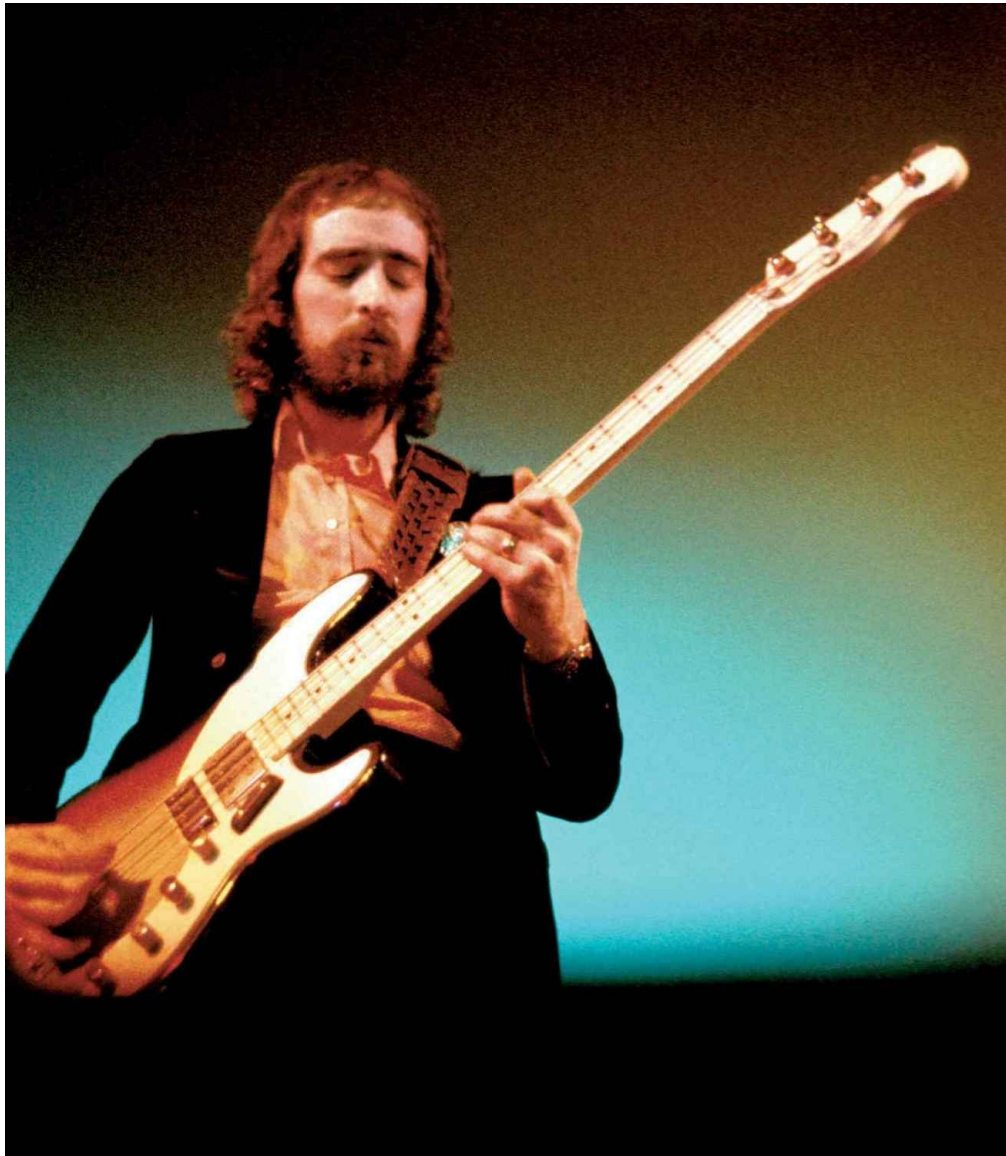
James, and once you'd heard him for half an hour you'd heard it all. He was, though, a great novelty to have when the band first started."

He was also a great asset to them onstage, not only as the band's most manically kinetic entertainer, but also as the leading source of their ribald humor. Although they hardly rate among early Fleetwood Mac's artistic highpoints, his tongue-in-cheek parodies of rock 'n' roll oldies were also well received in concert, where the group—still at a point where they had just one hit British LP to their credit—were making most of their bread and butter. Spencer was even the focal point of their first hit single, of sorts, when their covers of Elmore James' "Shake Your Moneymaker" and Spencer's "My Heart Beat Like a Hammer" were plucked off their debut album for a forty-five that did well in Scandinavia.

So there was no intention of replacing Spencer. But without really looking for a replacement or addition, by mid-August of 1968, Fleetwood Mac had expanded from a quartet to a quintet. The new boy—and he really was still a boy, having only recently passed his eighteenth birthday—was Danny Kirwan, with whom the band now had three singer-songwriter guitarists. "That's the only time," Vernon said in *The Peter Green Story: Man of the World*, "that I've seen a band with three guitar players where it worked."

Born May 13, 1950, in London, Kirwan first came to Fleetwood Mac's notice when his band, the Boilerhouse, supported them at a club gig in September 1967. The Boilerhouse played with Fleetwood Mac at a few other shows in the next few months, Green taking care to praise Kirwan in a June 1968 *Melody Maker* interview, before Kirwan had even made a record. So impressed was Green with the young man's talents that he tried to help Kirwan find a new rhythm section for the Boilerhouse. When a *Melody Maker* ad failed to do so, Mick Fleetwood suggested that Kirwan join Fleetwood Mac instead.

"Danny played support to us," remembered Green in the liner notes to *The Vaudeville Years of Fleetwood Mac: 1968 to 1970* (1998), "and soon Mick Fleetwood said, 'Why don't you get him in?' I didn't want to at first, but Mick persuaded me that we could do some interesting things with two guitars... and he was right. I would never have done 'Albatross' if it wasn't for Danny. I never would have had a number one hit record."



John McVie on stage at the Sundown club in Mile End, London, November 23, 1972. Getty Images



Danny Kirwan in July 1975. During his four years in Fleetwood Mac, he was crucial to their transition from blues-rock to more pop-based rock. Getty Images

As whimsically impulsive as the recruitment was, it made sense for a number of reasons. Never one to insist on total creative control of the band, Green welcomed the addition of a singer-songwriter-guitarist who was more versatile than Spencer, and not too similar in style to either himself or Spencer. Green would also have someone else to share the load with when it came time to supplying original material for their albums. While Kirwan's fluid guitar work, thin but sincere singing, and budding songwriting wasn't on Green's level, it was well up to standard for filler LP tracks. Also, Kirwan's more melodic, sometimes jazzy sensibilities were less purely blues-rooted than Green's or Spencer's, subtly smoothing

their soon-to-come transition from pure blues to more wide-ranging, eclectic rock.

“Pete loved to jam with Danny,” observed Fleetwood in his first autobiography, *Fleetwood* (1990), written with Stephen Davis. “They could play long melody lines together; in many ways it was a near-perfect match of sensibilities.” In his second memoir, Fleetwood amplified this, saying Kirwan’s presence also allowed Green “to write songs in a different style than he’d been able to previously. Rock songs poured out of him, much of them with a ferocity unlike his earlier work. The new material steered the band further into rock and roll than we’d ever been before and so began Peter’s most powerfully creative period.” Green let the world know his musical boundaries were starting to expand just two weeks after Kirwan joined, telling *Record Mirror*, “To my mind a blues doesn’t have to be a 12-bar progression. It can cover any musical chord sequence. To me the blues is an emotional thing. If someone is singing a blues and doesn’t feel it, then it isn’t a blues.”

With Kirwan, Fleetwood Mac now had three skilled, if very different, guitarists who’d usually complement each other well over the next year and a half or so. Kirwan made his debut with the group on August 19, 1968, at the same Blue Horizon club (run, as the name indicates, by Blue Horizon Records chief Mike Vernon) where he’d first supported them as part of the Boilerhouse. “Their new three-guitar lineup,” observed *Melody Maker*, “add[ed] new punch to an already powerful sound. On his showing [at the Blue Horizon], Kirwan is an obvious asset to the group and will make a name for himself.”

The shift wasn’t greeted quite as enthusiastically by the band’s third guitarist. “It was like a battalion of guitars and to me it was overkill,” said Spencer in a 1999 interview on The Penguin, a Fleetwood Mac fan website. “Sometimes it was all three of us playing guitars and, honestly, to this day, I don’t know why we didn’t drop Danny or Pete out on my songs, because it was fine enough with just one backup guitarist on the Elmore James numbers!”

The change in sound and appearance wasn’t at all evident, however, when Fleetwood Mac’s second album was issued just four days after Kirwan’s debut. Recorded rather hastily at the end of April, *Mr. Wonderful* wasn’t all that different from its predecessor, except that the material wasn’t as strong. Even at the time, some reviewers criticized the staleness

seeping into their approach, *Melody Maker* dubbing it “safe line unadventurous British blues that seems rather dull after recent albums by Ten Years After and Cream.” One of its readers complained in the letters column, “Has [Green] listened to his *Mr. Wonderful* LP? Replete with competent but cliché-ridden and stagnant blues, including four versions of ‘Dust My Broom,’ it is typical of the attitude he criticizes in others.”

Actually, there was just one version of “Dust My Broom” (more commonly known as “Dust My Blues,” and perhaps the song most often associated with Elmore James) on *Mr. Wonderful*. But there were a few tracks that sounded like the tune, in part because Spencer—as he had on *Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac*—wrote and/or sang half the songs. It’s true, however, that even Green’s compositions—co-credited, quirkily, to Green and manager Clifford Davis—were for the most part fairly unadventurous, rather by-numbers blues. At least these were sometimes enlivened by a horn section and Christine McVie’s piano.

A decade later, leading British rock critics Roy Carr and Steve Clarke gave the record an especially harsh reassessment in their book *Fleetwood Mac: Rumours n’ Fax*, carping that the band “replaced their self-conscious stance as dedicated bluesicians with an attitude which, with few exceptions, indicated that they were now playing for laughs.... Gone is the exuberance and spontaneity that sparked their debut. This time round, the performance is frequently slipshod, painfully repetitive and only gels (and then only just) when Green grabs the helm.”



In the US, "Albatross" was issued as a single on Epic Records. Although it made #1 in the UK, in America it couldn't even make the Top Hundred, peaking at #104.



Issued in the US on Fleetwood Mac's new label, Reprise, "Oh Well" gave the band their first entry into the Top Hundred of the American charts, though it rose no higher than #55.

On the two occasions when Green turned more serious, he delivered the album's highlights. "Love That Burns" was a slow-boiling soul ballad with horns, very much in the mold of "Need Your Love So Bad," though this time an original, not a cover, with a woozy sadness that took it into yet more melancholic territory. With acoustic guitar and harmonica (by fellow Blue Horizon artist Duster Bennett), "Trying So Hard to Forget" was another somber country blues, though even this wasn't as memorable as previous ventures by Peter in the same vein, such as "Rambling Pony" and "The World Keep On Turning."

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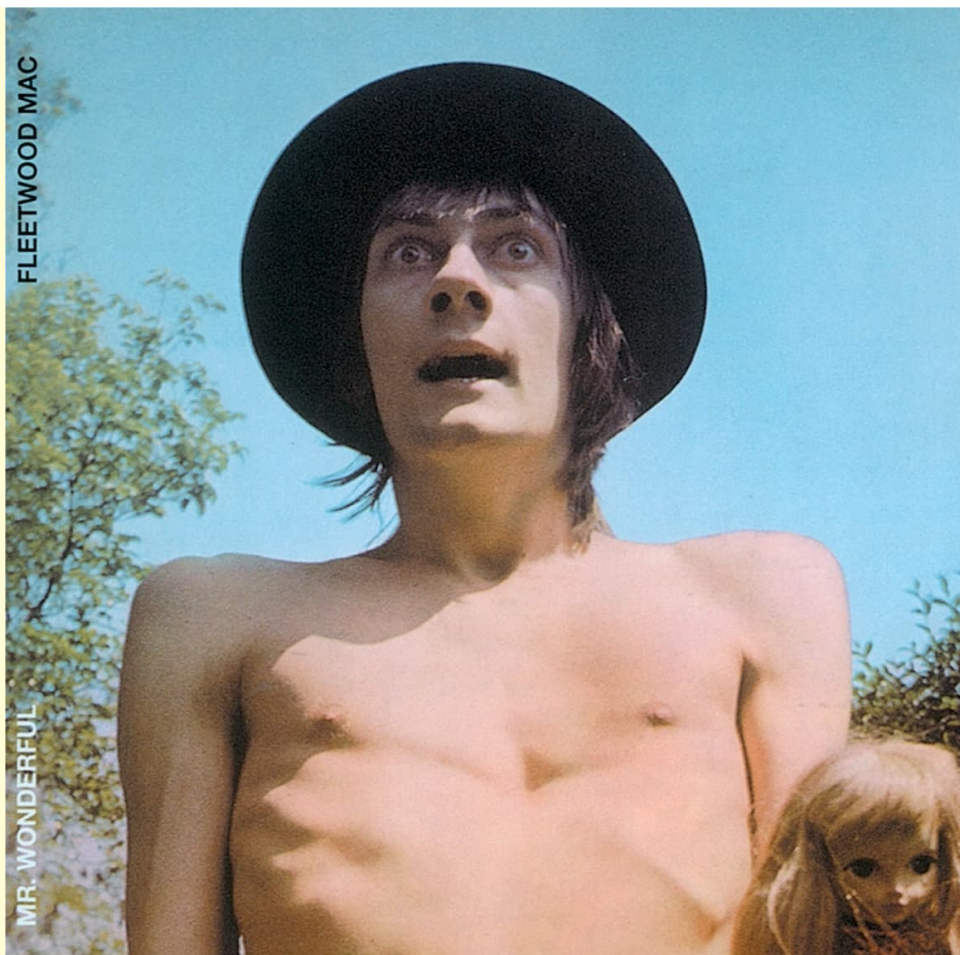
MR. WONDERFUL

By GARY GRAFF

After a reputation-staking debut album and a pair of further enhancing singles (“Black Magic Woman” and a cover of Little Willie John’s “Need Your Love So Bad”), Fleetwood Mac’s second effort was nothing less than a significant sophomore slump, a let-down caused by haste and some bad decisions.

Making things even worse, the 12-song set was recorded under the guise of “art” at London’s CBS Studios in April 1968, just two months after *Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac* was released. Producer Mike Vernon convinced the acquiescent group to record live and stripped-down, and in just a few days, mirroring myriad session strategies at Sun Studio in Memphis and Chess Studios in Chicago that had yielded so much of the music Fleetwood Mac admired and drew from. Vernon also brought in keyboards—from John McVie’s girlfriend and future wife Christine Perfect—and a horn section to fortify the still-fledgling group’s sound. He had Green and Spencer sing through the same PA the group used for its live performances, ostensibly for a more immediate kind of impact.

What was good for those American geese proved not good for this gander, however. *Mr. Wonderful* is anything but wonderful—though the cover of a nude Mick Fleetwood, naughty bits covered, is amusing. Nevertheless, it’s a mess that sounds rushed, raw, and thin, lacking both the fire and the inventiveness of the material that preceded it. The arrangements, so crucial with a larger ensemble in the studio, sound slapdash and unfinished. Spencer seems particularly tapped out; though his original “I’ve Lost My Baby” has some swagger, he employs the same Elmore James riff on four of the tracks—the James covers “Dust My Broom” and “Coming Home” as well as “Doctor Brown” and “Need Your Love Tonight.”



The cover of Fleetwood Mac's second album, Mr. Wonderful, seemed intended to scare away potential listeners.



The US-only compilation *English Rose*, combining half of the UK-only *Mr. Wonderful* LP with other late-1960s tracks, boasted a cover photo of Mick Fleetwood in drag.

And while Green delivered *Mr. Wonderful*'s one gem—the album-opening “Stop Messin’ Round,” a future showcase for Aerosmith’s Joe Perry—his material, too, sounds like it was more cranked out than crafted. And it’s telling that neither Green nor Spencer played on each other’s songs this time out, often making *Mr. Wonderful* sound like two half-albums squeezed together rather than a unified whole.

In an odd coda to the story, however, America got something more satisfying from the band (the alarming cover photo of Fleetwood in drag notwithstanding). *Mr. Wonderful* wasn’t released in the United States but came out instead as *English Rose* in January 1969, a twelve-track collection that included just six well-chosen tracks from *Mr. Wonderful* along with “Black Magic Woman” and “Albatross” and four songs by newly added third guitarist Danny Kirwan. In this incarnation, Fleetwood Mac sounds like it’s moving forward rather than treading water, and ready for the triumph of *Then Play On* later in the year.

Boasting another goofy-as-all-get-out cover picturing a pale, horror-stricken, naked Fleetwood (with leaves hiding the naughty bits), *Mr.*

Wonderful still made #10 in the UK, though it left the Top 10 after just one week and sold far fewer copies than the debut. Reflecting the band's nearly nonexistent presence in the US, it wasn't even released stateside, though half of the tracks would show up five months later on the American *English Rose* compilation LP of sorts. (The horrified woman on the cover of that LP, incidentally, is actually Mick Fleetwood in drag.) But as disappointing as its performance was in some respects, it didn't hurt Fleetwood Mac's status as a live attraction. And when they'd enter the studio for the first time with their new lineup, they'd not only land a big hit single, but wade into new creative waters with only tenuous roots to the blues with which they'd made their name.

The song that put Fleetwood Mac on top of the British hit parade was "Albatross," a languid Peter Green–penned instrumental, cut at their first session with Kirwan on October 6. Recalling Santo & Johnny's similarly dreamy 1959 instrumental smash "Sleep Walk," the meditative mood of "Albatross" was drawn out by a throbbing undercurrent of mallets and cymbal washes that built to periodic crescendos. Boosted by the BBC TV broadcast of a short promotional film of the band that used "Albatross" on the soundtrack, it soared to #1 in the UK, doing well in other European countries as well. It was also an influence on the biggest band of all, George Harrison citing it as "the point of origin" for the Beatles' "Sun King" in an interview with *Musician*. But the United States continued to be resistant to Fleetwood Mac's advances, the single stalling at #104 in the American charts.

Fleetwood Mac was, nonetheless, actually in the United States when "Albatross" hit the top spot in their homeland at the beginning of February 1969. After a short Scandinavian tour with Chicken Shack in November 1968, they embarked on their first proper American tour in early December, playing the States for a good ten weeks. With just one non-hit album to promote in US shops, they were usually not headliners, sharing bills with such groups as the Byrds, the Mothers of Invention, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. As to how they were able to crisscross the United States and play such prestigious events and venues as the Miami Pop Festival and San Francisco's Fillmore, their three-year deal with the American Premier Talent Agency—who also represented the Who, Herman's Hermits, and Arthur Brown in the States—had a great deal to do with it.

They might not have been selling many records across the water, but Fleetwood Mac was gaining their share of converts at venues like Philadelphia's Electric Factory, where guitarist Rick Vito was in the audience. "The band was extremely tight, using dynamics with such effectiveness," recalled Vito in *Vintage Guitar* many years later. "I may have heard all the happening guitar players of the day, but with the exception of Jimi Hendrix, Green made them all look like amateurs! He was a master of taste, tone, dynamics, and soul who sang amazing songs with conviction and believability. In short, he was everything I aspired to be as a musician." Little did either he or Green know that Vito would one day be in Green's place, playing guitar with Fleetwood Mac from 1987 to 1991.

In the audience when they played San Francisco's Fillmore was Carlos Santana, whose band's debut album would come out in summer 1969. "The white British dudes... zeroed in on two things—B. B. King and Elmore James—and they played the shit out of that music," marveled Santana in his autobiography, *The Universal Tone* (2014). "They had the sound of B. B.'s [1965] *Live at the Regal* album down almost as good as B. B. did! They lived the blues. They weren't wearing it like a suit. That's all they wanted to do; that's all they did, and they did it so well. I couldn't believe they were white."

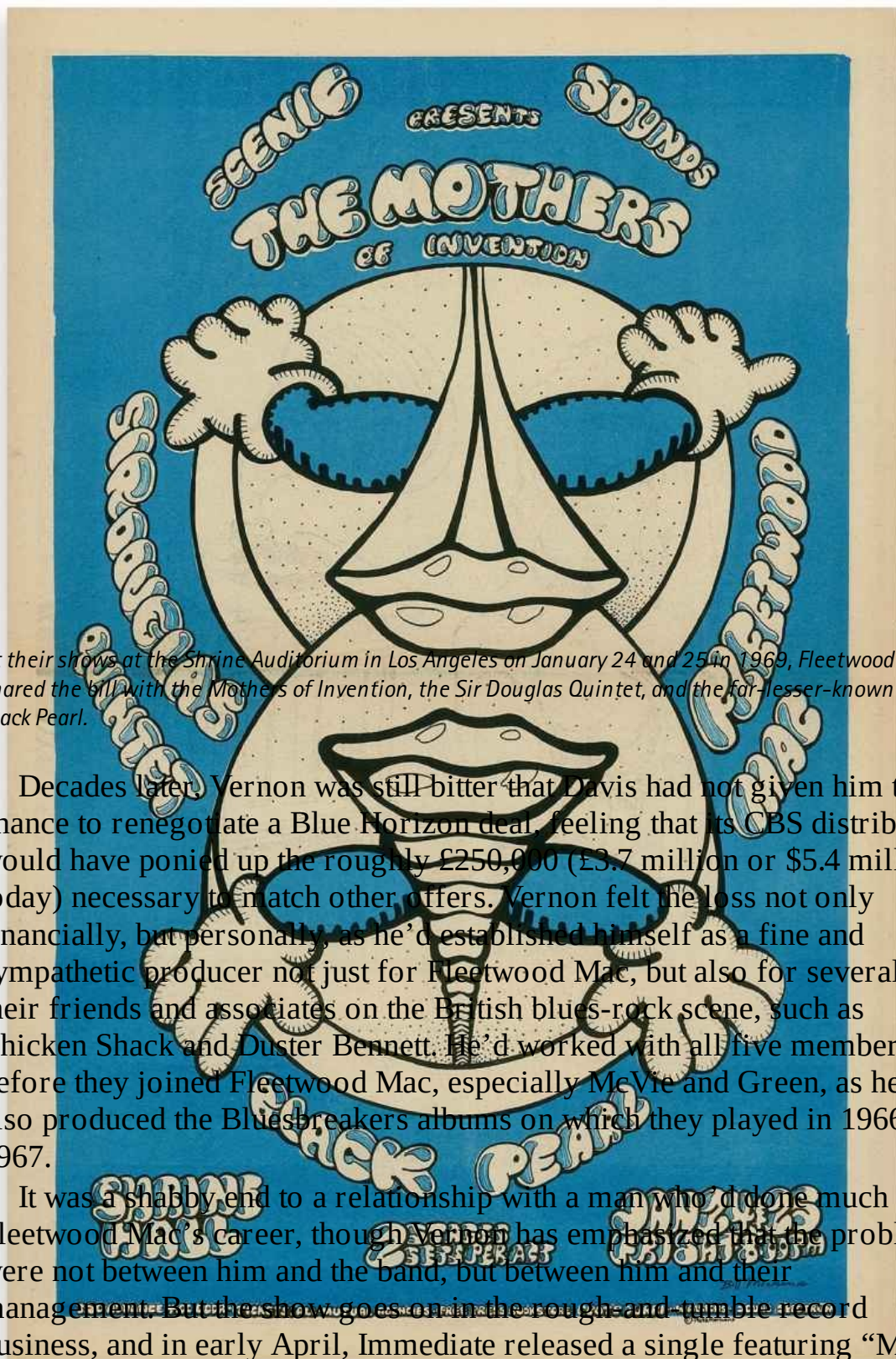
During their Chicago stop in early January, Green—along with everyone else in the band—fulfilled a long-delayed dream by recording with bona fide top Chicago bluesmen at the studio of Chess Records, the legendary label that had cut the best discs by such greats as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Little Walter. With guitar star Buddy Guy (for just a couple songs), Muddy Waters pianist Otis Spann, harmonica player Walter Horton, singer-guitarist David "Honeyboy" Edwards, bassist/songwriter Willie Dixon, and others, Fleetwood Mac laid down a bundle of tracks on January 4, 1969—enough, indeed, for a double LP, released in December as *Blues Jam at Chess* (and in the United States as the two-volume *Blues Jam in Chicago*, soon combined onto the double-LP *Fleetwood Mac in Chicago*).

Like many such super-sessions, the combination sounds better in the head than it does on the turntable (or, these days, computer or other digital music player). Haphazardly mixing blues covers with originals by Green, Spencer, Kirwan, Horton, Spann, Dixon, and Edwards, it's ragged and

tentative, as can be expected from a one-day session between musicians who'd never before played together. Even Green dismissed it as "a non-event" thirty years later in *Blues Revue*: "The rest of the band wasn't into it, and we did not play well."

The one exception is the magnificent version of Otis Rush's anguished "Homework," featuring stinging, wailing Green guitar and vocals, Spann's piano being the only non-band augmentation. Green got to jam onstage with an all-black blues outfit at Chicago's Pepper's Lounge the following day. Fleetwood Mac would also back Spann at a New York session five days later, drummer S. P. Leary taking Fleetwood's place.

On January 8, the group also took the opportunity to do some recording on their own in New York with Mike Vernon, though little of the material found its way into release at the time. For in mid-March, about a month after their return home, it was announced that Fleetwood Mac had left Blue Horizon for a five-year deal with Immediate Records, the label cofounded by then-Rolling Stones manager Andrew Oldham in 1965. In an unimaginable oversight—even considering it was long before computers routinely kept automatic track of such things—Blue Horizon failed to renew its option, leaving Clifford Davis clear to negotiate a contract with another company.



At their shows at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on January 24 and 25 in 1969, Fleetwood Mac shared the bill with the Mothers of Invention, the Sir Douglas Quintet, and the far-lesser-known band Black Pearl.

Decades later, Vernon was still bitter that Davis had not given him the chance to renegotiate a Blue Horizon deal, feeling that its CBS distributor would have ponied up the roughly £250,000 (£3.7 million or \$5.4 million today) necessary to match other offers. Vernon felt the loss not only financially, but personally, as he'd established himself as a fine and sympathetic producer not just for Fleetwood Mac, but also for several of their friends and associates on the British blues-rock scene, such as Chicken Shack and Duster Bennett. He'd worked with all five members before they joined Fleetwood Mac, especially McVie and Green, as he'd also produced the Bluesbreakers albums on which they played in 1966 and 1967.

It was a shabby end to a relationship with a man who'd done much for Fleetwood Mac's career, though Vernon has emphasized that the problems were not between him and the band, but between him and their management. But the show goes on in the rough-and-tumble record business, and in early April, Immediate released a single featuring "Man

of the World,” one of the tracks the label had bought from Blue Horizon as part of the Fleetwood Mac deal. This again showed the band stretching out beyond—way beyond—the blues into a flowing, melodic rock that was blues in feel but not in form.

Sung with grace by songwriter Green, it was in retrospect an expression of his growing discontent with stardom and its phony trappings. As Spencer observed when paraphrasing the lyrics in *The Peter Green Story: Man of the World*, “There’s no one I’d rather be than myself, but I wish I’d never been born... that’s almost like a suicide note.” Within a year that would boil over with more turbulence than anyone anticipated, but upon its release, “Man of the World” fed the very stardom that was fueling Green’s self-doubt, reaching #2 in the British charts.

In April, the group followed yet another short Scandinavian visit (Janis Joplin doing a few songs with them at their Stockholm show) with a week-long British tour with one of their idols, B. B. King. Their lead guitarist made quite an impression upon the great blues star. King effused to British rock journalists Roy Carr and Steve Clarke that Green was “the only living guitarist to make me sweat. He’s got the sweetest tone I’ve ever heard.” Also in April, they went back into the studio to start work in earnest on their third British album, the first to include Danny Kirwan compositions (though a few had already been released on the US *English Rose* LP, including a couple of standout brooding blues tunes, “Without You” and “Something Inside of Me”).

Now they were producing themselves and, judging from the resulting LP, doing a pretty good job. Titled *Then Play On* upon its September release, it was the best of the three albums they recorded with Peter Green. If uneven and not as consistent as the later pop-rock LPs for which they’re most renowned, it still contains some of their finest tracks, even if only one or two are widely known to the average Fleetwood Mac fan. “We knew we couldn’t just make another album like the others,” emphasized Fleetwood to Samuel Graham. “We didn’t have an exact concept of what we were going to do, but we knew what we *weren’t* going to do, and that was put out another record of Jeremy singing Elmore James.”

Elaborated Mick to Q in 1990, “*Then Play On* epitomized the vision Peter had of going forward, and that’s when Jeremy got left behind. Apart from a couple of piano things, he wasn’t on that album. We just didn’t want to keep treading water, and that album was the real start of Fleetwood Mac.

Working with [engineer] Martin Birch, Peter was experimenting.” In another departure, the band wouldn’t simply record live and choose the best take, instead editing and overdubbing to produce the best recording, not merely preserve the best performance.

Just as Green and Spencer had split the writing and singing pretty much down the middle on their early albums, so did Green and Kirwan do the same for *Then Play On*. The tracks written and sung by Green are highlights, even if they often addressed, obliquely and directly, the demons and frustrations that would soon drive him out of the music business. As a counterpoint to his introspection, “Rattlesnake Shake” is an all-out exuberant rabble-rouser, more in line with the macho hard blues-rock of just-emerging British bands like Led Zeppelin and Free.

If Kirwan’s songs are slighter than Green’s, they’re nonetheless more substantial than the Elmore James pastiches of Spencer. Wistful almost to the point of adolescent naiveté (Kirwan was still in his late teens), his better tunes have an ingratiating charm and can rock out once in a while, as he does on the curtain-raising “Coming Your Way.” Although the record is padded by a couple tedious jams (credited to Fleetwood and McVie), *Then Play On* was, as *Melody Maker* wrote, “A great leap forward by Peter Green and his men, who have produced an album that enhances their reputation in the eyes of many who still regard them as a straight, bashing blues band.” It also deftly wove the work of two top guitarists together, creating intoxicatingly varied textures that were rare on late-1960s rock recordings, which so often foregrounded the solos of a star frontman.

Then Play On was another success for the group, reaching #6 in the UK—but not on the Immediate label. Despite hit British albums by the Small Faces and the Nice, Immediate Records was in more financial trouble than outsiders realized when Fleetwood Mac signed with the company. On top of that, they had to cancel a summer US tour when the release of “Man of the World” and *Then Play On*—both of which they’d hoped to promote on the visit—were held up as Columbia Records and Atlantic Records engaged in a dispute over which company had the rights to issue the discs in the United States.

In late July, the group left Immediate and started negotiating with other labels, including CBS and Philips. More intriguingly, they also considered going with the Beatles’ Apple label—another company, as it happened, that

was already running into rough financial waters. Another connection between Fleetwood Mac and the Beatles was already in place, with Mick Fleetwood on track (after an on-again, off-again relationship of several years) to marry Jenny Boyd, sister-in-law to George Harrison.

By early August, however, the band signed a three-year contract with Reprise Records. Complicating matters, in the same month, Blue Horizon put out a motley compilation of tracks from previously released LPs and singles, *The Pious Bird of Good Omen*, which made the British Top 20. That must have drawn at least a bit of the momentum away from Reprise's maiden Fleetwood Mac release, *Then Play On*. But Reprise stuck with Fleetwood Mac for a long, long time—not only past the 1960s, but into the twenty-first century.

With two big hit singles in a row behind them, Fleetwood Mac was now expected to deliver those along with chart albums. In early August of 1969, they again came up with the goods when they cut Peter Green's epic "Oh Well," a track—as "Albatross" had been—different from anything they had previously recorded. The first half of the song was a tense modified boogie of sorts built around a captivating circular hard rock riff, the instrumental breaks corkscrewing to unsettling climaxes. The lyrics were certainly unusual for a single, with Green painting a most unflattering self-portrait ("I ain't pretty and my legs are thin") and questioning whether one could know what anyone was thinking, even when God himself was queried.

As offbeat as this portion was, it in no way prepared listeners for the second half of "Oh Well," which bore more resemblance to flamenco-flavored classical music than blues or rock. Purely instrumental, its mournful melody featured Green on nylon-string and electric guitars, timpani, and cello; his girlfriend Sandra Elsdon on eerie recorders; and Spencer, finally making a useful contribution to a 1969 recording session, on elegiac piano. It could have hardly been more different than "Oh Well (Part 1)," as the first half was titled when it was used on the A-side of a single, the second part being used on the flip side as "Oh Well (Part 2)." Yet the pieces complemented each other well, as if the band (and particularly Green) was finding some measure of peace after nearly getting swallowed by the storm. It was not only the peak achievement of the Peter Green era, but as fine a track as Fleetwood Mac recorded in any era, and as notable as any rock recording by anyone in the late 1960s.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

THEN PLAY ON

By RICHIE UNTERBERGER

With their first album, Fleetwood Mac established themselves as the best band to emerge from the late-1960s British blues boom. If their second LP offered pretty much more of the same with less imagination, their 1968 singles “Black Magic Woman,” “Need Your Love So Bad,” and “Albatross” showed they were willing to expand beyond blues conventions into more original territory. In 1969, *Then Play On* completed their transition from rock-influenced blues act to a rock group that played with the intense emotion of the blues, but eschewed blues clichés for melodically rich compositions with fluid interweaving guitars and an almost painfully confessional tone.

Although new guitarist Danny Kirwan wrote seven songs to founder Peter Green’s five, the tracks featuring Green as singer and songwriter are the record’s highlights. In retrospect, a couple of these are plaintively blunt expressions of his disillusionment with rock stardom, even if few realized just how serious this was at the time. “Tell me anybody, do you really give a damn for me?” he scoffs on the sparse and scary “Showbiz Blues,” with some of the most keening slide blues guitar to be heard on any recording. If less explicit in its despair, the minor-keyed “Before the Beginning” concludes the LP with despondent eloquence, as if Green were making his farewell statement almost a year in advance of actually leaving the band.

It wasn’t all gloom for Green. “Rattlesnake Shake” was a more conventional riff-driven party blues-rocker, and a not-so-veiled celebration of masturbation. “Closing My Eyes” might have reflected some restless discontent, but did so with beguiling serenity, like an oasis within the storm of Peter’s newly chaotic rock-god life. The instrumental “Underway” was yet more peaceful, as if it represented the inner state to which he aspired as his outer world spun out of control.



Fleetwood Mac's third album, Then Play On, was their final and most adventurous LP with Peter Green in the band.

If Kirwan's vocals lacked the grit and gravity of Green's, and his lyrics were more simplistic (or banal, as some unkind critics would have it), they nonetheless oozed a similar naked sincerity. "Coming Your Way" opens the album with a near-tribal propulsion, and "Like Crying Like Dying" is good-time, low-key, near-country blues that nonetheless masks some underlying anguish. His purer blues chops are showcased on "Without You," while the superficially chipper "Although the Sun Is Shining" hints at the demons that would also drag Danny down and out of the music business.

Then Play On is not the most consistent of records. The "Searching for Madge" and "Fighting for Madge" jams featuring Mick Fleetwood and John McVie should have been cut, and the majestic two-part British hit single "Oh Well" substituted in their place. The US edition of the record inserted "Oh Well" into the running order, but dropped four of Kirwan's songs. Fortunately, the 2013 deluxe edition includes all fourteen tracks from the original UK LP—adding both parts of "Oh Well," the 1970 hit single "The Green Manalishi," and its B-side "World in Harmony"—making it the definitive document of Green's final and greatest year in Fleetwood Mac.



The Dutch 1973 single reissuing "Oh Well" and "Rattlesnake Shake" does not show the Peter Green lineup the band employed at the time those tracks were recorded in 1969, instead picturing a different version of Fleetwood Mac from the early 1970s.

Need your love so bad

Fleetwood Mac



1968 single "Need Your Love So Bad," a cover of a 1955 single by the American R&B star Little Willie John.

progressive blues festival

featuring

Family

Fleetwood Mac

East of Eden

Edgar Broughton

Glass Menagerie

Spirit of John Morgan

John Peel (D.J.)

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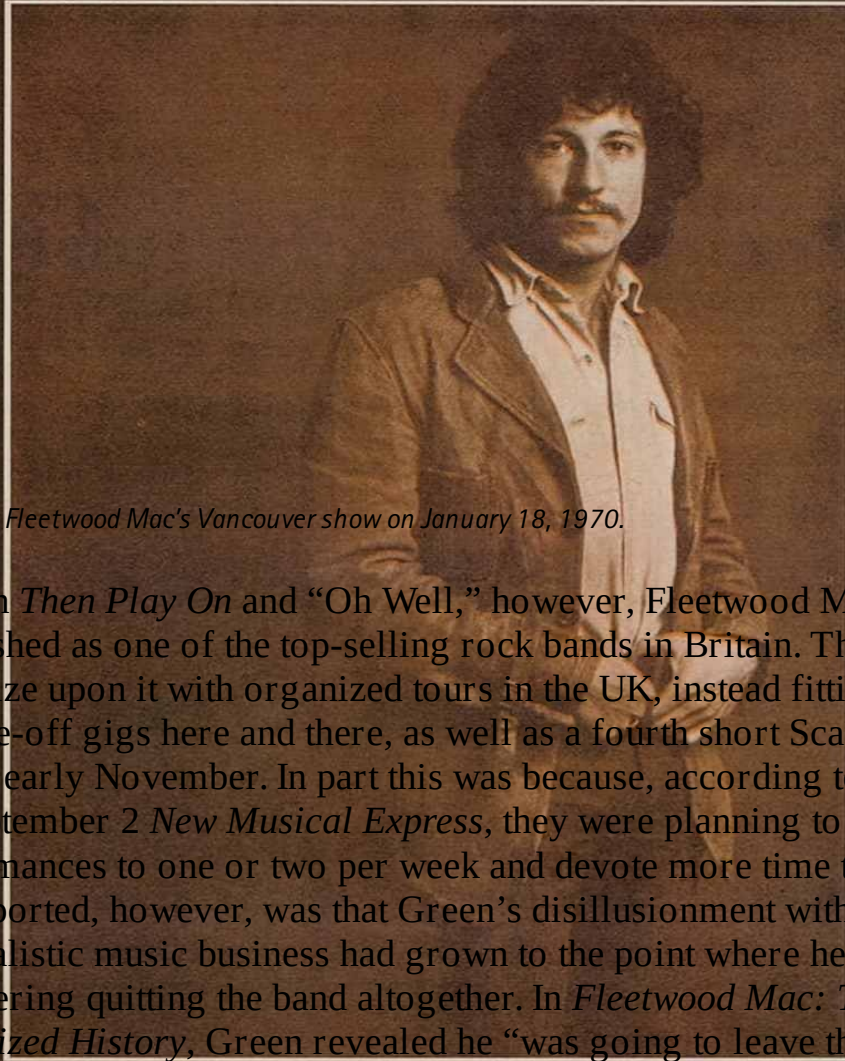
bought a flamenco guitar [a very expensive Ramirez], a lovely guitar, and I just about kind of managed on it.” And although it was issued as a two-part single, Peter added, “It was for an album.... The main thing, when you hear the whole thing together, is that you can hear it build up to the Spanish guitar solo.”

In the United States, both parts of “Oh Well” were segued into a single nine-minute track and added to *Then Play On*. This being the tail end of the era in which American labels would sometimes tinker with the contents of British rock albums, room was made for it by dropping four Kirwan songs, a couple of which had already appeared in the United States on the January *English Rose* LP. That gave American listeners a misleading picture of the band, skewing it very much toward Green’s songs (though a 2013 reissue restores the original UK running order, adding both parts of “Oh Well” and both sides of Fleetwood Mac’s next single).

All the monkeying around didn’t help much. *Then Play On*, like their two previous US LPs on Epic, wasn’t a hit, although it at least went about halfway up the Top 200 (peaking at #109), and “Oh Well (Part 1)” made #55 as a single. It would be their sole Top 100 single, unbelievably, until “Over My Head” become a hit in late 1975.

MOOSE VALLEY FARMS PRESENTS

FLEETWOOD MAC



Poster for Fleetwood Mac's Vancouver show on January 18, 1970.

With *Then Play On* and “Oh Well,” however, Fleetwood Mac was now established as one of the top-selling rock bands in Britain. They did not capitalize upon it with organized tours in the UK, instead fitting in festival and one-off gigs here and there, as well as a fourth short Scandinavian tour in early November. In part this was because, according to a report in the September 2 *New Musical Express*, they were planning to cut their live performances to one or two per week and devote more time to recording. Not reported, however, was that Green’s disillusionment with the materialistic music business had grown to the point where he was considering quitting the band altogether. In *Fleetwood Mac: The Authorized History*, Green revealed he “was going to leave the group before ‘Oh Well,’ but Clifford Davis, our manager, persuaded me to stay on for the sake of the rest of the guys.”

If the band truly wanted to play less and record more, it’s a little odd that Fleetwood Mac did little recording in the last few months of 1969, though Green found time to play on albums by former bandmates Bob Brunning and Peter Bardens. It’s a bit odder still that they set off for a three-month American tour in mid-November. For that matter, in a *Record*

SPRING
Sunday JAN 18 7:00pm
gardens auditorium
lights: ectoplasmic assault
admission 3.50 door
2.50 advance
westside music

Mirror interview that month, Green gave no indication he was thinking of quitting or even cutting back touring, saying:

On the first occasion that we went to America we had no promotion, no record out and no publicity. We came and went without anyone noticing that we had been and that was one of the reasons why we left Blue Horizon. The second occasion was virtually a repeat, although we went down very well in ballrooms. [This] time we hope to rectify the mistakes we made previously.... We have been placing too much emphasis upon recording and writing until recently, but the few live gigs we've done recently and the receptions have knocked us out. When we get back from the US we are going straight into a million live appearances.

Added Green around the same time in *New Musical Express*, "We are not going to change the format at all, although we will be doing a lot of new numbers since the last time over there. Danny has written a lot of harmony-type numbers, things with a West Coast feel. We'll be a bit less bluesy than before."

On their North American jaunt (taking on shows in Vancouver and Toronto, their first in Canada), Fleetwood Mac occasionally headlined, but more often shared the bill with or supported acts such as Joe Cocker, Jethro Tull, and Grand Funk Railroad. On January 8, 1970, they even did "Rattlesnake Shake" on the syndicated TV show *Playboy After Dark*, hosted by Hugh Hefner. Despite their lack of chart action, the band went over well in venues ranging from the small New York club Ungano's to sports stadiums, also playing a weekend at the legendary Fillmore West in early January. They shared a bill with their friends the Grateful Dead in New Orleans, narrowly avoiding disaster when they didn't make it to a party at the Dead's hotel, where most of the Dead and fifteen others were busted on drug charges at the end of January.

Live tapes from the tour—especially those issued on several albums years later from their gigs at the Boston Tea Party in February (taped for a possible live LP that didn't come out at the time)—verify that the band was expanding their sound and repertoire in new and occasionally thrilling ways. In keeping with the jammy ethos of the time (as heard on some late-1960s concert LPs by Cream, Jefferson Airplane, and others), some of their tunes were extended in length by a few-too-many minutes.

“Rattlesnake Shake” became a twenty-five-minute marathon; a new Green composition, “The Green Manalishi,” lasted fifteen.

Poster for Fleetwood Mac's November 11, 1970, show at the Palace Theater in Nashville, during their first American tour with Christine McVie on board.

♦♦ LIVE IN CONCERT ♦♦

Of greater significance were other new songs that both equaled the quality of the better material from *Then Play On* and continued that album's exploration of songs that were bluesy in mood, but less melodically and structurally rigid than the traditional blues at Fleetwood Mac's base. Standouts in this regard included Green's "Sandy Mary," another tune inspired by girlfriend Sandra Lison; the Kirwan-Green instrumental "World in Harmony," fulfilling Peter's pledge that audiences would hear "things with a West Coast feel"; and Kirwan's "Only You," proving the band's junior guitarist could write driving rockers as well as airy ballads. On these and other numbers, Kirwan and Green were also proving as adept as the best of them at blending dynamic, interlocking guitar lines.

If left out in the cold a bit by the songs stressing the band's guitar heroes, Jeremy Spencer still had time to give his usual Elmore James tributes and early rock 'n' roll homages/parodies, both of which were still key to the band's in-concert popularity. Despite Spencer's nearly nonexistent role in the studio, the band themselves weren't neglecting him, at one point planning to include a bonus EP of Spencer's parodies (recorded back in October 1968) with the *Then Play On* album. While that EP didn't appear (the tracks eventually surfacing on the 1998 outtakes compilation *The Vaudeville Years of Fleetwood Mac: 1968 to 1970*), it did give rise to the first solo release by a member of Fleetwood Mac when Spencer's self-titled debut EP appeared in January 1970.

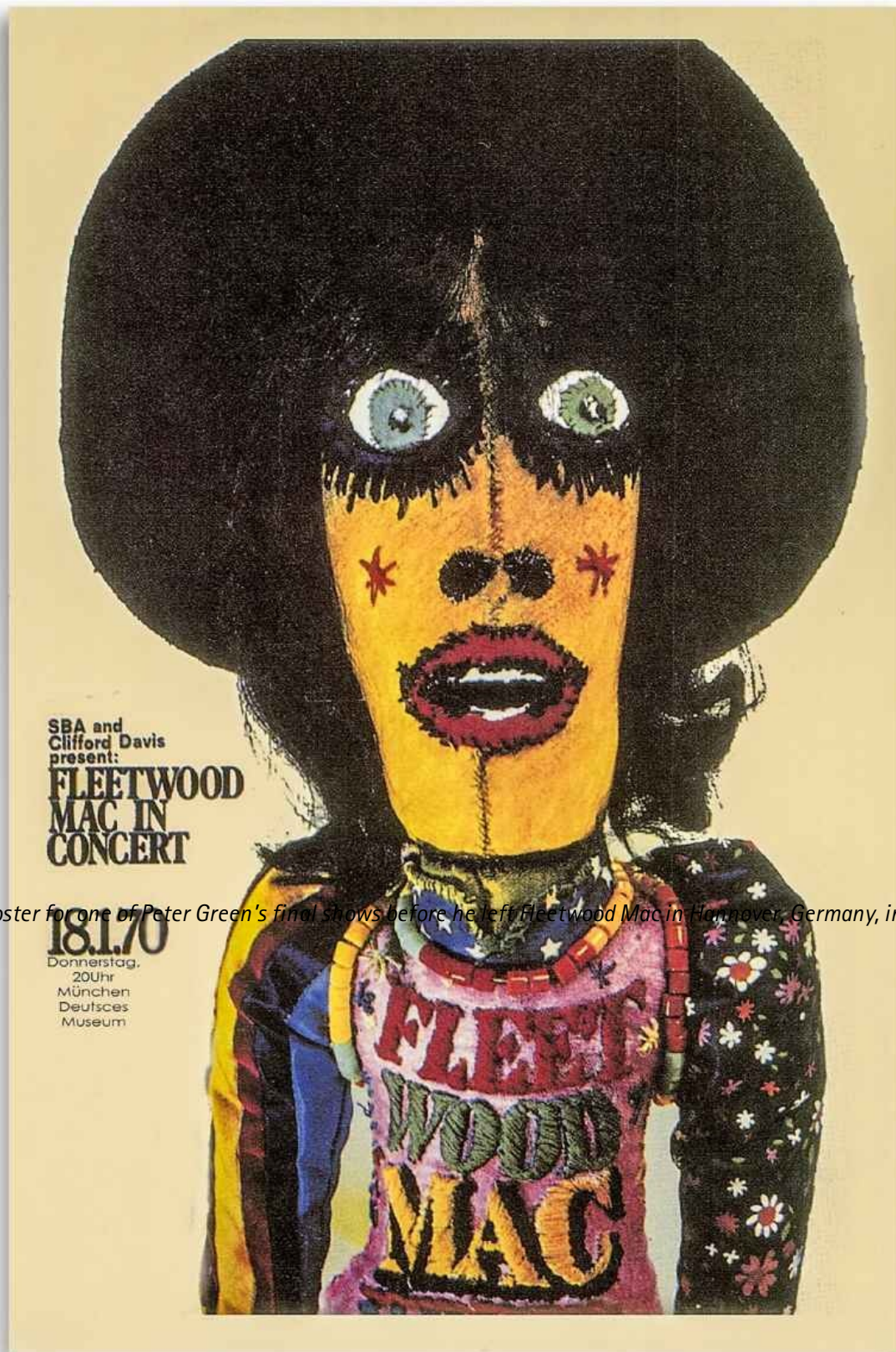
"We were about to record an album including Danny Kirwan, who had just joined," explained Spencer to this author for the liner notes of the album's CD reissue. "I couldn't see how the material Pete and Danny were composing would fit in with anything I had, even with my Elmore James style of blues (which I had already run into the ground), besides I had nothing new and progressive. However, I liked messing around in my spare time recording spoofs and '50s- type stuff on my home recorder, and the others suggested I do an accompanying EP insert to go with the album."

When that EP didn't come out, he continued, "We all agreed, 'Let's do a whole album of this stuff!' Everyone was enthusiastic and supportive,

being fans of that music themselves, having cut their musical ‘teeth’ on it. Well, I should say that Danny cut his more on Beatles and Cream, but he had a wonderful aptitude for melodically chiming in on lead guitar and backing harmony vocals.”

The album titled *Jeremy Spencer* thus turned out to be something of a Fleetwood Mac album with Spencer as frontman (though Green played on just one track, and was on banjo, not guitar). Besides covering some obscure rock ‘n’ roll oldies, Spencer wrote some tunes of his own satirizing Elvis, surf music, psychedelia, and British blues. One of his compositions was *not* a parody, as the B. B. King–style “Don’t Go, Please Stay” almost could have fit on a real Fleetwood Mac album, with sax adding a bit of soul to Spencer’s heartfelt vocal and stinging blues guitar. The Buddy Holly–styled “Linda” was (according to *Fleetwood Mac: Rumours n’ Fax*) “a sizable hit” in Holland. But otherwise the record was almost wholly ignored, not even coming out in the US.

The chance to write some songs in a non–Elmore James style, however, proved useful when Spencer had to unexpectedly step up and supply material in the absence of Green, whose remaining time in the band was shorter than anyone expected. “The more popular the band was becoming, the less interested he seemed to be about it,” observed roadie Dinky Dawson in his autobiography *Life on the Road* (1998), written with Carter Alan. Green’s image had already gotten more eccentric starting around the last half of 1969, with the guitarist taking to the stage dressed in Biblical white robes and rambling on about his religious beliefs in interviews, without much provocation. He had plenty of company in both the strange wardrobe and left-field quote departments in late-1960s rock, but then his behavior took an unprecedented turn.



Poster for one of Peter Green's final shows before he left Fleetwood Mac in Hannover, Germany, in 1970.



In his final months with Fleetwood Mac, Peter Green sometimes took to wearing long, flowing white robes on stage. Getty Images

Green gave notice that his ambivalence with rock stardom had reached a tipping point in an interview with Nick Logan of *New Musical Express* shortly after the band returned home from their American tour. Sensationally headlined “Why Peter Green Wants to Give His Money Away,” it gave Green the forum to declare, “The more money I earn the more I can give away.... The very least I can do is give away that money I don’t need, and anyone who thinks money is going to make them happy is so wrong. I would love to go yachting; I love cars. I would like to buy an AC Cobra but the thing is that before I do that I would like to know that everyone is getting their handful of rice every day.”

Toward that end, Green wanted Fleetwood Mac to become something of a charity band, donating their profits to worthy causes. As sympathetic as they were toward their leader’s altruism (and the band had in fact played a good number of charity and benefit shows since late 1967), Fleetwood and McVie in particular were uneasy about suddenly giving up their newfound relative wealth, even if they could keep their fame. At least Green didn’t seem eager to entirely jump ship just yet, also telling the *NME* that he and

Kirwan were planning the next Fleetwood Mac album and that “the feeling on the plane coming home [from the American tour] was so good that if we’d been asked to turn around and go back again I think we all would.”

Far from strengthening Peter’s bonds to the band, Fleetwood Mac’s next tour would all but dissolve them. For about a month in March and early April of 1970, they played gigs in France, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and their now-familiar Scandinavian haunts. The non-Scandinavian markets were especially important for the group to penetrate, now that their records were taking off throughout Europe. Roadie Dinky Dawson sensed that something was amiss when Green repeatedly flung his wah-wah pedal at Dawson with demands to fix it, though nothing was wrong. Much worse was in store when the band played the Circus Krone Bau in Munich on March 22, following a show marred by fights in the crowd.

After the concert, Green and roadie Dennis Keane were invited to a commune near Munich. Accounts of the visit and its effects vary, but Keane at least told Green biographer Martin Celmins that his and Green’s wine was spiked with LSD. Concerned after Green’s failure to return to their hotel, Fleetwood and the roadies went out to find him (he’d spent some of his trip jamming with other members of the commune).

The entourage, wrote Dinky Dawson in *Life on the Road*, “finally found Peter lying in a sunken den that was padded generously with huge cushions and bathed in various psychedelic lights. He was obviously tripping on some very potent LSD and Mick had to carefully explain to him what was going on.... Only after a long negotiation were we able to induce Pete to return with us, but the person we brought back to the hotel would never again be the man I’d known.” It was also then that Green told the band he’d be leaving Fleetwood Mac.

While the spiking incident of sorts is sometimes cited as the trigger for Green’s departure from the group and his subsequent spiral into mental illness, the immediate aftereffects weren’t so drastic. Green finished the tour, but in early April it was announced that he was indeed leaving the band, though he’d stay on through late May to honor some commitments. “There are many reasons, the main thing being that I feel it is time for a change,” Green explained to *NME*. “I want to change my whole life, really, because I don’t want to be at all a part of the conditioned world and as much as possible I am getting out of it.”

The same interview also indicates there were musical reasons behind his decision. “I was cut down by being a third of the group’s front line,” he remarks. “That was quite fun when it started but after a while I felt I couldn’t get into anything because after a couple of numbers I would have to step back to let the others have their chance.... I want to get 100 percent into music. I want to do lots of jamming with different groups and musicians.”

He hadn’t given up on the idea of giving his money away, adding that he wanted to forfeit the royalties on the solo album he was planning for that purpose. “I have started to give away some bread,” he reiterated to *Beat Instrumental* in June. “I’m giving away the money I don’t need and which I’ll never use.... I had thought of putting the money where it would help educate the people in the underdeveloped countries, but I realized you can’t educate people unless they’ve got food in their stomachs first. Giving the money away is a gesture, because I know the bit I’m giving won’t do anything really, but I’d rather be without it and make that gesture.”

For all his apparent anxiousness to start a solo career, Green continued to make music with Fleetwood Mac for about six weeks. A concert was taped for BBC Radio on April 9 and, more significantly, a final single was recorded five days later. Already part of their onstage repertoire, “The Green Manalishi (With the Two Pronged Crown)” was an unrelentingly ominous, grinding track with stop-start tempos and angry flurries of hard rock guitar riffs. Set against a full moon and dark night, the words were just as menacing, and at times downright fearful in their anxiety. In *Fleetwood Mac: The Authorized History*, Green confirmed the song “was written out of fear, mostly,” noting he wrote it after “I woke up one night, sweating heavily and feeling like I couldn’t move. I just felt terrible—and it wasn’t that I was sick.”

Backed by the incongruously serene, mellifluous instrumental “World in Harmony,” “The Green Manalishi” became a Top 10 hit in the UK—the last (except for a 1973 rerelease of “Albatross”) they’d enjoy in their homeland for nearly a decade. About a week after its release, Peter Green played his last show of the year with Fleetwood Mac (“sky-high on acid,” according to Fleetwood’s second memoir) on May 23 at the Spring Music Festival in Bath, the all-star bill also featuring the Grateful Dead and Traffic. He’d already begun work on a solo album earlier that month.

“The only tense moments came at the end when Fleetwood Mac were told that it was time to close,” reported *The Bath and Wilts Chronicle*.

“They continued to play, and at twenty minutes past midnight the organizers switched off the floodlights [and] the group’s equipment. Mick Fleetwood continued to play solo. Then the organizers switched off the remaining floodlights, plunging the ground into complete darkness. But instead of leaving, the crowd lit fires and, many still chanting and clapping their hands, jumped onstage to surround the drummer. Fleetwood finally stopped at 12:50 am, and the crowd left the ground without incident.”

It was a dramatic end to Green’s roughly three years at the head of the group he’d founded in mid-1967. Those years had seen the band rise from a Bluesbreakers spinoff to a band whose popularity, at least in the UK and Europe, was on the verge of rivaling that of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. In truth, the records Fleetwood Mac made during that period were highly uneven, containing a good amount of routine and unremarkable tracks among the highlights. But those highlights were very high indeed, and their work so highly esteemed that BBC broadcasts, live tapes, and outtakes from that period were issued for decades to come. Now spread throughout about a dozen CDs, they offer an incredibly deep picture of the band’s vast repertoire and willingness to experiment both onstage and in the studio.

Back in mid-1970, however, the band faced by far their biggest challenge to date, even with a single shooting toward the Top 10: how to replace Peter Green—the band’s lead guitarist, best singer and songwriter, and founding visionary. And if they didn’t replace him, could or should they go on at all?

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A poster for Fleetwood Mac's show at Madison Square Garden on October 22, 1971, with Deep Purple and Australian band Daddy Cool.

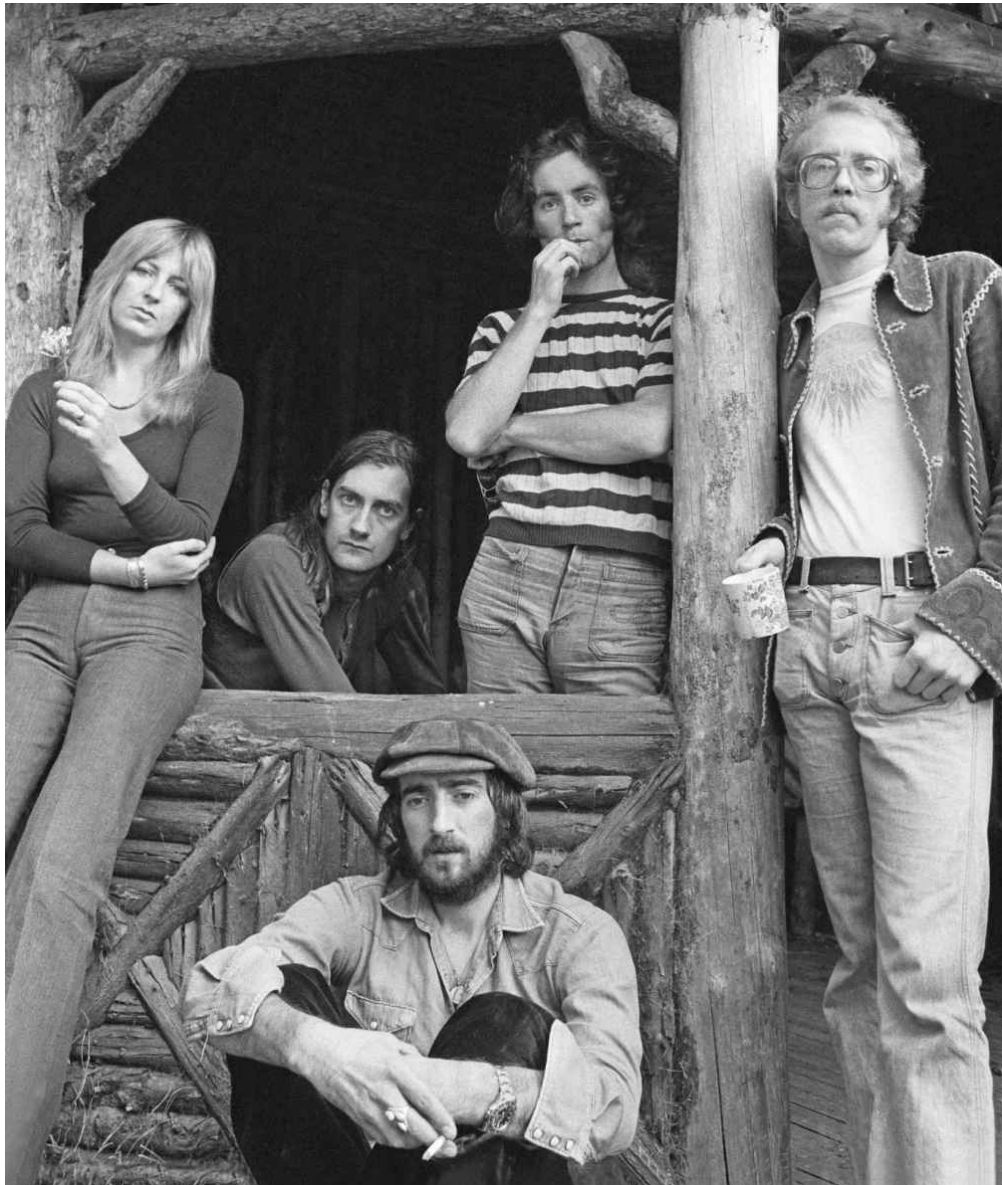
Chapter 3

THE MIDDLE YEARS

1970–1974

Without Peter Green, Fleetwood Mac faced a situation not unlike the one Pink Floyd had gone through a couple years earlier. In early 1968, Syd Barrett—Pink Floyd’s initial primary singer, songwriter, and guitarist—had also left for a solo career (or, more accurately, been fired because of his increasing mental instability and unreliability). Most fans and industry insiders thought the band might be finished. If anything, they thought it more likely that Barrett would be much more successful on his own than the band would be without him.

In much the same way, many would have bet on Green to be the far more commercial proposition than a Green-less Fleetwood Mac. Green was their founder, guitar hero, and writer and singer of their best songs, including all four of their big hit singles. The quartet that remained must have wondered whether it was worth carrying on at all. “Losing Peter was like taking the rudder out of a sailing boat,” admitted Fleetwood in *Play On*. “As a band we were still afloat, but we were drifting, with no map and no land in sight.”



One of several lineups Fleetwood Mac boasted in the first half of the 1970s is seen in this September 1973 photo. Sitting: John McVie. Standing, left to right: Christine McVie, Mick Fleetwood, Bob Weston, and Bob Welch. Getty Images

“I think we all felt the pressure to keep things going after Pete left,” Jeremy Spencer told *Blues Revue* in 2006. “He had been the main creative force. And, as usual, I was merely filling the role of being a showman, but with unoriginal material and parodying, which pretty much became just mimicking Elvis in a gold lamé suit. This was very unsatisfying, to say the least. I can’t say it enough, that the lack of creative inspiration for me was

devastating. It was practically killing me, along with my questions about life and what was I living for. Nothing seemed to have any purpose.”

As it turned out, both Pink Floyd and Fleetwood Mac would eventually become much bigger without their original leaders, though it took Fleetwood Mac longer to defy expectations. Instead of giving up the ghost, the band simply, in keeping with the title of their latest album, played on. Fleetwood couldn't jump into the lead vocalist role or write hit songs, but he could at least take on the role of leader as far as being the guy most responsible for their business and personnel decisions. He also exercised a strong voice in how and where their music was recorded, a journey that would, by the middle of the decade, land them on a different continent, with a band no longer consisting entirely of guys.

This was the beginning of what might be called Fleetwood Mac's "middle years," filling the gap between their late-1960s European stardom and their rise to global superstardom in the mid-1970s. From mid-1970 to the end of 1974, they'd record half a dozen albums with about as many different lineups. None of them would be big hits in the UK or US, and by the end of 1972, only Mick Fleetwood and John McVie were left from the late-1960s quintet that had scaled Fleetwood Mac's greatest commercial and artistic heights. Such was their state of flux that in 1974, a band named Fleetwood Mac with *none* of their original (or even one-time) members was sent on the road by their manager, initiating legal hassles that threatened their performing and recording career.

By the end of 1974, Fleetwood Mac was not just a much different band in membership, but also in musical style. The journey from blues to rock band, which had really started in the second half of the Green era, would be complete. In the interim, they struggled to form a consistent identity as guitarists left and joined, which worked against them commercially as they tried to both gain a foothold in the American market and regain the British one that had virtually abandoned them. These lost years were nonetheless important ones for the band, giving them the chance to explore different directions, absorb more and more pop into their sound, and produce some notable songs, though their albums were almost maddeningly inconsistent.

In late May and June of 1970, Fleetwood Mac had some business to wrap up in the immediate aftermath of Peter Green's departure before they could get on with playing and recording. Green graciously agreed to make a couple final TV appearances, "playing" as part of the Green-Kirwan-

Spencer lineup for the last time when the band lip-synced “The Green Manalishi” on *Top of the Pops* on June 17. Also in mid-June, Fleetwood finally married Jenny Boyd. Green was supposed to be best man, but showed up late, forcing roadie Dennis Keane to step in as replacement.

Instead of opting for a replacement for Green in Fleetwood Mac as well, the band chose to continue as a quartet, hoping that remaining guitarists Spencer and Kirwan might grow into musical leaders as singers and songwriters. Hoping to bring the band closer together, Fleetwood arranged for them to rent a country home in Alton, Hampshire. For a few months, the group—wives, children, girlfriends, and roadies included—lived in what they came to call Kiln House, which became the title of their next LP.

Although the band now had just two primary guitarist-vocalist-composers instead of three, *Kiln House* was more erratic and disparate than any of their albums with Green. Now required to write original material that didn’t mimic Elmore James, Spencer came up with a few homage/parodies to Buddy Holly and (on “Blood on the Floor”) country music, though these were less explicitly satirical than the ones he’d put on his solo album. Kirwan was the force behind tracks that used more hard rock guitar, such as “Station Man”—which would remain in their stage repertoire long after Kirwan’s departure—and the instrumental “Earl Grey,” which followed the lines of Fleetwood Mac guitar showcases like “World of Harmony.” Other tracks, such as “Jewel-Eyed Judy,” showed the band moving in more of a pop direction than anything they’d previously cut, without sacrificing Kirwan’s smooth but forceful hard rock guitar licks.

Filled out by covers of the rock ’n’ roll oldie “Hi Ho Silver” and, more surprisingly, Donnie Brooks’ sentimental 1960 pop-rock hit “Mission Bell,” *Kiln House* was the work of a band in transition. If determined to forge a sound that owed little or nothing to the blues with which they made their reputation, the band’s new album got mixed results, with no obvious hit single. In the UK, it peaked at a mere #39; in the US, as some compensation, it became their first Top 100 album, rising to #69. Reviewers were positive but a little nonplussed, with *Melody Maker* opining, “In progressing from a raw ‘blues revival’ band, Fleetwood Mac have gone forward in terms of production and performance and

backwards in their search for material and style.... Not a creative album, but entertaining and well-played.”

The press was noticing that Fleetwood Mac wasn't quite the same without Green, as Fleetwood readily copped to in *Melody Maker* in October 1970. “The band has always been changing,” he pointed out. “Just listen to our LPs and see the progression. It started as a rock blues band, then we started doing our own material rather than other people's. It has progressed in as much as progress is keeping going, and not going backwards. We are playing whatever we want to play; the band obviously doesn't say we're going to stay in one place.”

It would take a while, though, for memories of Green to fade. “Mac's line sounded dull and uninteresting, which was not helped by some of the duller guitar solos I have heard for a long time,” wrote *Melody Maker* in a concert review the following month. “Peter Green is most felt by his absence! The rest of the group did little to redeem themselves, although there were some good moments from the piano.”

Despite *Kiln House*'s fairly upbeat tone, there had been much turmoil behind the scenes as the band tried to pull themselves together. At various points, all of them quit except Fleetwood, who as new leader took on the duty of convincing them to stay. On one especially distressing night, *everyone* except Fleetwood quit, including John McVie, who—maybe with tongue in cheek—said he was considering hanging up his bass to become a roadie. A solution toward both easing the tensions and strengthening the band's music had been under their noses for quite a while, but it wasn't until the tour that followed *Kiln House* that Fleetwood Mac finally acted on it.



Fleetwood Mac in 1971, after Bob Welch (second from the left) replaced Jeremy Spencer. Getty Images

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

KILN HOUSE

By GARY GRAFF

K*iln House* is the first of Fleetwood Mac's several crisis albums, a set that came in the wake of dire straits and finds the group changing musical course somewhat to accommodate unexpected circumstances.

In this case it was the departure of founding frontman and primary talent Peter Green—at the time, a growing acid casualty sporting a Messianic beard, white robes, and a crucifix—who had drifted away from the group emotionally, spiritually, and musically. It left a gaping hole those around the group weren't sure could be easily filled, especially since fellow singer-guitarist Jeremy Spencer had been a creative no-show on 1969's *Then Play On*.

So the Mac did what so many British bands (see Traffic and Led Zeppelin, for instance) seem to do at times of creative crossroads; the remaining band members and bassist John McVie's keyboard-playing wife, Christine McVie, headed up to the country, taking communal residence in a converted, yes, kiln house, once used for drying hops before brewing, in the British countryside of Hampshire. There the group set to writing and recording some of what proved to be a fine recovery album (completed at De Lane Lea Studios in London), with Spencer regaining some of his stature in the band and Danny Kirwan stepping up again after establishing himself as a force on *Then Play On*.

So dissimilar were their personalities and creative temperaments, however, that the band-produced *Kiln House* often feels like the work of two separate bands, albeit with the same players. It's not quite as cohesive as *Then Play On*, but it holds together far better than 1968's shambolic *Mr. Wonderful*. And if Spencer's penchant for what he considered "parody" songs seemed gimmicky and vaudevillian before, especially on the heels of rock's psychedelic and socially conscious era, there was no question that this time out he was giving them his full effort and attention.



The cover of Kiln House, the first album Fleetwood Mac recorded after Peter Green left the band, was drawn by Christine McVie, who officially joined the group shortly before its release.

So there were some laughs and fun to be had on tracks such as “Buddy’s Song”—a revamping of “Peggy Sue Got Married,” in which Spencer name-checked a number of Buddy Holly song titles and dedicated them to Holly’s mother—and on the Elvis Presley–aping album opener “This Is the Rock.” Importantly, Spencer and Kirwan sounded like a uniform team on those, as well as on a roof-raising treatment of Fats Waller’s “Hi Ho Silver.”

Kirwan, meanwhile, pushes Fleetwood Mac even further outside of Green’s blues blueprint on choice originals such as “Station Man” and “Jewel-Eyed Judy”—both written in collaboration with his bandmates—while his guitar acumen was showcased on the rocking “Tell Me All the Things You Do” and the instrumental “Earl Grey.” His “One Together” and the album-closing “Mission Bell,” meanwhile, showed a gentler and more harmonic pop flavor that proved a harbinger of stylistic things to come for Fleetwood Mac.

And they’d come soon. Spencer ran off to the Children of God, a religious sect often regarded as a cult, while touring to support *Kiln House*, and the combination of Christine McVie as a full-time member and American singer-guitarist Bob Welch would build on the direction Kirwan started. But as the one studio document of a short-lived phase in Mac history, *Kiln House* was a testament to the group’s resilience and an ability to pull a modest victory out of what could have easily been a dismal defeat.

As she had on some of their 1968 sessions, Christine McVie played piano on *Kiln House*, this time also helping out on backup vocals. As she also drew the LP's charming cover of two kids and a dog on a country path to Kiln House itself, she was by the time of its completion already something of an unofficial band member. Shortly before Fleetwood Mac left for a three-month American tour in August 1970, Fleetwood asked Christine to join the band, finally formalizing a move that the British music press had already speculated might be in the works.

Christine McVie has had a somewhat lower-key presence and public image than the band's more flamboyant singer-songwriters, such as Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, and (in later years) Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham. Yet she has been just as important a musical contributor to Fleetwood Mac's success as any of those figures. She not only wrote some of their most popular songs, but also added both depth and balance to the group with her husky, sensuous vocals and first-rate keyboard skills. She was also crucial in helping guide the band toward a more pop-friendly approach that would pay off in spades when two other songwriters with a similar bent joined in the mid-1970s. But her roots, like those of everyone in the lineup she joined in late July 1970, were firmly in the blues.

Music was a major part of the household in which Christine McVie was raised. Born Christine Perfect on July 12, 1943, in Bouth in England's Lake District, her father was a violin teacher, and she had some classical training on piano for a few years as she entered adolescence. Like many teenagers in late-1950s Britain, she became a huge rock 'n' roll fan. And like many a budding British rock musician, she went to art college, studying sculpture in Birmingham. During that period, she did some playing and singing with student Spencer Davis, who'd soon form the Spencer Davis Group, with Stevie Winwood on vocals.

As the Spencer Davis Group began their own journey to stardom, Christine joined Birmingham rhythm and blues band Sounds of Blue, which featured Stan Webb on guitar, Andy Sylvester on bass, and Chris Wood (later of Traffic) on sax. Sounds of Blue only lasted about a year, McVie gaining a teaching degree and moving to London, where she did her time in the straight world as a window dresser in a department store. As bored as a department store worker as Fleetwood had been back in 1963, she was relieved when Sylvester asked her to join a new blues band he was forming with Webb, Chicken Shack.

“Mike Vernon wanted to sign them to Blue Horizon, but thought they needed a pianist,” Christine remembered in Pete Frame’s *Rock Family Trees* (1979). “So I joined as pianist and alternate vocalist (usually when Stan needed to catch his breath). I’d moved down to London because I thought I’d find a lot more fun down there; I certainly had no aspirations as a musician at that time—in fact I’d forgotten all about it.... But all of a sudden I found myself listening to a pile of Freddie King records, trying to pick up what I could of his piano player’s [Sonny Thompson’s] style. Then we went off and did five sets a night at the Star Club in Hamburg for a month, before making our British debut at the Windsor Festival in August 1967... which is where I first ran into Fleetwood Mac.”

As both singer and songwriter, Christine was spotlighted on Chicken Shack’s debut 1967 single “It’s Okay with Me Baby,” showcasing her knack for moody tunes that owed much to blues and soul, yet didn’t conform to rigid 12-bar blues structures. It didn’t make the British charts, but the band’s first two albums did, the second (*O.K. Ken?*) reaching the Top 10 in early 1969. Chicken Shack never made it (or even made the Top 200) in the United States, but by the late 1960s they were established as one of the most successful blues-rock bands in their native Britain and were Blue Horizon’s biggest act besides Fleetwood Mac.

Sadly, Christine’s talents were underrepresented in Chicken Shack, with Stan Webb taking most of the vocals. This was unfortunate, as the tracks on which she sings are by far the highlights of the records she made with them. It was only on those songs that the band escaped the clichéd, rigid blues format that Fleetwood Mac had so quickly outgrown. These were distinguished not only by Christine’s alluring vocals, but also her compositions, such as “It’s Okay with Me Baby” and less heralded cuts like “When the Train Comes Back,” which made one wish these were the main fare, not just occasional side dishes.

Lack of space for her songs and singing, however, wasn’t the reason Christine quit Chicken Shack in April 1969. She was tired of touring, especially since, combined with Fleetwood Mac’s own busy schedule, it meant less time with her new husband, John McVie, whom she’d married in August 1968. The music business has a hard time letting go of serious talent, however, and in June 1969, one of the Chicken Shack songs on which she’d sung lead—a cover of American soul great Etta James’ “I’d Rather Go Blind”—entered the UK Top 20. Even in a state of

semiretirement, *Melody Maker* readers voted her best British female vocalist in both 1969 and 1970. It wasn't long before she was persuaded by Mike Vernon to record a solo album under the maiden name she was still using professionally, Christine Perfect.

Released in June 1970, the self-titled *Christine Perfect* album mixed R & B covers with original material that, if not as studded with pop hooks as her Fleetwood Mac hits, were promising and well-sung tunes. Like Fleetwood Mac, she was becoming adept at putting some pop into her songs without abandoning the soul that had fired her earlier, more blues-oriented material. Her ties with Fleetwood Mac were strengthened even more by the inclusion of Kirwan's "When You Say," which Fleetwood Mac had featured on *Then Play On*, Kirwan also playing guitar on Christine's version.

Christine Perfect's album (not issued in the United States until 1977) didn't take off. Although she did play some shows with a band of her own, she decided to retire again just as the LP was being released, telling the *NME* in no uncertain terms, "I shall be doing no more live dates, and making no more records." This retirement, too, was short-lived when Fleetwood Mac, as she recalled in Pete Frame's *Rock Family Trees*, "were down to a four-piece, and just before the start of a tour, they suddenly felt they needed another instrument to fill out the sound... and there I was—sitting around doing next to nothing, and knowing all the songs back to front, because I'd been watching them rehearsing for the past three months." From that point onward, she has been known to the world as Christine McVie, not Christine Perfect.

"If it wasn't for Mike Vernon, I probably wouldn't even be in the business," commented Christine to Fleetwood Mac biographer Samuel Graham about her transition from solo artist to Fleetwood Mac. "But he was trying to put me in too specialized a kind of trip, the black music kind of thing. I didn't even know I could sing or write very well. It wasn't until Fleetwood Mac that I first started putting songs together intelligently."

In Kiln House, elaborated the singer in *MOJO*, "Downstairs were two huge empty rooms, one had a grand piano in it and I used to tinker with it, and Mick would come down and say (whispers) 'You ought to try and write songs, you should write.' I was gently nudged in the back. I started to try, because Mick was so encouraging. He'd go, 'Wow that's great! Let's record it!' And suddenly we had drums on this thing that I thought was

useless and it was sounding really good. That spurred me on because I believed whatever I wrote, Mick would turn it into something.”

She’d had a go at being a solo artist, but in Fleetwood Mac, she would not be a frontwoman, or even that flamboyant a presence. “If I have any image at all, it’s no image,” she told *Record World*. “Others have called me sort of a maternal type—it’s not that I want to be a matriarch, but I’m certainly no sex queen, either. My role is compadre musician. I’m one of the guys, really.”

“It was a relief working with Christine because, having been in Chicken Shack, she was one of the lads,” enthused Fleetwood in *Q* twenty years later. “But we weren’t about to treat her with any disrespect. She’s a wonderful lady—strong, won’t be pushed around, very practical and a real team player.”

Around the time Fleetwood Mac returned from the American tour—in which, perhaps because the band was less well known in the United States than the UK, they’d survived the loss of Green fairly well—Green’s first solo album was released. If there was anticipation that Green’s solo work would far outdistance efforts by his former band, *The End of the Game* dashed them. Comprising only instrumental jams, it sold little and was savaged by the majority of British critics. “The entire album drifts timelessly and indecisively, with Green’s guitar advancing and retreating in cat-like gestures,” wrote *Sounds*. “The whole thing gets nowhere fast, and becomes extremely boring after the first few tracks.” No better were the notices in *Beat Instrumental* (“a major catastrophe”) and *Disc & Music Echo* (“he seems to be in a void, neither advancing nor deteriorating, with a predominant feeling of apathy”).

Spencer gave a pithier assessment in the Vancouver publication *Georgia Straight*: “Some of the cuts sound like wild animals.” Clifford Davis offered a similarly guarded verdict in *The Peter Green Story: Man of the World*: “For me, it was Peter exorcising the demons within him. That to me was what that album was all about.”

Green followed the LP with a couple solo singles over the next year or so, but within a couple of years he’d quit making records. He would, however, return to play one more part in the Fleetwood Mac story, after another original member exited in a manner even more dramatic than Green’s.

After coming back from the US, the band toured Europe and the UK without much of a break, even when Mick and Jenny's first child, Amy, was born in January 1971. With the lease on Kiln House having expired, Fleetwood bought a Hampshire country mansion, Benifold, a few miles away. Before they set off on another long tour of the United States, they recorded a nice single, "Dragonfly." Like many of the band's songs dominated by Kirwan, it was an easygoing, wistful number with flowing, almost jazzy guitar, this time enhanced by Christine McVie's vocal harmonies.



Fleetwood Mac's last single with Jeremy Spencer, 1971's "Dragonfly," was not a hit, and was not included on any of their non-compilation albums.

"Dragonfly" wasn't a hit, and it could be the band barely noticed, as they had another defection on their hands. From the tour's outset, Spencer

seemed to be acting strangely, asking John McVie on a flight from San Francisco to Los Angeles why he had to be there if he didn't want to be. Arriving in LA that February just after a major earthquake had struck the region didn't do much for Spencer's spirits, and after settling into his hotel room, he told Fleetwood he was going to a bookstore on Hollywood Boulevard for a bit. When he didn't return, the band had to cancel their show and, after he failed to come back that night, contact the police.

After several days, they finally found Spencer at the downtown warehouse of the Children of God. Spencer's hair had been cut to the bone, and he'd only answer to the name Jonathan. He would not leave to resume the tour, or ever join Fleetwood Mac again. Even more decisively than Green, he cut his links both to his old band and the mainstream rock business, though he did release a barely noticed LP (credited to Jeremy Spencer and the Children of God) for Columbia in 1972, and has continued to make music (and release albums, if sporadically) to this day.

The band now faced cancellation of the remainder of a lengthy tour, which in some ways was more of a threat to their career than the loss of Green and now Spencer, especially with a new house to pay off. Panic-stricken, they asked Green to fill in, at least for the rest of the tour. Green's stock might have been higher than ever in the US, now that Santana's cover of "Black Magic Woman" had just been a Top 5 hit, but no one seems to have been under the illusion that he'd rejoin the band for good, reviving his and Fleetwood Mac's career in one stroke. Instead Green insisted they play sets of ninety-minute improvised jams, making one exception for "Black Magic Woman." Green also brought along conga player (and brother-in-law of Clifford Davis) Nigel Watson, with whom he'd record a 1972 single.

At a time when they were desperately trying to regain momentum and build a career in North America, Fleetwood Mac took the stage night after night with no idea of what they were to play. Green didn't help matters by going through the motions with less than total commitment, occasionally goading audiences by calling them "Yankee bastards." After the tour's conclusion, he and the band again went their separate ways. Determined to keep the group going and fulfill a British tour booked to begin in early June, the band had a month to find a replacement, as neither Christine McVie nor Kirwan wanted to go on without a third songwriter.

Although they tried out a few candidates, ultimately they hired American guitarist and singer-songwriter Bob Welch on the recommendation of their friend Judy Wong, then married to Jethro Tull bassist Glenn Cornick. While all of the members of Fleetwood Mac's previous lineups had cut their teeth on the British blues scene, Welch's background was quite different. Born in Los Angeles on August 31, 1945, in the late 1960s he played in the R & B-oriented Seven Souls, then moving to Paris to be part of the trio Head West.

Using all the cash he had to travel to London, Welch got the job after the band determined he was the right fit, bringing along songs and an urge to combine both male and female vocals in the arrangements. Somewhat to his surprise, he remembered in *Fleetwood Mac: The Authorized History*, "I was expected to pull just as much weight as everyone. They didn't talk about direction, except to make it clear that they didn't want to do blues." Welch had only sung a few of his compositions in front of an audience before joining Fleetwood Mac, but wrote twenty songs on their next five albums, as well as co-writing a few others.

With little drama to distract the band after Welch joined in spring 1971, they spent the rest of the year touring and recording their next album, *Future Games*, which came out in September. In a slight foreshadowing of their mid-1970s records, the vocal and songwriting chores were split fairly evenly between three members and featured both male and female singing, though the gender balance was two-to-one in favor of the guys. Even more than *Kiln House*, *Future Games* was a break from their blues-rock past. Now Fleetwood Mac was nearing the mainstream of early-1970s rock, even if their brand of slightly poppish music featured more in the way of dexterous rock guitars than most such outfits.

To the surprise of some who'd followed the band from their birth, the most successful songs were the ones that used the lushest melodies. Kirwan's "Woman of 1000 Years" showed an almost Beach Boys-like West Coast rock influence, especially in the newly resonant male-female vocal harmonies, that had largely been absent from previous Fleetwood Mac discs. Christine McVie's "Show Me a Smile" spotlights her growing taste for what would soon be called soft rock, its romantic verses yielding to emphatic choruses. They could still play louder if the occasion called for it, with echoes of the harder side of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young permeating Welch's eight-minute title track.

Future Games set the pattern followed by the band's next four albums as they muddled through their middle period: a failure to chart in the UK, favorable but hardly rave reviews, and solid but unspectacular sales in the US, where most of their money was made as a popular concert act. *Rolling Stone* was not as impressed as their audiences, panning it as "a thoroughly unsatisfactory album. It is thin and anemic-sounding and I get the impression that no one involved really put very much into it." The British weekly *Sounds* was kinder, though their accolade—"There may not be the very high streaks of fire that Green came up with during his time with them, but the feeling now is one of great warmth, of great purpose"—was hardly likely to inspire readers to rush out and buy a copy.

Fleetwood Mac seemed to be winning most of their new fans on the road, not on the turntable or radio. And it was on the road that they spent most of 1972—a state of affairs bewailed by Christine McVie on their next album on "Homeward Bound," especially as the constant touring was starting to take a toll on the McVies' marriage. On top of the touring were sessions for the next LP, *Bare Trees*, which came out in March 1972, a mere six months after *Future Games*—and then only in the US, the record not gaining UK release for another five months.

It was a sign that the American market was now their chief concentration, as it would continue to be until they finally had another big hit. "In England we may sell five or six thousand [copies of our albums] by the time they are finished, but it's nowhere near what they used to sell," acknowledged Fleetwood to *Melody Maker* in mid-1972. In recognition of that slide, the band was turning their attention elsewhere, Mick estimating in the same article that "we spend about six months every year in the States."

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

FUTURE GAMES

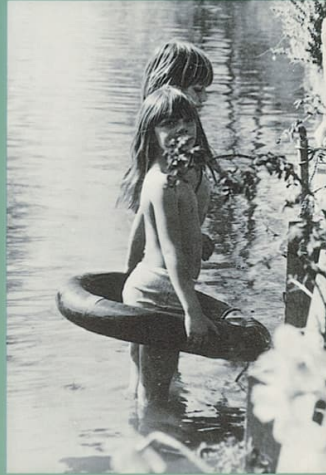
By DOMENIC PRIORE

The 1971 Fleetwood Mac *Future Games* release holds together very well and has become somewhat of a classic of soft psych. This was a record that the company initially turned down when the band handed in only seven tracks. They went back in, jammed a bit, and added the “song” “What a Shame,” which, when listening to the album, works as a proper prelude to the ethereal title track—a real work of art designed by new guitarist Bob Welch. The intrinsic feel of “Future Games” comes from more than just the fine collaboration of guitar playing between Danny Kirwan and Bob Welch; the whole thing is elevated to mystical proportions by a wonderful, building organ arrangement by Christine McVie. The vocal mix is now on a level moving toward the superb harmony combo they would become by the mid-1970s; at the end of “Future Games,” it is all in place, but with more than one highly stylized guitarist contributing to the finely woven sound patterns that surround the listener.

In a sense, the *Future Games* LP is a solid landmark as well as a perfect transition; Kirwan’s fingerpicking style gave the group a rolling-through-the-fields vibe. A more natural flow took place where Kirwan’s guitar style matched up with Welch’s penchant for dreamy phrases or memorable riffs. “Lay It All Down” is a solid sender in this way, with its basic lyrical plea for people to let go of their afterlife concerns, burdens, sorrow, and hurt, to instead enjoy “paradise here on earth.” Welch creates a very satisfying piece of festival-era celebration rock, with the roundhouse riff more than enough to keep momentum happening.

Kirwan would also bring material as transcendent as the title track to the table with “Woman of 1000 Years,” a song that features their most beautiful guitar interplay in the closing section of the number. Kirwan’s two songs at the beginning of side two are also solid, especially with “Sands of Time”—a perfect example of the new keyboard-driven Fleetwood Mac sound. Christine McVie adds a soulful harmony to Kirwan’s floating vocal, with Welch providing a Duane Eddy tone and the Fleetwood/McVie rhythm section underscoring the pace nicely.

Fleetwood Mac



Future Games.



Future Games was the first of five albums Fleetwood Mac recorded when Bob Welch was part of the band.

But it is the introduction of Christine McVie to the lineup that encapsulates the ability of this band to reinvent itself, against all odds, yet in a manner respectful of the early tonality, which was *intimacy*. McVie contributes one song—as superb as “Future Games” and “Woman of 1000 Years” in its own way—the wistful favorite “Show Me a Smile,” easily a tune that could fit alongside her more developed work featured later on *Tusk*. She gets the ball rolling early in the album with the beat-hoppin’ “Morning Rain,” perhaps introducing happy-go-lucky as a new component of Fleetwood Mac’s outlook.

For the first time since their first pair of albums, Fleetwood Mac used the same lineup on *Bare Trees* as they had on their previous LP. Also for the first time since *Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac* and *Mr. Wonderful*, their approach was basically the same on both discs. Guitar-oriented rock that didn’t quite crunch as loud as hard rock was still the order of the day. Such was the arch of the melodies, harmonies, and blend of instrumental parts

that they almost sounded as much like a Californian band as a British one (and were in fact now 20 percent Californian, with Welch in the ranks). Kirwan got his usual tuneful instrumental showcase with “Sunny Side of Heaven” and one of his best vocal numbers with the bittersweet “Dust.” But Christine McVie was underused, writing just one song other than “Homeward Bound.”

Only one tune, however, stood out as having hit potential: Welch’s “Sentimental Lady,” which had more memorable pop hooks than anything Fleetwood Mac had cut, both in its exultant chorus and ingenious multi-part verses. It was a hit—but not in 1972, only making the Top 10 after Welch re-recorded it for his debut solo album half a decade later. The band had to content themselves with another placing in the lower reaches of the Top 100 and another round of complimentary reviews, *Rolling Stone* finding it “similar to *Beatles* ’65 in its dual concerns with vintage rock ’n’ roll and muted, romantic pieces.” The magazine singled out Kirwan for special praise, reviewer Bud Scoppa bubbling, “It is his presence that makes Fleetwood Mac something more than another competent rock group. He gives them a distinctiveness, a sting. He makes you want to hear these songs again.”

There wouldn’t be much occasion for Kirwan to sing them over and over with Fleetwood Mac. Instability was becoming inherent to the band and reared its head once more when Kirwan was fired in late 1972 (though press accounts of the time reported that he quit to do a solo album). Kirwan for some time had been getting along worse and worse with the rest of the band, to the point where Fleetwood was the only one on speaking terms with the guitarist. Kirwan was also, Fleetwood remembered in his memoirs, drinking heavily and butting heads with Welch in particular. Even Fleetwood had had enough when Kirwan threw a tantrum in a dressing room, refused to do that night’s show, and then criticized Fleetwood’s drumming after watching from the soundboard. Like Green and Spencer before him, Kirwan failed to deliver on his obvious talents with a satisfying solo career, issuing three little-heard solo albums in the last half of the 1970s before vanishing from the music business.



Danny Kirwan in July 1975. After leaving Fleetwood Mac in late 1972, Kirwan put out some little-noticed solo albums before disappearing from the music business. Getty Images

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

BARE TREES

By TOM MOON

B*are Trees* is the only Fleetwood Mac record to touch every phase in the band's winding-road evolution. It's got clever derivations of the blues that glance back to the band's earliest days with guitarist Peter Green. It's got sleek, hurtling grooves that recall the intricate rhythm section cohesion of *Then Play On*. It's got mellow acoustic guitar pop that presages the mid-1970s megahits *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours*—and, as on those albums, its songs are written and sung by a rotating cast of distinct personalities. In its ethereal moments and layered guitar tapestries, *Bare Trees* anticipates parts of *Tusk*.

If it's any kind of DNA map, that's purely by accident, because *Bare Trees* is the product of a transition in progress. The second release from the second Fleetwood Mac lineup, it continues the move away from British blues-rock that began with the previous album, 1971's *Future Games*. But the band doesn't fully commit to any one new sound. Instead, it goes wide and gets arty, testing out all kinds of possibilities. One minute it's pumping like a rock band that's been living hard on the road, the next it offers serene, inward-looking music suited to social hour at a meditation retreat.

Some of the best-known songs, such as Bob Welch's "Sentimental Lady" and Christine McVie's "Spare Me a Little of Your Love," align with the mellow California rock that was cresting in 1972. They're placid, introspective, earnest, gorgeous. Others, such as Danny Kirwan's brisk opener "Child of Mine," are built on stray traces of the blues. But only traces: that tune sidesteps the chord sequence and 12-bar form of the blues in favor of a soul-revue-style drone backdrop that propels short, instantly memorable chants. Result: a sly update on overworked blues-rock tropes that registers as timeless.

The album cover for Fleetwood Mac's 'Bare Trees' features a misty, ethereal photograph of several bare trees standing in a foggy landscape. The title 'Fleetwood Mac' is written in a light blue, sans-serif font, and 'Bare Trees' is written below it in a reddish-pink, serif font.

Fleetwood Mac Bare Trees

Bare Trees was the last album Fleetwood Mac recorded when Danny Kirwan was part of the band.

Heard individually, these diverse pieces don't seem to go together—they could be products of different albums in different eras. Yet they coexist beautifully, in part because the band plays with a poise and restraint that makes each stylistic foray sound like “home.” Where some of Fleetwood Mac's contemporaries would take their experiments to the point of chaos, this band brings a calm understatement to each adventure. Perhaps because they're also involved in composing songs for the endeavor, the musicians are careful to honor what each of the songs need—and are loath to add anything extra. The backbeat of “Child of Mine” is all business and no flash, a study in wound-tight propulsion. Likewise, the country-ramble title track, with its dusty echoes of the Grateful Dead, showcases the cohesion of this rhythm section as it cranks out a pulse that could cruise on forever. The more contemplative air of “Dust” is rendered in misty, soft-focus tones that quickly become hypnotic.

That song, like most of the nine on *Bare Trees*, is a showcase for the contrasting yet complementary guitar work of Kirwan and Welch. Sometimes working in crisp rhythm-pattern tandem and sometimes trading leads, the two furnish the songs with stunningly apt ornamentations—such as the stinging single-note jabs on “Child of Mine” and the fantastically sloping weeping-willow guitar chorales on the instrumental “Sunny Side of Heaven.” Ornate but not fussy, the guitar work rarely rises up to demand the spotlight. But as with just about everything on *Bare Trees*, it merits that kind of attention. The deeper you go, you realize that this record doesn't need to scream. In its whispers and asides lurks a subtle strain of genius.

Christine McVie told *Melody Maker* that Kirwan left because he was getting increasingly interested in playing his own material. “He wanted to leave and we agreed it was the best thing,” is how she put it to the paper. “We found it harder to work together. Danny was spending all his time recording himself with lots of Revoxes [tape recorders], so we thought it was time for some new faces in the band.” As for whether there would be more personnel changes to come, wished Christine (futilely, as it turned out), “I really hope this is it. We all get on extremely well together and there is no reason why we shouldn’t stay together for a long while.”

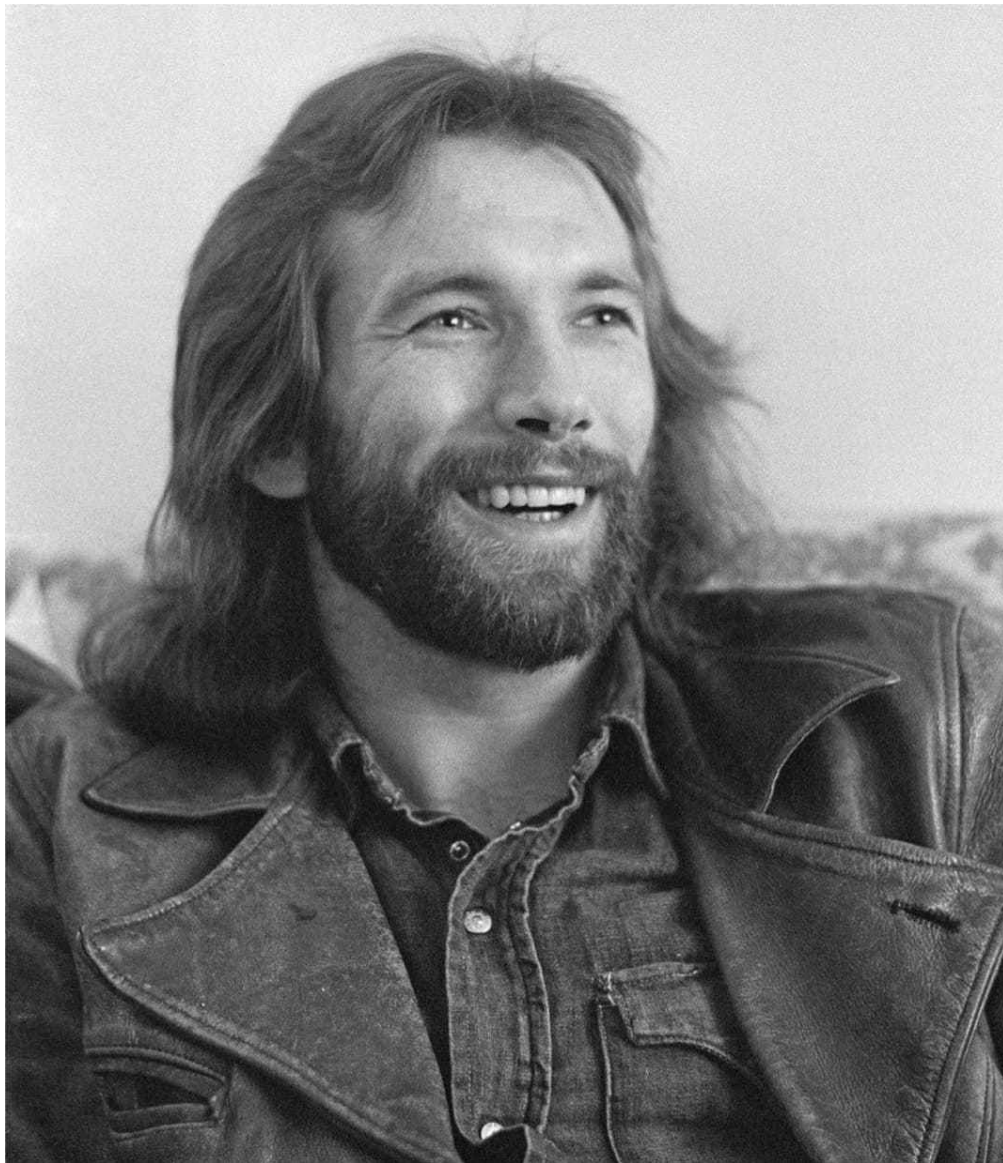
For all his problems, Kirwan had been an important part of the band for four years and had been responsible for more of their original material in the 1970s than anyone else. It wouldn’t be so easy to paper over the cracks opened by his departure, and the next two and a half years would in some ways be Fleetwood Mac’s most difficult. At least by this time they were getting so used to dealing with lineup changes that it was almost becoming routine to weather such crises, and there was no thought of giving up as they began yet another hunt for new blood.

For the first time, Fleetwood and company seemed to misfire when they reorganized around Kirwan’s departure. For some reason, it was decided they needed a singer who didn’t play an instrument as a frontman. They recruited Dave Walker from long-lived British blues group Savoy Brown—the same Savoy Brown bassist Bob Brunning had joined after leaving Fleetwood Mac in 1967, though Brunning was long gone by the time Walker toured with Fleetwood Mac as part of Savoy Brown in the early 1970s.

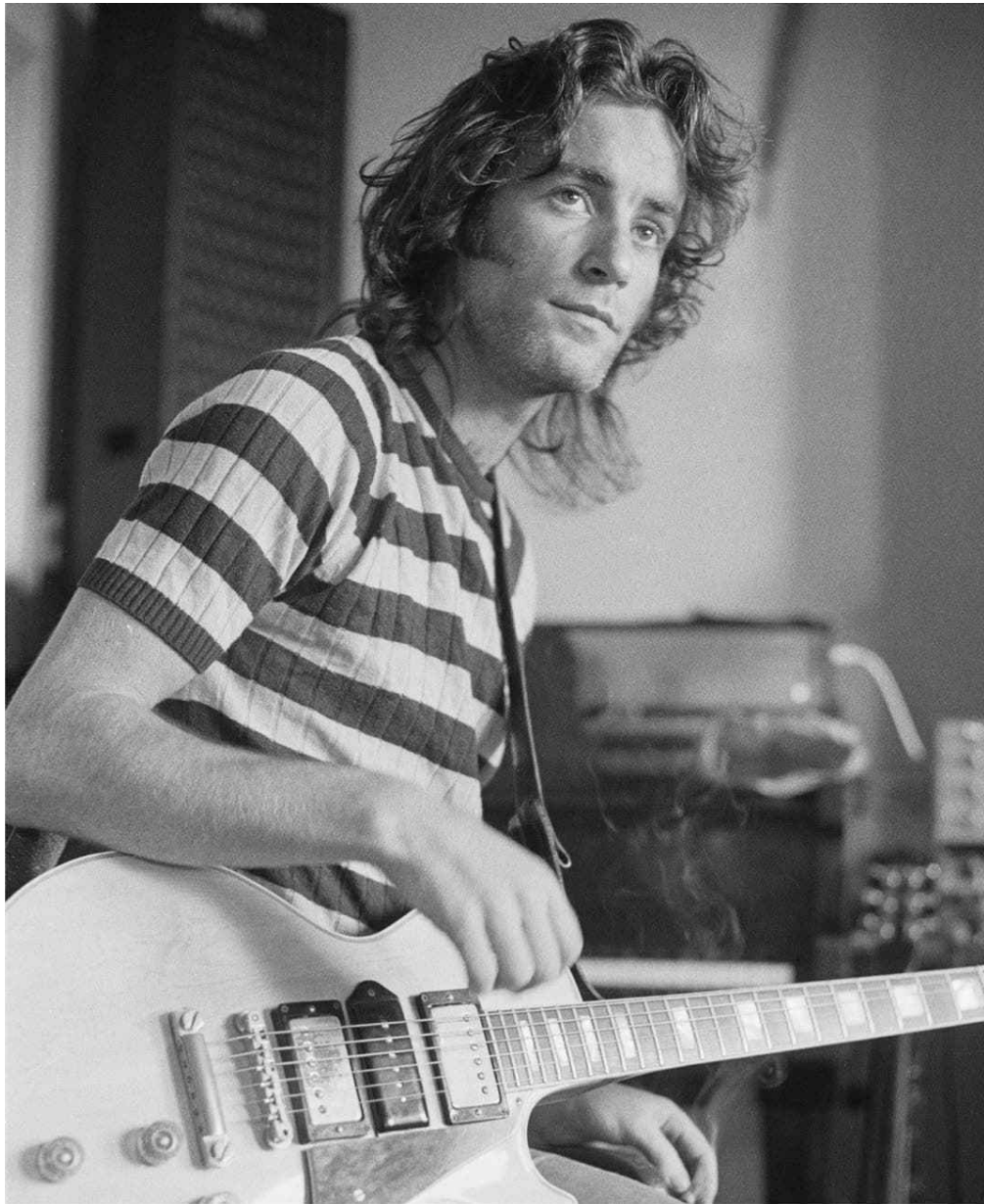
“Getting Dave Walker was our manager Clifford Davis’ idea,” claimed Fleetwood in *Q*. “We’ve got to get a lead singer out front who can start boogying!” Added at the same time was guitarist Bob Weston, whose chief qualification was a stint in veteran British bluesman Long John Baldry’s band. In contrast to Walker, Fleetwood found Weston a great fit, though Weston’s offstage behavior would cost him his new slot soon enough.

Walker was in Fleetwood Mac for a good eight months, but only appears on two songs on the band’s next album, *Penguin*. In a six-person ensemble with two capable, if somewhat reticent, singers, he was

extraneous; the band was unable to come up with suitable material for him to record. Fleetwood also remembered that Walker only wanted to write Savoy Brown–like songs, though his one composition on *Penguin*, the rustic country-blues-ish “The Derelict,” isn’t all that bad—and certainly better than the other number he sang on the LP, a pointless cover of Junior Walker’s Motown hit “(I’m a) Roadrunner.” It was the low point of a record that wasn’t so much eclectic as directionless, and sometimes nondescript.



Dave Walker on May 24, 1973. Recruited as a frontman/singer after Danny Kirwan left, Walker's stay in Fleetwood Mac was a short one, lasting less than a year. Getty Images



Guitarist Bob Weston in September 1973, shortly before Mick Fleetwood had him fired from Fleetwood Mac. Getty Images

As a saving grace, Christine McVie supplied one of her finer songs, “Dissatisfied,” which pointed toward the pop yet biting romantic tunes she’d sing after Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks joined the band a few years down the line. And Welch’s “Night Watch” proved his way with a catchy pop-rock song in the vein of “Sentimental Lady” hadn’t deserted him, even if it was too long for a hit single, clocking in at over six minutes. The band would adopt the penguin as a permanent logo after it

was used as the album's title and in its cover artwork, inspired by John McVie's fascination with the animal. (Back on the *Future Games* album cover, McVie had announced his obsession by using a shot of a penguin where his picture should have been.)

Not remembered too fondly by either the band (Christine even dismissing it as "our worst" in a 1982 *Sounds* article) or most of their fans, *Penguin* nevertheless gave Fleetwood Mac their first American Top 50 album—just barely—when it waddled to #49. It was a different story at home, where the record, like their two previous albums, failed to trouble the charts. "It might appear like we've ignored Britain," Fleetwood conceded to *NME* in mid-1973. "But the main thing is just that the albums don't sell here."

Rubbing it in was a UK rerelease of "Albatross," which went to #2 at a time when even payola probably couldn't have gotten the current version of the band into the British charts. Even worse, when a vintage clip of Fleetwood Mac performing the song with Peter Green was shown on *Top of the Pops*, the host announced the group had split. They hadn't, but other events in 1973 almost ensured the band didn't make it into 1974.



*The short-lived quintet lineup with Bob Weston in September 1973. After his departure from the band, Fleetwood Mac canceled the remainder of their tour behind the *Mystery to Me* album. Getty Images*

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

PENGUIN

By MARTIN POPOFF

Seven albums into what had been a sad-sack odyssey soon to burst, Fleetwood Mac found themselves shuffling the chairs on the *Titanic* yet again, with Danny Kirwan out and Bob Weston and Dave Walker in, neither to last long and all three eventually proving themselves bad actors. Still, a story thread existed, an incremental evolution from the present album's sparse Dead-lope onward to a pop paradise that would be equal parts Eagles, two gals, and Lindsey.

The bridge to that future would be Bob Welch and Christine McVie, who provide a level of luminescent personality over the versatile roots music politely suggested and then anchored by the namesake rhythm section. The hiring of Savoy Brown's Walker would represent the link to the band's manly, bluesy past, as evidenced on pointless soul cover "(I'm a) Road Runner" along with a Dylan/Dead-styled country credit of his own called "Derelict." Indeed, even in the spring of 1973, the sum total of Fleetwood Mac at this juncture would have faded into the old-timey timelessness of The Band and CCR if not for Welch's urgent, dark dream-world pop sense and the purifying if incongruous pipes of McVie. Ergo "Remember Me," "Dissatisfied," and "Did You Ever Love Me," where one could imagine, with a polish from Lindsey, these songs brightening the spirits of fellow aspiring Avocado Mafia members dreaming of a way out of the Troubadour and onto bigger stages. In other words, peer closely, and you can see the clouds parting and that famous California sunshine peeking out.



Penguin was the only album Fleetwood Mac made with the short-lived six-person lineup with guitarist Bob Weston and singer Dave Walker, though Walker only appears on a couple tracks.

Still, even with the band's blues boom music largely missing, but with too many prosaic and even morose textures replacing them, it's no wonder that *Penguin* didn't trouble the charts past #49, nor go gold. And yet sales were acceptable, a circumstance achieved without the help of a single—"Remember Me," with its slide guitar and Eagles optimism, certainly should have been pushed and pushed hard—par for the course for Fleetwood Mac, who incredibly wouldn't produce one on the next two albums either.

And so, as one grinds through *Penguin* decrying the confusion of directives, positing its source as lack of personal chemistry, nonetheless there's lots of production and arrangement to enjoy. Martin Birch's board-manning of the Rolling Stones Mobile Studio, set up at the band's Benifold, Hampshire, digs (with mix taking place at AIR Studios in London) was suitably ambitious for such an arrangement, allowing for peaceful, easy life/work balance that couldn't help but contribute to the old school and organic feel of the album, a quality to be hammered out of the band once Buckingham arrives.

And why *Penguin*? Well, John McVie loved the penguins at the London Zoo. Cuddly story, but as a visual concept it becomes botched, through a front cover illustration that makes the album look like a budget compilation record. But of course, I suppose it is, consisting of a ragged olio of songs marched through the rain and punch-clocked in from middle-class worker

bee musicians who seem to be gathered for little purpose other than achieving thirty-six minutes of creditable enough but disparately splayed pop for an FM state of mind.

First the band cleaned house a bit by letting Walker go in mid-1973 after starting their next album. (In late 1977, the luckless Walker was announced as Ozzy Osbourne's replacement in Black Sabbath, only to be elbowed out when Osbourne rejoined a couple months later.) Even without a major hit to their name for three years, the group was still expected to churn out one or two LPs a year, finishing *Mystery to Me* in time for October release. With Christine McVie and Welch now handling all the lead vocals and songwriting, it was as inconsistent as *Penguin*, and the group might have been better off consolidating their best songs of the period into one record.

Yet amid some of their more forgettable tracks (and another misconceived cover track, this time of the Yardbirds' "For Your Love") were songs indicating the Welch lineup of Fleetwood Mac could be a top band if they could just hit the mark more often. "Hypnotized" was arguably their best track from the Welch era, a gently percolating and aptly hypnotic rhythm gliding into an unforgettable chorus that—like the big hits Fleetwood Mac would land a few years later—craftily combined layers of male and female vocals. Originally written as more of a hard blues-rocker for Walker to sing in the short-lived Walker-Weston lineup, Welch wisely decided to rewrite it so he could sing it himself. Getting heavy FM radio airplay at the time and then for years after Welch left the band, an edited version could have well been a hit single. Instead, it was wasted on the B-side of "For Your Love."

As a more prescient sign of things to come, Christine McVie sang and wrote more material than she had on any previous Fleetwood Mac album. Her vocals having gained in warmth and steadiness since her Chicken Shack days, she was now moving with more confidence into buoyant romantic pop, whether on the orchestrally arranged "Why," the more chirpily uptempo "Believe Me," or the delicate "The Way I Feel," which was more like the deft piano-based work of newly emergent singer-songwriters such as Carole King and Carly Simon. Its stronger tracks couldn't help *Mystery to Me* do better than *Penguin*, resulting in another bottom-half-of-the-Top-100 performance.

While touring the United States behind *Mystery to Me*, a problem came up that was far more serious than failing to dent the Top 40. Fleetwood discovered that Weston was having an affair with his wife, Jenny. After manfully soldiering on for a while, Fleetwood finally had road manager John Courage fire Weston in late October in Lincoln, Nebraska. The rest of the tour was canceled, Fleetwood taking off to Zambia as he tried to get his head together.

The rest of the band were understanding of Fleetwood's need to take some time off and try to patch up his marriage. Manager Clifford Davis wasn't as sympathetic, sending an entirely different group of journeyman musicians on the road as Fleetwood Mac, none of whom had actually played in Fleetwood Mac. Mystery still surrounds the "fake" Fleetwood Mac, at least one of them later claiming the group was put together with Fleetwood's knowledge and cooperation. According to a story in *Let It Rock* magazine, John McVie "had already stated he was going to leave the band at the end of the tour and Bob Welch was soon to be off with [American singer-songwriter] Lee Michaels," though the band denied these allegations.



After this quintet lineup was reduced to a quartet in late 1973, a fake Fleetwood Mac did a few US concerts while the real band took a rest. Getty Images

However it came about, patching together a replacement Fleetwood Mac was a pretty ridiculous strategy. The band was fairly well known in the United States, and it would be hopeless to try to get away with mounting a lengthy tour with what were in effect imposters. Audiences greeted the musicians with hostility, some even demanding refunds. Promoters started to cancel shows, including Bill Graham, who substituted Savoy Brown after Fleetwood confirmed he had nothing to do with the band touring in the real Fleetwood Mac's place.

By late February, the bogus tour was exposed in *Rolling Stone*. “I want to get this out of the public’s mind as far as the band being Mick Fleetwood’s band,” declared Davis. “This band is my band. This band has always been my band.... I’ve always been the leader of the band as such. A lot of people over the years have misconstrued the Fleetwood Mac as Fleetwood and McVie.” Shot back an outraged Welch, “If he [Davis] has the rights to the band’s name, theoretically he can put anybody there. He can put four dogs barking on a leash and call it Fleetwood Mac. Basically what it boils down to is the manager flipped his lid. We’re going to take legal action as soon as we know where we can take it from.”

Fleetwood Mac followed through on that promise, initiating proceedings against Davis, with Welch and Fleetwood taking on the band’s managerial duties. The Fake Mac, as Fleetwood calls them in his first memoir, would regroup as Stretch and actually have a British Top 20 hit in late 1975, “Why Did You Do It.” This was interpreted by Mick as an attack on him for not participating in the fake tour, in which he still maintains he’d never agreed to take part.

As for their differences with Clifford Davis, while the band was able to resume touring in late 1974, a final settlement wasn’t reached until spring 1978. Davis got the publishing rights to their early material, including early hits like “Albatross,” which continued to earn serious money for many years after its 1968 release. Fleetwood Mac was able to change their deal with Reprise to prevent future payments from albums in their catalog from going through their ex-manager. It was a heavy price to pay, but worth it for the freedom to get on with their professional lives.

As many hassles as it generated, the debacle helped instigate a move that would dramatically impact Fleetwood Mac’s career. As the fake tour had taken place in the US, the lawsuit had to be filed in the States. As Welch pointed out, it was going to save a great deal of time and money if the band could relocate to the United States during the drawn-out process. At this point, the band’s primary following was in America, as was their record label, Reprise. Why not pull up stakes, especially since, by this time, they meant little to UK audiences?

Although the band (save Welch, who welcomed a chance to return to California) was reluctant to do so, they agreed to relocate to Los Angeles for six months in spring 1974 as they battled over the ownership of Fleetwood Mac’s very name. They were able to stop the fake Fleetwood

Mac from performing; Davis in turn was able to stop the *real*, or at least 1974 version of, Fleetwood Mac from giving concerts until the dispute had been settled, though at least they could record in the meantime. Their royalties were also tied up as the suits flew back and forth, putting the band under great financial pressure. According to Mick's first autobiography, when they arrived in the US, they had a mere \$7,200 to their name.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

MYSTERY TO ME

By DANIEL DURCHHOLZ

The notion that only cockroaches and Fleetwood Mac will survive the apocalypse is not a recent one. By 1973, the year that *Mystery to Me* was released, the group had already experienced more personnel changes via freakouts and firings than any ten bands could be expected to withstand.

And yet, they persevered.

The lineup that wrote and recorded *Mystery to Me* was not the same one from *Penguin*, just as that lineup was not the one that made *Bare Trees*. Nor was it the same lineup that would proceed to make *Heroes Are Hard to Find*.

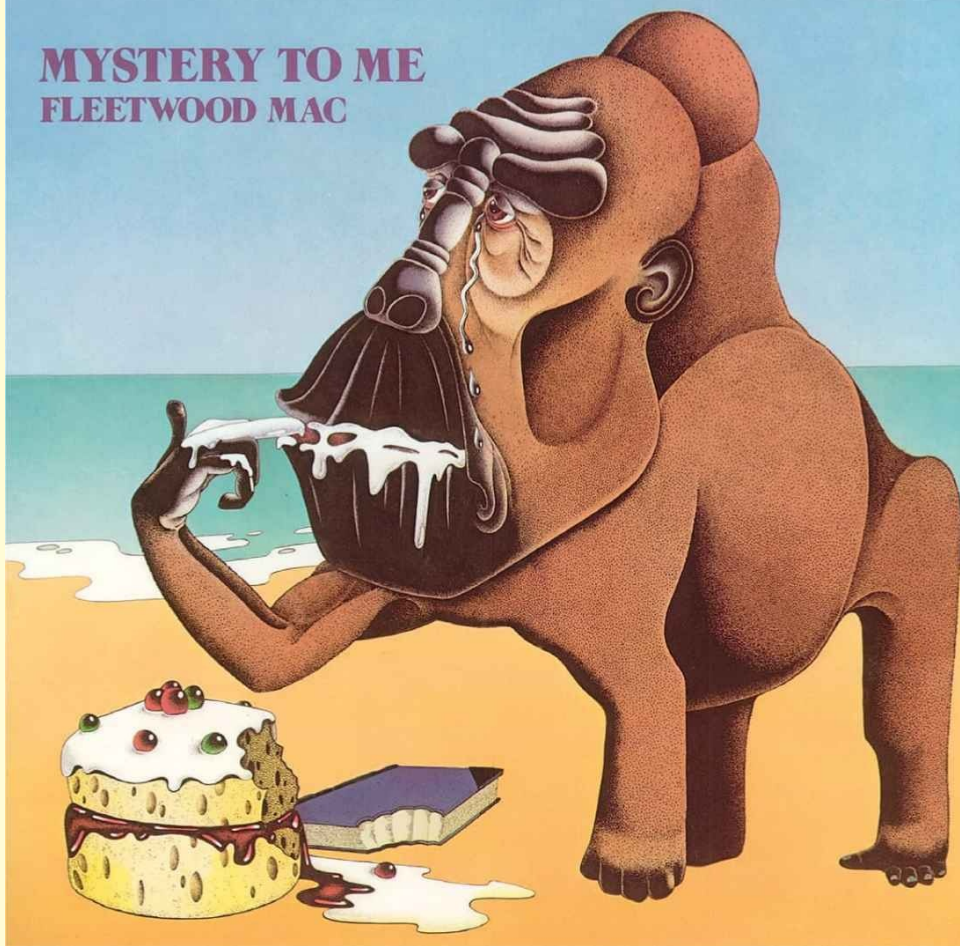
Given these constant changes, the nonstop touring, and intra-band discord, it's a wonder the Mac didn't collapse for any one of a thousand reasons. And it's maybe even a greater miracle that any material of consequence emerged from that period at all.

And truth be told, not much did.

Mystery to Me is an album that reflects the band's changing fortunes at the time—the move from being an established blues band to fledgling soft rockers, and (in no small part due to that switch) a bigger success in America than in England.

The writing on *Mystery* was mostly divided between Bob Welch and Christine McVie, with Welch dominating. His “Hypnotized” is the album's most enduring track. With its shuffling beat; jazzy, stabbing guitars; and Welch's coolly declaimed lyrics about unexplainable phenomena, it's reflective of some of the outré interests of the late 1960s/early 1970s, such as Erich von Däniken's UFO speculation *Chariots of the Gods* and Carlos Castaneda's mystical *The Teachings of Don Juan* (a character mentioned in another Welch song, “Miles Away”).

MYSTERY TO ME FLEETWOOD MAC



Mystery to Me, the second and last album recorded when Bob Weston was in Fleetwood Mac.

“Hypnotized” failed to “mesmerize” the general public at the time, but thanks to constant FM radio support, it eventually became an established part of the Fleetwood Mac canon.

Welch’s other contributions to the album are tuneful, but don’t dig nearly so deep lyrically. The best among them is “Emerald Eyes,” a song about a strong attraction to a girl in possession of said eyes. A line from the song—“She’s a mystery to me”—gave the album its title.

Elsewhere, “Keep on Going” (written by Welch but sung by Christine McVie) is a dip into string-laden soul music. “The City” is a heavier track that gives New York City a severe drubbing, calling it a “prison without walls.” It sounds harsh, but back then, given the gritty, crime-ridden state of New York City in the 1970s, it probably just seemed like piling on.

“Miles Away” is a similar plaint about getting away from the hustle and bustle, as Welch cracks on trendy art and Hare Krishnas getting in his face. “Somebody” is a relatively generic putdown of a person Welch deems “the crazy kind.”

Christine McVie’s songs—“Believe Me,” “Just Crazy Love,” “The Way I Feel,” and “Why”—offer considerably more intrigue, mostly because they can be picked over for revelations about the breakups and hookups occurring as the band lived and recorded the album at their communal home, Benifold.

As McVie sings lines like, “Is it really such a sin to love you?” (from “Believe Me”) or “You’re taking a risk, but it doesn’t matter” and “I can’t conceal the way I feel” (from “The

Way I Feel”), is she addressing her husband John as their marriage is breaking up, or producer/engineer Martin Birch, with whom she’d taken up? Or are they about Mick Fleetwood’s wife Jenny’s ongoing affair with guitarist Bob Weston?

Even in the pre-*Rumours* era, such speculation was part and parcel of the Mac experience.

“Forever,” a pretty weak attempt at reggae penned by Weston, Welch, and John McVie, and a credible if unmemorable cover of the Yardbirds’ “For Your Love,” round out the album.

In an era of endless transition for Fleetwood Mac, *Mystery to Me* finds the band about as you’d expect—neither a blues band nor strictly pop, not at the apex of their creative or commercial powers nor at the nadir, neither here nor there, fish nor fowl—but somehow still a going concern.

These weren’t the best circumstances under which to focus on a new album, but the band somehow got *Heroes Are Hard to Find* out in September 1974. Now back to a quartet of Fleetwood, the McVies, and Welch—which is probably how they should have left it before getting Walker and Weston into the group—they couldn’t quite come up with a standout track on the order of “Hypnotized,” Welch later admitting he was running out of inspired new material. On Welch’s songs, the group was more adrift from a solid identity than ever, playing material that was in some ways edging toward laidback jazz-rock-fusion-influenced music. Christine’s tunes, as they had been for some time with a few exceptions, were more accessible bright pop, especially on the title track and the more reflective “Come a Little Bit Closer,” enhanced by subtle orchestration and slide guitar. “Bob Welch sounds bored... and even Christine McVie is less than perfect this time out,” huffed longtime Fleetwood Mac fan Robert Christgau in his *Village Voice* Consumer Guide. “Their worst.”

Despite the spiritual and financial toll their ultimately successful legal battles took on the musicians, *Heroes Are Hard to Find* became Fleetwood Mac’s first Top 40 album near the end of 1974. The band was also finally free to tour the United States again, and by this time feeling more at home in the States, where their biggest audience seemed to await expansion. After briefly trying out a couple keyboardists onstage (one of them Doug Graves, an engineer on *Heroes Are Hard to Find*), they reverted to a quartet.

Equilibrium seems impossible for Fleetwood Mac to sustain for very long, and after weathering the toughest of storms, this lineup too would soon bite the dust. In December, Welch unexpectedly quit. His marriage (like everyone else’s in the band) was in trouble, and the grueling lawsuit, combined with a return to a demanding tour schedule, had burned him out.

There was little acrimony over Welch's decision, but it did leave his colleagues in the lurch as they prepared for another album in hopes of that long-awaited big-time American breakthrough. Against all odds, that breakthrough was about to happen with an infusion of new blood that no one could have predicted.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

HEROES ARE HARD TO FIND

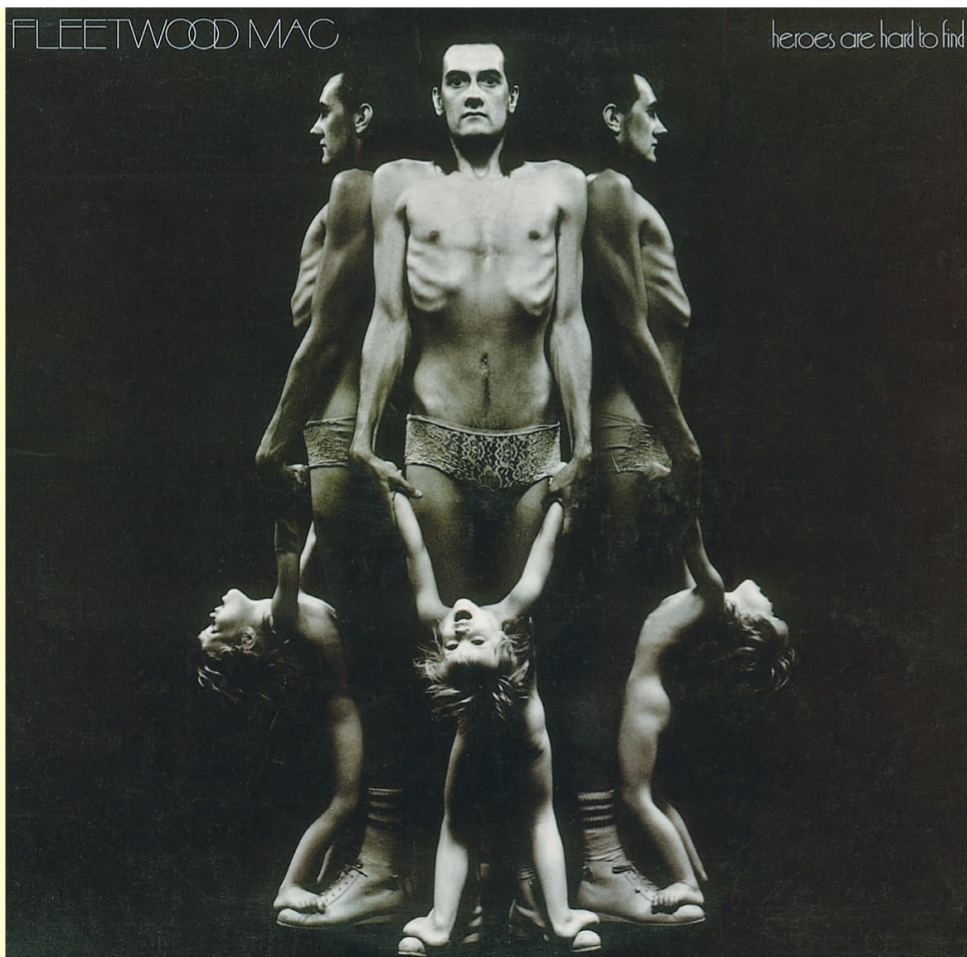
By TOM MOON

This album, Bob Welch's last with the band, was created under bizarre circumstances. After the musicians relocated to LA as they fought for the ownership of the Fleetwood Mac name, they recorded this diffuse, intermittently brilliant set.

It opens with the album's strongest signal of the band's embrace of its new home—a lean, vaguely funky groove that aligned with the LA pop-rock of the early 1970s. Singing in a casual way, Christine McVie dispenses sisterly advice about supporting and standing by a good man—because, don't you know, “heroes are so hard to find.” Bathed in gorgeous vocal harmony, that refrain strives for and attains a feeling of unrestrained optimism—no small feat given that at the moment of its creation, Fleetwood Mac had reason to be disillusioned.

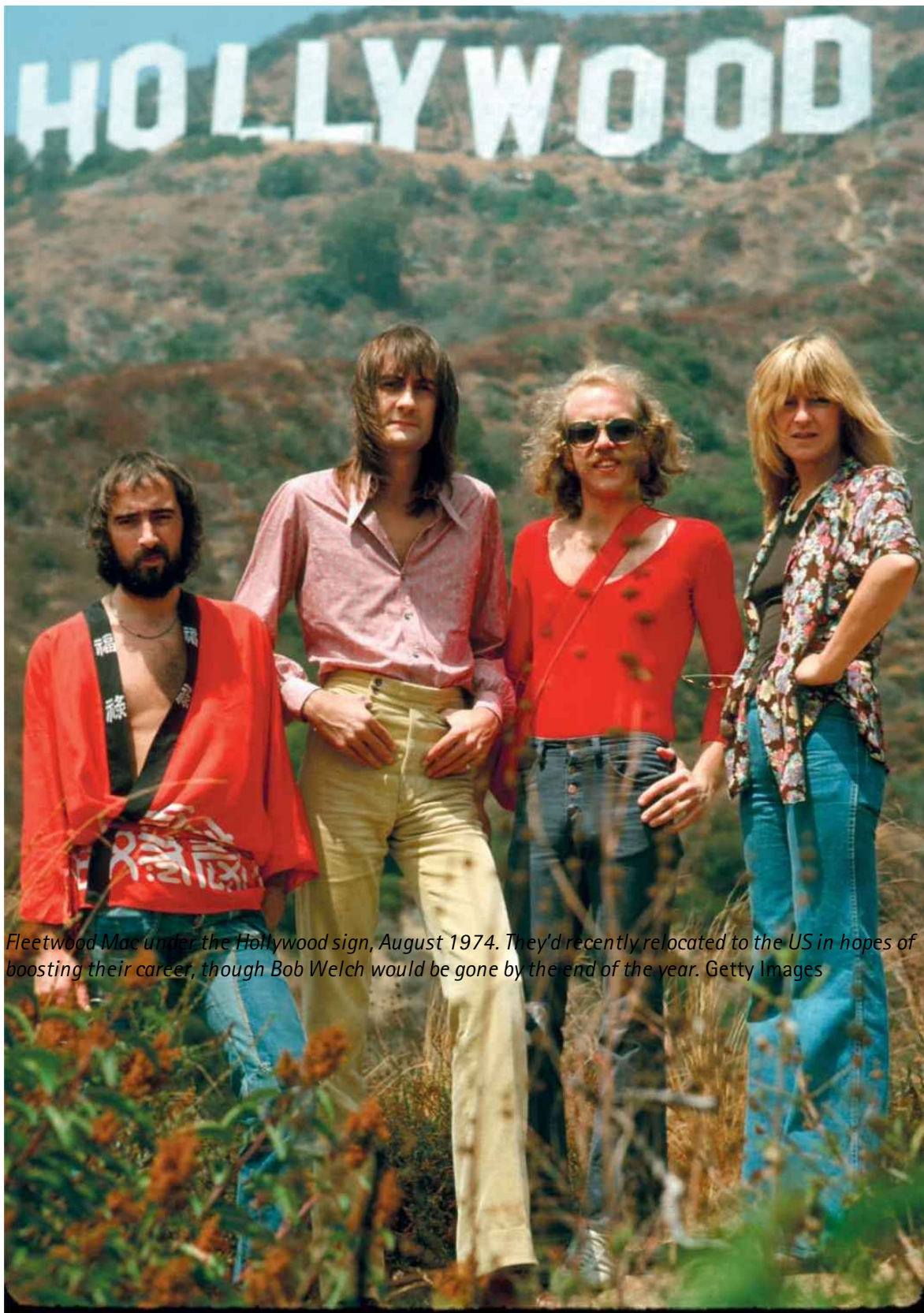
“Heroes” is one of several subtle McVie masterworks here. Another, “Come a Little Bit Closer,” stands as a criminally underappreciated pop classic, easily the artistic equal of the big hits she wrote on the next two Fleetwood Mac records. In a confiding voice that carries echoes of Karla Bonoff, Linda Ronstadt, and other hit makers of the day, McVie celebrates gentle, abiding intimacy in the verses. Those are characteristically low-key and evocative, and they become more so after the chorus, which soars heavenward in a burst of Brian Wilson–influenced pop transcendence. This one deserves its own chapter in any “Art of the Pop Song” curriculum.

Welch's contributions are more varied, and more hit-and-miss. His most succinct rock moment is “Angel,” a strong hook that's made better by the surging, pulsating rhythm section. That's followed by “Bermuda Triangle,” a faux-mystic foray that drifts between overwrought and contrived. “Silver Heels” isn't much better compositionally, but it proves to be an excellent showcase for Welch as a guitarist: his tasteful, apt, occasionally daring ad-libs are more interesting than anything he's singing.



Heroes Are Hard to Find was the first Fleetwood Mac album recorded in the United States, and last with Bob Welch.

Welch is the lone guitarist on this album (save for a pedal-steel cameo by Pete Kleinow), and he never showboats—what he plays is always designed to enhance the songs. Even when tackling an old chestnut, Elmore James’ “Coming Home,” Welch goes against what’s expected—his reading is arty and impressionistic, notable for exotic colors more than any generic blues fury. The album closes with another daydreamy atmosphere, “Safe Harbour,” that echoes the idyllic instrumentals of *Bare Trees* and other tunes from the era when Welch and Kirwan shared guitar duties. Though short, it demonstrates Welch’s command of the many aspects of rock guitar—there are gorgeous finger-picked arpeggio patters, thick chordal washes, melodies stated in deftly speared octaves a la Wes Montgomery, and graceful, weeping leads that might have made Jerry Garcia jealous. It’s the last thing before Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks come along, the perfect coda to Fleetwood Mac’s long, unruly, adventurous years.



Fleetwood Mac under the Hollywood sign, August 1974. They'd recently relocated to the US in hopes of boosting their career, though Bob Welch would be gone by the end of the year. Getty Images

Chapter 4

SUPERSTARDOM, *RUMOURS*, AND *TUSK*

1975–1979

At the beginning of 1975, Fleetwood Mac was not just in one of their many ongoing states of flux. The band's survival was in question.

Their guitarist, who'd written and sung much of the material on their last few albums, had just quit. An American tour by a bogus version of the band had wreaked havoc on their reputation, endangering their very right to use the name Fleetwood Mac. Even after the legal dust settled, it wasn't certain whether the now-all-British trio could remain in the US, where they had yet to obtain green cards. As if he didn't have enough to deal with, Mick Fleetwood was now managing the band, on top of trying to keep both the group and his wavering marriage together.

Reprise Records at least had faith in the act, renegotiating their deal with the band shortly before Bob Welch's departure. Yet as many good reviews as their LPs had received, and as much FM airplay as some of their album cuts had generated, Reprise couldn't be expected to hang on forever. Fleetwood Mac had yet to dent the Top 30 of the US album or singles charts and badly needed a hit. Their saviors would be stumbled upon by sheer luck.



Stevie Nicks at the Yale Coliseum in New Haven, Connecticut, on November 20, 1975. With her top hats, black chiffon dresses, and hit compositions, Nicks quickly became the most popular member of Fleetwood Mac. Getty Images



Mick Fleetwood at the twentieth Grammy Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, February 23, 1978. Rumours won a Grammy for Album of the Year at the event. Getty Images

Even before Welch left, Fleetwood was scouting Los Angeles for the right studio to record their next album. While shopping for groceries at the fabled Laurel Canyon Country Store in November 1974, he ran across an acquaintance, Thomas Christian, who urged him to check out a facility in the nearby San Fernando Valley. Fleetwood drove directly from there—groceries and kids still in the back seat—to Sound City, where engineer Keith Olsen played him a demo of sorts of recent sounds cut on the premises. The tape was “Frozen Love,” by a little-known duo who had

released just one obscure LP, was working on another, and had no intention of joining a different band.

Although they were also young veterans of the music business who'd begun performing in the 1960s, Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks could in some ways have hardly been more different from Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, and Christine McVie. They were as Californian as Fleetwood and the McVies were British. With their arrival in Fleetwood Mac, the band's gradual, nearly decade-long transformation from pure blues to pure pop would be complete. The entry of Buckingham and Nicks would also more dramatically change the music and fortunes of Fleetwood Mac than any personnel shift undergone by any major band.

Born on October 3, 1949, and raised near Palo Alto, California, about thirty miles south of San Francisco, Lindsey Buckingham had a more comfortable upbringing than his future British bandmates. Like now-long-ago Mac guitarist Jeremy Spencer, he was a fan of early rock 'n' rollers, citing Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers, Chuck Berry, and Eddie Cochran as heroes. But he also enjoyed folk and bluegrass, and became proficient on acoustic guitar—a skill that would prove invaluable in Fleetwood Mac—before developing his electric guitar chops.

Lindsey's older brother Greg won a silver medal in swimming at the 1968 Olympics, about a year after Lindsey joined his first pro outfit, Fritz. Unlike the original members of Fleetwood Mac, his rise to the top of his profession would be slow and labored. In Fritz, he wasn't even playing guitar, handling bass duties. But Fritz did give him an opportunity to play gigs for years around the San Francisco Bay Area. More crucially, it was also where he first worked closely with their singer, Stevie Nicks.

Born May 26, 1948, in Phoenix, Nicks grew up in several states as her father established himself as a successful business executive, at one time holding the presidency of Greyhound's Armour-Dial subsidiary. If she inherited some of his ambition, her musical aptitude was triggered by learning to sing with her grandfather, country singer Aaron Jess Nicks. After singing in a Los Angeles high school group called the Changing Times, she moved to Northern California and attended Menlo-Atherton High School. Buckingham was a grade behind her, and at a church meeting they sang the Mamas & the Papas' "California Dreamin'" together, leading to Lindsey's invitation for her to join a proper band.

After dropping out of San Jose State University (which Buckingham also attended for a while), Nicks hooked up with Fritz, who opened for several major acts at Bay Area venues, including Santana, Jimi Hendrix, and early idol Janis Joplin. Within the band's three-and-four-part harmonies, Buckingham and Nicks got used to singing together, Buckingham sometimes (unusual for a male vocalist) taking the higher harmony than Nicks. Stevie also had some time in the lead vocal spotlight, acting out drug withdrawal pains on their cover of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Codeine."

But while Fritz performed original material on the concert circuit for years, they never got as far as making a record before breaking up in the early 1970s. They hardly performed any songs by Buckingham or Nicks, although Nicks had been writing since she was a teenager. And while some of their most memorable material would be fueled by their romantic ups and downs, they weren't in a relationship while they were in Fritz.

Fritz's split gave the pair a chance to continue as both a musical and personal duo, now focusing on their original compositions. Plans to move to Los Angeles were delayed for almost a year while Buckingham recovered from a serious bout with mononucleosis. Buckingham used the downtime to his advantage, however, improving his electric guitar technique and working on some demos with Nicks.

Unreleased demos from this period that have made it into circulation find them still very much in search of a style, and pretty far from the style for which they'd become renowned. A batch often dubbed "The Coffee Plant Demos" (after the coffee plant owned by Buckingham's father, in whose basement the pair made tapes) is quite folky in nature. Nicks takes all the lead vocals, with only occasional vocal assistance from Buckingham, who also supplies acoustic guitar and bass. These and other early Nicks demos floating around find her in thrall to the mellow singer-songwriter style of the time, with echoes of James Taylor, Melanie, and Carole King. "Cathouse Blues" even sounds rather like Maria Muldaur's brand of sassy folk-blues.



Stevie Nicks with a dog friend, 1975. Getty Images



Contact sheet featuring shots of every member of Fleetwood Mac in action in New Haven, Connecticut, 1975. Getty Images

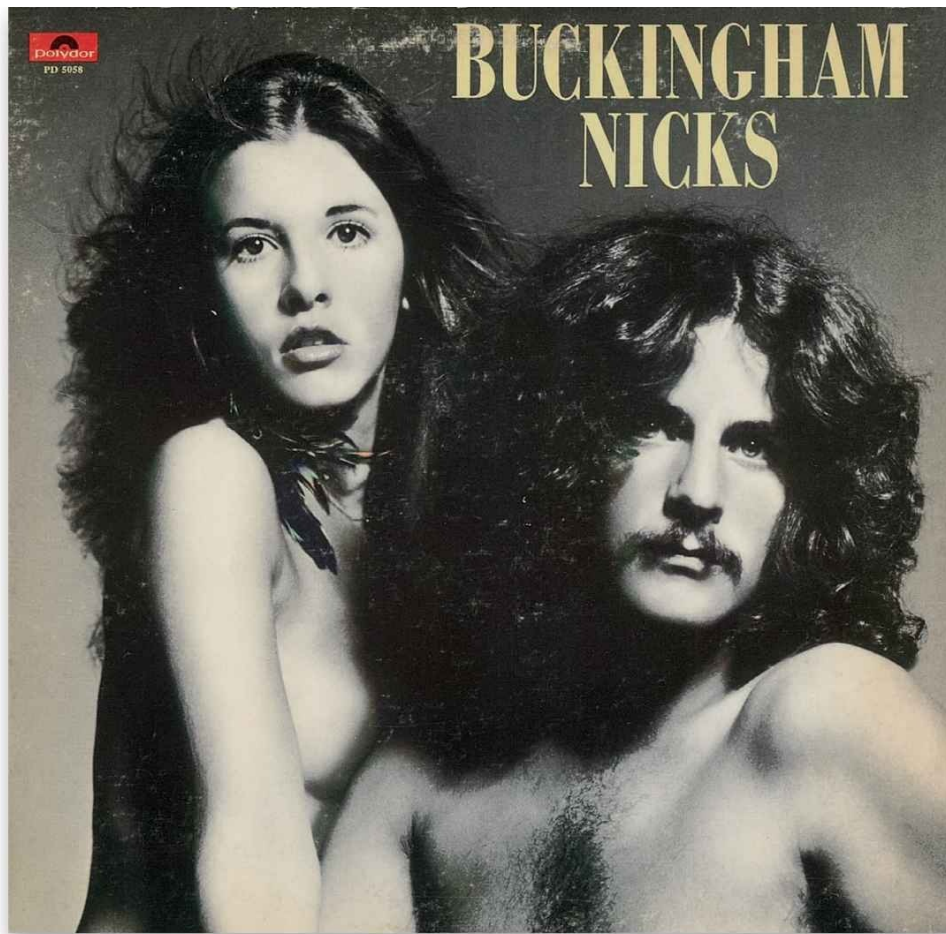
There was little to make these baby steps stand out from the pack other than Nicks' already distinctive, slightly husky vibrato vocals. There was still enough promise in what they were doing to make a crucial industry connection who would be vital to launching the careers of both Buckingham-Nicks and the revitalized Fleetwood Mac. With the help of engineer/budding producer friend Keith Olsen—who'd checked out Fritz, but quickly decided he only wanted to work with Buckingham and Nicks—they found a deal with the small Anthem label. The pair was set to record their debut in London's Trident Studios before Anthem went under, almost stopping their recording career before it got started.

One of Anthem's ex-owners, Lee LaSaffe, was nonetheless able to get them a deal with the major label Polydor, who issued the plainly titled

Buckingham Nicks LP in September 1973. Produced by Olsen—with top LA session musicians such as guitarist Waddy Wachtel, Elvis Presley bassist Jerry Scheff, and drummer Jim Keltner in the support cast—it was almost wholly ignored by both critics and record buyers. The odd exception was Birmingham, Alabama, where the LP somehow gained an avid audience. They would play a Birmingham gig before a sellout crowd of seven thousand fans, although by that time, they'd already accepted an invitation to join a much bigger act.

It's easy to hear seeds of Buckingham and Nicks' contributions to Fleetwood Mac in *Buckingham Nicks*. Buckingham and Nicks wrote all but one of the tracks (usually separately), which boast the crafty blends of acoustic and electric guitars that would become a Buckingham trademark. The two were also adept at weaving harmonies and different vocal parts together, both having developed into capable lead singers.

"Wish you could be here to hear some of this stuff," Nicks enthused in a letter to her family as she and Buckingham immersed themselves in sessions at Sound City. "Lindsey may go down in history as one of the greats in guitar-playing. It really is quite amazing." Yet even at this early juncture, there was a distinct difference between the compositions of Nicks and those of Buckingham, the writers who would soon pen the majority of Fleetwood Mac's original material. As Olsen put it in the documentary *Stevie Nicks Through the Looking Glass*, "The Stevie Nicks songs had that little bit of folky lightness, and Lindsey's material had this deeper sense of feel."



The mildly controversial cover of the sole Buckingham Nicks LP, released in September 1973.

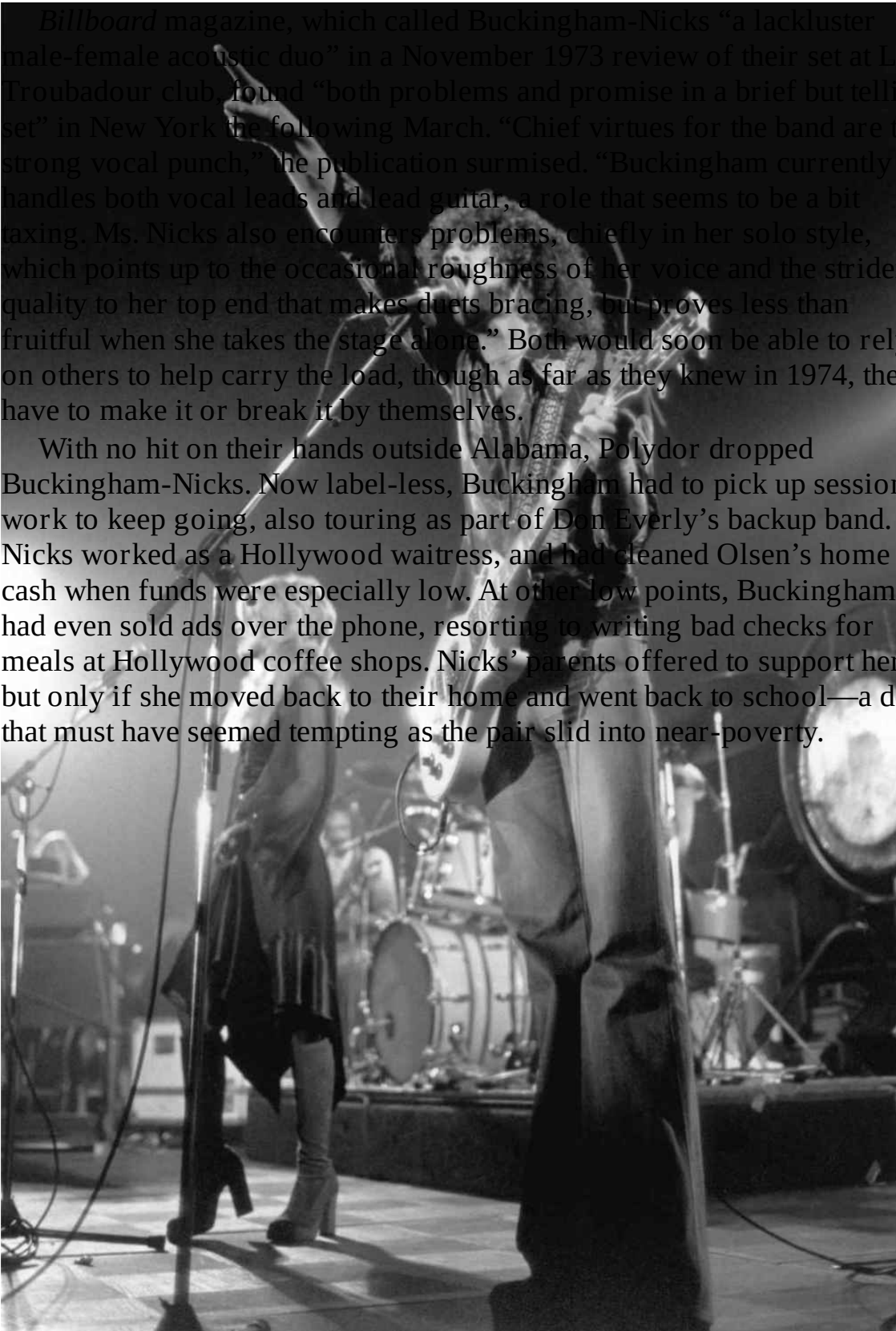
Yet it's also easy to hear why the album failed to make a commercial impact. While much of the template for their work in Fleetwood Mac was in place, the songs simply weren't all that memorable, blending into the also-ran woodwork of many similar early-1970s mainstream rock acts. Only one of the songs, "Crystal," would be re-recorded by their subsequent band. Adding to the impression that they'd rather sweep the album under the rug, the record has never been issued on CD. They might also be embarrassed by the very of-its-time cover, for which Nicks was, to her dismay, asked to take off her blouse so the pair could pose bare-chested, her breasts just about hidden by an almost unrecognizably long-haired Buckingham. "Our record company had no idea what to do with us," he complained in *Rolling Stone*. "They said something about wanting us to be the new Jim Stafford [then hot with the country-pop novelty hits

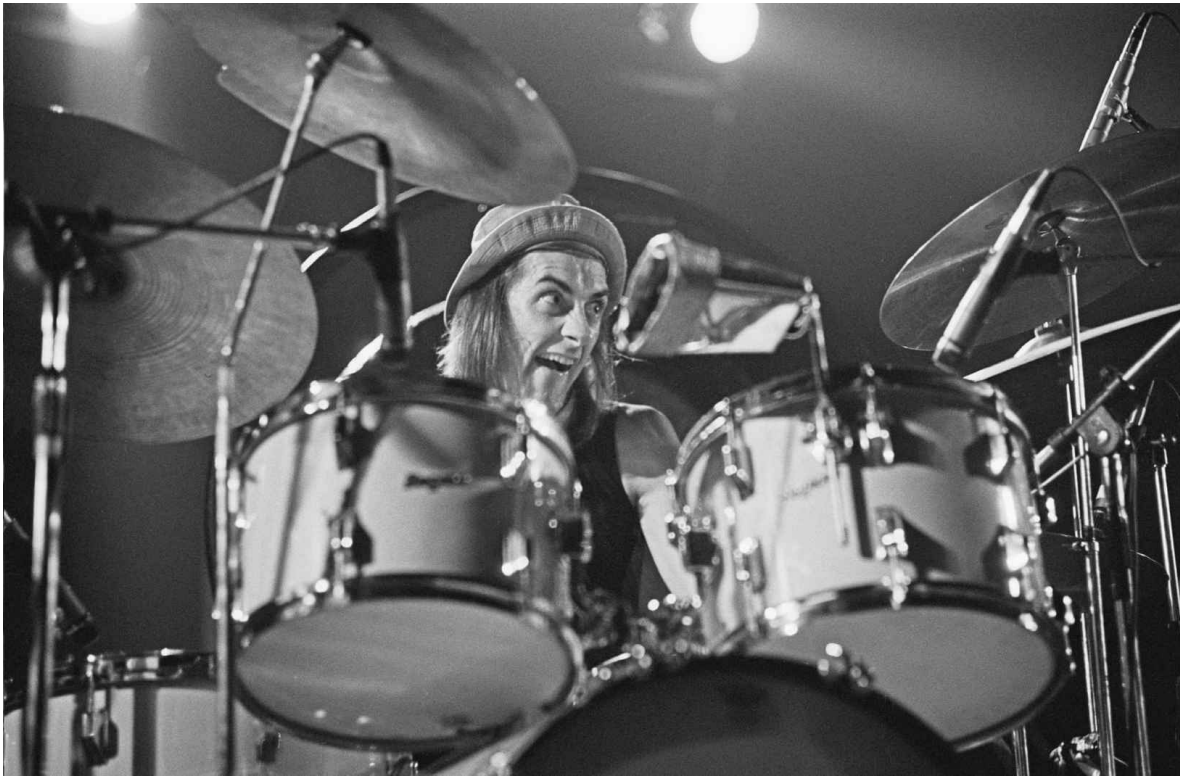
‘Spiders & Snakes’ and ‘My Girl Bill’], and they wanted us to play steakhouses.”

When Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham joined Fleetwood Mac in 1975, they gave the band two dynamic but distinctly different songwriters and performers in their front line. Getty Images

Billboard magazine, which called Buckingham-Nicks “a lackluster male-female acoustic duo” in a November 1973 review of their set at LA’s Troubadour club, found “both problems and promise in a brief but telling set” in New York the following March. “Chief virtues for the band are the strong vocal punch,” the publication surmised. “Buckingham currently handles both vocal leads and lead guitar, a role that seems to be a bit taxing. Ms. Nicks also encounters problems, chiefly in her solo style, which points up to the occasional roughness of her voice and the strident quality to her top end that makes duets bracing, but proves less than fruitful when she takes the stage alone.” Both would soon be able to rely on others to help carry the load, though as far as they knew in 1974, they’d have to make it or break it by themselves.

With no hit on their hands outside Alabama, Polydor dropped Buckingham-Nicks. Now label-less, Buckingham had to pick up session work to keep going, also touring as part of Don Everly’s backup band. Nicks worked as a Hollywood waitress, and had cleaned Olsen’s home for cash when funds were especially low. At other low points, Buckingham had even sold ads over the phone, resorting to writing bad checks for meals at Hollywood coffee shops. Nicks’ parents offered to support her, but only if she moved back to their home and went back to school—a deal that must have seemed tempting as the pair slid into near-poverty.





Mick Fleetwood at the Yale Coliseum in New Haven, Connecticut, on November 20, 1975. Even as Fleetwood Mac approached mainstream pop-rock superstardom, he never lost his taste for hamming it up when he could. Getty Images

But like the band whose path they'd soon cross, Buckingham and Nicks were persistent. They kept working on demos for a second album at Sound City—"it was like our home away from home," observes Nicks in the *Sound City* documentary—even in the absence of a record contract. Olsen had enough faith in the duo to help get them free time at Sound City, where they recorded tracks with engineer Richard Dashut, in whose one-room apartment they lived for a while.

When Keith Olsen played Mick Fleetwood "Frozen Love" (which had concluded the *Buckingham Nicks* album) at Sound City, Fleetwood liked what he heard. As Buckingham and Nicks were working in a different part of the studio at the time, Fleetwood briefly saw the pair for the first time that same visit. "I met Lindsey literally in passing, and I went off not even thinking anything other than I've heard some good music that was made in the studio that I'm gonna use," he admitted in the *Sound City* documentary.

Fleetwood booked time for Fleetwood Mac to cut their next album at Sound City in starting in early 1975, only for Bob Welch to quit shortly

before the sessions were due to begin. A replacement was needed immediately if they were to keep to their schedule. On New Year's Eve in 1974, Olsen relayed Fleetwood's invitation for Buckingham and Nicks to join Fleetwood Mac, without so much as an audition. Fleetwood was mostly interested in adding Buckingham to the lineup, but it was made clear that if he joined, they'd have to take Nicks too.

It seemed like a no-brainer to make the leap from waiting tables and doing telephone sales to joining a famous if struggling band, but the decision wasn't that simple. At first, Nicks and Buckingham were neither overjoyed nor entirely convinced it was the right career move. They had a great deal of faith in the material they were hoping to put on their second album, and not so eager to give up on the record at a moment's notice. Common sense prevailed, however, and within a few weeks Buckingham and Nicks were rehearsing with Fleetwood Mac, bringing with them some of the songs they'd hoped to use for themselves.

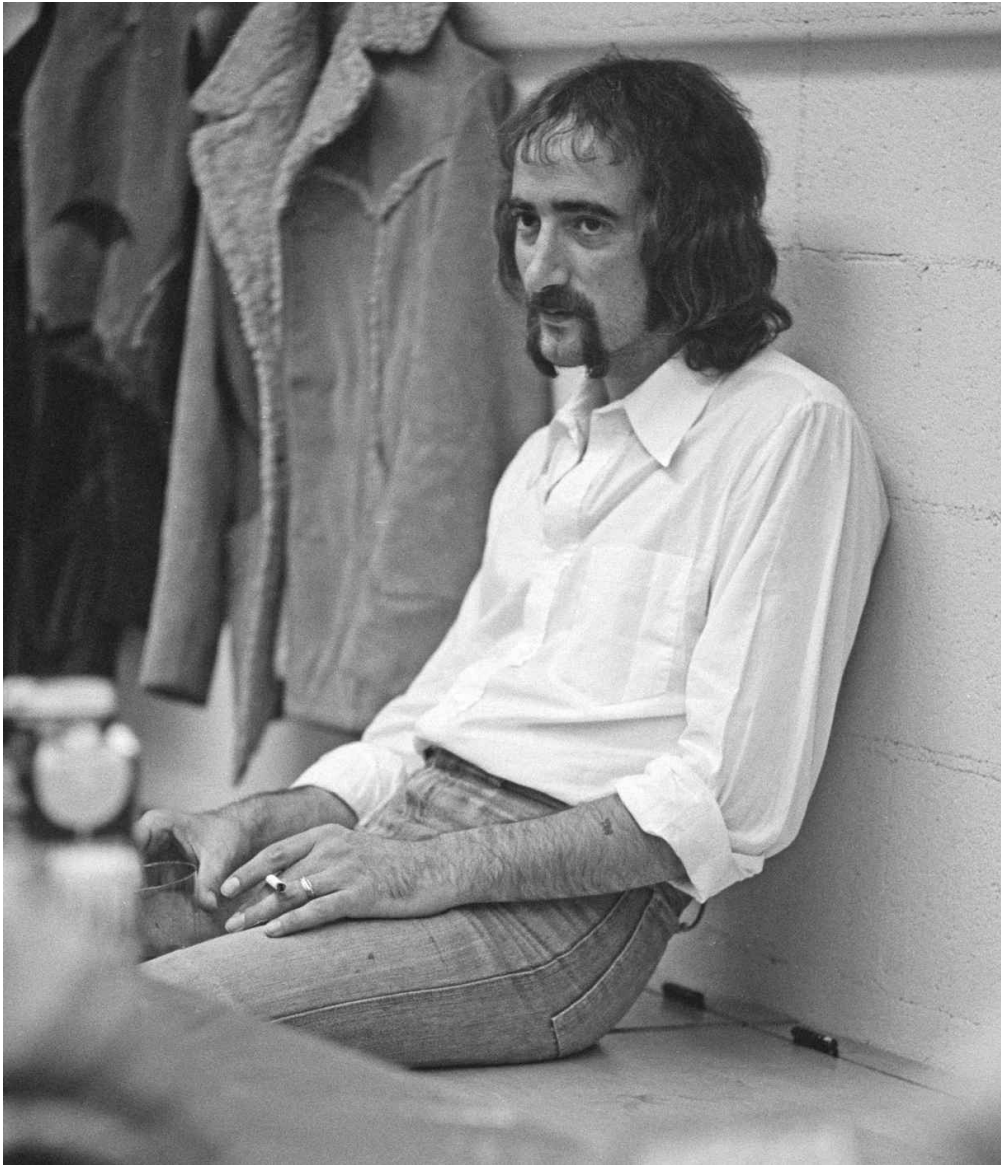
Like so many bands in rock, on paper it was a combination that no one would have expected to work. Acts both mixing British and American musicians *and* men and women were rare enough to be unprecedented in rock's upper echelon. Two couples within the same band *was* unprecedented in a rock group of significant stature, at least in such a public fashion. Fleetwood and the McVies had made their first hit records in the late 1960s; Buckingham and Nicks, though not much younger, had made just one record that hardly anyone had heard.

Yet somehow, they instantly clicked, both musically and personally. In early 1975, they began work on their first album together at Sound City, sharing production credits with Olsen. They wouldn't even play their first concert together until May. Buckingham and Nicks completed their final obligations as a twosome early the same year with some concerts in Alabama.

Among the songs they performed in their final shows were several that would be included on the new Fleetwood Mac album, *Fleetwood Mac* (not to be confused with their 1968 UK debut LP, also often referred to as *Fleetwood Mac*, though its official title was *Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac*). While not exactly dominating the proceedings, Nicks and Buckingham were immediate central forces in the new lineup, writing and singing more than half of the material. The vocals and compositions were now split among Nicks, Buckingham, and Christine McVie, giving the new

Fleetwood Mac an unusually strong concentration of singer-songwriter talent within one ensemble.

“It was like taking over two-thirds of the writing duties in the band,” remarked Buckingham in a 1977 interview with John Pidgeon that’s archived on the Rock’s Backpages website. “And that in itself is gonna change the sound.” But as he pointed out, “They’ve always been very fair with allowing everyone to be creative and to have a good vehicle for output.”



John McVie in New Haven, Connecticut, 1975. It wasn't made public until the following year, but his marriage to Christine McVie was coming to an end around this time. Getty Images



Christine McVie didn't attract as much attention as the two other principal singer-songwriters in Fleetwood Mac, Nicks and Buckingham, after they joined. But she was just as vital to their most popular albums, penning the hits "Over My Head," "Say You Love Me," "You Make Loving Fun," and "Don't Stop."
Getty Images

At her first rehearsal with Nicks and Buckingham, stated Christine McVie in Fleetwood's first autobiography, "I started playing 'Say You Love Me,' and when I reached the chorus they started singing with me and fell right into it. I heard this incredible sound—our three voices—and said to myself, 'Is this me singing?' I couldn't believe how great this three-voice harmony was. My skin turned to gooseflesh and I wondered how long this feeling was going to last."

This didn't mean that the second longest-serving member of the band didn't have his reservations. "John McVie said to me, 'You know, we're a blues band. This is *really* far away from the blues,'" remembered Olsen with amusement in the *Sound City* documentary. "And I said, 'I know. But it's a lot closer to the bank.'" And as John colorfully put it in Sam Graham's *Before the Beginning: A Personal & Opinionated History of Fleetwood Mac*, "It seems the time was right for a rock band with two girl singers—a real rock band, not like ABBA or the New Seekers, where the girls act as if they've never seen a tampon in their lives."

From the first lines of *Fleetwood Mac*'s opening cut "Monday Morning," it was evident that this was not only a new Fleetwood Mac, but a new Buckingham and Nicks. Written and sung by Buckingham, it was far catchier than anything on *Buckingham Nicks*, and more upbeat and poppier than anything Fleetwood Mac had previously cut, especially when it burst into an exultant chorus. The slightly spaced-out mysticism that Nicks would make her forte came to the fore on another of the album's highlights, "Rhiannon," which likewise revolved around a chorus with more of a hook than anything on her LP with Buckingham. Shortly before joining the band, Nicks had come across a Rhiannon character in Mary Leader's novel *Triad*, "just fell in love with the name, sat down, and wrote the song in about ten minutes," she told *Sounds*. "Her Rhiannon is evil and mine is really good."

"There's always been a very mystical thing about Fleetwood Mac," she asserted five years later in *Trouser Press*. "When I first joined Fleetwood Mac I went out and bought all the albums—actually, I think I had asked Mick for them because I couldn't possibly afford to buy them—and I sat in my room and listened to all of them to try to figure out if I could capture any theme or anything. What I came up with was the word 'mystical.' There is something mystical that went all the way from Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac straight through Jeremy, through all of them: Bob Welch, Christine, Mick, and John. It didn't matter who was in the band; it was always just there. Since I have a deep love of the mystical, this appealed to me. I thought this might really be the band for me because they are mystical, they play wonderful rock 'n' roll and there's another lady so I'll have a pal."

Maybe the sudden presence of two new kids on the block helped raise Christine McVie's game, as she too came up with more accessible tunes than she'd ever performed on her previous recordings. If more low-key than the brasher songs by Buckingham and Nicks, "Over My Head" and "Say You Love Me" oozed a breathy, insinuating romanticism. While McVie had sung (and played piano on) more-than-respectable blues- and soul-influenced rock going back to her days with Chicken Shack, it was not until Buckingham and Nicks shared the stage that she really bloomed as a highly commercial pop-rock composer. "I had a lot to prove," she conceded in David Wild's liner notes to the 2013 expanded version of

Rumours. “I was in awe of Stevie and Lindsey, and felt a great urgency to write some songs that surpassed others I’d written in the past.”

And with Nicks on board, Fleetwood Mac had two woman singers projecting sultry sexiness, though their differences also worked to their advantage. “Christine has a real drawn, deep voice, it’s like velvet,” remarked Olsen in the documentary *Stevie Nicks Through the Looking Glass*. “And Stevie is this nasally thing that is almost on the verge of being a goat. And so you put the two together, and you get something that is really unique.”

In sum, as Ben Edmonds wrote in his review of the *Fleetwood Mac* album for *Phonograph Record Magazine*, the album Buckingham and Nicks had done on their own “sounds absolutely premature by comparison with their initial accomplishments as a part of Fleetwood Mac. They’re both talented writers and singers, but their decisive contribution to the band is more in the realm of attitude; there’s an aggressive energy at work here that even the original Fleetwood Mac might not’ve been able to match.”

They also helped bring out some of Christine McVie’s strengths as an instrumentalist, Edmonds praising how “her keyboards mesh with Buckingham’s guitar to give the overall sound more punch, bringing a band that has always been the sum of readily identifiable parts into a more unified perspective. Far from being merely a good band with a distinguished past,” he concluded, “Fleetwood Mac is a band with a future. A record strong enough to demand immediate inclusion in any consideration of the year’s best.”

Fleetwood Mac was also a more radio-ready album than any the band had cut with different personnel. Olsen—a young veteran of the music business who’d played bass in the Music Machine (famed for the classic 1966 garage rock hit “Talk Talk”) and would go on to great success in productions with Rick Springfield, Pat Benatar, the Grateful Dead, and numerous others—might have gotten the producer gig because he worked with Buckingham and Nicks and introduced them to Fleetwood at Sound City. But he helped give the record a clean balance between different instruments; acoustic and electric guitars; and different singers, the band now using more vocal harmonies than ever.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

FLEETWOOD MAC

By ANDREW EARLES

The mainstream pop-rock landscape into which Fleetwood Mac's self-titled tenth album was released in 1975 is an unrecognizable antiquity compared to the complex, transparency-adverse, and otherwise nebulous array of blink-and-miss-them causal factors behind mainstream superstardom in the second decade of this century. We have to go deeper into the rearview than what's implied by the "before the Internet" go-to medal of valor so often voiced by those who participated in culture wars of yore. The year 1975 was also well before MTV had arrived to join what then existed as the only two primary methods of achieving some level of chart movement/album sales: the crapshoot of radio playlist rotation and the fallback of touring the country or world behind the release of each album. Fleetwood Mac, in its innumerable lineup incarnations and throughout the great deal of stylistic progression/diversity that occurred over the eight years and nine albums the band had already put behind it, did achieve multiple moments of chart success and heightened exposure. This, along with the associated historical realities of the band's megastardom prehistory, seems to remain misunderstood or altogether unknown to the casual fan, but the reason is really no mystery given the sheer magnitude of what *Fleetwood Mac* initiated for the rest of the band's existence. The album was their consummate stylistic arrival at the intersection of timeless pop-rock songwriting artistry and that which could, and did, bring widespread acceptance of the next-level variety in the truest sense of the term. Belying the notion that this album marked the point when Fleetwood Mac shifted from a blues-rock band and into a hit-making machine, serious inroads to pop gold had already been made, and the transformation from something other than British blues-rock had occurred long before. While the self-titled album's addition of Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks into the fold was clearly paramount to the album's success and saturation with immediate catchiness, the drastic line of demarcation that this album made in the Fleetwood Mac timeline has gone on to historically erase the five albums before it, in which Bob Welch and Christine McVie laid the crucial groundwork for the sound that defines the *Fleetwood Mac* album.



Herbie Worthington's memorable cover photo for 1975's Fleetwood Mac LP, often referred to as "The White Album" because of its stark design.

What the solidified-by-then static core of drummer, founder, namesake, and career-long band boss Mick Fleetwood; bassist John McVie; and his former wife Christine McVie had endured with the "Fake Mac" debacle and all that came before makes what eventually started to happen with Fleetwood Mac the ultimate definition of hard-won success. With Nicks and pop-genius Welch successor Lindsey Buckingham, along with the rest of the band, correctly having faith in the strength of the album by touring the living hell out of it for months on end, things gradually turned huge. Starting with McVie's "Out of My Head," released as the album's first single and becoming their first big American hit, the album began to steadily rise in the charts, thanks to two follow-up hits in Nicks' "Rhiannon" and McVie's "Say You Love Me." As with the other songs pulled from the album that did not chart in the United States ("I'm So Afraid," "World Turning," "Warm Ways," and "Blue Letter"), all of the singles are different remixes than their LP counterparts. A year and three months after its July 1975 release, *Fleetwood Mac* reached #1 on the Billboard 200 album charts, and overall, the album would eventually reside within the Top 40 for fifteen months and the Top 10 for thirty-seven weeks. In November of 2015, the album was announced as a 2016 Grammy Hall of Fame inductee.

A few months after fighting for their life, Fleetwood Mac had finished, somewhat to their surprise, the most commercial record they'd ever recorded. Now the task was to both sell it and popularize their new lineup to millions of listeners who had never heard of Buckingham and Nicks. Despite their half-dozen years of experience on the US concert circuit, it wasn't going to be easy. Indeed, for all the eventual popularity of *Fleetwood Mac*—often referred to by fans and the band themselves as “The White Album,” in honor of its rather sparse cover design—it wouldn't reach #1 until more than a year after its July 1975 release.

Part of the problem in making the LP a breakout hit was the very track record that had made Reprise such a staunch supporter of the band, even in the face of middling sales year after year. Their label was willing to keep them on, but hesitant to throw much promotion behind the new record and lineup. The company's attitude changed little, even after Fleetwood met personally with Warner Brothers president Mo Ostin to plead the album's case. When the company agreed to take out a full-page ad in *Billboard*, they mixed up the names of Buckingham and Nicks in the captions.

“We were an outfit that could be counted on consistently to move between 250,000 and 300,000 records whenever we put out an album, but that was about it,” muses Fleetwood in his second autobiography. “We never did better, we never did worse. Essentially, what we earned covered the expense of keeping us on the label and little more.” Reprise-Warners was also reluctant to give tour support to yet another version of Fleetwood Mac—the ninth or tenth version, depending on whether you count the brief period when Peter Green rejoined—that had yet to prove viable as a concert attraction.

That wasn't going to stop Fleetwood Mac from taking the new lineup on the road, playing their first show in El Paso, Texas, on May 15, 1975. With “The White Album” two months shy of release, the band didn't have a new record to promote or even a settled stage repertoire. For their first tour, they mixed a few songs from the upcoming LP—one of which, “Crystal,” had actually first appeared on *Buckingham Nicks*—with songs from records done before Buckingham and Nicks joined, some (like “Oh Well”) dating back to the Peter Green era. Playing midsize arenas, they were still often an opening act, sharing bills with such fading 1970s stars as Ten Years After, the Guess Who, and Loggins & Messina.

Yet in some ways, their very lack of a superstar track record might have ultimately worked to their benefit. Concertgoers and radio listeners with little or no familiarity with Macs of days gone by—which, in 1975, constituted the majority of young Americans—were open to appreciating Fleetwood Mac as something of a brand-new band, which in a sense they were, now that Nicks and Buckingham were in the ranks. The two also gave the band their most dynamic frontpeople since Green and Spencer had paced the boards in the late 1960s, with one important difference. Green and Spencer, for all their attributes, were not exactly sex symbols. With her fashionable shag haircut, colorfully eccentric wardrobe (soon to feature black chiffon dresses and top hat), and sensuous stage presence, Nicks was drawing legions of new fans who'd never have looked twice at photos of the Macs I, II, or III. “Gypsy” and “witch” were the usual labels pinned on Nicks, in part because she actually introduced “Rhiannon” as a song about a witch onstage.

It was quite an adjustment at first for a long-running band who had never featured a woman singer, even part of the time, who didn't play one of the band's core instruments (though Nicks did shake a tambourine onstage). “How dare this California bimbo—which is how they looked at me—come in and walk out into the center of our stage and be the lead singer overnight?” is how Nicks characterized their initial reaction on the BBC television program *Rock Family Trees*. But, she hastened to add, “They realized really quickly that I wasn't trying to take anything away from them. And I wasn't. And I really did love them and want them to be wonderful. And I certainly didn't want to take anything away from Chris. 'Cause I liked her and I respected her, and she was really nice to me.”



Fleetwood Mac at the second annual Rock Music Awards on September 18, 1976. Although the two former couples within the band are locked in embraces, by this time the relationships were over. Getty Images

The more purely musical attributes of Nicks' boyfriend garnered their share of critical praise too. "Buckingham is the best guitarist the group has ever had," enthused Ken Barnes in a *Phonograph Record Magazine* review of a 1976 concert. "He gets a jangly folk-rock sound out of one guitar that some groups can't get with three, and he's got those driving power chords down cold."

At the new Mac's early shows, as Fleetwood told John Pidgeon, "Although all the halls weren't necessarily full, the audience reaction was incredible. Because they'd never heard or seen Stevie and Lindsey within Fleetwood Mac, and there's not one place or time where it got a little bit weird and... you know, 'where's Bob Welch' and this, that, and the other. It was completely the opposite. So that again was a complete stroke for us. 'Cause we felt then completely confident being onstage."

What really put the *Fleetwood Mac* album over the top, however, was the somewhat belated emergence of several hit singles, starting with "Over My Head." Aided by a new mix designed specifically for AM stations and

car radios, it cracked the Top 20 in early 1976. “Rhiannon”—which had quickly become a highlight of their concerts, and Nicks’ signature tune—made #11 a few months later. In the summer, a full year after the LP’s release, “Say You Love Me” began its own rise to #11.

ROLLING STONE, AUGUST 28, 1975 71

The great British-American- male-female-old-new- blues-rock-ballad band:



Lindsey Buckingham Mick Fleetwood Christine McVie Stevie Nicks John McVie

FLEETWOOD MAC
Rhiannon
Mystery
Ain't No
Crystal
Say You Love Me
Landslide

Their best album ever:
Fleetwood Mac.

On Reprise records and tapes.

Fleetwood Mac got flogged as “the great British-American-male-female-old-new-blues-rock-ballad band” in this ad for Fleetwood Mac (aka “The White Album”), their first LP with Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks.

While these chart stats would be put to shame by the blockbusters that followed in the late 1970s, “The White Album” rode the coattails of these hits to the top of the album listings, though it took more than a year to do so. Ten years later, it was certified as having sold five million copies in the United States alone. But if 1976 and the *Fleetwood Mac* album sparked superstardom that ushered in some of the best of times for the band, in other ways, it was the worst of times for each and every one of them.



Stevie Nicks gripping the tambourine, her on-stage musical instrument. Getty Images

When Fleetwood Mac started to become a household name, it no doubt boosted their image to feature two married couples within the same band. As three of the four musicians in those couples were songwriters, it was easy for fans to fantasize that the songs were inspired by real-life romance. It was as if Fleetwood Mac were one big, happy extended family, and one that invited the audience to join in on the cozy fun.

By the time *Fleetwood Mac* became a hit, those relationships were ending or over. Some of their new songs would continue to be inspired by their partners/ex-partners, but the relationships they reflected weren't always in full bloom, and weren't always celebrated. Even their Rock-of-Gibraltar leader would divorce, remarry, and embark on a fling with Stevie Nicks.

One broken relationship has been all it takes to destroy many a band. Three at roughly the same time seemed to sound Fleetwood Mac's death knell. Yet just as their love lives were imploding, their music was, almost perversely, thriving. Using their real-life traumas as grist for much of the material, Fleetwood Mac would somehow write and record their biggest commercial smash, and one of the highest-selling albums of all time.

It's hard to map a precise chronology of who broke up when within Fleetwood Mac, as the bonds had been weakening for some time. Buckingham and Nicks might have been heading for a romantic separation (though not necessarily a professional one) even before joining the band. There's even been speculation that they only stayed together as long as they did because it would have hurt Fleetwood Mac for the pair to break up just at the point when the new lineup was on the verge of a commercial and artistic breakthrough. The quick onset of success, if anything, quickened their split, the pressure of fame and constant touring overwhelming two musicians who'd struggled in the trenches for nearly a decade—and, unlike their three cohorts, had never experienced any degree of chart hits or critical recognition.



At the Glasgow Apollo in April 1977. Getty Images

Their rapidly growing audience remained oblivious to the tension for almost a year after *Fleetwood Mac*'s release. A brief news item in the April 22, 1976, *Rolling Stone*, however, made public what insiders had known for quite some time, dropping another big shoe in the process. "We hear that Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham are the second couple within Fleetwood Mac to be treading choppy waters," reported the magazine. "Christine and John McVie split up eight months ago." A two-page article on the band in the previous issue had not mentioned either of these bust-ups.

As the McVies had been married since August 1968, their breakup might have been a greater shock to longtime followers of the band. They'd lived and worked together for so long that it might have been taken for granted that they'd mastered the challenges of combining touring and recording with married life. Any hopes that fences could be mended took a blow when Christine had an affair with the band's lighting director, Curry Grant. Grant was fired after Christine confirmed this to the rest of the

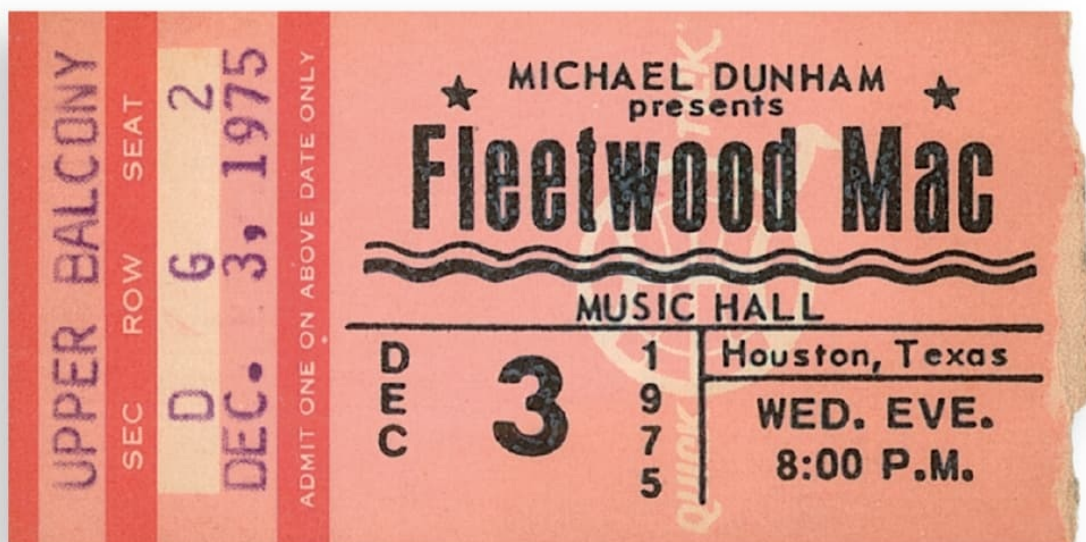
group, but that didn't improve matters between her and John. In 1976, the couple divorced.

As all this was going down, Mick Fleetwood's marriage—on shaky ground since his wife Jenny's affair with Bob Weston a few years earlier—was also disintegrating, with Jenny hooking up with Mick's friend (and Chicken Shack bass player) Andy Sylvester. Unlike the other four, he didn't face the challenge of playing music at an arm's length from his ex or soon-to-be ex day after day. Unlike the other four, however, he had to keep a grip on both managerial responsibilities (albeit with plenty of help from lawyer Mickey Shapiro) and his domestic situation. And not being onstage or in the studio with Jenny might have been more of a minus than a plus, as she found it increasingly hard to deal with his prolonged absences from home as their family grew up. Between bouts of separation and reunions, the Fleetwoods divorced in late 1975—though not for the last time.

These weren't the best of circumstances to begin thinking about writing and recording the material for their next album. But with *Fleetwood Mac* becoming a runaway hit, the heat was on to capitalize on the surprise smash by getting a follow-up together, and sooner rather than later. In a more ideal scenario, this might have been a good time for the band to take a break and take stock of their fluctuating relationships. But at a time when the record industry expected an album from its hit acts every year or two, that wasn't going to be possible.



A ticket for Fleetwood Mac's September 27, 1975, show at Michigan Palace in Detroit. Moderately successful Los Angeles band Ambrosia shared the bill at this concert.



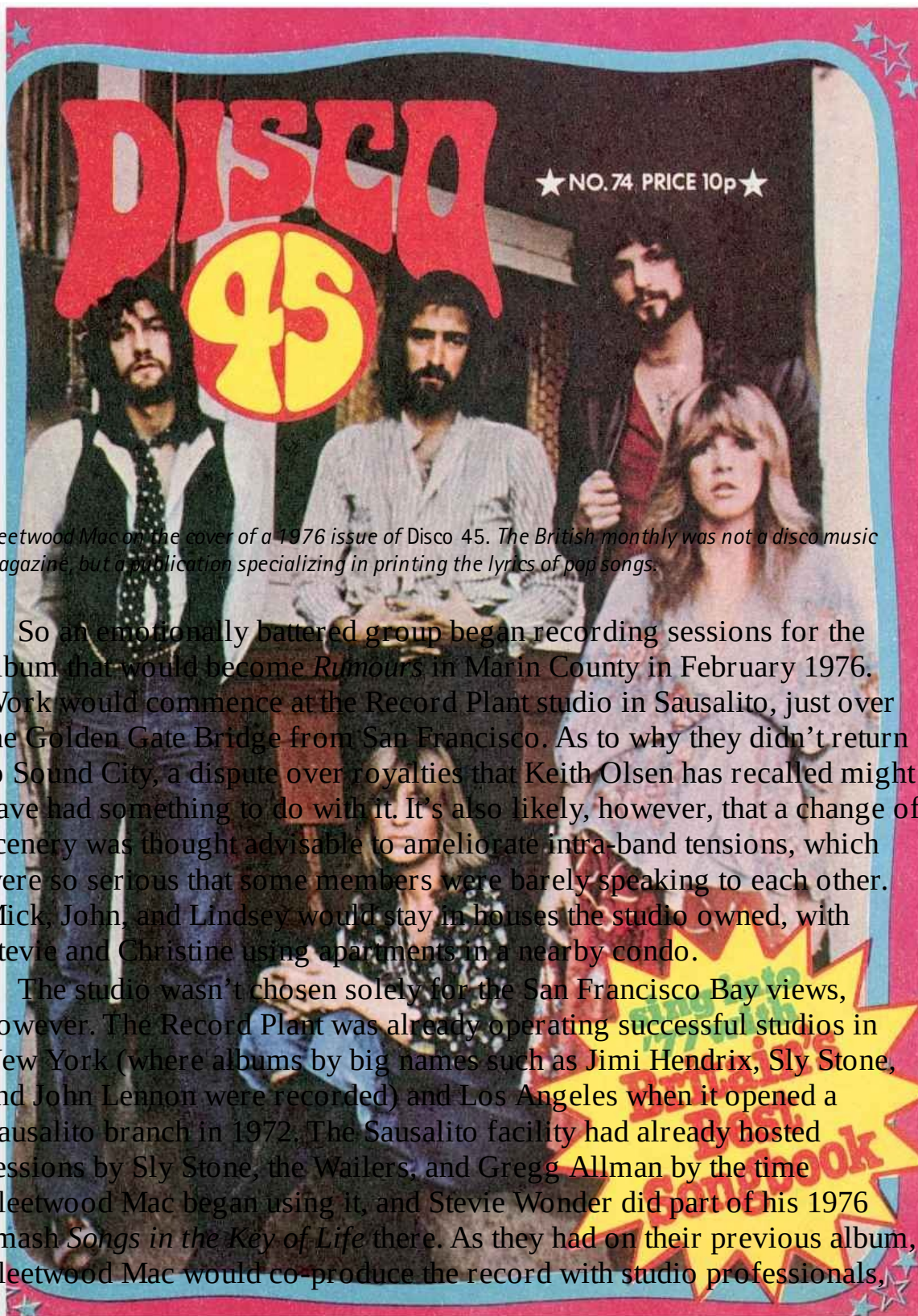
A ticket for Fleetwood Mac's show at the Houston Music Hall on December 3, 1975.



With some remixing and additional guitar work from Lindsey Buckingham, the single version of "Say You Love Me" was a #1 hit in 1976.



Stevie Nicks at Fleetwood Mac's concert at the Berkeley Community Theatre on February 28, 1977. This was just the second show of the tour they launched behind Rumours, which had been released at the beginning of February. Getty Images



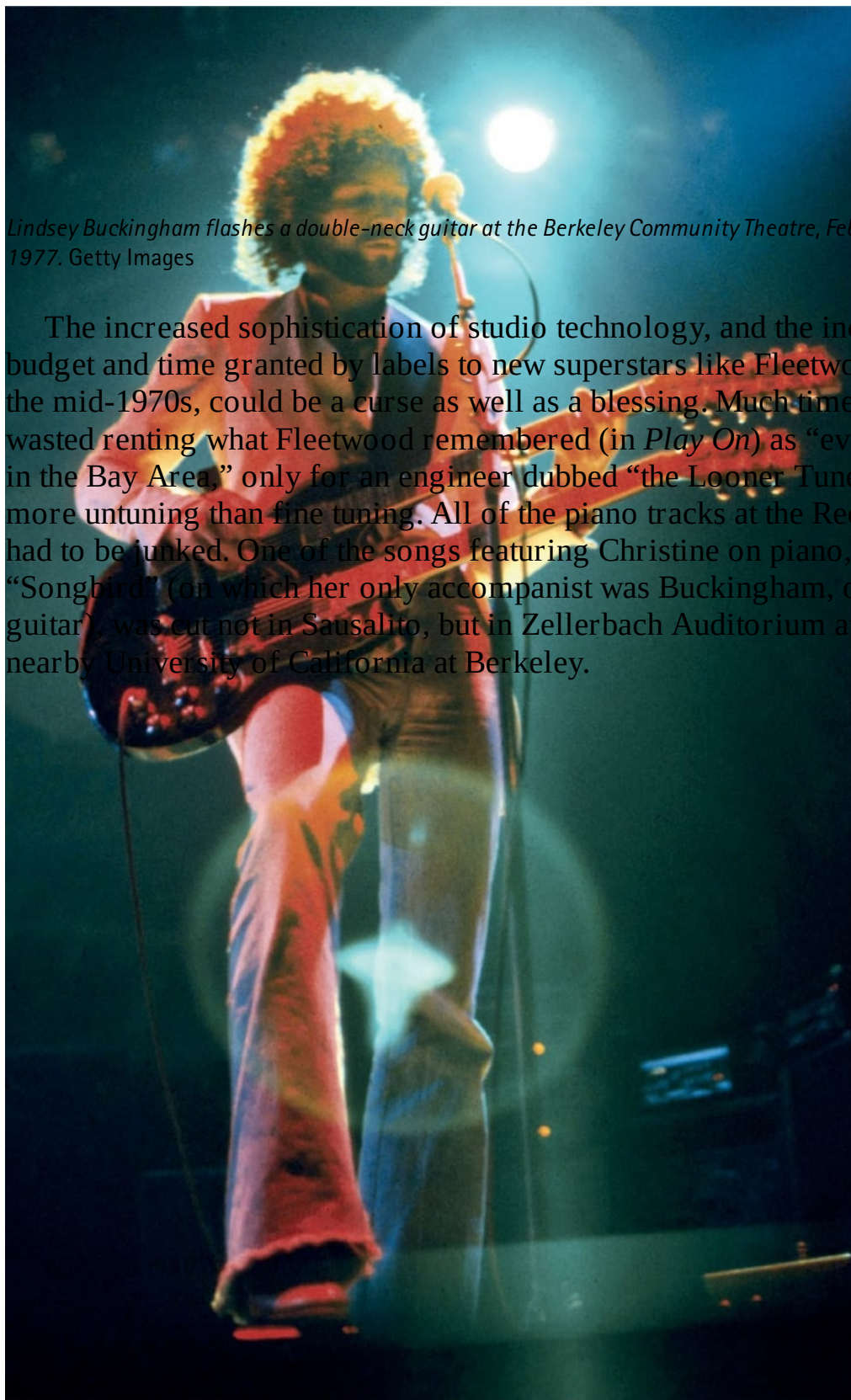
Fleetwood Mac on the cover of a 1976 issue of Disco 45. The British monthly was not a disco music magazine, but a publication specializing in printing the lyrics of pop songs.

So an emotionally battered group began recording sessions for the album that would become *Rumours* in Marin County in February 1976. Work would commence at the Record Plant studio in Sausalito, just over the Golden Gate Bridge from San Francisco. As to why they didn't return to Sound City, a dispute over royalties that Keith Olsen has recalled might have had something to do with it. It's also likely, however, that a change of scenery was thought advisable to ameliorate intra-band tensions, which were so serious that some members were barely speaking to each other. Mick, John, and Lindsey would stay in houses the studio owned, with Stevie and Christine using apartments in a nearby condo.

The studio wasn't chosen solely for the San Francisco Bay views, however. The Record Plant was already operating successful studios in New York (where albums by big names such as Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, and John Lennon were recorded) and Los Angeles when it opened a Sausalito branch in 1972. The Sausalito facility had already hosted sessions by Sly Stone, the Wailers, and Gregg Allman by the time Fleetwood Mac began using it, and Stevie Wonder did part of his 1976 smash *Songs in the Key of Life* there. As they had on their previous album, Fleetwood Mac would co-produce the record with studio professionals,

engineers Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat getting promoted to co-producers in the course of the album's sessions.

In contrast to the relatively briskly and efficiently recorded *Fleetwood Mac*, however, *Rumours* would be a protracted production, sometimes agonizingly so. Two months and more than three thousand hours of recording between February and April yielded little in the way of usable material. As John Grissim revealed in *Rolling Stone* that April, "Pianos (four in succession) refused to stay in tune, a 16-track recorder developed a habit of chewing up tape, and two members had bouts with the flu. As a result of the delays (which, in the case of the illnesses, cost over \$1,000 a day in studio time), the band has managed to lay down only three basic tracks, putting the project well behind schedule."



Lindsey Buckingham flashes a double-neck guitar at the Berkeley Community Theatre, February 28, 1977. Getty Images

The increased sophistication of studio technology, and the increased budget and time granted by labels to new superstars like Fleetwood Mac in the mid-1970s, could be a curse as well as a blessing. Much time was wasted renting what Fleetwood remembered (in *Play On*) as “every piano in the Bay Area,” only for an engineer dubbed “the Looner Tuner” to do more untuning than fine tuning. All of the piano tracks at the Record Plant had to be junked. One of the songs featuring Christine on piano, “Songbird” (on which her only accompanist was Buckingham, on acoustic guitar), was cut not in Sausalito, but in Zellerbach Auditorium at the nearby University of California at Berkeley.



A Stevie Nicks promo photo, late 1970s. Getty Images

Deficient equipment wasn't the only obstacle hindering progress at the Record Plant. Some of the tunes still didn't have words, a big problem when added lyrics changed the songs so much that early backing tracks had to be scrapped. Stevie and Christine would sometimes hide in each other's rooms as their now ex-partners searched for them in their condo.

Too, the amenities at the Record Plant did not exactly discourage drug use. Tanks of nitrous oxide were available for recreation, and visitors would often use a sunken part of the premises (originally built for Sly Stone), nicknamed the Pit, to do cocaine. A batch of pot cookies packed

such a punch that little work was done at one evening session, with nothing to show for around \$1,000 of studio costs at night's end. Drugs weren't the only substances consumed to various degrees, with John McVie (as Caillat recalled in his memoir *Making Rumours*) hitting the bottle pretty hard at times.

More productively, Nicks used the privacy of the Pit to do some songwriting, composing Fleetwood Mac's biggest hit there in a mere five minutes during the sessions. When she laid down vocals for that composition, little tinkering would be needed. "The first time she sang it ['Dreams'], she did such a great job," remarked Ken Caillat in *Stevie Nicks Through the Looking Glass*. "Typically we call that a work vocal, just a guide track that we plan on replacing later. But we tried to replace that lead vocal throughout the rest of the year, and there was some parts of the verses we could never beat. She could never improve the vocal part, so there was some sort of spontaneity that came with her first performance of that."

Still, for the most part Fleetwood Mac was dissatisfied with the Record Plant results. The band briefly resumed the sessions at Miami's Criteria Studios, where hits by the likes of Eric Clapton and the Allman Brothers had been cut. But ultimately, the core of *Rumours* would be recorded and mixed in several Los Angeles studios after all, including their old haunt Sound City. Most of this work involved numerous overdubs of instruments and vocals, Fleetwood claiming in *Play On* that "more or less all that we kept from the Sausalito sessions in the end were my drum tracks." By the time fall arrived, the tapes had been played so often they were starting to deteriorate, and some seat-of-the-pants transfers of overdubs onto a backup master were necessary to save the album.

In the midst of this semi-madness, Fleetwood Mac fit in some spring and summer concert dates as "The White Album" continued its charge toward #1. They shared a bill with Peter Dinklage at the annual Bill Graham Day on the Green spectacle at the Oakland Coliseum, and did a show with the Eagles on the July 4 bicentennial in Tampa. Between those two extravaganzas, parts of their May 2 show in Santa Barbara were filmed for a documentary on the band (now available in half-hour form as *The Rosebud Film* on a deluxe edition of *Rumours*). About ten days after that, they were filmed doing a few songs at a Hollywood rehearsal stage

for the same documentary, including “Rhiannon” and the yet-to-be-issued “Go Your Own Way” and “You Make Loving Fun.”

That didn’t mean the band was any less perfectionist, as an impatient Warner Brothers waited for the final product, of which they (at the group’s insistence) had heard little or nothing. (Although Fleetwood remembers refusing “to play them so much as a note” in *Play On*, in *Making Rumours* Caillat does recall previewing “Go Your Own Way” and “Dreams” to applauding Warners executives after sessions had been underway for a few months, with Mick present.) Ten hours were spent getting a kick drum sound. One of the record’s eventual highlights, “The Chain”—actually a combination of parts of several different songs—was almost abandoned after countless attempts. Literally dozens of demos, instrumental tracks, rough versions, early takes, jams, and acoustic tryouts of songs from *Rumours* have been added to expanded CD editions of the record as bonus tracks. Often skeletal and quite different from the familiar final versions, these testify to both the group’s diligence and their difficulty in constructing exactly what they wanted.



In spite of two romantic breakups within the band around the time Rumours was recorded, Fleetwood Mac not only survived, but thrived. Getty Images

Unsurprisingly, there was also a lot of difficulty in maintaining civility and communication in light of their simultaneously terminating relationships. “It was very clumsy sometimes,” John McVie admitted in Fleetwood’s first autobiography. “I’d be sitting there in the studio while they were mixing ‘Don’t Stop,’ and I’d listen to the words which were mostly about me, and I’d get a lump in my throat. I’d turn around and the writer’s sitting right there.”

Beyond the realm of the romantic, Buckingham was upping the tension by increasingly asserting himself in the studio. According to Caillat’s memoir, at times he even played other members’ instruments if what his bandmates came up with wasn’t to his satisfaction. Caillat’s account also details Buckingham literally throttling him after the producer (at Buckingham’s instructions) had recorded over one of his guitar solos. (To his credit, Buckingham later admitted that Fleetwood came up with a better drum part for “Go Your Own Way” than the one he had suggested.) In a less fractious dispute, Fleetwood gave Nicks an ultimatum after informing her that her composition “Silver Springs” wasn’t going to make the album, telling her that unless she sang “I Don’t Want to Know” instead, she’d only have two songs on *Rumours*, not three.

In the end, their professionalism, and the remarkable persistence that had brought them to the brink of superstardom, won out over lingering infighting and jealousies. “The machinery of it, the roll of it, had already gotten so great that there was never any consideration of do we want to stay together, or do we want to approach this in another way,” explained Buckingham in the *Classic Albums* series documentary on the LP. “We just had to play the hand out. And the only way to do that was to take all of these feelings—say my feelings for Stevie, and vice versa—and to sort of cram them into one corner of the room, and then to get on with whatever was going on with your process in the rest of the room.”

In the end, seven studios were used, the tab running to a bit over a million dollars. Boiled down to the then-standard running time of forty minutes, a few songs that had been worked on didn’t make the final cut, such as Nicks’ “Planets of the Universe” and Buckingham’s tellingly titled “Doesn’t Anything Last.” One such number that did make it to a state of

completion, Nicks' "Silver Springs," was another composition inspired by her breakup with Buckingham. To her disappointment, it was only used as a B-side to "Go Your Own Way," though Richard Dashut would hail it as "the best song that never made it to a record album" in *Classic Albums*. Lasting eight minutes, it was simply too long to fit on the record. Even when it was cut down to four and a half, it couldn't fit on either LP side without lowering the audio quality of the vinyl, which could only accommodate twenty-two minutes per side before fidelity was diminished.

Autumn concert dates were canceled to allow Fleetwood Mac time to finish the album, whose hoped-for release date had now been pushed back. The United States might have now been their base and chief market, but they hadn't forgotten the continent on which they'd first made a mark, going to London for ten days in October to promote "The White Album" and the new version of the band to the European media. The jaunt also occasioned a couple of reunions that were more bitter than sweet.



A group portrait in 1977, the year Fleetwood Mac vaulted from stardom to superstardom. Getty Images

Meeting up with Peter Green at their hotel, the band—particularly their British contingent—was distraught to find an almost unrecognizably disheveled, overwrought, and mentally unstable figure with whom communication was pretty much impossible. Such was Green's condition that Christine McVie summed up his condition to early Fleetwood Mac biographer Sam Graham as follows: "You have to talk about Peter in the past tense, because Peter [as a] musician doesn't exist anymore. Almost like Jimi Hendrix. Jimi Hendrix is dead. Peter isn't dead. He's worse than dead. He's just a vegetable, you know. And it's very sad... he was a great musician."

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

RUMOURS

By ANTHONY DECURTIS

When an album becomes one of the best-selling releases in popular music history, discussions of it tend to become more sociological than musical. That's understandable, particularly in the case of Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours*, a collection of eleven songs that say so much about the band members' lives and the time in which the album was created.

What too often gets overlooked in that macrocosmic approach, however, is the sheer quality of the music. It's one thing to capture the zeitgeist and sell tens of millions of albums. It's quite something else to outlive that zeitgeist and retain the coruscating emotional power of *Rumours*. For that to happen, you need songs that are perfectly constructed, songs that not only survive repeated listenings, but encourage them. But those songs also cannot simply be aesthetic curiosities, so entrapped by the artifice of their construction that their long-term appeal is limited only to specialists. Their sonic eloquence needs to seem so natural that the casual fan would never notice it and the discerning listener would not be distracted by it.

All the songs on *Rumours* meet those rigorous criteria—and then some. Sonically, the songs are a bottomless pleasure to listen to; nuances reveal themselves with every new hearing. Emotionally, however, the album is devastating. That such violent passions can exist within such controlled settings seems like a revelation every time you encounter it. But perhaps that dynamic is precisely what we mean by art—and perhaps it explains why great art lasts, as *Rumours* has done beautifully.



With a cover featuring Mick Fleetwood and Stevie Nicks, Rumours topped the charts for thirty-one weeks.

As surely everyone knows, *Rumours*, which came out in 1977, documents the breakups, affairs, and shaky new relationships among the five members of Fleetwood Mac at the time: Lindsey Buckingham, Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, and Stevie Nicks. That turbulence took place within the context of massive drug abuse—primarily cocaine and alcohol—and echoed the let-it-all-hang-out sexual ethos of the Seventies.

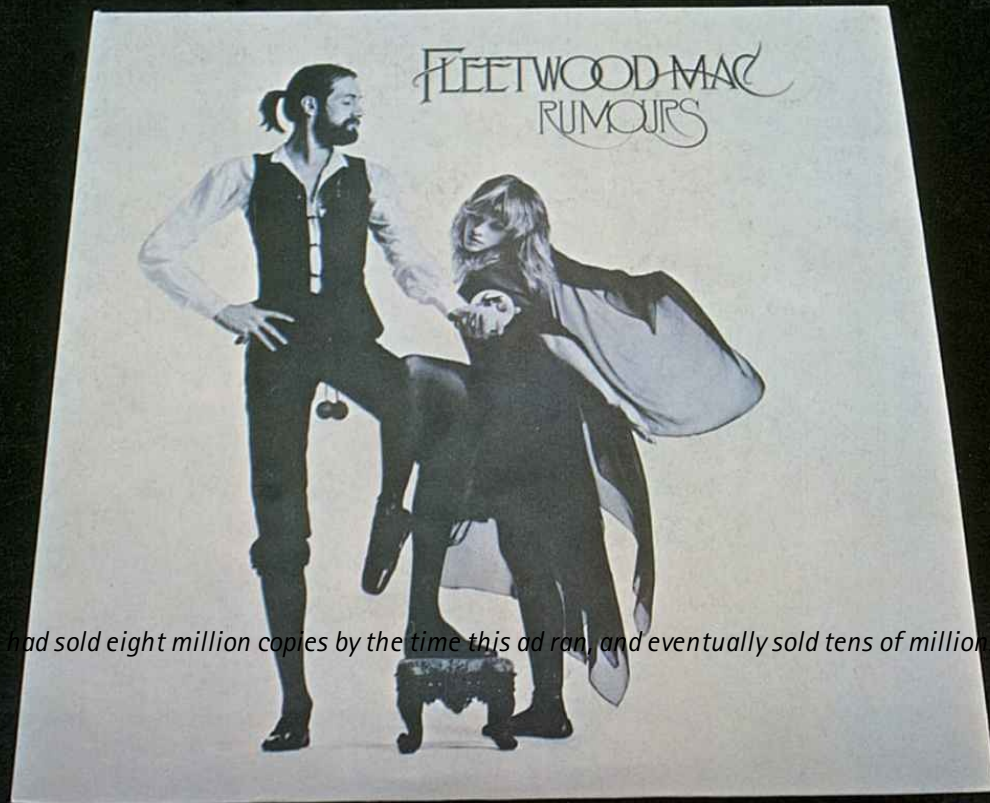
Listening to the album today, what comes through is both the ravaging pain that underlay all that freedom and the strange but persistent idealism that propelled it. The album careens from the serrated bitterness of Buckingham's "Go Your Own Way"—directed squarely at Nicks, of course—to the sunniness of Christine McVie's "Don't Stop" and "You Make Loving Fun" (a paean to the band's lighting director, with whom she had an affair while married to John McVie). But even Christine burrows deep into her personal darkness on "Oh Daddy," a forlorn, nearly masochistic erotic meditation. Nicks, meanwhile, runs the gamut from the taunting reverie of "Dreams" (directed at Buckingham, needless to say) to the chilling self-indictment of "Gold Dust Woman," a searing chronicle of addiction and desperation.

At the heart of *Rumours* sits "The Chain," a song aptly credited to all five band members. It's an amalgam of three separate songs brilliantly woven together by Buckingham, perhaps the greatest triumph of the architectural skills he brought to the album. And in that regard, it's an

emblem for the band itself, a unit composed of highly distinctive, independent, and very different talents. It's important to remember that for all the racy shenanigans and crushing psychosexual torment, for all the divorces, affairs, and plain old fucking around, the band stayed together. "I can still hear you saying/You would never break the chain," the song's chorus screams. Those lines point the finger at lies and infidelity, but nearly four decades later, they stand as a testament to artists who, having put their riveting work above all else, proved stunningly true to their promise to each other: "Chain, keep us together."

Shortly after their London meeting, Green did a spell in a mental institution, as fallout from a murky incident in which he was alleged to have threatened early Mac manager Clifford Davis with a shotgun if Davis didn't stop sending him royalty payments. Another veteran of their late-1960s lineup wasn't doing much better. Danny Kirwan also saw the band on their London visit, and though he'd been out of Fleetwood Mac less than five years, he'd already had bouts with homelessness and alcoholism. Those would continue in subsequent years as Kirwan disappeared from the music business, issuing his final solo album in 1979. Mick Fleetwood has not even seen Kirwan since then, though he'd do a great deal over the next few decades to help Peter Green out, both musically and personally.

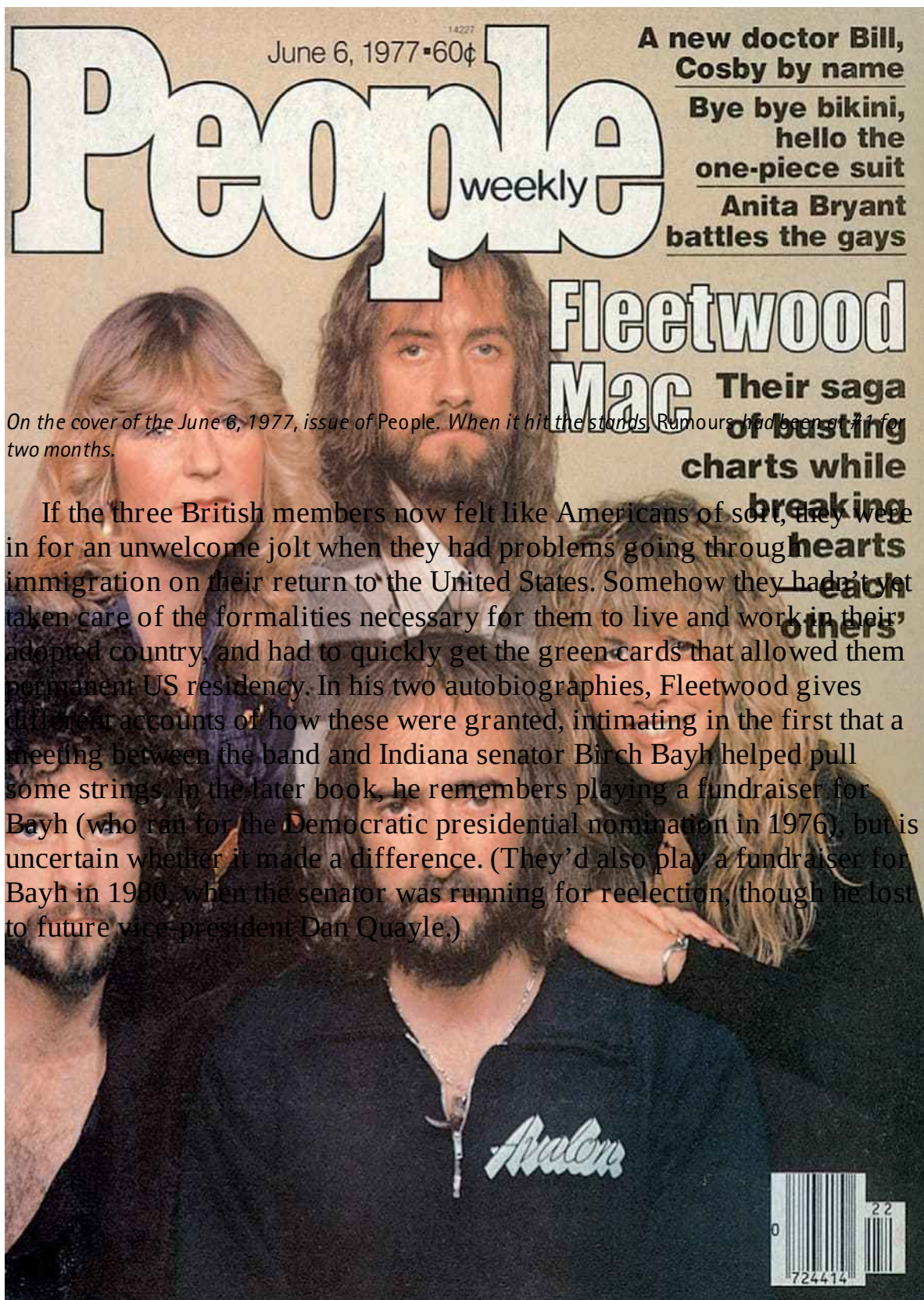
As another sour reminder of the land they'd left behind, *Fleetwood Mac* somehow failed to repeat its success in the UK. Failing to enter the charts until late 1976, it peaked at a mere #23; issued as singles, "Say You Love Me" and "Rhiannon" barely made the Top 50. Perhaps at this point, Fleetwood Mac was considered as much an American band as a British one, if not more so, now that they were firmly ensconced in Los Angeles.



Rumours had sold eight million copies by the time this ad ran, and eventually sold tens of millions.

EIGHT MILLION





On the cover of the June 6, 1977, issue of People. When it hit the stands, Rumours had been out for two months.

If the three British members now felt like Americans of sort, they were in for an unwelcome jolt when they had problems going through immigration on their return to the United States. Somehow they hadn't yet taken care of the formalities necessary for them to live and work in their adopted country, and had to quickly get the green cards that allowed them permanent US residency. In his two autobiographies, Fleetwood gives different accounts of how these were granted, intimating in the first that a meeting between the band and Indiana senator Birch Bayh helped pull some strings. In the later book, he remembers playing a fundraiser for Bayh (who ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1976), but is uncertain whether it made a difference. (They'd also play a fundraiser for Bayh in 1980, when the senator was running for reelection, though he lost to future vice-president Dan Quayle.)



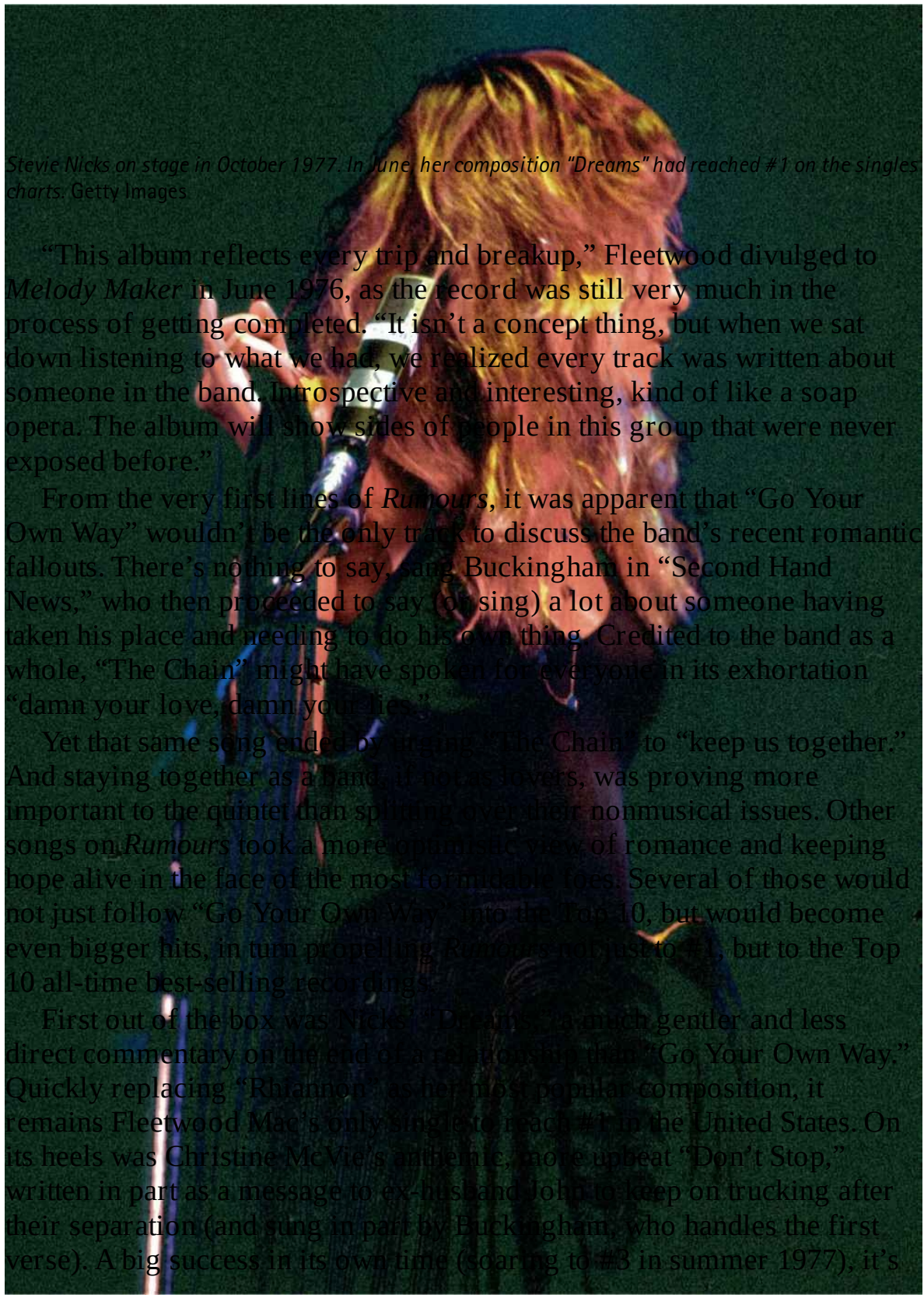
Stevie Nicks at a New York concert, 1977. Problems with her voice caused the cancellation of some Fleetwood Mac concerts that year. Getty Images

However, in order to secure US residency for himself, his daughters, and his ex-wife, Mick had to remarry Jenny Boyd. It was an apt conclusion to the strange musical chairs between partners as Fleetwood Mac ended one of the most successful, and stormiest, years of their career. If the storm would abate somewhat in 1977, the success would pick up even more momentum.

It wasn't until January 4, 1977, that mixing was finally completed on *Rumours*, as the record first titled *Yesterday's Gone* (after a lyric in "Don't Stop") was now known. It was John McVie's idea to call it *Rumours* as a response to all of the rumors (as the word is spelled in the US) swirling around the group as their breakups became public knowledge and the follow-up to *Fleetwood Mac* failed to appear. Some of said rumors speculated the band would break up before another album could be released, or at least that the personnel would change as one, two, or three members left for a solo career and/or different groups.

While none of this took place, the first taste from *Rumours* made it clear the band's messy personal relations would make their way not just

into the mass media, but also into their actual songs. Released at the end of 1976 as a single a couple months in advance of the LP, Buckingham's "Go Your Own Way" was something of a kiss-off to Nicks, who was especially ticked off by the line accusing her that packing up and shacking up was all she wanted to do. Not true, according to Nicks. But that didn't keep it from becoming their first Buckingham-penned hit, as well as supplying invaluable pre-publicity for the *Rumours* album itself.



Stevie Nicks on stage in October 1977. In June, her composition "Dreams" had reached #1 on the singles charts. Getty Images

"This album reflects every trip and breakup," Fleetwood divulged to *Melody Maker* in June 1976, as the record was still very much in the process of getting completed. "It isn't a concept thing, but when we sat down listening to what we had, we realized every track was written about someone in the band. Introspective and interesting, kind of like a soap opera. The album will show sides of people in this group that were never exposed before."

From the very first lines of *Rumours*, it was apparent that "Go Your Own Way" wouldn't be the only track to discuss the band's recent romantic fallouts. There's nothing to say, sang Buckingham in "Second Hand News," who then proceeded to say (or sing) a lot about someone having taken his place and needing to do his own thing. Credited to the band as a whole, "The Chain" might have spoken for everyone in its exhortation "damn your love, damn your lies."

Yet that same song ended by urging "The Chain" to "keep us together." And staying together as a band, if not as lovers, was proving more important to the quintet than splitting over their nonmusical issues. Other songs on *Rumours* took a more optimistic view of romance and keeping hope alive in the face of the most formidable foes. Several of those would not just follow "Go Your Own Way" into the Top 10, but would become even bigger hits, in turn propelling *Rumours* not just to #1, but to the Top 10 all-time best-selling recordings.

First out of the box was Nicks' "Dreams," a much gentler and less direct commentary on the end of a relationship than "Go Your Own Way." Quickly replacing "Rhannon" as her most popular composition, it remains Fleetwood Mac's only single to reach #1 in the United States. On its heels was Christine McVie's anthemic, more upbeat "Don't Stop," written in part as a message to ex-husband John to keep on trucking after their separation (and sung in part by Buckingham, who handles the first verse). A big success in its own time (soaring to #3 in summer 1977), it's

arguably even more popular than “Dreams” these days, as it was used as the theme song for Bill Clinton’s 1992 presidential campaign (and continues to be played when he appears at Democratic National Conventions). As a reminder that love didn’t stop with divorce, Christine’s funkier, wistful “You Make Loving Fun” became a Top 10 hit later in 1977—the fourth from *Rumours*.

Four big hits alone, however, can’t explain the phenomenal success of *Rumours*, which dwarfed even that of “The White Album.” Songs like “The Chain,” “Second Hand News,” and Nicks’ “Gold Dust Woman” got so much FM radio airplay they were something of unofficial hit singles under their own steam. As a whole, the album hung together more tightly and organically than any of their previous LPs, radiating a consistency that made listeners want to play it over and over.

Even the cover art helped, with its strikingly stark photo (by Herbie Worthington, who’d also photographed the *Fleetwood Mac* cover) of an elegant Fleetwood perching on a footstool as he towered over a floridly dressed Nicks. In keeping with her burgeoning image as rock’s cosmic princess, her flowing cape made her look as if she’d literally just flown in from an angels’ convention. Set against a white background, their rather intimately interwoven pose was an early indication, in hindsight, of the next passionate flare-up that made life in Fleetwood Mac so simultaneously thrilling and miserable.

Nor was the band above using their now-well-publicized bust-ups to their own advantage. Shot by top photographer Annie Leibovitz, the cover of the March 24 *Rolling Stone* showed them literally in bed with each other, and not with their longtime partners. Fleetwood was entwined with Nicks; Christine McVie with Buckingham; and John McVie, oblivious to the hanky-panky, lay on the side alone, reading a magazine.

To add to the titillation, in the article itself, Nicks made it clear that all her songs on *Rumours*, except perhaps “Gold Dust Woman,” “are definitely about the people in the band... Chris’ relationships, John’s relationship, Mick’s relationship, Lindsey’s and mine. They’re all there and they’re very honest and people will know exactly what I’m talking about... people will really enjoy listening to what happened since the last album.” Even “Gold Dust Woman” might qualify as a commentary of this sort, Nicks describing it twenty years later (in the *Classic Albums* documentary) as a “symbolic look at somebody going through a bad

relationship and doing a lot of drugs.” Nor was every relationship the tunes documented romantic, Christine penning “Oh Daddy” about Fleetwood, at that time the only father in the band.



Fleetwood Mac were literally in bed with each other on the cover of the March 24, 1977, issue of Rolling Stone, the month after Rumours was released.



Happy together on stage, 1977. Fleetwood Mac toured extensively throughout the year in support of Rumours, playing shows in North America, the United Kingdom, Europe, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. Getty Images

For all of these reasons, *Rumours* was an instant hit, reaching #1 a couple of months after its February 1977 release. Its ascent was hardly unexpected. It had the largest advance order from record stores—almost a million copies—of any album in Warner Brothers history. The *Fleetwood Mac* album had already sold four million copies, and with “Dreams” entering the charts the same month *Rumours* made #1, it could be expected to settle in the pole position for a few weeks.

Then something unprecedented occurred. The album was #1 for thirty-one weeks in 1977 (its streak only interrupted by one week in which Barry Manilow's *Live* took over the top spot), a reign longer than any previous rock LP had enjoyed (including 1977's other blockbuster, the Eagles' *Hotel California*, whose nearly unbroken reign at #1 a few months earlier lasted a mere two months). Within a year of its release, *Rumours* had sold more than ten million copies, more than eight million of those in the United States alone. Estimates of its total sales vary, but the Recording Industry Association of America certified it as passing the twenty million mark in 2014, with other sources citing figures of more than forty million worldwide. It wasn't until 1983 that the thirty-one-weeks streak would be broken—and it would take the biggest-selling album of all time, Michael Jackson's *Thriller*, to do it.

"It is still super special and fresh," mused Nicks about the record's perennial popularity in the liner notes to the 2013 expanded edition. "Somehow it doesn't sound old. It's kind of creepy almost how it doesn't get old. A lot of classic records we all love, if it comes on the radio, we'll all say, 'Wow, that really dates me,' and the answer is usually, 'Well yes, it does.' But I don't think there's a date attached to *Rumours*. At least to my ears, *Rumours* still sounds like it could have been done in your living room three days ago. And maybe that's why we still love it so much because somehow it still has an air of almost being new."

Rumours also accumulated its share of awards, winning the 1978 Grammy Award for Album of the Year. It also notched the rare grand slam of getting named Album of the Year in each of the three major US music trade magazines (*Billboard*, *Cash Box*, and *Record World*), as well as by *Rolling Stone*'s readers' poll. Many years later, *Rolling Stone* placed it at #26 in its list of the five hundred greatest albums of all time, hailing it as "the gold standard of late-Seventies FM radio... on *Rumours*, Fleetwood Mac turned private turmoil into gleaming, melodic public art."



Stevie Nicks and Fleetwood Mac performing in 1978.



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PENGUIN •

FLEETWOOD MAC

•PROMOTIONS



Fleetwood Mac bumper sticker, inspired by the band's trademark penguin logo.

Why this one-of-a-kind shower of praise and sales for *Rumours* and not, say, *Hotel California*, or Linda Ronstadt's *Simple Dreams*, which sat at #1 for the final five weeks of 1977?- *Rolling Stone* dedicated much of a January 1978 article to that very question. After batting around several theories, author Dave Marsh and Warner Brothers Senior Creative Services Director (and ex-Beatles publicist) Derek Taylor basically came to the same deduction as the millions of fans buying the LP. *Rumours*, they concluded, was simply "a very, very good two-sided pop record." It didn't so much fit in perfectly with late-1970s commercial FM radio as define late-1970s commercial FM radio. Ironically, it did so at the very time when the Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen" was shooting to #2 in the UK, lighting a punk and new wave explosion that would eventually threaten the dominance of the slickly produced California soft rock of acts such as the Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, and Fleetwood Mac themselves.

The Sex Pistols, the Clash, and the Ramones were still fairly distant blips on the radar to the rock mainstream when Fleetwood Mac launched a worldwide tour in support of their new mega-smash. The days of playing support to or getting co-billed with mid-level AOR acts were long gone. Fleetwood Mac was now selling out arenas coast-to-coast under their own power.

Gone too were the days of tentatively mixing new material with old favorites. The set was now devoted almost exclusively to songs from "The White Album" and *Rumours*. Often these were given a harder rock edge onstage, as 1977 concert recordings on expanded editions of *Rumours* prove. "Rhiannon" in particular underwent a transformation, stretching to eight minutes as Nicks almost screamed herself hoarse in the extended closing section.

And while old favorites like "Station Man" and "Hypnotized" were still in the program in the ten US dates they played in February and March, by the time they returned from a series of European shows for the second North American leg of the tour in May, even those had been retired. Fans were coming to see the Buckingham-Nicks lineup, and to hear the songs from their two hit albums. Many of them didn't even know the names of Danny Kirwan, Jeremy Spencer, or Peter Green.

Between those North American jaunts, Fleetwood Mac made a triumphant return to Europe and the UK, where *Rumours* was becoming a big hit as well (though it wouldn't top the British charts until early 1978, and singles culled from the album were only modest sellers). Buckingham and Nicks also managed to find time to co-produce Walter Egan's second album *Fundamental Roll*, which generated the Top 10 hit "Magnet and Steel." There would be no rekindling of their personal relationship, however, with Stevie getting involved with the Eagles' Don Henley and singer-songwriter John David Souther for short spells.

As serious money poured in, the band's lifestyle upgraded accordingly, a private jet and limousines replacing the station wagons in which they'd driven from date to date. Nicks even insisted on pink rooms with a white piano, which often had to be lifted through the window by hired crane. Drug use accelerated as well, and while Fleetwood has denied his excesses were quite as monumental as some tabloids would have it, he makes no secret of the band's heavy indulgence in cocaine, in particular.

Along with the high times came new stresses, including a threat to one of their most vital musical assets. Stevie's voice couldn't quite hold up under their heavy touring schedule, causing cancellation of some dates. Her voice, reported *Rolling Stone* in its review of their June 29 show at New York's Madison Square Garden, "was the audience's prime discussion topic before and after the concert... she couldn't summon the chops to get away with *anything*," finding it "impossible to hit 'Rhiannon's higher notes." She sometimes resorted to shots to keep the swelling in her vocal cords down, the band also adding a voice coach to their touring unit.

Nicks wouldn't get the chance for the extended rest her voice might have needed. Just a month after wrapping up the second leg of their North American tour in Santa Barbara on October 2, Fleetwood Mac was off to New Zealand, Australia, and Japan for a month, doing their final show of the year on the way back in Maui. During the break in the schedule, Nicks and Fleetwood began an off-on two-year affair, though Fleetwood was still married (or remarried) to his first wife at its onset. On top of all of Fleetwood's other obligations and complications, his father had been diagnosed with cancer in August, dying a year later.



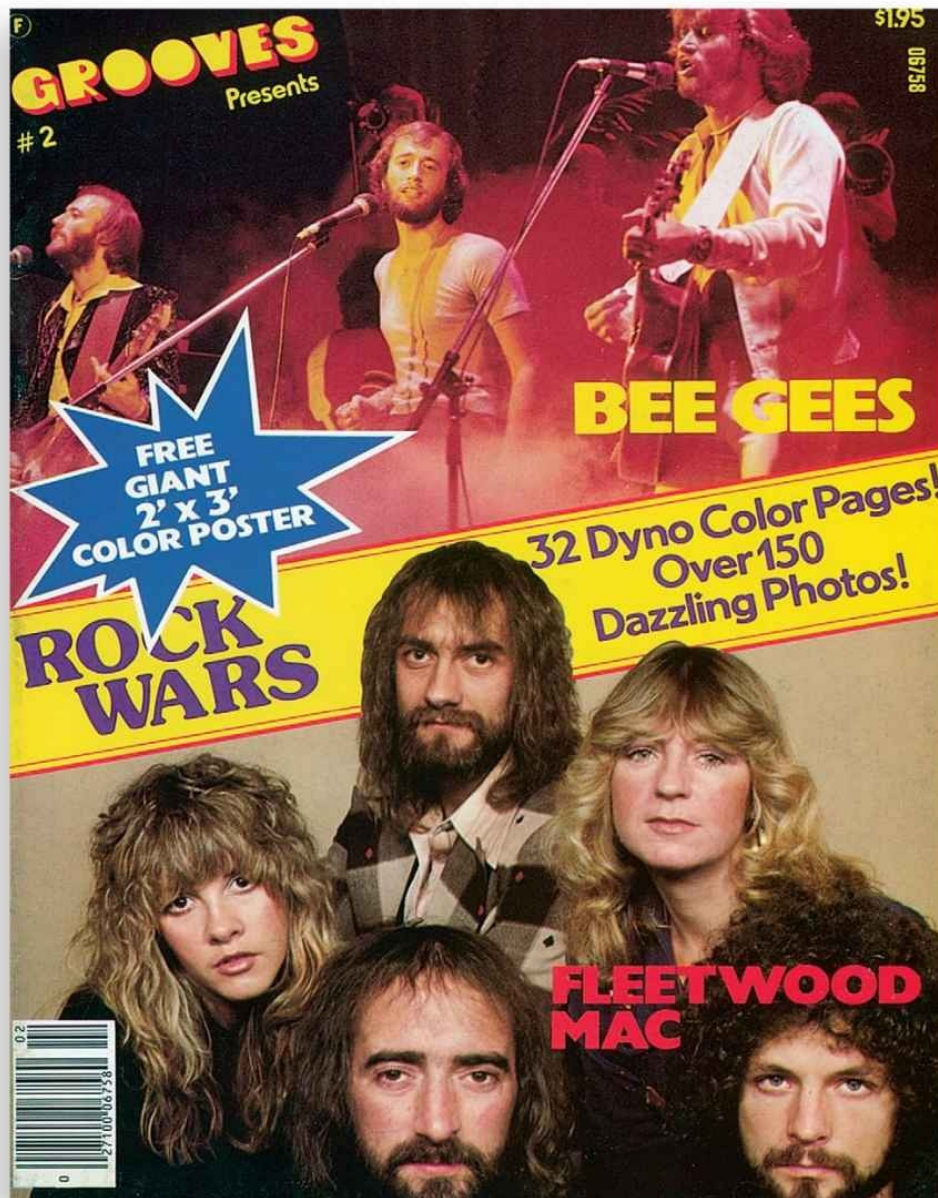
By the late 1970s, Fleetwood Mac was traveling in high style, and the days of hauling themselves between gigs in station wagons were becoming a thing of the past. Getty Images

In the midst of the most successful and stressful year of his life, Fleetwood found time to extend a helping hand to a couple of old friends, with mixed results. One was Peter Green, who briefly moved to Los Angeles, where he was married in the home of Mick and Jenny Fleetwood on January 4, 1978. Fleetwood also got Green a record deal with Warner Brothers, reported by more than one source to be in the vicinity of a million dollars.

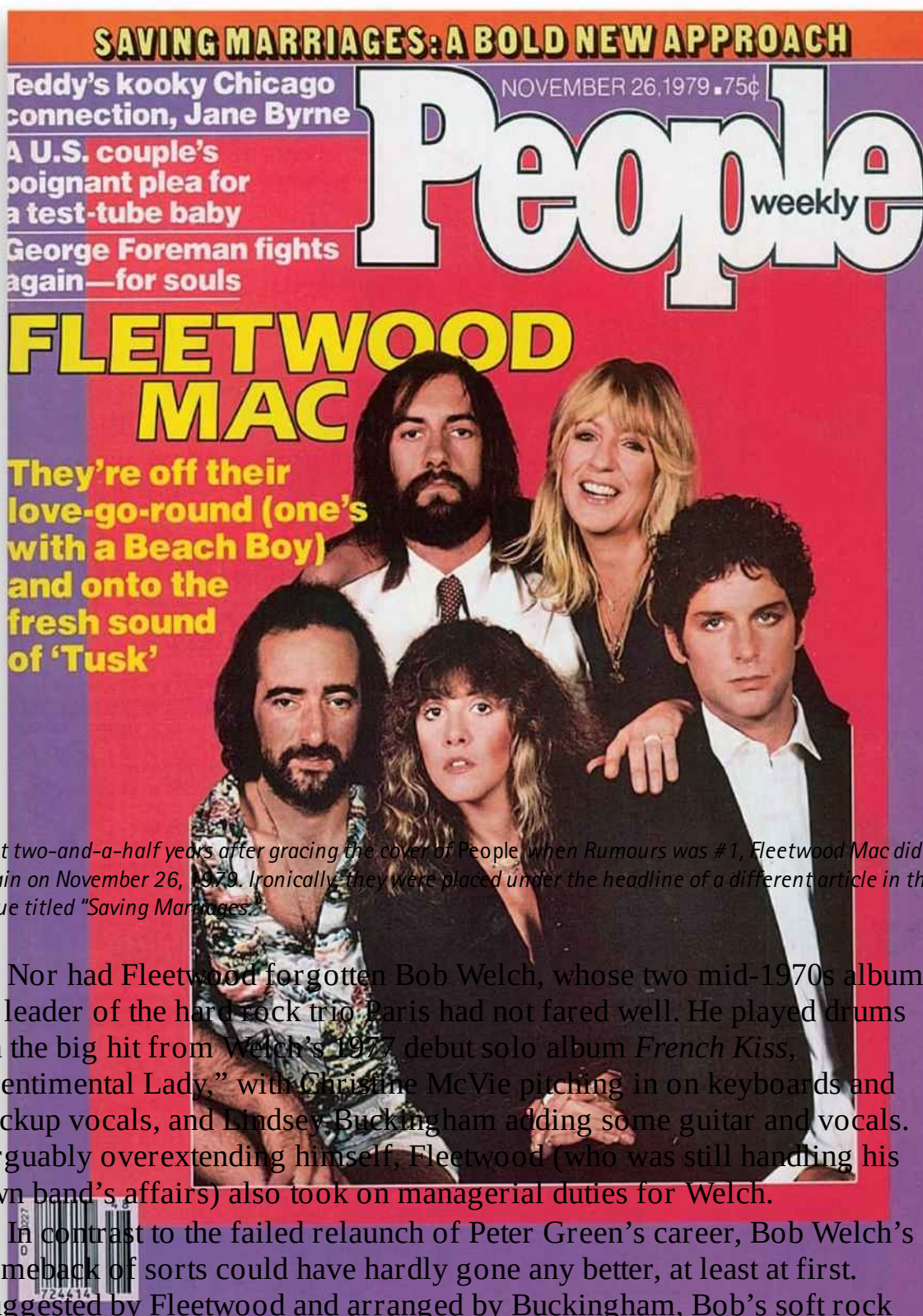
But there was only so much he could do for a figure as unstable as Green had become. Green decided not to sign, declaring the offer to be (as Fleetwood remembered in Martin Celmins' *Peter Green: The Biography*) "the work of the devil." He'd also given away a \$5,000 Les Paul guitar Fleetwood had bought for him to a stranger in a hotel elevator (though it was soon recovered). Returning to England, Green did resume his recording career with a few solo albums in the late 1970s and early 1980s, though these gained little in the way of either sales or critical notice.



Rumours was selected as the #1 album of the year in Rolling Stone's 1977 readers' poll.



On the cover of the second issue of Grooves magazine, 1978.



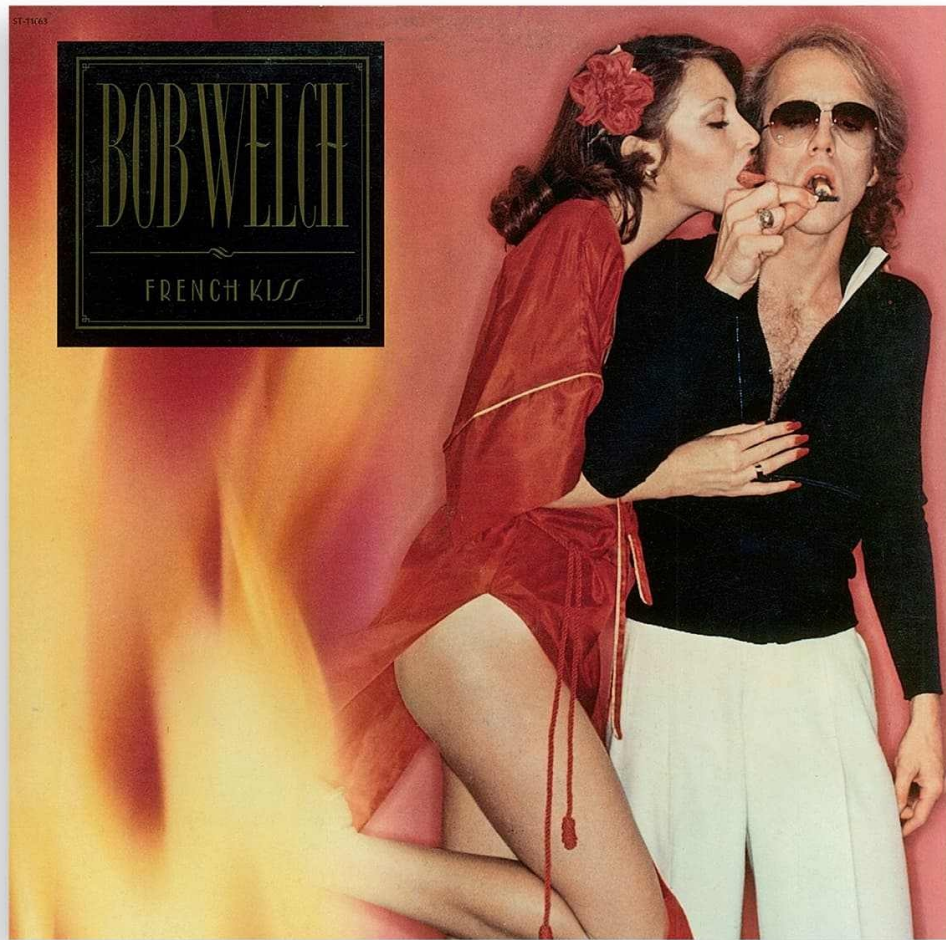
Just two-and-a-half years after gracing the cover of *People* when *Rumours* was #1, Fleetwood Mac did it again on November 26, 1979. Ironically, they were placed under the headline of a different article in the issue titled "Saving Marriages."

Nor had Fleetwood forgotten Bob Welch, whose two mid-1970s albums as leader of the hard rock trio Paris had not fared well. He played drums on the big hit from Welch's 1977 debut solo album *French Kiss*, "Sentimental Lady," with Christine McVie pitching in on keyboards and backup vocals, and Lindsey Buckingham adding some guitar and vocals. Arguably overextending himself, Fleetwood (who was still handling his own band's affairs) also took on managerial duties for Welch.

In contrast to the failed relaunch of Peter Green's career, Bob Welch's comeback of sorts could have hardly gone any better, at least at first. Suggested by Fleetwood and arranged by Buckingham, Bob's soft rock remake of "Sentimental Lady," originally issued by Fleetwood Mac on

1972's *Bare Trees*, made #8. *French Kiss*, which was likewise more pop-oriented than Welch's albums with Paris, rose to #12, with another of its tracks, "Ebony Eyes," becoming a substantial hit in early 1978. Welch would also tour with Fleetwood Mac in 1978, though the good feelings wouldn't last forever.

As remarkable a year as 1977 had been for the group, they weren't going to be able to take a year or so off to rest on their laurels, or rest Stevie Nick's voice, or resolve their complicated personal and business affairs. Nor, it seems, did they even want to. The Buckingham-Nicks version of Fleetwood Mac had only been together for three years and two albums, and only really started to explore what they wanted to do musically, as quick and huge as the payoff had been. Their record label and fans were as eager for a follow-up to *Rumours* as they had been for a follow-up to *Fleetwood Mac*, the stakes now upped exponentially by *Rumours*' record-breaking sales.



Bob Welch's French Kiss album was a big hit for the former Fleetwood Mac guitarist. Reaching #12 in the charts, it featured the hit single "Sentimental Lady," a remake of a song he'd also recorded years earlier as part of Fleetwood Mac.

The logical thing to do would have been to record another album filled with the kind of pop-rock songs Lindsey, Stevie, and Christine were so skilled at delivering, and John and Mick so adept at helping to polish and perfect. No doubt that's what Warner Brothers wanted, and that's likely what Fleetwood Mac's now-massive fan base expected. Even a pale reflection of the previous two records would have been guaranteed sales of several million, had the material been in the same style.

If there was one predictable aspect to Fleetwood Mac's career, however, it was its very unpredictability. Even in their most popular and apparently stable lineup, that wasn't about to change. Their next album would not be at

all like *Rumours*, and indeed not like anything else anyone was doing in the late 1970s.



Lindsey Buckingham at the Oakland Coliseum, May 7, 1977. Fleetwood Mac played this concert as part of promoter Bill Graham's Day on the Green series, sharing the bill with the Doobie Brothers and Gary Wright. Getty Images

One thing would not change, however. Like *Rumours*, the sessions for their next album, which began in May 1978, would be costly and drawn-out. But the only record *Tusk* would set was for the most expensive rock album ever made prior to 1980. That was just one of the controversies that plagued a project that remains Fleetwood Mac's most ambitious.

From the get-go, the band was determined that the record wouldn't be a repeat of *Rumours*. They, or at least a couple of them, had been down this road a decade earlier, when they branched out into non-blues-confined rock with Peter Green and Danny Kirwan on 1969's *Then Play On*, though they could have been assured of steady sales if they'd stuck to the blues that had put them on the map. It had worked pretty well then, both in the

quality of the music produced and the quantity of copies it sold. Could it work again?



A 1977 group portrait. The success of Rumours continued to build throughout the year with a series of hit singles, including "Go Your Own Way," "Dreams," "Don't Stop," and "You Make Loving Fun." Getty Images

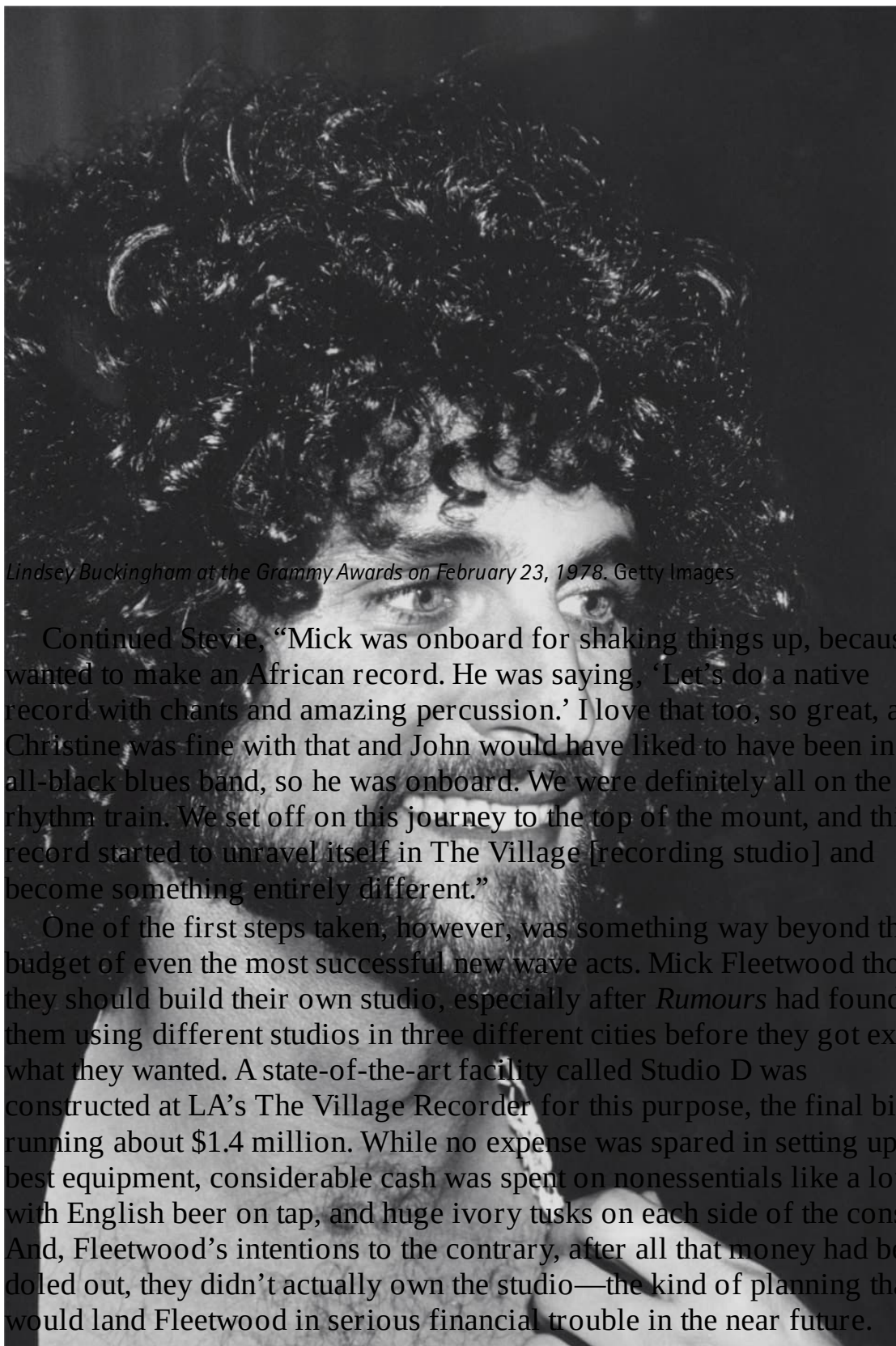
Lindsey Buckingham in particular was adamant that new ground had to be broken. Fleetwood Mac wasn't about to suddenly go punk and new wave as those styles became all the critical rage, especially in the UK. But as someone who kept up with bands like the Clash, he wanted his own band to sound contemporary, and not like one of those dinosaurs that punks were accusing complacent rock superstars of becoming. That didn't mean that he wanted Fleetwood Mac to sound like the Clash or Talking Heads, but he did want the group to become more daring and take more risks.

"I think if we hadn't done that album, then Lindsey might've left," pondered Christine McVie in *Creem*. "We 'allowed' him to experiment within the confines of Fleetwood Mac instead of saying, 'We don't want you doing stuff at your studio and putting it on the Fleetwood Mac

album’—he might’ve said, ‘I’m gonna leave, then.’ We didn’t want him to leave, for obvious reasons.”

“The axiom ‘if it works run it into the ground’ was prevalent then,” Buckingham commented in Rob Trucks’ book *Tusk*. “We were probably poised to do *Rumours II*. I don’t know how you do that, but somehow my light bulb that went off was, ‘Let’s just not do that. Let’s very pointedly not do that.’ And we had a meeting and I talked about it. The band was a little wary at first. They got more and more drawn into it as it went along.”

As Nicks remembered it in Jim Irvin’s liner notes to the 2015 deluxe edition of *Tusk*, however, the band wasn’t insistent on repeating *Rumours*. “Lindsey was really making a stand. ‘I’m not doing *Rumours* over!’ And the rest of us were like, ‘What do you mean? Why would any of us want to do *Rumours* over? We just want to make a great new record.’ If you want to go down some different pathways, research some different genres of music and change it up, everybody was fine with that, but Lindsey was just so adamant about doing something that was the opposite of the previous records. He announced it so visually, so demandingly that I think he scared us. We were like, ‘What the fuck?!’”



Lindsey Buckingham at the Grammy Awards on February 23, 1978. Getty Images

Continued Stevie, “Mick was onboard for shaking things up, because he wanted to make an African record. He was saying, ‘Let’s do a native record with chants and amazing percussion.’ I love that too, so great, and Christine was fine with that and John would have liked to have been in an all-black blues band, so he was onboard. We were definitely all on the rhythm train. We set off on this journey to the top of the mount, and this record started to unravel itself in The Village [recording studio] and become something entirely different.”

One of the first steps taken, however, was something way beyond the budget of even the most successful new wave acts. Mick Fleetwood thought they should build their own studio, especially after *Rumours* had found them using different studios in three different cities before they got exactly what they wanted. A state-of-the-art facility called Studio D was constructed at LA’s The Village Recorder for this purpose, the final bill running about \$1.4 million. While no expense was spared in setting up the best equipment, considerable cash was spent on nonessentials like a lounge with English beer on tap, and huge ivory tusks on each side of the console. And, Fleetwood’s intentions to the contrary, after all that money had been doled out, they didn’t actually own the studio—the kind of planning that would land Fleetwood in serious financial trouble in the near future.

Nor would the band go into the studio, work single-mindedly on the sessions for a few months, and promptly come out with a finished product. This being Fleetwood Mac, there were plenty of distractions and crises to impede the flow chart. Mick and John played on “Werewolves of London,” the breakthrough hit for Los Angeles singer-songwriter Warren Zevon. The band played nearly a dozen shows in big American venues in July and August, including such huge ones as the Cotton Bowl in Dallas and JFK Stadium in Philadelphia, both of which had around one hundred thousand seats. Buckingham recorded many of his parts for some works-in-progress at home, at times banging on shoeboxes for the rhythm and cutting vocals in his bathroom. In the process, he upset some other members of the group, particularly the McVies, who felt he should be doing all his work as part of the team in a proper studio.

“When we started the album, we had a meeting at Mick’s house,” remembered Buckingham in *Trouser Press*. “I said I had to get some sort of machine into my house as an alternative to the studio. The trappings and technology of the studio are so great—the blocks between the inception of an idea and the final thing you get on tape are so many—that it just becomes very frustrating. That was why my songs turned out the way they did: the belief in a different approach. For me it wasn’t really a question of changing tastes, but of following through on something I’d believed in for a long time and hadn’t had a means of manifesting.”



Stevie Nicks at the Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin, on July 19, 1978. Getty Images

Their domestic situations continued to be as unsettled as ever. Fleetwood's father died in summer 1978, and his marriage crumbled soon afterward. Mick's confession of his fling with Stevie sealed the end of his relationship with his wife, as did his increased drinking. Christine embarked on a torrid affair with Dennis Wilson after meeting the notoriously volatile Beach Boys drummer at The Village Recorder, where he was working on a solo album. Earlier in 1978, John McVie had married Julie Rubens, with Mick acting as best man.

The extracurricular activities didn't get in the way of the band spending many hours in the studio, and spending more money on the recording than anyone had on any album. It took just under a year to complete, also taking up 175 reels of two-inch tape and almost 400 mix reels. As if to underscore his determination to give the record a different sound, on the very first day of recording, Buckingham asked Ken Caillat to twist every knob 180 degrees to "see what happens."



Christine McVie on accordion in concert with Fleetwood Mac, late 1970s. Getty Images

The stretched-out schedule wasn't solely due to their perfectionism, or a willingness to spend money that many viewed as indulgent, even decadent. With three writers and a generous two-year gap between albums, they were coming up with more songs than ever. Enough, it soon became

evident, for a double album, co-produced by the band with Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat. The three distinct but complementary kinds of compositions, as well as a growing appetite for experimentation, meant that Fleetwood Mac could now deliver their rough equivalent of the Beatles' *The White Album*, another double LP that had made the most of these attributes. In another echo of the late 1960s, Peter Green made an uncredited guest appearance on the final section of Christine McVie's "Brown Eyes," though his guitar is pretty low in the mix.

For all its reputation as something of a mad scientist laboratory exercise that grew out of control, *Tusk* isn't all that weird. It's not even as eccentric or eclectic as *The White Album*. The tracks written and sung by Christine McVie or Stevie Nicks were pretty much in line with the romantic pop they'd offered on the previous two albums, though perhaps not as bubbly or catchy. Buckingham's material, in contrast, was usually brittler in both construction and production, with a jagged, almost nervous feel that let his new wave inclinations into the mix, though not so much that the tracks could be mistaken for new wave.

To some degree, a bit of stripped-down new wave seeps into the production of some of the other songs too, especially in the rhythms and percussion. Fleetwood even asked Buckingham to make the songs he'd written more identifiably Fleetwood Mac in nature during the mixing process. But even some of Buckingham's less pointed departures from *Rumours* weren't quite like what he'd done on the previous two albums, with the dreamy "That's All for Everyone" coming off as something of a tripped-out psychedelic ballad with Caribbean overtones.

The title track, however, was as off-the-wall a cut as some listeners were bracing themselves for as reports of the elaborate *Tusk* sessions made it into the media. In fact, it was as off-the-wall as anything Fleetwood Mac had done, going back to the classical ending of "Oh Well" and Jeremy Spencer's rock 'n' roll parodies. Growing out of a riff the band played at sound checks, "Tusk" was not so much a song as a chant, its tribal rhythms overlaid with the same riff played by the University of Southern California Trojan Marching Band. The 112-strong USC outfit recorded their contributions in an empty Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, with the proceedings filmed for posterity, although John McVie was represented only by a life-sized photo, as he was on holiday in Hawaii.

By the time recording wrapped up in early summer 1979, they had not only enough material for a double album, but enough demos and outtakes to fill up a couple CDs on the five-disc 2015 deluxe edition of *Tusk*. They wanted all twenty of the finished tracks to be released, and understandably thought they had enough pull with Warner Brothers to justify such a package. In the CD era, all seventy-two minutes could fit on a single disc. Back in 1979, a double LP would be necessary.

The label initially balked at doing so, hoping the band would condense it into a single vinyl disc—something, incidentally, that producer George Martin had unsuccessfully tried to get the Beatles to do for *The White Album*. Whereas Martin's rationale had been to boil the sessions down to the very best songs, however, Reprise/Warner Brothers likely had more mercenary motives. As executive Mo Ostin told Fleetwood, the record industry was in a slump as the 1970s ended, generating fears that a double album wouldn't sell nearly as many units as a standard single LP. With the absence of songs that were nearly as obvious candidates for hit singles as *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours* had boasted (with the possible exception of "Sara"), the label could already have been mentally picturing a zero vanishing from the end of their projected sales figures.



Lindsey Buckingham at the Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin, on July 19, 1978. Getty Images

If that was the projection, it was accurate, at least out of the gate. *Rumours* had spent more than half a year at #1, logging sixty weeks in the Top 40. After *Tusk* came out in September 1979, it stopped at #4, occupying a Top 40 slot for twenty-two weeks. Warner Brothers' initial shipment of an estimated one and a half to two million copies was its largest in history; the list price of \$16 meant that it would need to sell about half a million copies just to break even. To put that price tag in perspective, in 2015, new copies of the standard single-disc CD reissue of

Tusk sold for only a dollar or two more, even with thirty-five years of inflation. As another strike against instant sales appeal, there wasn't even a photo of anyone in the band on the front cover, which instead featured Ken Caillat's dog Scooter nipping at his master's pants.

"Doing a double album didn't make any business sense at all," acknowledged Fleetwood in *Trouser Press*. "But it meant a lot to us, artistically—whether we could still feel challenged. We really, really are pleased with it. We've also, I think, got enough discretion to know if the songs aren't up to standard, in which case we'd have just put out a single album."

Two hit singles were pulled off *Tusk*, but these were likewise sales letdowns for those hoping for another "Dreams" or "Don't Stop." "Tusk" surprised many by getting to #8, followed by Stevie Nicks' more accessible "Sara," which in an edited version reached #7. Nicks revealed much later that Sara would have been the name she'd given a baby had a pregnancy with Don Henley come to full term. "It's accurate, but not the entirety of it," she told *Billboard* in 2014, adding elsewhere in the article, "there was another woman in my life named Sara, who shortly after that became Mick's wife, Sara Fleetwood."



"Tusk," the title track of Fleetwood Mac's 1979 album, was also a hit single.



"Sara" was the biggest hit from the Tusk album. Note the "special thanks to the band from Lindsey Buckingham" credit on the label. Buckingham was the most vital force behind Tusk 's production.



A promotional copy of the "Sara" single. About one and a half minutes were edited out of the album version when "Sara" was issued as a forty-five.

Sara Recor wasn't just another woman, but actually someone Nicks would later describe as her best friend, which must have multiplied the romantic pain and confusion. She was even there when Stevie wrote the song, which was pared down from a sixteen-minute demo. "I played it for J. D. [Souther] and Don Henley and they both said, 'You know what, it's almost not too long,'" she recalled in the liner notes to the 2015 *Tusk* deluxe edition. "'It's good in its full sixteen minuteness—it's got all these great verses and it just kinda travels through the world of your relationships.' They were really complimentary to me and these are two great songwriters. I knew I had to edit it down, but I found it hard to get below seven minutes. As simple and pretty as the song was, it turned into a magical, rhythmic, tribal thing with all those 'oohs' and 'aahs.' It's a fun song to sing."

Rumours had been almost as ecstatically received by critics as it was by record buyers, but *Tusk*'s press was decidedly mixed. "Unfortunately, Buckingham doesn't sing all that well (the mix notes this, and camouflages as best it can), and most of his songs are Barthelme-dull sketches buried in thump and clangor," wrote Mitchell Cohen in *Creem*. "*Tusk* isn't particularly impressive as a twenty-song compendium, and it has its perverse touches, and it will be noticed by millions. Trouble is, the sprawling format makes even more obvious the fact that Fleetwood Mac is at least three different bands, led by three miniaturists of varying talent: one a fragmentary rock-technician; one a sexily swirling mistress of misty dreams; one a very human, thoughtful singer-composer as scared as most of us are of the impermanence of intimacy."

Robert Christgau, who'd given *Rumours* an A grade in his *Village Voice* Consumer Guide, lowered his rating to B+ for *Tusk*, though he wasn't put off by its stranger aspects. "Not only don't Lindsey Buckingham's swelling edges and dynamic separations get in the way of the music, they're inextricable from the music, or maybe they *are* the music," he speculated. "The passionate dissociation of the mix is entirely appropriate to an ensemble in which the three principals have all but disappeared (vocally) from each other's work. But only Buckingham is attuned enough to get exciting music out of a sound so spare and subtle it reveals the limits of Christine McVie's simplicity and shows Stevie Nicks up for the mooncalf she's always been."

"Like [the Beatles'] *The White Album*, *Tusk* is less a collection of finished songs than a mosaic of pop-rock fragments by individual performers," was *Rolling Stone*'s more measured verdict. "*Tusk*'s twenty tunes—nine by Lindsey Buckingham, six by Christine McVie, five by Stevie Nicks—constitute a two-record 'trip' that covers a lot of ground, from rock & roll basics to a shivery psychedelia reminiscent of the band's earlier *Bare Trees* and *Future Games* to the opulent extremes of folk-rock arcana given the full Hollywood treatment. 'The White Album' was also a trip, but one that reflected the furious social banging around at the end of the Sixties. *Tusk* is much vaguer. Semiprogrammatic and nonliterary, it ushers out the Seventies with a long, melancholy sigh."

Just because the critics did not fall all over themselves with gushing praise didn't mean they didn't appreciate *Tusk*'s risk-taking. "If Fleetwood Mac is mainstream in its place in the music world, *Tusk* is radical in its

refusal of the mainstream's limits," wrote noted rock critic Greil Marcus in *New West*. "The most striking tracks were not quite songs, and they didn't make their claims as tracks. Programmers looked for The Cut, the one tune that hooks an album onto the air, the single number that will make programming rational, and programmers couldn't find it, because Fleetwood Mac had left it off."

Continued Marcus, "The stand Fleetwood Mac has taken with *Tusk* is as brave as that Bob Dylan took with *John Wesley Harding* [the end-of-1967 album on which Dylan, at the height of psychedelia, offered plaintive country-folk-flavored songs]—braver, perhaps, because Fleetwood Mac cannot rely on his kind of charisma, or on the kind of loyalty he commands... With its insistence on perceptions snatched out of a blur, drawing on (but never imitating) Jamaican dub and ancient Appalachian ballads, Fleetwood Mac is subverting the music from the inside out, very much like one of John le Carré's moles—who, planted in the heart of the establishment, does not begin his secret campaign of sabotage and betrayal until everyone has gotten used to him, and takes him for granted. *Tusk* is, in its lyrics, about romance out of reach; its music is also out of reach, which means that you have to make a certain effort to get hold of it."



Stevie Nicks on stage in 1978. Such was her star quality that, by this time, there were already rumors that she was considering starting a solo career. Getty Images

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

TUSK

By ZOË HOWE

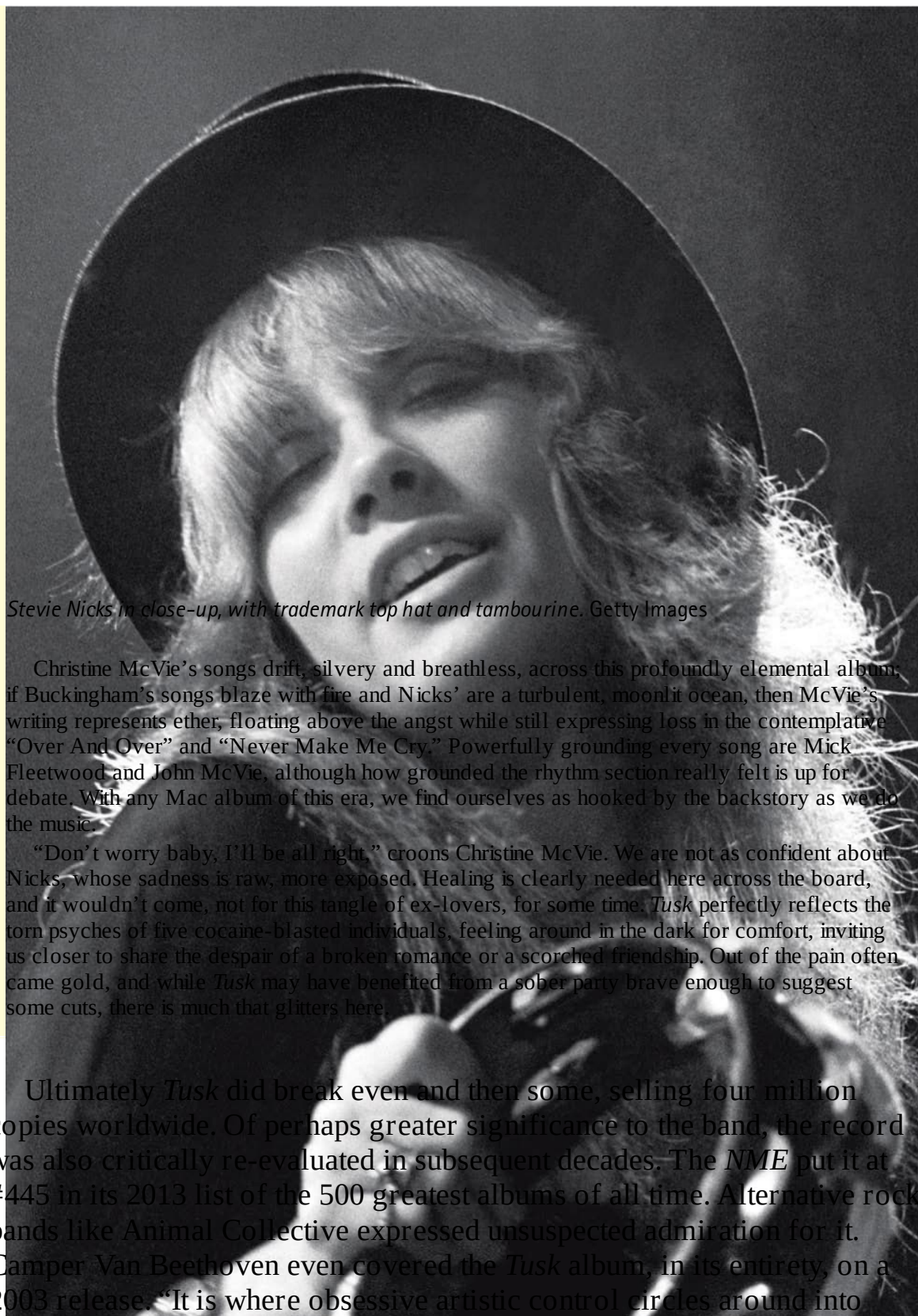
Rumours had been a brave step into uncharted territory, so it was vital that the follow-up would be fresh and forward-looking too (even if Warner Bros was counting on more of the same). Thirteen traumatic months later, a compelling, highly charged work was complete, but it was one that would lack a unified voice; the three songwriters of the band are clearly pulling against each other, creatively as well as personally.

Tusk is referred to as largely Buckingham's project, his forceful energy driving the band forward and simultaneously "shaking people's preconceptions of pop." Buckingham, newly inspired by punk (not that any self-respecting punk would have released a sprawling double album), injected some of that attitude into his writing, although musically the result would be less new wave and more bluegrass on amphetamines meets ELO (on amphetamines). This aggressive style obviously suited Buckingham's mood—there is much anger on *Tusk*. The title track, with its staccato riff, blaring horns, and feral vocals, and the metallic "That's Enough for Me" and "What Makes You Think You're the One?" radiate jagged, white-hot hurt. Every Buckingham song has a sting in its tail—and the sting jabs at Nicks every time.

McVie and Nicks, meanwhile, were evidently reluctant to force themselves into Buckingham's stylistic MO. They were happy writing the way they always had, concentrating on further honing their own songwriting voices and channeling their respective heartbreaks into song. In direct contrast to Buckingham's songs on *Tusk*, brimming with acidic nervous energy, Nicks' work—including the haunting "Sara," "Storms," and "Sisters of the Moon"—are cathartic but more reflective. Even on the upbeat "Angel," which stomps and whirls with sparkling energy, the bereft Nicks admits to "trying not to reach out" when her estranged love walks into the room.



The cover of Tusk was as unusual as its contents, picturing co-producer Ken Caillat's dog tugging at Caillat's pants.



Stevie Nicks in close-up, with trademark top hat and tambourine. Getty Images

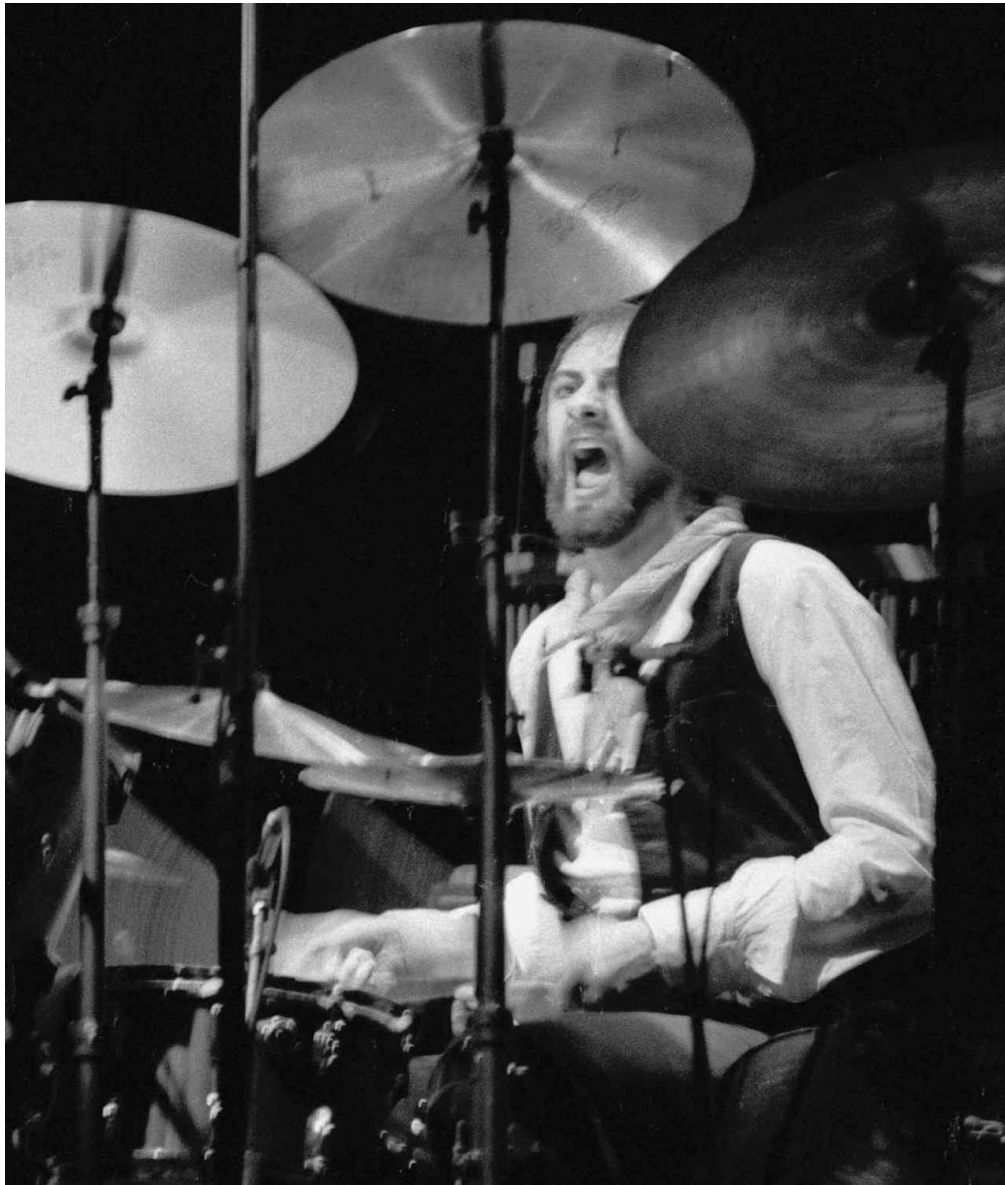
Christine McVie's songs drift, silvery and breathless, across this profoundly elemental album; if Buckingham's songs blaze with fire and Nicks' are a turbulent, moonlit ocean, then McVie's writing represents ether, floating above the angst while still expressing loss in the contemplative "Over And Over" and "Never Make Me Cry." Powerfully grounding every song are Mick Fleetwood and John McVie, although how grounded the rhythm section really felt is up for debate. With any Mac album of this era, we find ourselves as hooked by the backstory as we do the music.

"Don't worry baby, I'll be all right," croons Christine McVie. We are not as confident about Nicks, whose sadness is raw, more exposed. Healing is clearly needed here across the board, and it wouldn't come, not for this tangle of ex-lovers, for some time. *Tusk* perfectly reflects the torn psyches of five cocaine-blasted individuals, feeling around in the dark for comfort, inviting us closer to share the despair of a broken romance or a scorched friendship. Out of the pain often came gold, and while *Tusk* may have benefited from a sober party brave enough to suggest some cuts, there is much that glitters here.

Ultimately *Tusk* did break even and then some, selling four million copies worldwide. Of perhaps greater significance to the band, the record was also critically re-evaluated in subsequent decades. The *NME* put it at #445 in its 2013 list of the 500 greatest albums of all time. Alternative rock bands like Animal Collective expressed unsuspected admiration for it. Camper Van Beethoven even covered the *Tusk* album, in its entirety, on a 2003 release. "It is where obsessive artistic control circles around into

raggedness, where chaos and order dance together in a cloud of whirling scarves,” wrote Sam Anderson of the original Fleetwood Mac version in *The New York Times* in 2015. “The album probably has five too many songs, and a handful of tracks are two minutes too long, but that’s the cost of this kind of genius: excess, bombast, hubris, getting carried away.”

Knowing that the record would be a tougher sell than *Rumours*, Fleetwood Mac started a worldwide tour in late October that would last almost a year. The 111 shows were spread over three separate North American legs, along with concerts in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Europe. They had also, incidentally, hoped to do a concert in Russia to benefit UNESCO in the late 1970s, but increasing tensions between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan got in the way of pulling it off.



Mick Fleetwood at the LA Forum on December 6, 1979, about six weeks into the Tusk tour. Getty Images

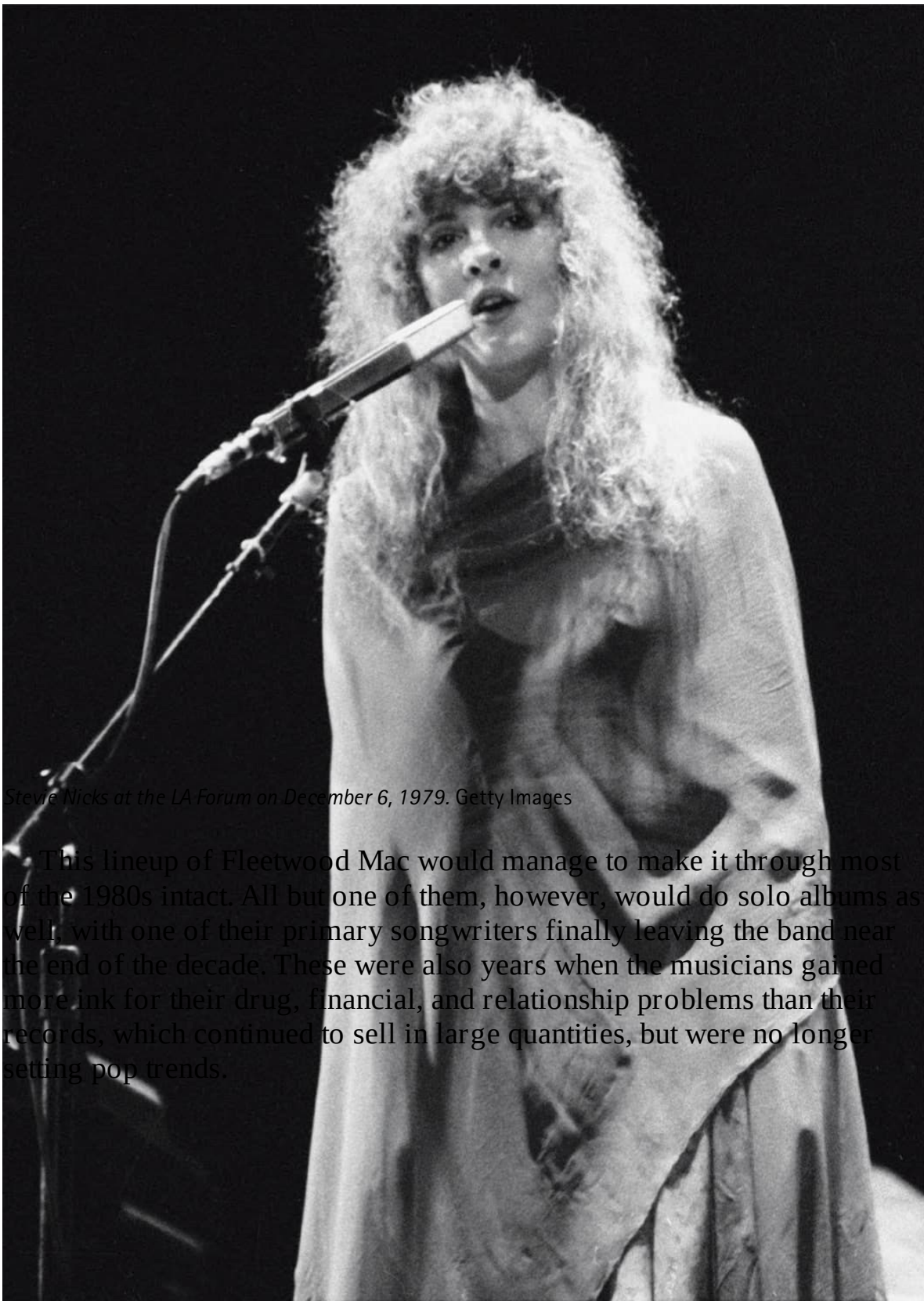
Even with *Tusk*'s mixed reception, Fleetwood Mac's tour was guaranteed to draw lots of fans, including many who hadn't bought or even liked *Tusk*. Madison Square Garden, Tokyo's Budokan, and London's Wembley Arena were just some of the massive venues they played, living up to the very stereotype of the kinds of huge arenas superstar punk rockers had denounced. Two CDs of recordings from the tour, about half of them from their June 1980 Wembley shows (including a faithful

rendering of the decade-old “Oh Well”), were issued in 2015 as part of the *Tusk* deluxe edition.

Rolling Stone singled out Buckingham for special praise in its review of their tour-ending September 1, 1980, show at the Hollywood Bowl. “It was Buckingham’s show at the beginning of the tour, and, if anything, he was more commanding at the end,” wrote Steve Pond. “Dressed in the ten-gallon hat, boots, and white V-neck T-shirt of a Beverly Hills cowboy, he was simply spectacular onstage. He dominated the band as completely as any human being could ever dominate drummer Mick Fleetwood and bassist John McVie—one of the most cohesive and potent rhythm sections in rock.” It was, the writer surmised, “a far gutsier evening than we logically expect from megastars.”

The tour didn’t make as much money as they hoped, in large part because of the huge overhead, with a private plane, exorbitant hotel suites, and, as Fleetwood confirmed in his first autobiography, “a king’s ransom” spent on cocaine. Rumors swirled, as they had almost since she’d joined the band, that Nicks would be going solo. At the beginning of 1980, she let Fleetwood know that she’d started a solo album, although she’d remain in Fleetwood Mac.

But by the end of the tour, there were rumors that the band was breaking up. These couldn’t help but get fueled when Buckingham announced at their final show that “This is our last concert... for a long time.” Just a few nights earlier, he’d told a Tucson crowd that the band was going to take some time off. Clearly, Fleetwood Mac was in doubt as to what the immediate future held, if not quite ready to consider breaking up.



Stevie Nicks at the LA Forum on December 6, 1979. Getty Images

This lineup of Fleetwood Mac would manage to make it through most of the 1980s intact. All but one of them, however, would do solo albums as well, with one of their primary songwriters finally leaving the band near the end of the decade. These were also years when the musicians gained more ink for their drug, financial, and relationship problems than their records, which continued to sell in large quantities, but were no longer setting pop trends.

Chapter 5

HITS, SPLITS, REUNIONS, AND SOLO PROJECTS 1980–2010

In the last half of the 1970s, Fleetwood Mac experienced success on a scale matched by few rock bands. They had two #1 albums, one of them among the biggest-selling albums of all time; served notice that they weren't going to sit on their laurels by issuing a different and fairly experimental double LP to end the decade; and did all this amidst personal and romantic turmoil that made for weeks of press field days. The route they'd taken to the top of the mountain was unlike any other group's, somehow navigating almost a decade of nerve-wracking personnel shifts and business setbacks. How could they possibly follow it up?

They couldn't, of course. No one could have. Instead, they'd take the course followed by many classic rock bands: a few more hit albums in their most successful style, a more sporadic release schedule that would eventually dwindle to nothing, and numerous solo projects that met with widely varying measures of commercial and critical success. Like many classic rock bands in middle age, their lineup altered as members left and rejoined, at some points threatening to becoming only half-recognizable to many of their fans.



In the 1980s, Lindsey Buckingham took on a different look as he began to issue solo albums, though he also remained in Fleetwood Mac for most of the decade. Getty Images

There were times over these three decades or so where the band seemed in danger of finally sputtering to a halt, whether due to their usual tabloid-worthy personal problems or sheer inactivity. One thing that was clear was that, despite the hits (some quite large) landed by a few solo members, the group was worth more collectively than individually. And the quintet that formed in 1975 and stayed intact for a dozen years was the one people wanted to see, even if they've only periodically managed to reunite in the last thirty years.

While the 1980s had kicked off to a roaring start for Fleetwood Mac as they played to huge crowds around the world, some things had to change after the year-long tour ended in late 1980. They'd need to take some time off, not only from the road, but also to pursue solo projects. For some years, Stevie Nicks had been rumored to be splitting for a solo career, and, while Mick Fleetwood denied she'd be leaving in an April 1980 article in *Trouser Press*, he confirmed that "both Stevie and Christine definitely are going to make solo albums. I want to make one as well—in Africa. But if we can't do that without having to split the band up, then it's a bit of a pity."

More contentiously, Fleetwood would be relieved of his role as manager. There was unhappiness over the band's failure to make more money from their world tour, though their insistence on luxury travel, accommodations, and accoutrements made turning big profits difficult. In addition, Nicks and Buckingham had decided to get managers of their own, Nicks signing with Eagles manager Irving Azoff. Fleetwood maintained his position as bandleader, in part because it was hard to envision anyone else being up to the task. But in business, Fleetwood Mac was now more of a democracy, and as a band, they were more oriented toward business than they'd ever been.



Fleetwood Mac at London's Wembley Arena on June 25, 1980, near the end of the European leg of the Tusk tour. Getty Images

Another business decision that tore the band in different directions, if not as momentarily as their management shifts, was the release of a live album shortly after the world tour's conclusion. As Fleetwood later admitted, he was the only one who wanted to put it out, Buckingham and John McVie in particular opposing the move. While it functioned as something of a stopgap in a three-year space between studio releases, the double LP *Fleetwood Mac Live* was more of a commercial disappointment than *Tusk* had been, peaking at #14. Perhaps the band was finally reaching the point of overexposure, though it did at least offer three new songs, all of them recorded in front of crew and friends at the Santa Monica Civic Auditorium. One, "Fireflies," was a Nicks original; another, "One More Night," was written by Christine McVie; and a third, a cover of the early Beach Boys track "The Farmer's Daughter," testified both to the group's love of the Beach Boys and Christine's love for Dennis Wilson, with whom she was still romantically involved.

As they had three singer-songwriters who'd each carved distinct identities and written big hit singles, it was no surprise that each of the three would have no trouble landing solo deals if they wished. What was a surprise was that none of them was first out of the gate with a solo album. Instead, the first solo LP by a current member of Fleetwood Mac (other than Jeremy Spencer's obscure 1970 self-titled release) was Fleetwood's *The Visitor*. Making good on his interest in African music, he went to Ghana to record with musicians from the region. As this was a few years in advance of Paul Simon's *Graceland* and the general boom in the awareness of African pop in the West, it marked Fleetwood as a pioneer of sorts in bridging the gap between rock and what came to be known as world music.



Mick Fleetwood with two local children in Ghana, February 1981. His first solo album, *The Visitor*, was one of the first albums by a rock star to make extensive use of African music. Getty Images

Warner Brothers was reluctant to fund a \$300,000 project since, as Fleetwood put it to *Rolling Stone*, “I think people felt I was gonna come out here and record ethnic grunts and groans and put my name on it because I’d gone halfway around the twist with bein’ obsessed about bein’

a drummer.” But *The Visitor* (which came out on RCA instead) wasn’t exactly an African drumming album, however, or even an Afro-pop album. In England, Fleetwood and other musicians—including ex-brother-in-law George Harrison and, on a remake of “Rattlesnake Shake,” Peter Green—added parts in Jimmy Page’s studio. In some ways *The Visitor* was stranger (at least to Western ears) and more eclectic than *Tusk*, mixing tracks strongly rooted in African percussion with vocal-oriented numbers that verged on pop songs. There was even a version of Lindsey Buckingham’s “Walk a Thin Line,” less than two years after it came out on *Tusk*.



Mick Fleetwood dancing with local residents in February 1981, when he recorded much of The Visitor in Ghana. Getty Images

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

LIVE ALBUMS

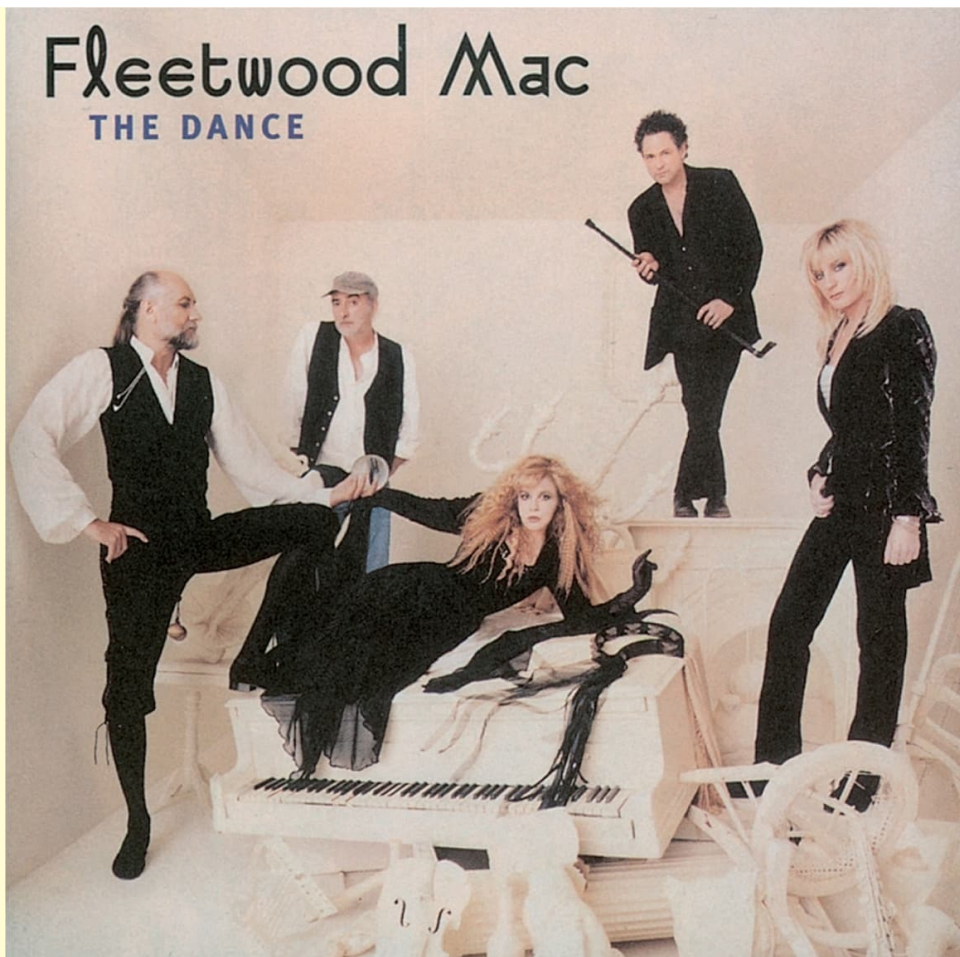
By GARY GRAFF

For the past four-plus decades, Fleetwood Mac has made its mark primarily in the studio, where the deft and adventurous hand of Lindsey Buckingham has ushered the band through polished pop masterpieces such as *Fleetwood Mac*, *Rumours*, *Mirage*, and *Tango in the Night*, and the experimental daring of *Tusk*. But it should not be forgotten that Fleetwood Mac, even in the Buckingham-Nicks era, is a potent live act, too, having cut its teeth at the Marquee and other clubs in London and honed itself in arena and stadiums around the world.

Fortunately that side of the band is well-documented on disc as well.

The early Fleetwood Mac is captured, appropriately enough, on *Live at the Marquee*, a 1999 release of a 1967 show whose poor sound quality unfortunately eclipses a solid twelve-song performance. Peter Green and Jeremy Spencer stretched out on tracks such as “Talk to Me Baby,” “Evil Woman Blues,” and “Dust My Blues” as well as Green’s “Looking for Somebody” and Elmore James’ “Shake Your Moneymaker,” which both appeared on the group’s self-titled studio debut that year. Similar sound issues plague *London Live 1968* (also released as *Fleetwood Mac: The Dream*), which surfaced in 2001 from an April 27 show at the Polytechnic of Central London with muscular renditions of “Got to Move,” “Buzz Me,” and “My Baby’s a Good ’Un.”

There are more satisfying live releases to be found from the group’s Green-led era, however. The 1995 set *Live at the BBC* sports two discs of performances from 1967–1971, effectively chronicling the evolution of the group from gutbucket blues to a more sophisticated blues-rock blend, and from a quartet to a quintet with the arrival of Danny Kirwan. It also showcased the firepower Fleetwood Mac could generate in short bursts; only on “Rattlesnake Shake,” which clocks in at 7:38, and the five-minute “Sandy Mary” does the group get a chance to stretch out and improvise. Mostly, *Live at the BBC* features compact, two- to four-minute renditions of their repertoire, with some of the Kirwan material—“Early Morning Come,” “Although the Sun Is Shining,” and “Like Crying Like Dying”—faring best, since he was the most pop-savvy of the band’s three frontmen.



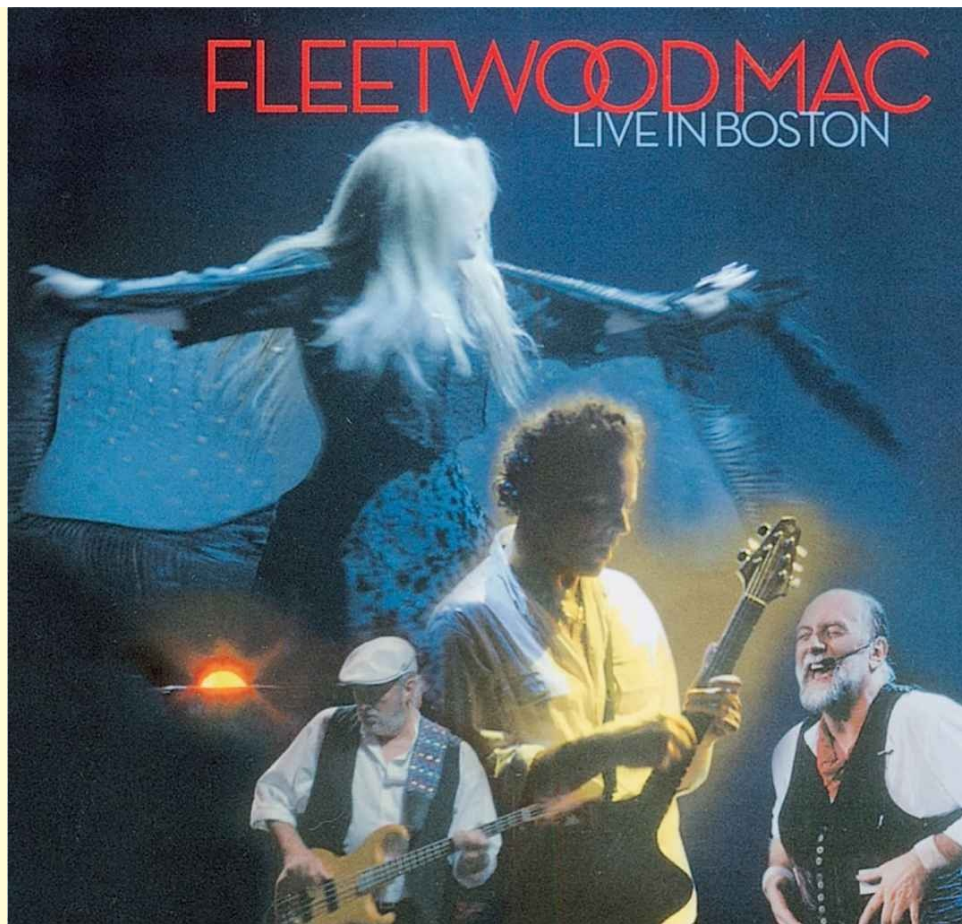
Recorded live on May 23, 1997, The Dance restored Fleetwood Mac to the top of the charts.

Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac



Live at The Marquee

Live at the Marquee features Fleetwood Mac in concert on August 15, 1967. With original bassist Bob Brunning still in the lineup, this was just the second show they ever performed.



The Live in Boston DVD was filmed at Fleetwood Mac's concerts during their Say You Will tour on September 23 and 24, 2003.

Shrine 69, capturing the group in Los Angeles and released thirty years later with Mick Fleetwood's full blessing and supervision, also finds the five-piece in fine form, right up to the somewhat lewd album-closing rendition of Carl Perkins' "Blue Suede Shoes," during which Spencer plays piano and extols the size of his, well, crawling king snake—not the kind of thing he could ever pull off at the staid BBC. *Live in Boston*, which has been released by a number of different labels and under different titles since 1985, finds the quintet on a kind of home turf at the Boston Tea Party during February of 1970, one of the group's early haunts and supportive locales. The initial release sported just seven songs, including killer workouts on "Black Magic Woman" and Elmore James' "Can't Hold On." A three-disc *Live in Boston: Remastered* from 1998 is a thirty-song beast that offers the best survey of this incarnation of the band at a peak period, before things started to go awry, and features guest appearances by Eric Clapton and Joe Walsh on a thirteen-minute-plus "Encore Jam." *Vintage Years Live*, from 2008, is another repackaging of the Tea Party stand that has a more hit-conscious selection than the original single-disc releases.

Fleetwood Mac would not chronicle its live act again until the Buckingham-Nicks era, with 1980's *Live*, drawing from shows between 1977 and 1980. The blues are gone and so is the raw, anything-can-happen abandon of the Green-Spencer-Kirwan days; *Live* is the work of a smooth and slick hit-making act—albeit one that could certainly generate its own fireworks, such as extended romps through "Not That Funny," "Rhiannon," and Buckingham's six-string showcase

“I’m So Afraid.” The set also includes a pair of sound check recordings, the Nicks original “Fireflies” and a cover of the Beach Boys’ “The Farmer’s Daughter.”

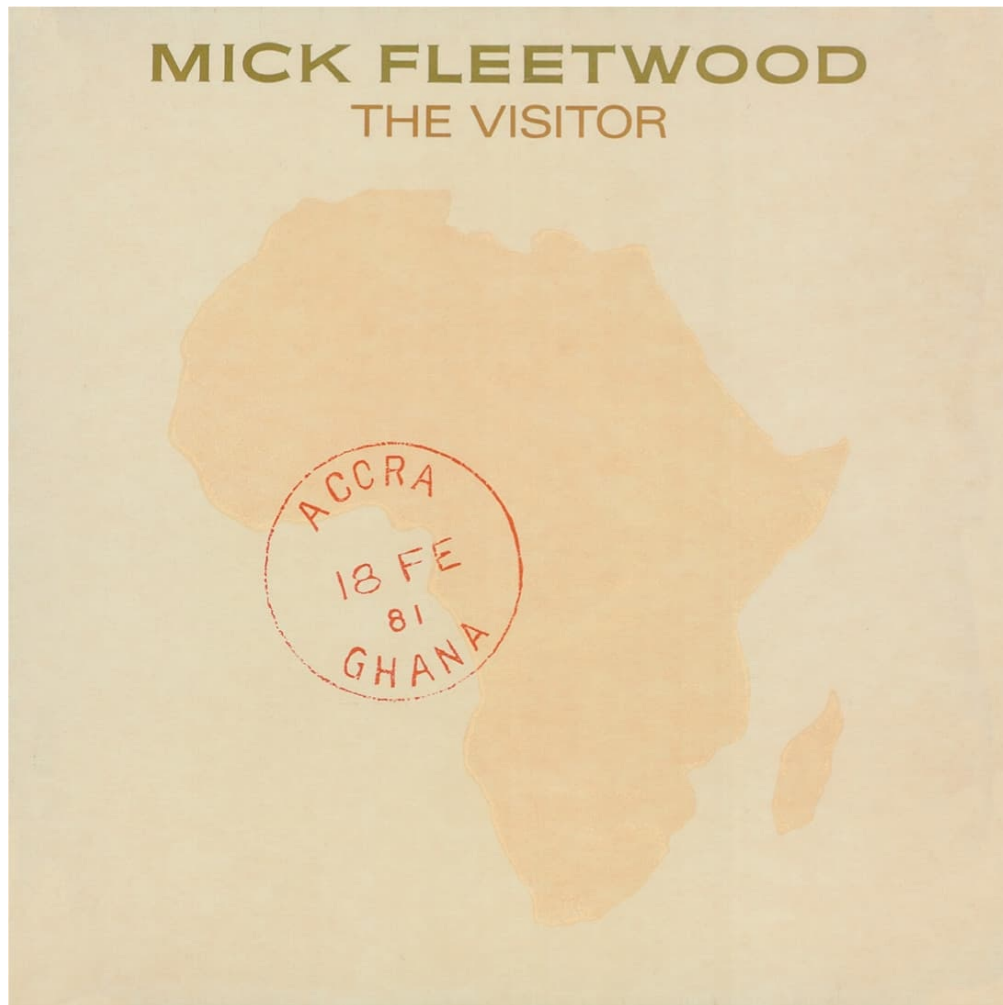
Fleetwood Mac also included concert performances as bonus material on deluxe reissues of *Rumours* and *Tusk*. The former captures a confident, swaggering outfit following up the success of 1975’s *Fleetwood Mac*, while the latter features more *Tusk* material than the 1980 *Live* release contained.

The Dance came in 1997 as a tool for the group’s reunion after a decade apart, since Buckingham quit after 1987’s *Tango in the Night*. Recorded for MTV and pitched a bit more musically low-key and intimate than *Live*, the hits-heavy set was highlighted by performances of some rare songs, such as Buckingham’s “Bleed to Love Her” (which later surfaced on 2003’s *Say You Will*), and Nicks’ “Silver Springs,” the “Go Your Own Way” B-side that was one of *The Dance*’s singles. And the University of Southern California’s Trojan Marching Band added some brassy oomph to “Tusk” and “Don’t Stop.” This was clearly how fans wanted to hear Fleetwood Mac live, at least on record; *The Dance* debuted at #1 on the Billboard 200, has sold more than six million copies worldwide, and ranks as the fifth-best-selling live album of all time in the US. It also won three Grammy Awards.

Fleetwood Mac rolled the tapes in Boston again during September of 2003 for *Live in Boston*, which came out the following June. The CD/DVD set hailed from one of the group’s most polarizing periods, when Christine McVie was retired and Buckingham and Nicks were fronting the band as a duo. The approach is certainly different from *Live* or *The Dance*—a bit more spacious and even in some cases more aggressive, with the two clearly feeling a different weight of responsibility but also energized by the then-new *Say You Will* album. Buckingham sounds a bit more up to the task, particularly during his frenetic solo acoustic performance of “Big Love” and extended treatments of “Peacekeeper” and “I’m So Afraid.” Nicks sounds a bit more reserved but still holds her own, giving “Rhiannon,” “Gypsy,” “Gold Dust Woman,” and “Stand Back” plenty of brass and the tender “Landslide” some genuine emotion. McVie, and particularly her songs, were missed, but *Live in Boston* documents how Fleetwood Mac confronted another of its myriad twists head-on and came out still intriguing, if not necessarily better.

The Visitor wasn’t a big hit upon its mid-1981 release, peaking at #43, though selling records wasn’t the goal or expectation of Fleetwood. On the other hand, everyone expected Nicks’ first solo album to be a smash. Even pre-*Rumours*, she’d been singled out as a potential solo star, and more actual rumors had buzzed about her leaving for a solo career than they had around any other member of Fleetwood Mac. As the most colorful performer and commercial (if not by a huge stretch) songwriter in the band, all she had to do was write and sing a whole album, not just a third of one. Which was not an obstacle, since “the only reason I started a solo career is because I wanted to do more of my songs,” she told *BAM* magazine. “I will much rather work within Fleetwood Mac.” Confirmed Christine McVie to David Gans in *Record*, “Stevie’s very prolific. She writes constantly, and all her songs are like babies to her, even though

some of them are rubbish. When I write, I sit down and work on an idea until it's finished, but Stevie cranks out songs all the time."



Mick Fleetwood's first solo album, 1981's The Visitor, was largely recorded in Ghana.



Stevie Nicks in the early 1980s. Her debut solo album, *Bella Donna*, topped the charts in September 1981. Getty Images

Coming out just a bit after *The Visitor*, and co-produced by Tom Petty and Jimmy Iovine, *Bella Donna* delivered the sales blockbuster the label with which she'd signed a solo deal (Modern) wanted. Sounding much like her songs with Fleetwood Mac, yet (with some help from Don Henley on a couple tracks) even more in the pop-rock mainstream, it made #1. With backup by Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" (co-written by Petty) was a #3 single, and "Leather and Lace," one of the cuts with Henley, made #6. A couple other songs from the LP were smaller hits, and it was obvious she could break from Fleetwood Mac and sustain a lucrative solo career if she chose to do so.

That couldn't be said of Buckingham after his maiden voyage, *Law and Order*, appeared in October 1981. If Fleetwood had opted to go rather esoteric on his own, and Nicks even closer to the middle of the road, Buckingham chose the road that zigzagged. Often pinpointed as the source of Fleetwood Mac's most daring and noncommercial ventures on *Tusk*, Buckingham now had the chance to explore—some would say indulge—more eccentric inclinations than were likely to be welcomed on a Fleetwood Mac album, certainly in such quantity. The opening track, “Bwana,” was introduced by chirping crickets; an extended instrumental break in “Johnny Stew” was dominated by odd grunting noises; and numerous cuts, such as “Johnny Stew,” boasted the kind of stripped-down, new wave-influenced sound that some of his *Tusk* songs had. Strong traces of rockabilly and country could be heard as well on numbers such as “Love from Here, Love from There.”



Stevie Nicks' first solo album, Bella Donna, went to #1 shortly after its release in the summer of 1981.

Even the covers—of the rock oldie “It Was I,” the country standard “A Satisfied Mind,” and Kurt Weill’s “September Song”—were both indicative of Buckingham’s wide-ranging palette and well outside the kinds of material he’d written and performed in Fleetwood Mac. With Mick Fleetwood on drums, one of the more conventional tunes, “Trouble,” became a Top 10 single. But the *Law and Order* LP peaked at a disappointing #32, indicating Buckingham was a far more salable commodity as part of Fleetwood Mac than on his own.



Lindsey Buckingham had been the chief force behind the most adventurous aspects of Tusk, but Fleetwood Mac would play it safer on their 1980s albums. Getty Images

As to why Christine McVie failed to issue a solo album during this period, perhaps she was distracted by the end of her volatile relationship with Dennis Wilson. Wilson, caught in a downward spiral of substance abuse and personal problems, drowned in Marina Del Rey near Los Angeles in December 1983, not long after getting kicked out of the Beach Boys for good. Written by McVie about Wilson, “Hold Me” became the first single off *Mirage*, the album Fleetwood Mac started to record in France in spring 1981, even before *The Visitor* was released.

The band was not just in France for the fine food. After overextending himself with property he'd bought in the United States and Australia, Fleetwood was running into financial problems that would culminate in bankruptcy sooner than anyone imagined. On the way to Ghana to record *The Visitor*, his credit card had even been cut off. By recording at Le Château d'Hérouville (about sixty miles from Paris, and famed as the studio where Elton John cut *Honky Chateau*), Fleetwood wouldn't be liable for American taxes.

Just as there were no illusions that *Tusk* would be a *Rumours II*, so were there no illusions that *Mirage* would be a *Tusk II*. As Buckingham put it in Rob Trucks' *Tusk* book, when *Tusk* "came out and didn't sell 60 million albums there was a backlash politically within the band and we had another meeting which basically went something like this: 'Well, Lindsey, we still want you to produce but we're not going to do *that process* anymore.'" Much of *Mirage* was recorded live as a band, though that was followed, as had become customary, by a good half year or so of overdubbing and polishing. Buckingham might have still had a strong voice in production, but officially the production was co-credited to Fleetwood Mac, Richard Dashut, and Ken Caillat, as it had been on every album since *Rumours*.



Fleetwood Mac jamming at the US Festival on May 30, 1983, in San Bernardino, California. Getty Images

Anyone worried that the band was up to *Tusk II* must have had their doubts assuaged by the very first notes of *Mirage*'s opening cut, "Love in Store." Here was the Fleetwood Mac with which pop fans were most familiar and comfortable: hopeful, romantic, and catchy, with vocal harmony. In keeping with the band's bent for weird pairings, romantic and otherwise, it was co-written by Christine McVie and Jim Recor, husband of the same Sara Recor that Fleetwood had begun a relationship with in the late 1970s and would marry in 1988.

The rest of the album largely followed suit. “Hold Me” was their biggest hit since “Don’t Stop,” reaching #4 and staying in the Top 40 for fifteen weeks. Saved specifically for the band rather than getting used on *Bella Donna*, Nicks’ “Gypsy” didn’t do quite as well, though it made #12, supported by the most expensive music video that had ever been produced (and which became MTV’s first “World Premiere Video”). But it became one of her signature tunes, and is probably the most popular song from the album. As she noted in a 2009 interview with *Entertainment Weekly*, the song was inspired by a time when she was a gypsy of sorts: “In the old days, before Fleetwood Mac, Lindsey [Buckingham] and I had no money, so we had a king-size mattress, but we just had it on the floor. I had old vintage coverlets on it, and even though we had no money it was still really pretty... just that and a lamp on the floor, and that was it—there was a certain calmness about it.”

Even Buckingham’s songs were more accessible than they’d been on his solo album and much of *Tusk*. His “Oh Diane” (written with Richard Dashut), taking its inspiration from the teen idol pop of the late 1950s and early 1960s, was a Top 10 UK hit, though it missed the charts altogether in his home country. *Rolling Stone* saw Buckingham’s songs and strong voice in the production as key to the record’s impact. “On *Mirage*, Lindsey Buckingham once again reaches into his bag of magically production tricks and pulls out an elusive gem of a Fleetwood Mac record that, to borrow some lines from his own ‘Can’t Go [Back],’ has ‘a face as soft as a tear in a clown’s eye,’” wrote John Milward in his review.

For some who missed the more abrasive *Tusk*, or even the tenser *Rumours*, the rock was *too* soft and comfortable. “People say this is *Rumours II*,” Buckingham told *Rolling Stone* a couple months later. “I don’t see it that way. I certainly see it as a more conservative album, but there are a lot of albums coming out by artists who are sounding a little more pop and a little softer—Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson.” In 1987 he’d be much tougher on *Mirage* in the same magazine, calling it “safe” and “uninspired.”

Christine McVie put a more positive spin on the album’s mood in *Sounds*. “There’s nothing weird on it at all, there’s no little hidden goblins anywhere, it’s all straightforward simple rock ’n’ roll songs,” she reassured readers. “These songs are an awful lot happier. *Rumours* was

kind of the message of doom, the songs were up but the words were all about each other's jaded love lives."

The upshot was that *Mirage* topped the charts for five weeks running in the summer of 1982. Much to Fleetwood's disappointment, it would not be followed by the customary grueling stadium tour to capitalize on a new hot record. They did make a relatively brief tour of the United States in September and October, highlighted by a closing slot at the Labor Day Weekend US Festival, which drew an audience of almost half a million. Highlights of the tour, featuring performances of thirteen songs, were issued on VHS in 1984 as *Fleetwood Mac in Concert: Mirage Tour 1982*, though it's not currently available on DVD.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

MIRAGE

By NEIL DANIELS

Fleetwood Mac's thirteenth studio album arrived after a temporary lull in the band's career, which saw both Buckingham and Nicks pursue solo careers. Buckingham's debut album *Law and Order* (1981) arrived on the *Billboard* charts at a fairly disappointing #32, while Nicks—somewhat predictably—achieved far greater success with 1981's *Bella Donna*, a #1 multi-platinum release. The lengthy *Tusk* world tour was draining, and it was over a year later that the band reconnected with each other to begin work on what would become *Mirage*.

With co-producers Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat, the band recorded *Mirage* at Le Château in Hérouville, France, as well as Larrabee Sounds Studios and the Record Plant back home in LA. The tapes were then mixed at George Massenburg Labs in West Los Angeles.

In the end, *Mirage* would be a far cry from *Tusk*, a more musically demanding album, while *Mirage* is, to put it simply, FM friendly. Soft rock ruled the airwaves. Bands such as Journey, Boston, REO Speedwagon, and Styx had sold millions of albums with their sugar-coated brand of AOR (album-orientated rock). 1980s Fleetwood Mac was not too dissimilar. Peter Green enthusiasts would keep their distance in the same way Peter Gabriel fans distanced themselves from the Phil Collins-fronted version of English progressive rockers, Genesis.

However, as far as sales were concerned, the shift in sound to radio-friendly rock would come up trumps as the album spawned a few hit singles: notably "Hold Me," "Love in Store," "Oh Diane," and "Can't Go Back." The album also gave birth to the excellent number "Gypsy," penned by Nicks and released as a single. The music video, directed by Aussie filmmaker Russell Mulcahy, was the highest-ever-budgeted music video created at the time. The full five-and-a-half-minute version of the song was finally released in 1992 as part of the commemorative release *25 Years—The Chain*. "Gypsy" is also a staple live number and continues to be a fan favorite.



*Fleetwood Mac's 1982 album **Mirage** restored them to the #1 position after the relative commercial disappointment of **Tusk**.*

While the band's previous three studio albums (*Fleetwood Mac*, *Rumours*, and *Tusk*) were compelling and emotionally attuned, *Mirage* is a straight-ahead rock album with a glossy production and dulcet melodies—but it lacks heart. That's not to say the album doesn't have an emotional core as far as the band is concerned: "Straight Back" is about Nicks' separation from producer and industry mogul Jimmy Iovine, while the history of "That's Alright" goes back to 1974 and Nicks' relationship with Buckingham.

It was an emotional time for Nicks, having established a hugely successful solo career, and to go back to Fleetwood Mac offered some difficult adjustments.



About thirty seconds were edited out of the album version of "Gypsy" when it was released as a single.



"Hold Me" was the biggest single from the Mirage album.



Another version of the "Hold Me" single.

Despite some weaknesses, through a handful of superlative songs, *Mirage* was a success. It spent a healthy eighteen weeks in the US Top 10, making it the band's first US #1 since *Rumours*, and was a Top 10 UK hit too.

Mirage was not a groundbreaking album either artistically or commercially, but that's not to say it doesn't have merit. Some would say the band had lost their edge, which is not too far from the truth, but as a standalone album and not placed in comparison to their greatest work, *Mirage* is a thoroughly pleasing rock opus.

In crucial respects, chart statistics aside, it wasn't the same for the band as when *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours* had been #1 in the mid-1970s. The others didn't share Fleetwood's appetite for touring in bulk. Solo projects hadn't been in the mix in the early days of the Buckingham-Nicks lineup; now everyone had such irons in the fire except for John McVie. Nicks in

particular was in demand not only for a follow-up album to *Bella Donna*, but also as a concert artist, having already toured behind her first LP in late 1981. (A December 13, 1981, Los Angeles concert from that tour was broadcast on HBO, and subsequently issued on video.)

In 1983, there would be no Fleetwood Mac studio album. That in itself was no shock; they hadn't put studio LPs out in consecutive years since 1974 and 1975. But now the break stretched out so long that it would be five years until the next Fleetwood Mac record. Much like when the Beatles broke up, fans had to content themselves with following the members' erratic solo careers, the crucial difference being there was no official announcement or indication that Fleetwood Mac had actually split.

Nicks, as anticipated, reaped the most dividends as a soloist, even if she couldn't maintain the momentum of her blockbuster debut. In mid-1983, *The Wild Heart* went to the Top 5, as did its big hit single, "Stand Back." Again Nicks got an assist from Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers, who backed her on the Petty-penned "I Will Run to You." With a lower profile, Fleetwood gave a hand to his bandmate by drumming on another track, "Sable on Blonde." On a more somber note, 1983 was also the year of Nicks' only marriage, which lasted just a few months. Subsequently, she maintained the marriage—to Kim Anderson, recently widowed husband of her friend Robin Anderson—being motivated not by love, but by shared grief for the loss of his wife to leukemia, as well as by a hope to support the Andersons' infant son, to whom Nicks was godmother.

Also in 1983, Fleetwood got a band together and issued his second album, credited to Mick Fleetwood's Zoo. *I'm Not Me* mixed oldies covers, band originals (none penned by Fleetwood), and a cut co-written by Buckingham and Fleetwood Mac co-producer Richard Dashut. With instrumental contributions by Buckingham and Christine McVie, it was a far less left-field venture than *The Visitor*. Yet it failed to make the charts at all, and a US tour was ill-attended, though Fleetwood had a blast playing to small club audiences. He didn't follow through on the final LP of his three-album deal with RCA Records, and wouldn't do another record without Fleetwood Mac for almost another ten years. One association he formed in Mick Fleetwood's Zoo would prove vital to his primary band's survival, however, when their guitarist, Billy Burnette, joined Fleetwood Mac a few years later.

Christine McVie finally made her long-awaited solo album—not her debut, as she’d put out an LP as Christine Perfect back in 1970—with a self-titled effort in early 1984. Buckingham, Eric Clapton, Stevie Nicks, and the ever-reliable/faithful Fleetwood made guest appearances on the record, with McVie co-writing half of the tracks with guitarist Todd Sharp. Although she brought as many musical assets to the table as Nicks or Buckingham, McVie seemed oddly unsuited for the solo spotlight, and only wrote one track on *Christine McVie* on her own. Others were co-written with Winwood and Billy Burnette, while three (all written or co-written by Sharp) didn’t bear her composing credit at all.

The record did generate two hits, with “Got a Hold on Me” making the Top 10, and the perky “Love Will Show Us How” hitting #30. Yet the album as a whole under-performed, peaking at #26. In line with her general nonchalance toward hogging the stage, she has done only one other solo album since then, and even that took a good twenty years to appear.



Mick Fleetwood on stage, 1987. The drummer has always been the member of Fleetwood Mac most dedicated to touring and playing live shows. Getty Images



Christine McVie's self-titled 1984 solo album, like all of Fleetwood Mac's solo efforts (except those of Stevie Nicks), wasn't nearly as popular as the band's hit albums.



On solo albums like 1984's *Go Insane*, Lindsey Buckingham ventured into some areas he couldn't explore as part of Fleetwood Mac.

"I was never too keen on the idea of a solo thing," she confessed a few years later in *BAM* magazine. "I do not enjoy the pressure of being the only one up there who everybody looks to for leadership. I like being part of a group. But the time was trickling on by and I could see Fleetwood Mac was not going to be happening for a while, so I did an album and a tour. That was hard work. I had to do my own make-up and the whole bit. My make-up used to run down my face and by the end of the night, it was horrific. So no, I would not want to tour [solo] again. My life, musically speaking, has always been Fleetwood Mac—at least for the last twenty years—and I have enjoyed it thoroughly."

Also released in 1984, Buckingham's second album charted even lower than *Christine McVie*. Titled *Go Insane*, the first part of the opening track

gave some listeners the impression Buckingham *had* gone insane, as his near-spoken vocals were backed with swooping electronic noises and robotic chants before the song changed into a merry electro-pop tune. He hadn't gone insane, but he had broken up with longtime girlfriend Carol Ann Harris, dedicating the album to her. The title track gave him a Top 30 hit, but the extremely mid-1980s synthetic beats were so different from what he'd played in Fleetwood Mac that it couldn't be reasonably expected to appeal to many fans of his work in that group. Buckingham demonstrated his virtuosity and command of the studio by playing and singing nearly all the parts himself, and paid his own Dennis Wilson tribute with the nearly seven-minute closing track, "D. W. Suite."

"I'm trying to break down preconceptions about what pop music is," Buckingham proclaimed in *Rolling Stone*, probably fully aware that doing so would turn off a lot of fans of the pop he'd excelled at in Fleetwood Mac. "I'm struggling to be original," unlike, in his view, the other singer-songwriters in the band. Buckingham landed a low blow by adding, "I've seen Stevie's show, I've seen Christine's show. To me, they both bordered on being lounge acts, simply because they were resting so heavily on Fleetwood Mac's laurels. But I think you owe it to yourself and you owe it to your audience to try at least."

The biggest headlines that anyone in Fleetwood Mac made in 1984, however, had nothing to do with their records. In spring 1984, Mick Fleetwood filed for bankruptcy. While the exact figure is probably impossible to calculate, newspapers of the time, as he remembered in his first autobiography, reported that he'd lost or—both metaphorically and quite literally—blown eight million dollars. As for tabloid speculation that much of his assets had been wasted on more indulgent pleasures, claimed Fleetwood in his first autobiography, "People were saying that I'd put eight million dollars up my nose, but if I'd done all the things they said, I'd have been dead long ago."

Exactly how he managed to go bust in the wake of nearly a decade of phenomenally high-selling records and concerts would probably fill a book in itself. But in his own books, Fleetwood does lay out the essential details. His business manager led him into some bad investments; he was overextended on his various mortgages; and Fleetwood Mac's failure to tour as much as he anticipated over the last few years had drastically cut into his income. At one point he had to borrow \$50,000 from Christine

McVie. Eventually he was reduced to selling his gold records, car collection, and recording equipment. He also had to sell his property, moving into the back room of Richard Dashut's house.

Although she was enjoying the most successful solo career of anyone from Fleetwood Mac, the mid-1980s were also a tough time for Nicks. In late 1985, a third solo album, *Rock a Little*, failed to sell as well as her first pair, though it neared the Top 10 and spawned a #4 single, "Talk to Me." Her excessive cocaine use was a far greater problem. Shortly after her six-month tour in 1986 ended (part of which Fleetwood played on), she checked into the Betty Ford Center in Rancho Mirage, California, for thirty days for treatment for her dependency.

Even John McVie, the Fleetwood Mac mainstay least likely to make headlines, had his bad spells in these years. In the first half of the 1980s, he'd kept by far the lowest profile of anyone in the quintet. His only musical activity outside the band had been touring with a reunited version of John Mayall & the Bluesbreakers in the early 1980s, which also included Mick Taylor and drummer Colin Allen (who co-wrote a *Mirage* track, "Wish You Were Here," with Christine McVie). His capacity for boozing it up had caused some problems since way back in the mid-1960s with the Bluesbreakers. While it wouldn't cease when Fleetwood Mac convened for a new studio album, a 1987 alcohol-related seizure made him quit for good.



The third solo album by Stevie Nicks, Rock a Little, featured the hit single "Talk to Me."

As all of their careers (with the arguable exception of Nicks') were in some need of a commercial boost, and as Fleetwood in particular was suffering financially, starting to record and perform together again could be viewed as the logical next move. It wasn't as easy to effect in the real world as it was to write down. The five hadn't even been together in the same place for three years when they saw Nicks backstage at a Los Angeles benefit concert in September 1985. Yet the previous month, everyone but Nicks had played on a cover of Elvis Presley's "Can't Help Falling in Love" that Christine McVie recorded for the soundtrack of *A Fine Mess*.

An actual new Fleetwood Mac album was slow to take shape. The main stumbling block was not Nicks, the one who had the least to gain and the most to lose by putting her solo career on hold. Instead, it was

Buckingham, who had already started his next record. When he finally agreed to sign on, the band then spent some time considering producers, feeling they could benefit from working with someone new. A meeting with Nile Rodgers—who could have hardly been any hotter at the time, producing Madonna’s *Like a Virgin* and mid-1980s albums by Mick Jagger, Duran Duran, Grace Jones, Laurie Anderson, and others—didn’t lead to anything. Warner Brothers executive Mo Ostin then gave them some money to try out Jason Corsaro, engineer on *Like a Virgin* and mid-1980s records by Robert Palmer, the Power Station, and Jeff Beck. A week of rehearsals/sessions with him didn’t yield satisfactory results.

After all this tinkering, Buckingham ended up co-producing the record with Richard Dashut. (Ken Caillat, also a co-producer since *Rumours*, would no longer be working with the band.) Yet their very consideration of Rodgers and Corsaro indicated a desire, on their part and perhaps Warner Brothers’, to get a sound that would comfortably fit into the glossier, higher-tech sheen dominating mid-1980s hit radio. They’d get this, though in different conditions than they were used to, with the by-now usual challenging personal problems helping to stretch out the sessions to eighteen months.

The basic tracks for the album that would be titled *Tango in the Night* were cut at Rumbo Recorders in the San Fernando Valley, mixing and overdubbing taking place at Buckingham’s home garage studio, the Slope. Their wilder drug use and partying had started to become a thing of the past for at least some members, and work proceeded in a more conventional manner than it had for their last few albums. Even so, as Fleetwood revealed in his first book, the drum track to the title song came out of a drunken collaboration between him and Buckingham.

A far more significant difference from the records they’d done since the mid-1970s was that Nicks usually wasn’t even around. She was touring to support her third album, and didn’t show up in the studio until the beginning of 1987, about six months after the project had started. As she also spent time at the Betty Ford Center during this period, she only spent a couple of weeks actually recording *Tango in the Night*, though she did send demos of her songs to the band during her world tour so they could work on them without her. John McVie was around, but was so rusty from two years of musical inactivity that he at first had trouble laying down his parts, getting up to speed after a pep talk from Fleetwood.



Stevie Nicks at the Ahoy Arena in Rotterdam in June 1988, during Fleetwood Mac's first European tour after Lindsey Buckingham left the band for an extended period. Getty Images

While the writing on *Tango in the Night* was again shared roughly equally between Buckingham, Nicks, and Christine McVie, there was more co-writing going on, both within the band and with composers who weren't in the band. Buckingham and Christine McVie co-wrote three tracks, one with the assistance of her new husband, fellow keyboardist Eddy Quintela; Quintela co-wrote another tune with Christine, "Little Lies." Buckingham and Dashut shared the credits for "Family Man," and "Seven Wonders" was co-penned by Nicks with singer-songwriter-keyboardist Sandy Stewart, who'd written three songs on Nicks' second solo album.

Despite Nicks' long absences from the sessions, she did end up contributing almost as much material as Buckingham or Christine McVie, writing or co-writing three of the twelve tracks. One of the stronger cuts, "Welcome to the Room... Sara," was inspired by her very real and recent stay at the Betty Ford Center, where she'd checked in under the name Sara Anderson. Her infrequent presence did cause her to miss the sessions for

McVie's "Everywhere," and there was a minor blow-up when she heard the playback and complained about not singing harmony on the song.

Christine McVie sternly reminded Nicks that she had barely been around for *any* of the sessions. All ended well when Nicks put vocal harmonies on the track after all, giving it a more characteristically Fleetwood Mac aura.

Despite the frequent unavailability of Nicks, the band's chief songwriters were so prolific that some tracks couldn't fit onto the album. A bit bizarrely, though "You and I, Part II" concluded the record, its companion piece, "You and I, Part 1," wasn't even on *Tango in the Night*, instead getting used as the B-side to the single that came out a month before its release, "Big Love." "Ricky," which was a little offbeat for a Christine McVie number—with its talking drum-like percussion and whispery, lusty vocal—surfaced on the B-side of "Lies." Buckingham's "Down Endless Street," a straightforward pop-rocker with a slightly ethereal shimmer, had to wait even longer, eventually appearing on the flip of "Family Man."

While not quite as radio-ready fodder as most of the other tracks from the *Tango in the Night* sessions, all of them were about up to the standard of the material that did make the album, and gave listeners glimpses into some of the more idiosyncratic sides of the mid-1980s Fleetwood Mac. Had the CD been the primary format when *Tango in the Night* was issued in April 1987, perhaps all three of those songs would have been used on the album itself. Lack of space and loss of fidelity were not issues on a compact disc, as they were when more than forty-five minutes of music were used on a vinyl LP. The CD was a couple years away from asserting itself as the dominant vehicle for recorded music, however. With the LP still king, those three tracks lost out, and have yet to be reissued.

When *Tango in the Night* finally hit the shops, fears that Buckingham's production might have turned the group into Frankenstein were alleviated by the opening track. "Big Love" was written by Buckingham, but it was pop-rock, not off-kilter synth-pop, complete with an aggressive guitar solo. The rest of the record was also identifiably Fleetwood Mac pop-rock, but with a glitzier production than their previous albums, particularly in the synthesizers (handled by both Buckingham and Christine McVie) and percussion.



The Japanese version of the "Big Love" single.

That was to be expected; it had, after all, been five years since *Mirage*, and both studio technology and the pop market had changed considerably during that time. A bit of the folksiness that Buckingham and Nicks had brought into the band resurfaced in Nicks' "When I See You Again" and "You and I, Part II" (not all that similar to the "You and I, Part I" B-side), which ended the album with something of a tropical breeze. But for the most part, *Tango in the Night* was a record with contemporary pop production values, uninfluenced by the edgier emerging sounds in rap and post-punk.

Tango in the Night was thus not destined to be a huge critical favorite, or pinpointed as either a groundbreaker or (as *Rumours* had been) a defining reflection of its time. It was, however, a huge seller, moving

more units than might be assumed from its initial chart performance. Its peak of #7 on the American charts might have been regarded as a disappointment, but it stayed in the Top 40 for almost a year. In the UK, Fleetwood Mac was, for the first time since 1970, more popular than they were in the US, the album hitting #1 and staying in the charts for almost two years.

Even if it didn't make the American Top 5, *Tango in the Night* produced two Top 5 singles, "Big Love" and "Little Lies." According to Fleetwood, the band spent \$250,000 on a video for "Big Love," whose rise in the charts was also greased by rumors as to who supplied the song's sexual grunts on the extended fadeout. (The answer was not Nicks or another woman, but Buckingham, concocted by sampling his voice through a variable-speed oscillator.) The *New York Times* hailed the album's "mood of edgy, sophisticated wistfulness" and singled out Buckingham's arrangements for special praise, finding them to "evoke the members of the group calling to one another from mist-shrouded turrets, across vast distances."

So Fleetwood Mac was back on top of the world, yet again. Certainly Mick Fleetwood's finances were well on the way to recovery, especially as royalties built up from the band's post-1974 catalog. Was all now right with the band? Of course not. After having put so much into *Tango in the Night*, Buckingham didn't want to go on tour.

At a series of meetings in mid-1987, the rest of the band tried to get Buckingham to change his mind, or at least do a lengthy *Tango in the Night* tour and *then* do his own thing. Mo Ostin convinced Buckingham to do a ten-week tour—much shorter than the eight months the band hoped for, but enough to get the wheels rolling for getting Fleetwood Mac back on the road. Then Buckingham pulled out again. On August 7, 1987, he stormed out of a meeting at Christine McVie's house that the band had called in hope of an explanation. An argument between Buckingham and Nicks got physical, with Buckingham slapping Nicks before getting pulled away. He sat in his car for fifteen minutes before driving off, and no one in the band tried to stop him.



"When I See You Again" was used as the B-side of the "Everywhere" single.



"Big Love" also came out in a 12-inch version with an extended dance mix.



The 1988 single "As Long As You Follow" was one of two new recordings included on Fleetwood Mac's Greatest Hits compilation that year.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

TANGO IN THE NIGHT

By ZOË HOWE

Fans had to wait four years after the mixed bag of *Mirage* for the increasingly disparate Fleetwood Mac to start work on a new album. The result, *Tango in the Night*, would be a stronger, more polished release than its predecessor, and it would be replete with hits, making it the Mac's biggest seller of the 1980s—but it would also be the last album released that decade by the tumultuous *Rumours* lineup. The strung-out, distracted Nicks was largely absent from sessions, while Buckingham had simply had enough altogether and would have preferred to be concentrating on solo work, as would almost everyone else in the group.

Still, Nicks, Buckingham, and McVie brought strong writing to *Tango*, which opens with the eccentric, tremblingly sexy “Big Love” (both “male” and “female” grunts provided by Buckingham himself), nestling next to Nicks' earthier, harmony-rich “Seven Wonders,” bright and blowsy as a gypsy skirt. The highly-produced “Family Man” is radio-friendly, while still etched with that familiar Buckingham edge, as is the more experimental, percussive “Caroline” (written for Buckingham's former girlfriend Carol-Ann Harris). The title track also sees Buckingham at play in the studio, with castanets, chunky chords, and Latin drama run riot, but there is a heaviness here, a seriousness.

Nicks manages to bring some wry wit to her melodic paean to rehab—“Welcome to the Room... Sara” (Sara, a favorite name of Nicks', being the pseudonym she used in therapy sessions). It is a little troubled, of course, a little tense, riddled with spiky cryptic clues and messages to badly behaved lovers (Joe Walsh, for example—“when you hang up that phone, you cease to exist” referring to something Walsh had said to Nicks during a fight) and badly behaved managers (“Frontline, baby... you kept her prisoner”). But musically, at least, there is still a full-bodied warmth and sensuality that contrasts with the intermittently indignant lyrics.

FLEETWOOD MAC

TANGO IN THE NIGHT



In 1987, Tango in the Night gave Fleetwood Mac another big hit album, although Lindsey Buckingham left the band for a long stretch shortly after its release.

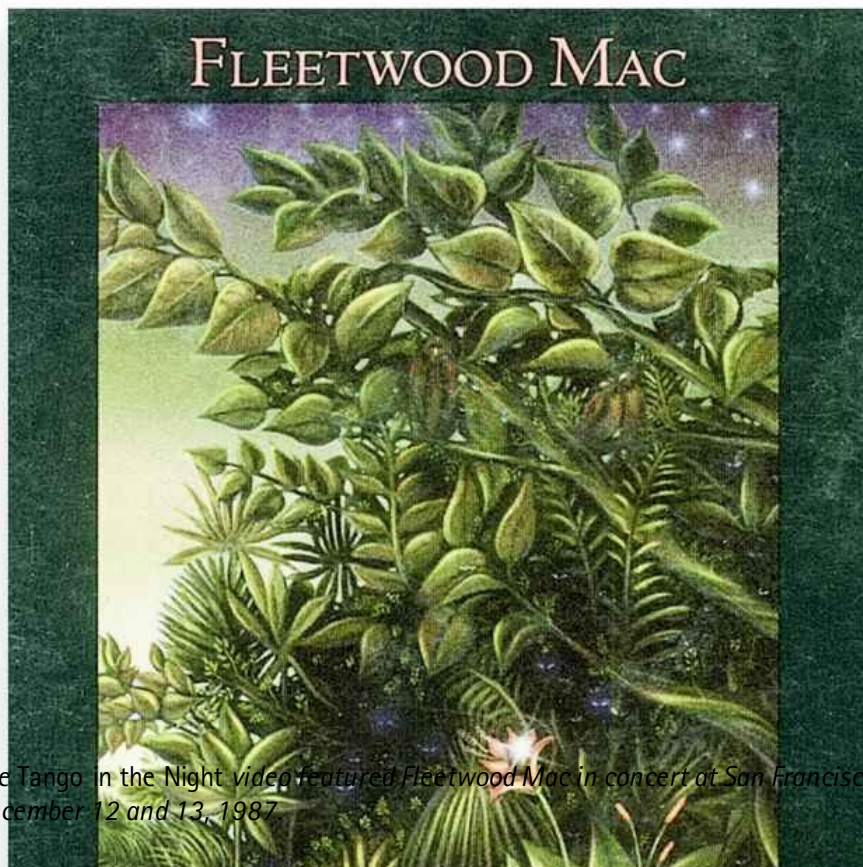
It is arguably Christine McVie's writing—including "Little Lies" and "Everywhere"—that proves to be the most roundly sophisticated and successful on the album. We are on mid-1980s synth territory here, and McVie is especially at home, balancing *Tango*—an otherwise florid, intense firebrand of an album—with her characteristic light touch and slick song-craft. "Isn't It Midnight?" is icy 1980s pop personified. Still, it is Nicks' and Buckingham's respective material that moves this writer more.

Buckingham stated that, early in the process of making *Tango*, they "felt like a band again," but this optimistic start would soon deteriorate. The band members were, during this period, "personally at their worst," said Buckingham, and they needed a break from each other. The fact that *Tango* would be the first (Buckingham-Nicks era) of their albums not to feature any of the band on the cover speaks volumes, and the cracked poignancy of "When I See You Again," Nicks' coke-damaged voice husky and nasal, paints a heartbreaking picture. Still, it is tinged with hope, filled tentatively with questions rather than answers. The door is far from closed.

Not wanting to cancel the tour, Fleetwood Mac did what they'd been doing for nearly twenty years—finding a replacement for a departing

guitarist. But replacing Lindsey Buckingham wasn't the same as filling in the holes that Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan, and Bob Welch had left. The Buckingham-Nicks lineup of Fleetwood Mac had been together for twelve years—longer than all of their pre-1975 lineups combined. For many fans, it was the only lineup they'd known. A Lindsey-less version was guaranteed to get some negative reaction, no matter what guitarist they found to take his place.

As it turned out, they found two new guitarists to fill Buckingham's shoes. The first, Billy Burnette, had been playing with Fleetwood for about five years in the Zoo. In the mid-1950s, his father, Dorsey, had played bass in his brother Johnny Burnette's Rock and Roll Trio, one of the first and best rockabilly bands; both Dorsey and Johnny would have some solo hits, though Johnny tragically drowned in 1964 and Dorsey died in 1979, aged just forty-six. Also a singer and songwriter, Burnette had issued more than half a dozen solo albums and scored some low-charting singles, mostly on the country listings. Aside from his stint in the Zoo and having recorded an unreleased track with Nicks during the *Rock a Little* sessions, not much in his resume suggested him as an obvious musical fit for Fleetwood Mac. Then again, nor had the qualifications of any of the Americans that had joined the band, whether Buckingham, Nicks, or Welch.



The Tango in the Night video featured Fleetwood Mac in concert at San Francisco's Cow Palace on December 12 and 13, 1987.



Stevie Nicks and guitarist Billy Burnette on stage at the LA Forum during the last concert of Fleetwood Mac's 1990 tour, in December of that year. Getty Images

It was felt that another guitarist was needed as well, so a friend of Burnette's was also asked to join. Rick Vito, as noted earlier, had seen Fleetwood Mac as a teenager in Philadelphia back in 1968. Fleetwood Mac had changed a lot since then, and so had Vito, who in the past fifteen years or so had played on records by Todd Rundgren, Maria Muldaur, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, Bob Seger, and even Fleetwood and John McVie's old boss, John Mayall. Having toured with both Seger and Browne, he was also used to large and demanding concert audiences. Without even auditioning, both were absorbed into Fleetwood Mac's ranks soon after Buckingham's departure.

In September 1987, the new lineup hit the road for a few months. Also onstage, though not official members, were two of Nicks' backup singers, Lori Nicks and Sharon Celani. Ghanaian percussionist Isaac Asante, another touring nonmember, had met Fleetwood while making *The Visitor*, and had just played on Paul Simon's *Graceland* tour. The show at the San Francisco Cow Palace was filmed and issued on VHS, and is now available on a DVD release, also titled *Tango in the Night*. Although a Nicks illness canceled a March 1988 Australian tour, a couple months later they went to Europe, doing sold-out shows at London's Wembley Arena.

Fleetwood would later claim that hardly anyone on the *Tango in the Night* tour asked where Buckingham was, but it's impossible to pretend that his absence didn't change the music. One person who most definitely *did* notice the missing Mac was *Rolling Stone*'s David Wild, who wrote in his otherwise positive review of their October 8, 1987, show in Maryland's Capital Centre, "There were moments when Burnette's and Vito's attempts to re-create Buckingham's idiosyncratic vocals and guitar flourishes became a bit annoying." *Rolling Stone* wasn't done with making sure the world knew Buckingham was gone, proclaiming in its year-end "The Year in Records" roundup, "Fleetwood Mac may recover from Buckingham's recent departure, but the [material written by others] on the album—an EP's worth of bouncy Christine McVie ditties and cloying Stevie Nicks lullabies—suggested that Buckingham will be sorely missed."

In addition, most of Buckingham's most famous songs were not in the tour's set—even "Big Love," which had just been a big hit. As some

compensation for longtime followers, Peter Green's "I Loved Another Woman," a highlight from their first album, was played onstage for the first time in ages. "Black Magic Woman" was also discussed as a possibility, but blocked by John McVie on the grounds that the song was too strongly associated with Santana.

Such was Fleetwood Mac's commercial stock in the wake of *Tango in the Night* that they could be expected to tour the world with little flak for their altered configuration, even if Buckingham had been instrumental to the creation of the album it was supporting. It wasn't going to be so easy to actually create a new studio album without Buckingham. That's what they set out to do, however, with their next record, *Behind the Mask*, which didn't come out until 1990.

Work might have started on it earlier had Nicks not again been busy with her solo career, with 1989's *The Other Side of the Mirror* giving her another Top 10 hit. Although she toured both Europe and the United States the same year, her triumphs were shadowed by an increasing dependency on the tranquilizer Klonopin, which a psychiatrist was prescribing in increasing dosages to keep her off cocaine. As for the rest of the band, their solo aspirations seem to have wilted. The year 1989 saw no releases by Fleetwood or the McVies, though Fleetwood played a few club dates in the northeast United States with his old friend Peter Bardens, who'd kicked Fleetwood's career into gear by inviting him into the Cheynes back in 1963. Even Buckingham wouldn't get his next solo album out until 1992, despite his eagerness to concentrate on his own thing at the expense of touring with Fleetwood Mac.

A Fleetwood Mac greatest hits collection would fill the gap as the group took a break. While it only made #14, it became a huge catalog item, selling eight million copies in the United States alone by 2000. As a perk for insatiable fans, it did include a couple of new tracks, both recorded by the new post-Buckingham lineup. One of them, the Christine McVie-Eddy Quintela co-written "As Long As You Follow," was released as a single, just missing the Top 40. The other, the Nicks-sung "No Questions Asked," also came out as a single, and did even worse. Neither were portents of great things for their next album, *Behind the Mask*, which, like these tracks, was produced by the band and Greg Ladanyi. Ladanyi's credits included records by Jackson Browne, Warren Zevon, Don Henley, and the Jacksons.

A few things jiggled within the band for *Behind the Mask*, besides the obvious absence of Buckingham. The writing would again be split fairly evenly between everyone except the rhythm section. This meant that Billy Burnette and Rick Vito would be contributing about as much as Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks, Burnette ending up co-composing a good five of the dozen tracks. Figures from outside the band pitched in as well, Nicks co-penning “Freedom” with Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell.

It’s a measure of *Behind the Mask*’s stature within the Fleetwood Mac canon that Fleetwood—always one to look at the bright side of their output—devotes a total of two sentences to it in *Play On*. The band had been through so many incarnations that it was senseless to criticize a record for not sounding like Fleetwood Mac. But *Behind the Mask*, released in April 1990, did not sound all that much like their hit records of the 1970s and 1980s. Christine and Stevie’s vocals might have been recognizable, but the songs weren’t too memorable, the album lacking stylistic definition or unity, especially with the introduction of two new and pretty different male singers and songwriters. On the Vito-Burnette composition “When the Sun Goes Down,” they really *didn’t* sound like Fleetwood Mac, instead coming off as a rockabilly act whose track had somehow ended up on the wrong CD.



Stevie Nicks' fourth solo album, The Other Side of the Mirror, was a Top 10 hit in 1989.



*Fleetwood Mac's 1988 Greatest Hits compilation filled the gap between 1987's *Tango in the Night* and 1990's *Behind the Mask*, including two new songs that were also released as singles.*

Saleswise, *Behind the Mask* was a major disappointment. It was their first album since 1974's *Heroes Are Hard to Find* not to make the Top 10, peaking at #18. Its only hit single, "Save Me"—another McVie-Quintela co-write—couldn't get higher than #33. Just as the American market had been their saving grace in the 1970s, the British public was ironically now coming to their rescue to some extent, sending *Behind the Mask* to #1 in the UK. Tours in Australia, the United States, and Europe went well, again with sold-out shows at Wembley. At their final concert of the year in LA on December 7, Buckingham (who had played guest guitar on the title track of *Behind the Mask*) joined them onstage for "Go Your Own Way," the worst of the bad blood between him and the band now apparently behind them.

Had Mick Fleetwood had *his* way, one has the feeling he might have wanted every year to be taken up by a worldwide Fleetwood Mac tour or album (or both). The same might have gone for John McVie, even if he wasn't as vocal about it. The rest of the band had different ideas. By the time the tour wrapped up, Christine McVie, whose father had died in 1990, let Fleetwood know she wanted to stop touring altogether. Nicks wanted to go back to her still-thriving solo career, and Rick Vito was set to go out on his own. The loss of Vito, in all honesty, would not register much with their fans, but it would be hard to keep Fleetwood Mac going without Christine or Stevie, though both said they'd still record with the group in the studio.



*Mick Fleetwood in September 1995. The following month, Fleetwood Mac's least successful album, *Time*, was released, after which the band—whose lineup by that time was missing Stevie Nicks, Lindsey Buckingham, and Christine McVie—was inactive for the next year and a half. Getty Images*

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

BEHIND THE MASK

By NEIL DANIELS

The tumultuous history of Fleetwood Mac is well known to rock enthusiasts and historians of popular music. Some bands simply cannot continue without certain members and end up disbanding entirely, which some could argue is the honorable decision to make. Fleetwood Mac is not one of those bands.

Behind the Mask was the first album without longtime guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, who was replaced by Billy Burnette and Rick Vito. Produced with Greg Ladanyi and recorded at The Complex, Los Angeles, and Vintage Recorders, Phoenix, Arizona, throughout 1989 and early 1990, *Behind the Mask* is an oddity in the band's musical arsenal.

The album has some hits and misses as far as its musical accomplishments go; more of the latter though. "Skies the Limit" is one of the album's strongest offerings and later found its way on 2002's *The Very Best of Fleetwood Mac*. On the other hand, "Save Me" which was a Top 40 US single failed to make the aforementioned compilation. "Love is Dangerous" is an average ballad that was later recorded by Vito for his 2001 solo album *Crazy Cool*. The guitar work is rather robust; the album's flaws lay in the songwriting.

Released in April 1990, perhaps the change in personnel had an impact on sales, as *Behind the Mask*, the band's fifteenth studio album, was not a success by the band's previous standards. Neither did it enjoy any hit singles. It wasn't the success that its predecessor *Tango in the Night* was, which featured the so-called classic lineup of Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Christine McVie, John McVie, and Mick Fleetwood. While it struggled to make the US Top 20—coming in at #18—it was a #1 hit in the UK. Fleetwood Mac had lost its mojo in the United States.

Fleetwood Mac

BEHIND THE MASK



Done without Lindsey Buckingham and with new guitarists Billy Burnette and Rick Vito, Behind the Mask was a commercial disappointment in the US, just reaching the Top 20.

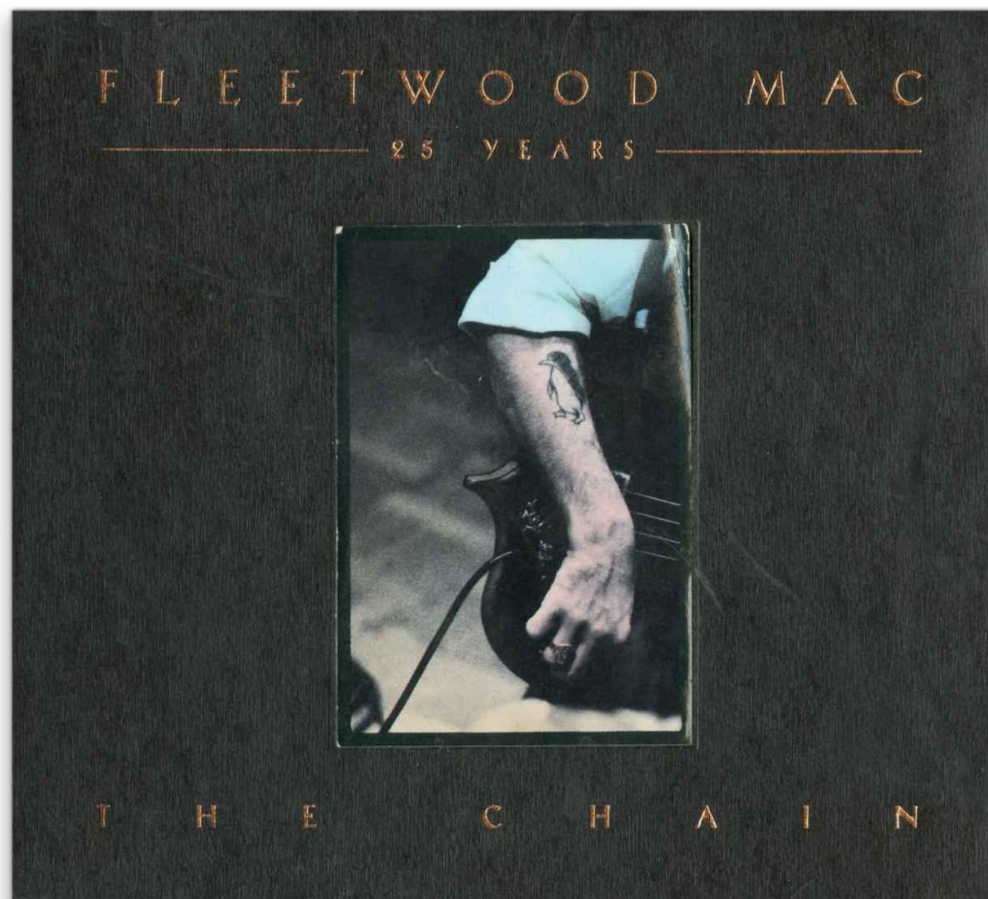
Behind the Mask is far from being a highlight of the band's career. Critics hardly greeted the album with glowing smiles. Some argued that it lacked substance and that the band had lost their groove, that they were relics of the past. Others said the inclusion of Burnette and Vito in place of Buckingham injected some much-needed life back into the band. The truth lies somewhere in the middle.

A rather sad indictment is that *Behind the Mask* is probably more notable for its alluring album cover, by photographer Dave Gorton, than its music. The band does not appear on the cover, as Fleetwood suggested the artwork should reflect them on a more spiritual plane. It bagged a Grammy nomination for Best Album Package.

The fundamental problem is that they do not sound like a unified band. There are very few moments of genuine inspiration, and the hallmark Fleetwood Mac sound is almost entirely absent. After Buckingham left, the band should have taken a long sabbatical, which of course they did after its follow-up, 1995's unsuccessful *Time*. Sadly, by this point, Fleetwood Mac had become a name of the past.

Is *Behind the Mask* the weakest album post Peter Green? The debate continues.

The next couple of years were exceptionally quiet ones for Fleetwood Mac, as a group and individually—the quietest, in fact, since the band had started. In the absence of a new album or concerts, a four-CD career-spanning box set was assembled. Issued in 1992 around the time such box sets were becoming major catalog items for classic rockers, *25 Years—The Chain* actually focused mostly on the Buckingham-Nicks era, with three of the four discs entirely devoted to post-1974 recordings. It did (like most such box set retrospectives) include a few rarities and previously unissued outtakes, alternate versions, and live performances. There were also four unexceptional “new” songs, though one, “Paper Doll,” had been recorded (but not used) for 1988’s greatest hits compilation. One of the four recently (or relatively recently) recorded tracks, “Love Shines,” was issued as a single, but failed to chart in the United States.



In 1992, the four-CD box set 25 Years: The Chain mixed highlights from throughout Fleetwood Mac's career with some rarities, outtakes, alternate versions, and live performances.

As for early-1990s solo projects, the main event was Buckingham's five-years-in-the-making *Out of the Cradle*, issued in mid-1992. (Although technically out of the band, Buckingham had also contributed one of the new songs to the *25 Years* box, "Make Me a Mask.") For all the effort that went into it, the record was not a big event with the public. It failed to reach the Top 100, even after Buckingham toured for the first time on his own with a band featuring no less than seven other guitarists. Buckingham had (like everyone from Fleetwood Mac past or present except Stevie Nicks and, for just a few years, Bob Welch) never really caught on as a solo artist, and his next individual effort wouldn't come out for almost fifteen years.

Neither Christine McVie nor Stevie Nicks released solo discs in the early 1990s, though McVie sang and co-wrote (with Quintela) two of the new songs ("Love Shines" and "Heart of Stone") on the *25 Years* box. Relations between Nicks and Fleetwood strained after a dispute about the use of the *Rumours*-era B-side "Silver Springs" on that box, as she'd wanted to use it for her own best-of, *Timespace: The Best of Stevie Nicks*, which came out in late 1991. Although she did work on her next solo album, it wouldn't come out until 1994, in part because her dependency on Klonopin was worsening. After passing out at home in late 1993, she went into detox for a month and a half to address the problem. "The sad thing is, that was eight years out of my life when I could have done maybe three really great solo records, maybe one more really great Fleetwood Mac record," she lamented of her addiction in *Q* in 2008. "So that's gone."

While each guy in Fleetwood Mac's rhythm section put out solo albums in the early 1990s, these were more projects to occupy their time than serious shots at the charts. John McVie's "*Gotta Band*" with Lola Thomas remains the bassist's only solo album, though he didn't write any of the material; much of it was penned by Thomas, who took all the lead vocals. The fairly average blues-soul-flavored record did have its share of star guests, Mick Taylor and Fleetwood Mac's own Burnette playing guitar and the Memphis Horns adding brass.

In late 1990, the first of Mick Fleetwood's two memoirs (*Fleetwood: My Life and Adventures in Fleetwood Mac*, written with Stephen Davis) was published. (Although Nicks told *Creem* that she was working on an autobiography in 1982, her memoir has yet to appear.) As part of the Zoo, Fleetwood also got a co-writing credit for all of the tracks on *Shakin' the*

Cage, mostly in association with Australian guitarist Billy Thorpe. More hard rock-oriented than McVie's album with the Gotta Band (if equally undistinguished), it too gained little notice. Also in this version of the Zoo were Burnette, Isaac Asante, and—most crucially—a woman singer, Bekka Bramlett, who'd soon join Fleetwood Mac.

Two or three years without Fleetwood Mac was becoming too much for the drummer to bear, especially with “Don't Stop” blaring everywhere as the theme song for Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential campaign. Clinton was such a fan that he asked the Buckingham-Nicks lineup to play at his inaugural ball. Possibly no other request could have been successful at reuniting the quintet at this point, but they did perform “Don't Stop” at the White House for the occasion on January 19, 1993, joined onstage near the end by the Clintons and Michael Jackson. It was the briefest of reunions, but it did get Fleetwood on the case to assemble yet another Fleetwood Mac, or “the mini-Mac,” as the group would call this version.

Near the end of his first autobiography, an ebullient Fleetwood had claimed, “If anyone else quits, John McVie and I will just go out and find another front line.” A couple years later, they pretty much did just that. Old friend Dave Mason, who'd emerged from the same mid-to-late-1960s British rock scene as Fleetwood and McVie in the band Traffic (and later as an intermittently successful solo artist), came in on guitar. As a singer-songwriter of some distinction, it was also expected he could contribute significant new material.

Mason also had much experience playing in concert and in the studio with other stars, including soul-rock duo Delaney & Bonnie, parents of Bekka Bramlett. As Bramlett had already worked with Fleetwood in the Zoo, it seemed natural to have her join the mini-Mac too, especially since a female singer would be necessary to cover the vocal parts on many of the past hits they might play onstage. For Christine McVie was adamant: she would not tour with this lineup, though she was willing to be part of the band in the studio.



*Like Fleetwood Mac, Stevie Nicks fell out of commercial favor in the mid-1990s, when her solo releases weren't selling nearly as well as they had in the previous decade. She rejoined Fleetwood Mac shortly before the band recorded their 1997 live album, *The Dance*. Getty Images*

With Burnette (who'd handed in his notice in early 1993, but rejoined a year later), and without Christine, the mini-Mac toured the world in the mid-1990s. Fleetwood's earlier pledge to recruit another front line to the contrary, in his second memoir he admits that it was a mistake to go out as Fleetwood Mac minus any of the three singer-songwriters who had written their big hits of the 1970s and 1980s. Understandably, many fans and promoters had a hard time regarding this as an authentic version of the band, who—only a few years after those Wembley sell-outs—were now often playing support to other veterans, performing at mini-festivals, or headlining small venues.

Without Nicks, Buckingham, or Christine McVie, the set was filled out with Dave Mason songs and Bramlett-sung R & B covers, which wasn't what Fleetwood Mac fans had in mind when they bought tickets. Worst of all, Mason and Bramlett didn't get along—a problem Fleetwood didn't

anticipate, since Mason had worked a lot with her parents and known Bekka since she was little. Jeremy Spencer joined the band for a few songs at a Tokyo show, but this seems to have been one of the few joyful memories the tours produced.

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

TIME

By MARTIN POPOFF

Operating in a genre that one could basically call soft rock, Fleetwood Mac fortunately found a way to rise—nay, soar—above the sensibly plentiful boring connotations of those two words mashed together. The distinction came from some quantity of novelty, frankly, beginning with the two female singers, one of them nasal and odd, and then the whole package called Lindsey Buckingham, chicken scratch picker, wound rubber band, crazy hollerer, and meticulous craftsman.

Strength of song—that's always more of an abstract, up for debate, which is why there's no point faulting *Time* particularly. What is missing, of course, is any of that overt quirkiness that makes loving fun, because, alas, the record is sorely lacking through the loss of both Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham, the former replaced by Bekka Bramlett, daughter of Delaney and Bonnie, the latter, by Traffic's Dave Mason. Rick Vito was also gone since the last album, 1990's *Behind the Mask*, a big drop from *Tango in the Night* at gold.

The result is a record that doesn't exactly refute any of the negative connotations of the term *soft rock*, *Time* being an assortment of smoothly and unobtrusively produced uptempo acoustic rock numbers taking advantage of all the technology afforded to big-budget superstars from the 1970s and 1980s trying to make a go of it in the 1990s. Richard Dashut's career is defined by his relationship to Fleetwood Mac (along with its members gone solo), but he does nothing here to introduce any pathos or tension when it comes to the songs, the arrangement, or the tones. Going for expensive and comfortable all the way, he becomes a swell 1990s producer despite perhaps knowing that there were things he should have brought forward from the past.

The album cover for Fleetwood Mac's 'Time' features a minimalist design. The title 'FLEETWOOD MAC' is printed in a dark, serif font, with 'T I M E' in a smaller, spaced-out serif font below it. The background is a light, textured surface. In the lower right corner, there is a small, dark, spherical object, possibly a piece of fruit or a stone, with a small, dark, irregular shape on its surface.

FLEETWOOD MAC

T I M E

Done without Lindsey Buckingham or Stevie Nicks, Time was Fleetwood Mac's only non-compilation studio album to miss the US charts.

It's hard to see what Dave Mason brings to the situation stylistically, with "I Wonder Why" evoking memories of Bob Welch and "Blow by Blow" being hard-ish bar room rock incongruously strafed by synths. Billy Burnette, on the other hand, especially paired with Bekka Bramlett, brings a bit of southern rock lite to the party, crossed with, say, Poco and the safest bits from late-period Little Feat (Fred Tackett actually guests on trumpet!).

One of Christine McVie's collaborations with Eddy Quintela also leans into this appealing direction, "Hollywood (Some Other Kind of Town)" marrying pop with twang, while "I Do" is the clear winner along the lines of the buoyant piano-clear pop we all celebrate with this band. Elsewhere, she's much more pensive and quiet, save for "Nights in Estoril" which suffers from production and arrangement overload as badly as "Blow by Blow."

The album closes with a complete departure: seven-plus minutes of "These Strange Times" featuring cinematic orchestration as a plush bed for a spoken-word vocal from Fleetwood. It's a progressive rock tour de force worthy of a Jon Anderson solo album, and one comes away perplexed and somewhat nourished after such a display of safe pop rock.

Ultimately, fans were having none of it, with *Time* tanking spectacularly—not charting, and not breaking six figures in American album sales—making it the least successful record of the band's storied career.

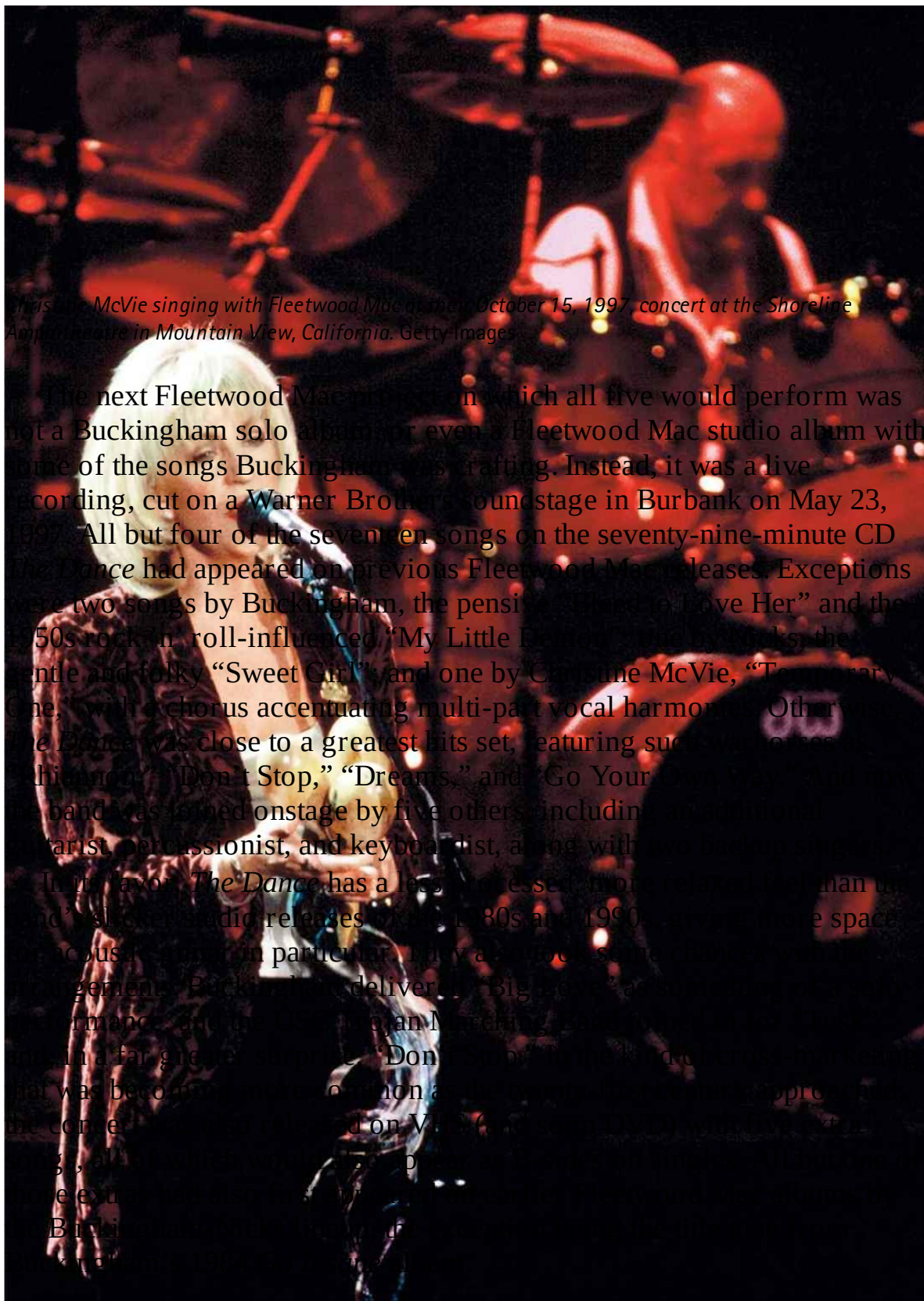
The mini-Mac was destined to be short-lived, but they did eke out one album at the end of their duration. Released in late 1995, *Time* did mark a general reversion to more organic, less hi-tech instrumentation than the increasingly slick arrangements that had been applied to their previous three albums. But memorable, inspired songs or approaches were not evident, and Mason—who, to Fleetwood’s disappointment, seemed indifferent to using the mini-Mac as a means to reignite his own flagging career—contributed little in the way of fresh tunes, taking just two co-composer credits.

Time did have five songs sung and co-written by Christine McVie, making for at least some continuity with their sound of the last two decades. Even she couldn’t summon much enthusiasm for it a few years later, telling *MOJO* in 1997 that the album “was something that I had not volunteered to do; it was contractual. I don’t like to harp on it very much, but I thought the music was starting to get a little strange, the choices a little funny. I wasn’t really enjoying that particular incarnation of the band.”

For the few paying attention, *Time* does feature a rare Fleetwood vocal—or, more accurately, spoken recitation—on the weird seven-minute closer “These Strange Times,” the opening part of which obviously alludes to the demons plaguing Peter Green. “The subject matter is inspired by Peter Green, but it’s also about me,” was Fleetwood’s candid comment about the track in *MOJO*. “I nearly destroyed myself with drugs and alcohol and crazy behavior, and this is a positive thought mode that you can get out of the dark, into the light. I was a functioning addict for a long time. It wasn’t as bad as it sounds, because as long as I had my stuff, I functioned perfectly normally and looked just like anybody else, but I was dependent on drugs to maintain that state. So this song is about getting out of that mire.”

But there were, indeed, few who listened, as *Time* failed to even broach the Top 200. As of 2014, it hadn’t even broken the six-figure mark in US sales, a stunning setback for a band used to selling millions for two decades. When the mini-Mac was officially dissolved around the time of *Time*’s release, few lamented their disappearance, though Burnette and Bramlett could be spotted forming a duo and putting out an album shortly afterward.

Somehow the real Mac, or at least the most famous Mac, subsequently reunited faster than anyone expected, and without many machinations on Fleetwood's part. Buckingham was at work on a solo album, and Fleetwood and John McVie played on some of the tracks he was recording. Fleetwood later recalled that his intention was to form a new band with Buckingham, but the proceedings started to morph into a Fleetwood Mac reunion when Christine McVie and then Stevie Nicks joined the sessions. Nicks' 1994 album, *Street Angel*, had been her first flop, falling a little short of the Top 40. For all she had been through with Buckingham, she teamed up with him again in 1996 to write a song for the soundtrack to *Twister*, "Twisted."



Christine McVie singing with Fleetwood Mac at their October 15, 1997, concert at the Shoreline Amphitheatre in Mountain View, California. Getty Images

The next Fleetwood Mac project on which all five would perform was not a Buckingham solo album, or even a Fleetwood Mac studio album with some of the songs Buckingham was crafting. Instead, it was a live recording, cut on a Warner Brothers soundstage in Burbank on May 23, 1997. All but four of the seventeen songs on the seventy-nine-minute CD *The Dance* had appeared on previous Fleetwood Mac releases. Exceptions were two songs by Buckingham, the pensive “Blind to Love Her” and the 1950s rock ‘n’ roll-influenced “My Little Demon”; one by Nicks, the gentle and folky “Sweet Girl”; and one by Christine McVie, “Temporary One,” with a chorus accentuating multi-part vocal harmonies. Otherwise, *The Dance* was close to a greatest hits set, featuring such warhorses as “Whisper,” “Don’t Stop,” “Dreams,” and “Go Your Own Way.” And now the band was joined onstage by five others, including an additional guitarist, percussionist, and keyboardist, along with two backup singers. In its favor, *The Dance* has a less processed, more relaxed feel than the band’s slicker studio releases of the 1980s and 1990s, giving more space to acoustic guitar, in particular. They also took some chances with the arrangements: Buckingham delivered “Big Love” as something of a solo performance, and the U.S. Marine Marching Band joined in for “Task Force” in a far greater surprise. “Don’t Stop,” in the kind of cross-marketing that was becoming more common as the twenty-first century approached, the concert was also released on VHS (and soon DVD) with five extra songs, all of which would also appear as B-sides on singles. All but one of those extras had also first appeared on earlier Fleetwood Mac albums by either Buckingham-Nicks (two), or the exception being the title tune from Buckingham’s 1986 solo debut album.

For an endeavor that had its roots in a new Buckingham record, *The Dance* had surprisingly little in the way of new songs, from Buckingham or anyone else. Fleetwood Mac appeared to be becoming what would be called a “legacy” band, largely revered for their past rather than their present, and focused on performing their most popular hits rather than creating new ones. If *The Dance* was primarily an exercise in marketing this, however, it was an extremely successful one. It made #1, breezing right into the top slot in its first week on the charts. By 2000, it had sold five million copies in the United States alone.

For most of fall 1997, Fleetwood Mac toured North America, ending with a November 30 show at the US Airways Arena near Washington, DC. By that time, Christine McVie had decided not only to stop touring, but to retire from the band and the music business. No longer with Eddy Quintela, she wanted to relocate back to England, and stopped Fleetwood from giving her a persuasion speech to reconsider even before he started. Fleetwood Mac was now a quartet, and would remain so in their sporadic bouts of activity over the next fifteen years.

Almost before they could lay out a plan as to how to proceed, they were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame on January 12, 1998. At the New York ceremony, the Buckingham-Nicks lineup played “Landslide,” “Big Love,” and, after their induction, “Say You Love Me,” for which Buckingham played banjo. Also inducted as part of the band were Peter Green (who’d recently started performing and recording as part of the Peter Green Splinter Group), Jeremy Spencer, and Danny Kirwan. Of those three, however, only Green was present at the ceremony, and he did not perform with the band, instead playing “Black Magic Woman” with Carlos Santana.



The reunited Rumours lineup recording The Dance on May 23, 1997, at the Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank, California. Getty Images

For bands with multiple lineups (which includes most of the ones in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame), the selection of which members to induct is often a source of controversy. Fleetwood Mac was no exception, and the absence of one member in particular from the official roll call became a sore point. Few if any fans or critics would lobby for the inclusion of temporary or secondary members, such as Dave Walker or Rick Vito, but the failure to induct Bob Welch as part of the group struck many as unjust, including Welch himself. Welch had, after all, been with Fleetwood Mac longer than Green or Spencer, and almost as long as Kirwan; more importantly, he had written and sung more material on the records they made in that span than anyone else in the band. Welch had been in a breach of contract lawsuit (settled in 1996) with Fleetwood, John McVie, and Christine McVie over division of royalties from the Fleetwood Mac albums on which he played, and felt that might have worked against his getting in the Hall.

Now in or approaching their early fifties, the remaining members of Fleetwood Mac may not have felt as much urgency to keep on recording and touring—which they'd been doing with ever less frequency since the early 1980s. The money from recent tours and the flow of royalties from

their catalog should have been more than enough to keep them comfortable, though given his several families and weakness for shady investments (as documented in his books), one wonders if Fleetwood is ever going to be on full financial footing. The pace of solo releases also slowed to a crawl, even after Nicks' *Trouble in Shangri-La* gave her a Top 10 hit comeback album in 2001.



By the end of the twentieth century, Fleetwood Mac's concerts, like those of most big rock bands, had become more visual spectacles. Getty Images

Even without much else in the way of tours or recording to divert them, it took five years after their Hall of Fame induction for the next Fleetwood Mac album to appear. Issued in April 2003, *Say You Will* is the only studio record by the band on which Nicks and Buckingham write and sing everything (never composing together, though they did occasionally use collaborators from outside the group). Without Christine McVie to provide some contrast with her own compositions, or harmonies to flesh out those by her bandmates, the album tended to sometimes feel like a mixture of Buckingham and Nicks solo tracks that happened to have Fleetwood Mac's rhythm section. Christine does play keyboards and sing backup vocals on a couple of tracks (including "Bleed to Love Her," first appearing in a live version on *The Dance*), but those had originally been

intended for a Buckingham solo album. Another contributor of note was Sheryl Crow, who played organ and sang backup on two of Nicks' tunes.

For all the material she placed on *Say You Will*, the record didn't come out to Nicks' satisfaction. "I'd be lying if I said that record is what I wanted because it isn't," she told *The Age*. "I argued with Lindsey all the way through it and he argued with me. It wasn't very much fun and I wasn't that pleased with the music. I felt my demos were better."

Say You Will still sounded more or less like the kind of album listeners had come to expect from a record by the Buckingham-Nicks lineup, even if it was a little like hearing a Crosby, Stills & Nash disc on which one of three principals just appeared in the background for a couple tracks. The songwriters also showed some social consciousness in songs such as "What's the World Coming To," "Murrow Turning Over in His Grave," and "Illume 9/11," though tense romantic ruminations remained their main comfort zone. The CD was a hit, but not one with much staying power, failing to sell a million copies after debuting at #3. More lucrative was the extensive tour that supported it in 2003 and 2004, grossing nearly \$100 million in the United States alone, and spawning a tour souvenir DVD with *Live in Boston*, filmed in the city's Fleet Center on September 23 and 24 of 2003.



Lindsey Buckingham on March 27, 2003, a few weeks before the release of Fleetwood Mac's Say You Will album. Getty Images

THE ALBUM REVIEWS

SAY YOU WILL

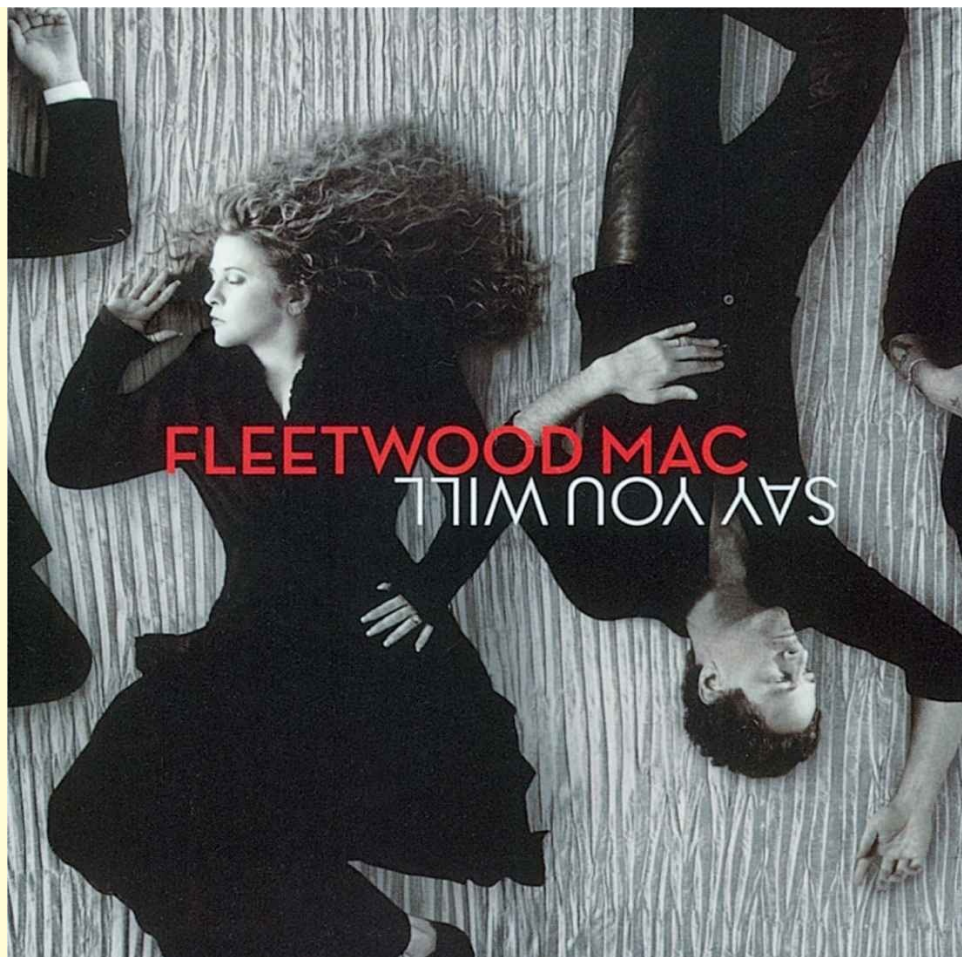
By BARNEY HOSKYNS

In the post-post-punk, hip-hop-dominated universe of the early noughties, rather than simply milk the rock-nostalgia gravy train, Fleetwood Mac was determined to make meaningful music that connected with fans half their age. Hence the full return of studio boffin and eclectic experimentalist Lindsey Buckingham, who wanted *Say You Will* to take big risks and believed he had Mick Fleetwood's and John McVie's tacit backing to do just that. (Watch the remarkable warts-and-all "making-of" documentary *Destiny Rules* for the full backstory of the simmering tensions between the four members.)

There was a historical parallel for *Say You Will*: in just the way that 1979's off-the-wall, double-length *Tusk* had followed 1977's stratosphere-busting *Rumours*, so the almost-double *Say You Will* followed the play-safe "live greatest hits" water-tread that was 1997's *The Dance*.

The funny thing was that *Tusk*, when you revisited it in 2003, didn't sound so off-the-wall at all—which only made *Say You Will* sound, at moments, all the more out there as neo-AOR mainstream pop-rock. The eighteen-track opus was a box of Allsorts, replete with countless different colors and moods, veering from moodily *Tusk*-ish experiments such as "Morrow Turning Over in His Grave" to sing-along ear candy like Nicks' infectious title track.

As one might have expected, there were a slew of Nicks songs that were essentially narcissistic hymns to, well, Nicks; one even bore the title "Silver Girl." Another, "Illume," was a bongo-driven meditation on America post-9/11 and boasted the priceless Nicks line "I am a cliff dweller from the old school." You had to love the woman: on the closing "Goodbye Baby," she sounded like nothing so much as Kate Bush spliced with Victoria Williams.



Issued in 2003, Say You Will is the last studio album Fleetwood Mac has released as of this writing.

Then there were Buckingham's songs, some of which dated back to the solo "project" that should have materialized after his 1992 album *Out of the Cradle*. What made *Say You Will* great were tracks of his, such as "Red Rover," "Come," and "Say Goodbye." If his pipes were still slightly bleating, the heady melodicism and thrilling hypersyncopation of "Rover" were intoxicating. "Come" started with softly ambient, Salif Keita-style picking and then blasted into a blaringly histrionic rocker: it might almost have come from a Robert Plant & the Strange Sensation album. The shimmering "Say Goodbye"—all dappled guitars and whispered vocals—suggested Buckingham had been listening to such modern-day indie troubadours as Elliott Smith.

The album peaked somewhere in the middle with "Red Rover," followed by the effortlessly shiny Stevie-pop of "Say You Will" itself and then by the album's first single "Peacekeeper," which sounded like a genuine Buckingham-Nicks collaboration. Both packed killer choruses, as insidiously sweet-sad as vintage Mac classics, from "Silver Springs" to "Gypsy." Nicks' "Running through the Garden" was early-1980s power pop, with a layered keyboard hook and chugging new-wave guitar.

For obvious reasons, the only flavor missing on *Say You Will* was the departed Christine McVie's perfect *Tango in the Night* bop-pop, making the album more *Buckingham-Nicks Redux* than *Tusk Revisited*. (You could hear McVie, though, on two tracks originally slated for

Buckingham's solo album.) That was okay, because there was more than enough here to get one's teeth into.

Tusk 2 this album wasn't, but *Tusk 2* it didn't need to be. In an age of off-the-shelf Top 40 hackwork, Fleetwood Mac kept the pop-rock mainstream interesting.

The next ten years were quiet ones for Fleetwood Mac, with even Fleetwood failing to feel the urge to mark each passing year with an album and/or tour. Christine McVie released her second and final solo album, *In the Meantime*, in 2004. Buckingham issued several moderately popular albums (among them 2008's *Gift of Screws*, using some of the material that had been recorded from 1995 to 2001 for an album with the same title) and did a couple low-key solo tours. Nicks didn't complete her next solo release until 2011's *In Your Dreams*, another Top 10 entry that, as of this writing, is her most recent studio set. Now married to his third wife, Fleetwood put out three barely noticed albums as the leader of side bands in the first decade of the new millennium—one as figurehead of the Mick Fleetwood Blues Band, with Rick Vito on guitar and vocals. John McVie made occasional appearances on records by others (including *Something Big* by the Mick Fleetwood Band, as the drummer's group was billed on that release), but otherwise had plenty of time to spend on his main hobby, sailing.

The Christine-less Buckingham-Nicks quartet did get together for the ten-month Unleashed World Tour that took up most of 2009, grossing about \$85 million. This time around, there was no studio album to support and not even a live album to issue in its wake as a tour souvenir for diehards. Long since having passed the point where they had something to prove, Fleetwood Mac now seemed to have nothing left to offer in the way of new music. Failing that, the best fans could hope for would be a chance to see all five musicians from the *Rumours* era reunited in concert while there was still a chance for that to happen, if only in theory. As Christine McVie remained in retirement, that seemed unlikely. But in Fleetwood Mac's world, the unlikely is likely, and a few years later, even that would change.



Mick Fleetwood, gentleman rock star, checks out a Mercedes Benz limousine once owned by John Lennon at the Hard Rock Cafe in London on March 27, 2001. Getty Images

Chapter 6

THE CLASSIC QUINTET, REUNITED 2010–2015

As the second decade of the new millennium started, Fleetwood Mac was as inactive as they'd ever been. In 2010, there was just one concert by the band, and that was a private show for the Texas Pacific Group at the Phoenician Hotel in Scottsdale, Arizona. Described on its website as "a leading global private investment firm with \$70.2 billion of capital under management," TPG was a long way from the London club owners that had first given Fleetwood Mac work when the group was getting off the ground. There would be some grim reminders, however, of their early roots and their own mortality in the next few years.

The passing of original bassist Bob Brunning on October 18, 2011, marked the first death of any of the many musicians who'd been in Fleetwood Mac. This and the death of Bob Weston a few months later were barely noted in the media, but the demise of the band's other Bob was far more shocking. On June 7, 2012, Bob Welch shot himself to death in his Nashville home. Off the charts and general musical radar for many years, he was in dire pain after spinal surgery earlier in the year. He was survived by his wife of twenty-seven years, Wendy, who found his body.



Mick Fleetwood at NBC's Today show in New York's Rockefeller Plaza on October 9, 2014. Getty Images

Nicks and Buckingham did put out studio albums in 2011, Nicks' (*In Your Dreams*) making the Top 10. Nicks toured behind *In Your Dreams* in 2011, and Buckingham toured the following year, but Fleetwood Mac continued to stay off the road until April of 2013. Three months of North American shows were followed by a month of concerts in Europe in the fall, though the only new product they had was an EP issued shortly after the touring commenced. The first new studio recordings by the band in ten years, the four-song, unimaginatively titled *Extended Play* combined three songs by Buckingham with one of Nicks', adding up to just seventeen

minutes of music. And Nicks' offering wasn't a new tune, as "Without You" was written in the early 1970s and had been recorded as one of "The Coffee Plant Demos" by Buckingham and Nicks in their pre-Fleetwood Mac days. It took Nicks rediscovering the song on YouTube to get it revived for the EP.

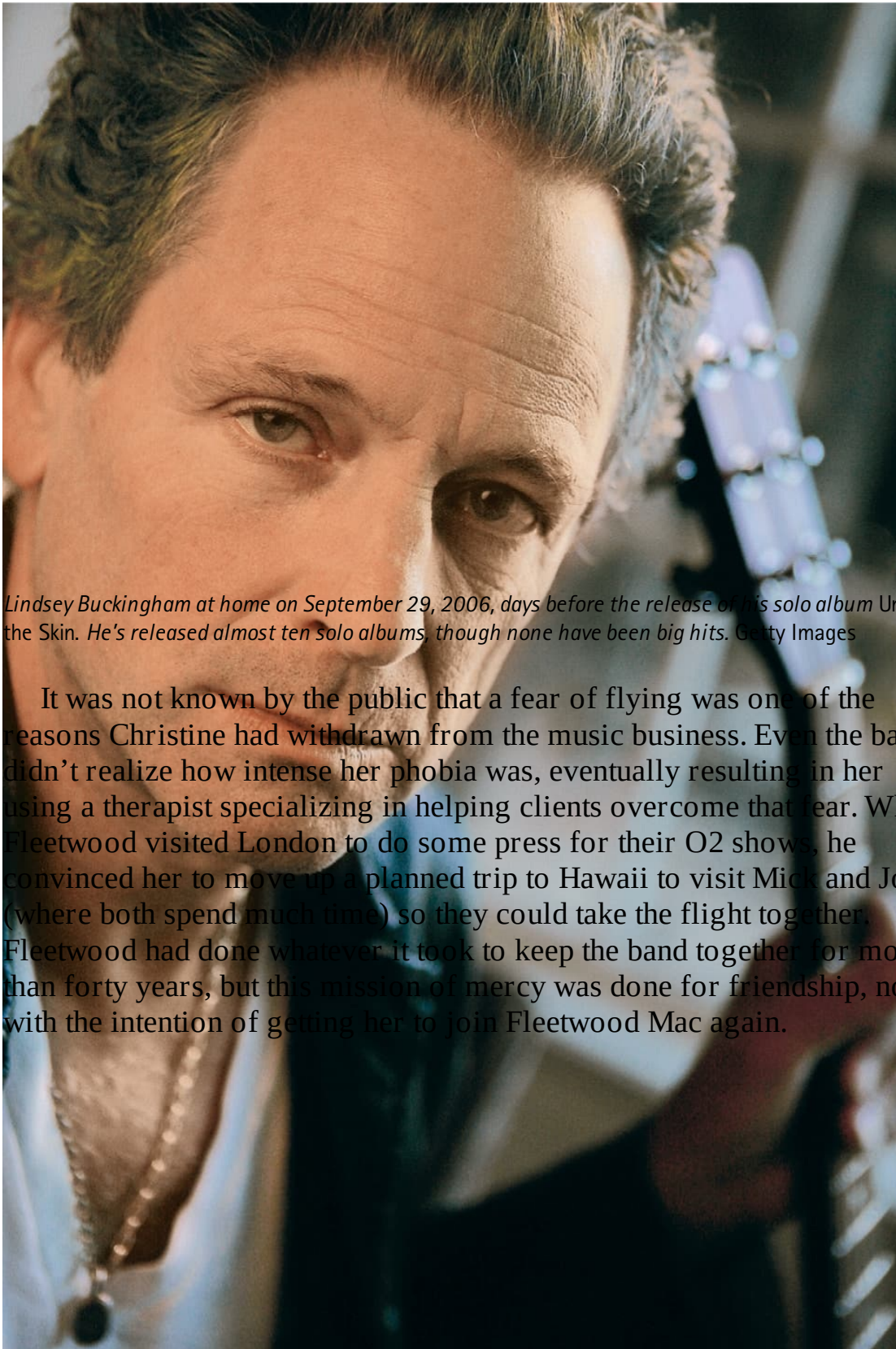
Whether the band's two songwriters were having trouble generating material or saving some of their compositions for their solo efforts is hard to say. Whatever the circumstances, *Extended Play* was an oddly low-key release, only coming out as a digital download. Buckingham explained to *Rolling Stone* that there wasn't enough time to record a new album before the tour. Even so, the record was strangely unpromoted, though they did perform two of the EP's songs, "Without You" and the Buckingham-penned single "Sad Angel," in their 2013 concerts.

Nearly forty years after their romantic split, some of the new material, as slender as it was in quantity, was still inspired by their personal relationship. "Sad Angel," revealed Buckingham in *Rolling Stone*, was written "for Stevie. She always had to fight for everything. She was coming off a solo album and was in the process of reintegrating herself mentally in the band, and we're all warriors with a sword in one sort or another. She and I have known each other since high school. So I just wrote, 'Sad Angel have you come to fight the war/We fall to earth together, the crowd calling out for more.'... Of all the things we cut, 'Sad Angel' was, for lack of a better term, the most Fleetwood Mac-y. It was really kind of the best stuff that we have done in a while."

Added Buckingham, "All these years later, we are still writing songs that are dialogues for each other. That was part of the appeal of *Rumours*, and of the group in general." But if *Rumours* had guaranteed the band eternal appeal, by 2013 its shadow was so long that they were in some respects competing against their own past. In May 2011, it had even reentered the charts at #11 after an episode of the TV program *Glee* featured six songs from the album. The 2013 deluxe edition of *Rumours* got a five-star review in *Rolling Stone*, at a time when the still-ongoing Fleetwood Mac, with four of the five members who had recorded *Rumours*, couldn't even find time to record an entire album of new material. On the 2013 tour, eight of the twenty-three songs in their set (counting the *Rumours*-era B-side "Silver Springs") were from that epochal work.

Most of the missing *Rumours* tunes were, naturally, the ones that Christine McVie had written and sung. They did make an exception for “Don’t Stop,” and were joined by McVie onstage when they performed it as part of their encore at shows at London’s O2 Arena on September 25 and September 27. Her absence from most concerts, however, resulted in an imbalanced repertoire. As Buckingham admitted to *Rolling Stone*, the band missed her, Nicks more than anyone. The coming year would find them touring with a new sense of vitality and urgency, due to two unexpected turns of events.

The first, and far more serious, was the announcement on October 27 that John McVie had been diagnosed with cancer. Having just played their final European show of the tour in Amsterdam the previous day, Fleetwood Mac canceled the Australian and New Zealand legs of the tour so McVie could be treated for the illness. Fortunately, the treatment was successful, and, as of this writing, he continues to play with the band and, of perhaps just as much importance to him, pursue his sailing hobby with a passion. When he and Fleetwood Mac resumed touring in fall 2014, an even more pleasant development had restored the group to a quintet, with Christine McVie once again performing with them as a full member.



Lindsey Buckingham at home on September 29, 2006, days before the release of his solo album Under the Skin. He's released almost ten solo albums, though none have been big hits. Getty Images

It was not known by the public that a fear of flying was one of the reasons Christine had withdrawn from the music business. Even the band didn't realize how intense her phobia was, eventually resulting in her using a therapist specializing in helping clients overcome that fear. When Fleetwood visited London to do some press for their O2 shows, he convinced her to move up a planned trip to Hawaii to visit Mick and John (where both spend much time) so they could take the flight together. Fleetwood had done whatever it took to keep the band together for more than forty years, but this mission of mercy was done for friendship, not with the intention of getting her to join Fleetwood Mac again.



Mick Fleetwood, Stevie Nicks, and Lindsey Buckingham at London's Wembley Arena on October 30, 2009. From the late 1990s until 2014, Christine McVie did not tour with Fleetwood Mac. Getty Images

But her visit to Hawaii set that in motion anyway. Fleetwood's band was getting ready to play a fundraiser during her visit, and he invited her to hang out at his Maui farm while they rehearsed. Keeping a commitment he'd made years earlier not to bug her about returning to the stage, Fleetwood deliberately did not bring up the possibility of her playing with the band or with Fleetwood Mac. But while Fleetwood was out of the room, ex-Fleetwood Mac guitarist Rick Vito and Aerosmith singer Stephen Tyler (who had a house in Maui) asked if she'd like to do a song

or two at the fundraiser. She made an unannounced guest appearance at the concert, marking her first time onstage in seventeen years.

In a tentative, circuitous way, that got her talking more to Fleetwood and the rest of the band, Nicks specifically asking McVie to come back into the group. Even before the London O2 shows, she was rehearsing with them in preparation for a proper reunion after the end of the 2013 tour. In January 2014, it was formally announced that she was rejoining the band.

“I left the band because I developed a terrible fear of flying,” she told the *New Yorker* a year later. “I wanted to restore an ancient house in Kent, and that’s what I did. It was a heap—this Tudor building with the beams painted lime green, so hideous. And I had this idea that I’d love the small village life, with the Range Rover and the dogs and baking cookies for the YWCA. But then it got so boring. You couldn’t walk down the road without meeting two people related to each other. I missed the songs. And I missed the audience.”



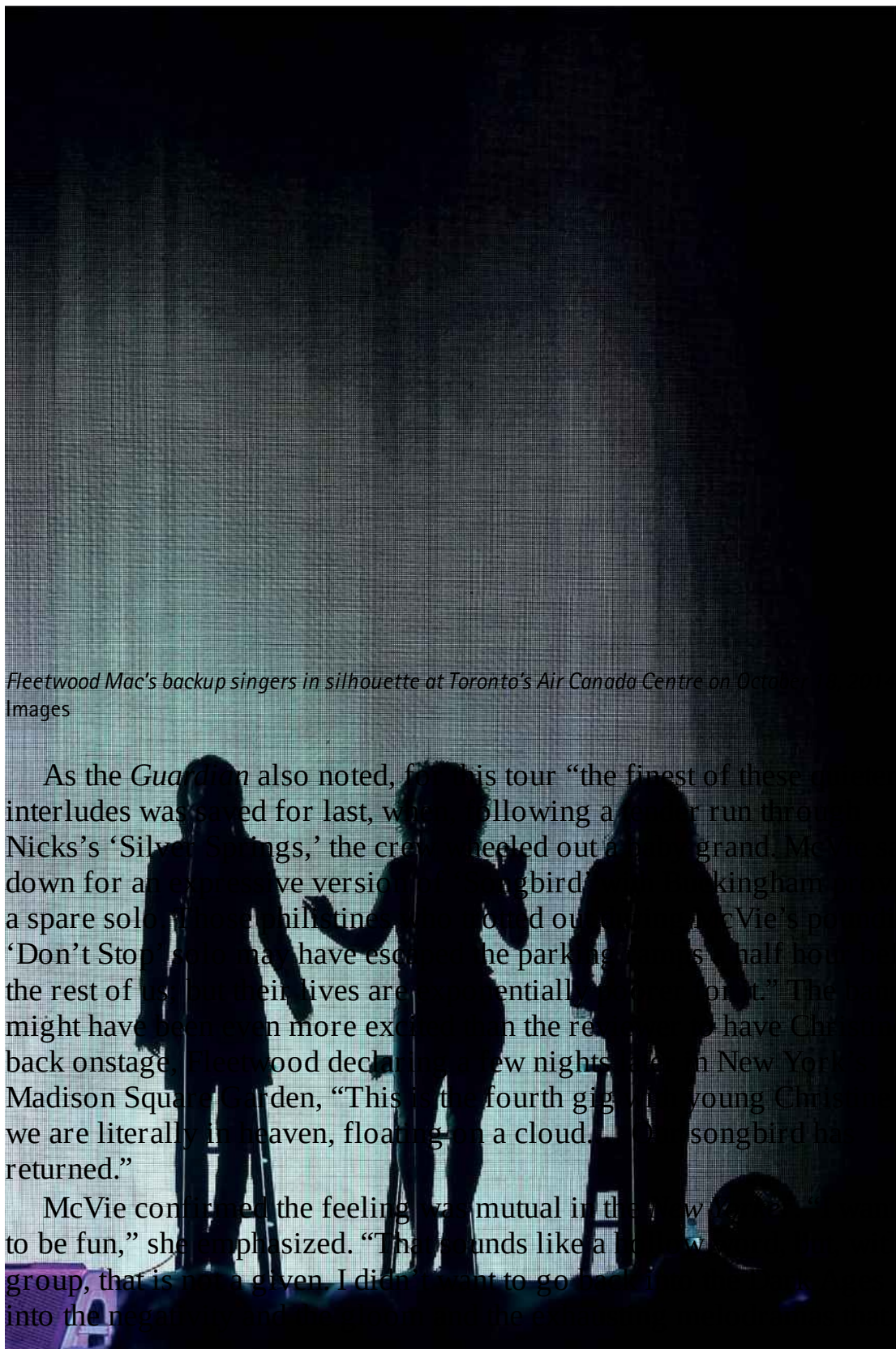
Fleetwood Mac at Madison Square Garden on October 7, 2014. Getty Images

Although Fleetwood, Buckingham, and Christine McVie did some work on a Fleetwood Mac studio album in spring 2014, touring was the main

focus of the reunited band. Titled with typical forbearance the On with the Show tour, it began on September 30, 2014, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and lasted for more than a year, though not with the jammed-up day-to-day schedules the band kept to in the 1960s and 1970s. Totalling 120 shows, the worldwide jaunt included a particularly extensive leg in North America, followed by shorter blazes through Europe, Australia, and New Zealand (where the last show was given in Auckland on November 22, 2015).

A few weeks into the tour, Fleetwood's second memoir, *Play On*, came out, telling much the same stories as his first with some variations, the final sections taking the tale up to preparations for the reunion tour with Christine McVie. The big hits spotlighting Christine—"Say You Love Me," "Over My Head," and "You Make Loving Fun"—were back in the set. Additional musicians augmented the core quintet, including backup singers and a few guys pitching in on keyboards, guitar, and percussion.

"Sixteen mostly retired years is a long time to get rusty, but the seventy-one-year-old McVie was in excellent form, her keyboard playing gently rumbling or subtly expressive, her singing graceful," wrote leading British daily paper the *Guardian* in its four-star review of the tour's first show. "Unlike her two front-of-stage colleagues, McVie isn't an apparent eccentric or egoist, but rather an understated craftsperson of plaintive easy listening and English soul.... It was great, and crucial, to have her back."



Fleetwood Mac's backup singers in silhouette at Toronto's Air Canada Centre on October 10, 2003. (Photo by Getty Images)

As the *Guardian* also noted, for this tour “the finest of these quiet interludes was saved for last, when, following a roller run through Nicks’s ‘Silver Springs,’ the crew wheeled out a stage grand. McVie sat down for an expressive version of the songbird, with Buckingham providing a spare solo. These final tunes were played out by McVie’s performing ‘Don’t Stop,’ solo may have escaped the parking lot as half hour before the rest of us, but their lives are essentially the same sort.” The band might have been even more excited than the rest of us to have Christine back onstage. Fleetwood declared a few nights later in New York’s Madison Square Garden, “This is the fourth gig of young Christine and we are literally in heaven, floating on a cloud. Our songbird has returned.”

McVie confirmed the feeling was mutual in the new year. “I loved it to be fun,” she emphasized. “That sounds like a lot of fun. This group, that is not a given. I didn’t want to go back into the studio and into the negative and the negative is the exact opposite of what we have

gone on in this band for years and years.” A few months into the tour at the time of the article, she reported success, so far: “We are all smiling 99 percent of the time. Which, by this band’s standard, is phenomenal.”

“When we went on the road, I realized what an amazing friend she’d been of mine that I had lost and didn’t realize the whole consequences of it till now,” reflected Nicks in the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* the same month. “She brings the funny back into Fleetwood Mac. Before, it was just a boys’ club. With her back, there’s more of a feminine touch to the whole thing. I never want her to ever go out of my life again, and that has nothing to do with music and everything to do with her and I as friends.”

Fleetwood reinforced the happy-ending feel of the reunion in *MOJO* in 2015: “Emotionally, if you think of the enormity of what has happened, the surprise of what has happened, the doors that have opened to be walked through.... If you were writing a book, you’d go, ‘Isn’t it a shame I can’t end it like this?’ We’ve had the chance to end it like that and I wouldn’t dream of it any other way.”

The warm fuzziness of being back together again was one of the main motives for going back out on the road, but it can’t be denied that the band made a lot of money on the way. By mid-2015, the tour had grossed \$166 million. *Pollstar*’s midyear report on the Top 100 highest-grossing worldwide tours had Fleetwood Mac at #2, ahead of the Rolling Stones, Paul McCartney, Garth Brooks, and the Foo Fighters. Of course, such rankings depend a lot on how many shows such performers present, but it’s nonetheless impressive in the face of robust competition from both legacy artists and newer faces, such as Taylor Swift and the one act to top Fleetwood Mac on this chart, One Direction.



Part of the audience at Fleetwood Mac's appearance on the Today show on October 9, 2014, in New York. Getty Images



Christine McVie, happy to be back in the spotlight with Fleetwood Mac at the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa, Canada, on October 28, 2014. Getty Images

As a concert act, Fleetwood Mac seems to have nothing left to prove, unless it's to prove to themselves they can still play music, get along, and draw huge crowds—perhaps not necessarily in that order, and perhaps the order changes day to day. But there's no doubt that they could probably do

it all over again, and gross just as much money, in the near future. As of the end of 2015, no plans for future touring had been announced, the band understandably due for a long rest after the last concert of On with the Show.

The greater challenge, and one whose outcome would be far more uncertain than the next tour's gross, would be to finish a studio album comprising entirely new, original material. There hasn't been such a thing since 2003. There have been reports that the band has been working on a new album since spring 2014 (as Fleetwood verified in his second autobiography), yet by the end of the following year, it was uncertain what, if any, progress had been made. As much flak as *Rumours* and *Tusk* got for taking forever, they were done at lightning speed in comparison.

It would have been hard to fit in much recording during the On with the Show tour. But there were also indications that the band themselves were unsure of whether a new album could happen. "I think Stevie's a little torn," responded Buckingham when asked by *MOJO* whether the band was relishing the prospect of a new record. "It has a lot to do with her life in general and trying to figure out what means something to her. I don't [know] whether or not she'll come to the table for an album. I hope she does.



Madison Square Garden marquee for the January 22, 2015, concert of the "On with the Show" tour.
Getty Images



Fleetwood Mac at O2 Arena in London, May 27, 2015. The show drew an audience of nearly 100,000, as did their concert at the same venue the following day. Getty Images

“I’ve said to her: ‘One of the things that was so beautiful for me about working on new songs with Chris was she wanted me to do that for her. That was something you used to want me to do for you—nobody’s done it better than I have. It tapped into something in me, Stevie, with Chris, that I’d almost forgotten, when it’s not just for yourself. If you would trust me to do that for you it would make me very happy.’ I think it scares her a little.”

Nicks certainly didn’t seem champing at the bit to get going when she was asked about a new Fleetwood Mac album by London’s *Daily Mirror* in June 2015. “Honestly, I just don’t know about it. This tour has been so hard and so breathtakingly overwhelming. I have to look great, I have to feel great, I have to sound great. And I cannot be thinking about future albums or poetry or songs right now.”

Comments earlier in the year from Fleetwood seemed to indicate they had a great deal of material in store, from Buckingham in particular, but not from Nicks, owing to her reluctance to commit to the project. “My inclination is, the music will not be wasted,” he told ABC Radio. “It will come out one way or another. I truly hope and I quietly believe it will be Fleetwood Mac, and Stevie will do some lovely stuff, and within the next couple of years we will get that done.”

The he said–she said back-and-forth was starting to sound like the kinds of volleys of accusations, betrayals, and hopeful pleas that had been sung about in *Rumours*. It was much more exasperating to read about than to listen to on a best-selling album, however, and even longtime fans could be forgiven for losing interest in the situation. In early December 2015, Nicks cooled the speculation by confirming to the Showbiz 411 website that the group was making “a whole album,” and that the band had “plenty of songs.” Yet the same site reported the following day that “Stevie says she’s going to work on several solo projects before a Fleetwood Mac album” and that “Mick Fleetwood is working on a Fleetwood Mac project of some kind without her.” The very appearance of the album isn’t 100 percent certain, let alone a target release date.



Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham at the O2 Arena concert on May 27, 2015. By mid-2015, the “On with the Show” tour had grossed \$166 million. Getty Images

If there is no album, will Fleetwood Mac keep playing concerts anyway? “How much longer can the Mac be a working band?” John McVie

asked himself in *MOJO* in mid-2015. “Not much longer, for me anyway. It’s not the music—it’s the peripherals, the traveling.”

But even the least-quoted member of Fleetwood Mac went on to express the kind of ambivalence that’s been characteristic of their goals and aspirations since they started. “Mick will go on until they put him up against the wall and shoot him,” McVie acknowledged. “I do flash on it, what must I fucking look like, this old fart up there. But I look out and there’s kids, and kids on their shoulders now, and they all seem to be having a good time. It’s sort of worrying.... Jesus Christ, will there still be a demand when I’m 75?!”

Almost certainly, there will (and that time isn’t that far away, with McVie having passed his seventieth birthday in late 2015). Besides being one of the most popular so-called “legacy” bands still touring, Fleetwood Mac has by now left a legacy unlike anyone else working in rock music. In their first dozen or so years, they underwent more startling changes in personnel and direction than any other superstar act. Despite many lows in which the band seemed all but certain to break up; a good five-year gap without big hit records at the time when they needed them the most; and five-year, and now it seems fifteen-year, gaps between any albums at all, they’ve generated more record and concert sales than almost all of their peers. They’ve had few imitators, let alone successful ones, in part because they were in such metamorphosis that there is no one Fleetwood Mac style, even if the kind of pop-rock they did on *Fleetwood Mac* and *Rumours* was by far their most popular.



Fleetwood Mac at the Isle of Wight Festival on June 14, 2015. Getty Images

In their last thirty-five years or so, in contrast, their style has remained pretty much the same. Once committed to unnerving change and daring original material, they now, like many of the veteran acts who emerged alongside them in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly subsist on playing decades-old greatest hits in concert. Their personnel have kept shifting, yet they've usually retained at least four of their core classic quintet, and often all five. The other constants remain an unending uncertainty about their future and a perennial tension between individual personalities and goals that has both sparked their greatest achievements and ensured that they can never seem to rest on their laurels, or even rest easy at all.

If Fleetwood Mac never plays another note, however, their music will, as their leader likes to say, "play on." On the radio, on whatever personal listening devices are in or will come into use, and in the hearts and minds of those who grew up on their music, as well as their children and, now, grandchildren. From "Black Magic Woman," "Albatross," and "Oh Well" to "Over My Head," "Rhiannon," "Say You Love Me," "Dreams," "Tusk,"

and others, their standards will not just play on after they're gone, but play on and on and on.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Note: This selected discography is not exhaustive, as it would be difficult to compile a complete list of all Fleetwood Mac releases throughout the world. It concentrates on their most essential recordings, including all of their studio albums and their most notable best-of collections, live recordings, and box sets. Live recordings of marginal fidelity or questionable legality have been omitted, as have haphazard rarity collections and singles focusing on variant versions and remixes.

STUDIO ALBUMS

Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac aka Fleetwood Mac

Released: Blue Horizon, February 24, 1968 (UK); Epic, June 3, 1968 (US)

Recorded: CBS Studios, London (August to December 1967)

Producer: Mike Vernon

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Bob Brunning

Tracks: "My Heart Beat Like a Hammer" (Spencer), "Merry Go Round" (Green), "Long Grey Mare" (Green), "Hellhound on My Trail" (Green), "Shake Your Moneymaker" (Elmore James), "Looking for Somebody" (Green), "No Place to Go" (Chester Burnett), "My Baby's Good to Me" (Spencer), "I Loved Another Woman" (Green), "Cold Black Night" (Spencer), "The World Keep On Turning" (Green), "Got to Move" (Elmore James, Marshall Sehorn)



Mr. Wonderful

Released: Blue Horizon, August 23, 1968 (UK)

Recorded: CBS Studios, London (April 1968)

Producer: Mike Vernon

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Christine Perfect, Duster Bennett, Steve Gregory, Dave Howard, Johnny Almond, Roland Vaughn

Tracks: “Stop Messin’ Round” (Green, Clifford Adams), “I’ve Lost My Baby” (Spencer), “Rollin’ Man” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Dust My Broom” (Robert Johnson), “Love That Burns” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Doctor Brown” (Buster Brown), “Need Your Love Tonight” (Spencer), “If You Be My Baby” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Evenin’ Boogie” (Jeremy Spencer), “Lazy Poker Blues” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Coming Home” (Elmore James), “Trying Hard to Forget” (Green, Clifford Adams)



English Rose

Released: Epic, January 1969 (US)

Recorded: CBS Studios, London, February to October 1968

Producer: Mike Vernon

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Christine Perfect, Duster Bennett, Steve Gregory, Dave Howard, Johnny Almond, Roland Vaughn

Tracks: “Stop Messin’ Round” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Jigsaw Puzzle Blues” (Kirwan), “Doctor Brown” (Buster Brown), “Something Inside of Me” (Kirwan), “Evenin’ Boogie” (Jeremy Spencer), “Love That Burns” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Black Magic Woman” (Green), “I’ve Lost My Baby” (Spencer), “One Sunny Day” (Kirwan), “Without You” (Kirwan), “Coming Home” (Elmore James), “Albatross” (Peter Green)



Then Play On (UK version)

Released: Reprise, September 19, 1969

Recorded: CBS Studios and De Lane Lea Studios, London, October 1968 to August 1969

Producers: Fleetwood Mac

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie

Tracks: “Coming Your Way” (Kirwan), “Closing My Eyes” (Green), “Fighting for Madge” (Fleetwood), “When You Say” (Kirwan), “Show-Biz Blues” (Green), “Underway” (Green), “One Sunny Day” (Kirwan), “Although the Sun Is Shining” (Kirwan), “Rattlesnake Shake” (Green), “Without You” (Kirwan), “Searching for Madge” (McVie), “My Dream” (Kirwan), “Like Crying” (Kirwan), “Before the Beginning” (Green)

Then Play On (US version)

Released: Reprise, October 1969

Recorded: CBS Studios and De Lane Lea Studios, London, October 1968 to August 1969

Producers: Fleetwood Mac

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Sandra Elsdon

Tracks: “Coming Your Way” (Kirwan), “Closing My Eyes” (Green), “Show-Biz Blues” (Green), “Underway” (Green), “Oh Well” (Green), “Although the Sun Is Shining” (Kirwan), “Rattlesnake Shake” (Green), “Searching for Madge” (John McVie), “Fighting for Madge” (Fleetwood), “Like Crying” (Kirwan), “Before the Beginning” (Green)



Fleetwood Mac in Chicago

Released: Blue Horizon, December 5, 1969 (first as *Blues Jam at Chess*)

Recorded: Chess Studios, January 4, 1969

Producers: Mike Vernon and Marshall Chess

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Walter “Shakey” Horton, Buddy Guy, Honey Boy Edwards, Willie Dixon, Otis Spann, S. P. Leary, J. T. Brown

Tracks: “Watch Out” (Green), “Ooh Baby” (Chester Burnett), “South Indiana Take 1” (Walter “Shakey” Horton), “South Indiana Take 2” (Walter “Shakey” Horton), “Last Night” (Little Walter Jacobs), “Red Hot Jam” (Green), “I’m Worried” (Elmore James), “I Held My Baby Last Night” (Elmore James), “Madison Blues” (Elmore James), “I Can’t Hold Out” (Elmore James), “I Need Your Love” (Walter “Shakey” Horton), “I Got the Blues” (Walter “Shakey” Horton), “World’s in a Tangle” (James Lane), “Talk with You” (Kirwan), “Like It This Way” (Kirwan), “Someday Soon Baby” (Otis Spann), “Hungry Country Girl” (Otis Spann), “Black Jack Blues” (J. T. Brown), “Everyday I Have the Blues” (Peter Chatman), “Rockin’ Boogie” (Spencer), “Sugar Mama” (Chester Burnett), “Homework” (Al Perkins, Dave Clark)

Kiln House

Released: Reprise, September 18, 1970

Recorded: June–July 1970

Producers: Fleetwood Mac

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Christine McVie

Tracks: “This Is the Rock” (Spencer), “Station Man” (Kirwan, Spencer, John McVie), “Blood on the Floor” (Spencer), “Hi Ho Silver” (Fats Waller, Ed Kirkeby), “Jewel Eyed Judy” (Kirwan, Fleetwood, John McVie), “Buddy’s Song” (Ella Holley), “Earl Grey” (Kirwan), “One Together” (Spencer), “Tell Me All the Things You Do” (Kirwan), “Mission Bell” (Jesse D. Hodges, William Michael)



The Original Fleetwood Mac

Released: CBS, May 14, 1971 (UK); Sire, November 4, 1977 (US)

Recorded: Probably Decca Studios and CBS Studios, London, circa 1967–1968 (outtakes from the pre-Danny Kirwan era)

Producer: Mike Vernon

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Christine Perfect

Tracks: “Drifting” (Green), “Leaving Town Blues” (Green), “Watch Out” (Green), “A Fool No More” (Green), “Mean Old Fireman” (traditional, arranged Spencer), “Can’t Afford To Do It” (Homesick James), “Fleetwood Mac” (Green), “Worried Dream” (B. B. King), “Love That Woman” (Lafayette Leake), “Allow Me One More Show” (Spencer), “First Train Home” (Green), “Rambling Pony No. 2” (Green)



Future Games

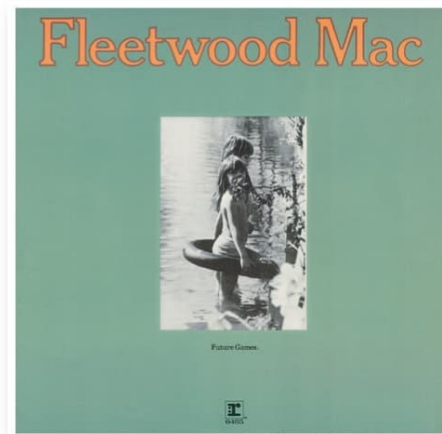
Released: Reprise, September 3, 1971

Recorded: June to August 1971, Advision Studios, London

Producers: Fleetwood Mac

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Danny Kirwan, Christine McVie, John McVie, Bob Welch, John Perfect

Tracks: “Woman of 1000 Years” (Kirwan), “Morning Rain” (Christine McVie), “What a Shame” (Welch, Fleetwood, Kirwan, Christine McVie, John McVie), “Future Games” (Welch), “Sands of Time” (Kirwan), “Sometimes” (Kirwan), “Lay It All Down” (Welch), “Show Me a Smile” (Christine McVie)



Bare Trees

Released: Reprise, March 1972

Recorded: 1971–1972, De Lane Lea Studios, London

Producers: Fleetwood Mac

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Danny Kirwan, Christine McVie, John McVie, Bob Welch, Mrs. Scarrott

Tracks: “Child of Mine” (Kirwan), “The Ghost” (Welch), “Homeward Bound” (Christine McVie), “Sunny Side of Heaven” (Kirwan), “Bare

Trees” (Kirwan), “Sentimental Lady” (Welch), “Danny’s Chant” (Kirwan), “Spare Me a Little of Your Love” (Christine McVie), “Dust” (Kirwan), “Thoughts on a Grey Day” (Mrs. Scarrott)



Penguin

Released:

Reprise,
March 1973

Recorded:

January
1973, The
Rolling
Stones
Mobile
Studio,
Benifold,
Hampshire, England



Producers: Fleetwood Mac and Martin Birch

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Bob Welch, Bob Weston, Dave Walker, Steve Nye, Ralph Richardson, Russell Valdez, Fred Totesaut

Tracks: “Remember Me” (Christine McVie), “Bright Fire” (Welch), “Dissatisfied” (Christine McVie), “(I’m a) Road Runner” (Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, Eddie Holland), “The Derelict” (Walker), “Revelation” (Welch), “Did You Ever Love Me” (Christine McVie, Welch), “Night Watch” (Welch), “Caught in the Rain” (Weston)

Mystery to Me

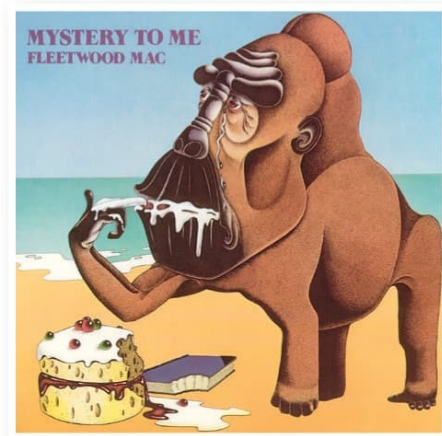
Released: Reprise, October 15, 1973

Recorded: Spring to summer 1973, The Rolling Stones Mobile Studio, Benifold, Hampshire, England

Producers: Fleetwood Mac and Martin Birch

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Bob Welch, Bob Weston

Tracks: “Emerald Eyes” (Welch), “Believe Me” (Christine McVie), “Just Crazy” (Christine McVie), “Hypnotized” (Welch), “Forever” (Weston, Christine McVie, Welch), “Keep on Going” (Welch), “In the City” (Welch), “Miles Away” (Welch), “Somebody” (Welch), “The Way I Feel” (Christine McVie), “For Your Love” (Graham Gouldman), “Why” (Christine McVie)



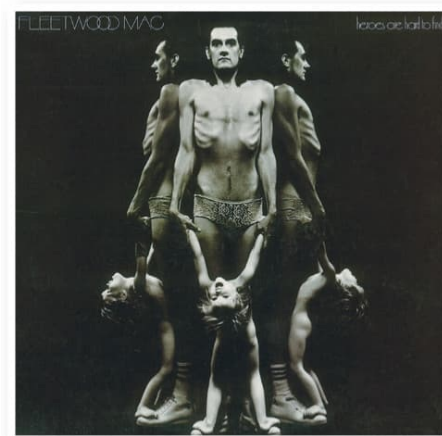
Heroes Are Hard to Find

Released: Reprise, September 10, 1974
Recorded: July 1974, Angel City Sound, Los Angeles

Producers: Fleetwood Mac and Bob Hughes

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Bob Welch

Tracks: “Heroes Are Hard to Find” (Christine McVie), “Coming Home” (Welch), “Angel” (Welch), “Bermuda Triangle” (Welch), “Come a Little Bit Closer” (Christine McVie), “She’s Changing Me” (Welch), “Bad Loser” (Christine McVie), “Silver Heels” (Welch), “Prove Your Love” (Christine McVie), “Born Enchanter” (Welch), “Safe Harbor” (Welch)



Fleetwood Mac

Released: Reprise, July 11, 1975

Recorded: January to June 1975, Sound City Studios, Van Nuys, California

Producers: Fleetwood Mac and Keith Olsen

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Waddy Watchel

Tracks: “Monday Morning” (Buckingham), “Warm Ways” (Christine McVie), “Blue Letter” (Michael Curtis, Richard Curtis), “Rhiannon” (Nicks), “Over My Head” (Christine McVie), “Crystal” (Nicks), “Say You Love Me” (Christine McVie), “Landslide” (Nicks), “World Turning” (Christine McVie, Buckingham), “Sugar Daddy” (Christine McVie), “I’m So Afraid” (Buckingham)



Rumours

Released: Warner Brothers, February 4, 1977

Recorded: February 1976 to January 1977, Record Plant Studios, Sausalito, California; Zellerbach Auditorium, Berkeley; Wally Heider Studios, San Francisco; Criteria Studios, Miami; Record Plant Studios, Los Angeles; and Davien Recording Studio, North Hollywood, California

Producers: Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, and Richard Dashut

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks

Tracks: “Second Hand News” (Buckingham), “Dreams” (Nicks), “Never Going Back Again” (Buckingham), “Don’t Stop” (Christine McVie), “Go Your Own Way” (Buckingham), “Songbird” (Christine McVie), “The Chain” (Buckingham, Nicks, Christine McVie, Fleetwood, John McVie), “You Make Loving Fun” (Christine McVie), “I Don’t Want to Know” (Nicks), “Oh Daddy” (Christine McVie), “Gold Dust Woman” (Nicks)



Tusk

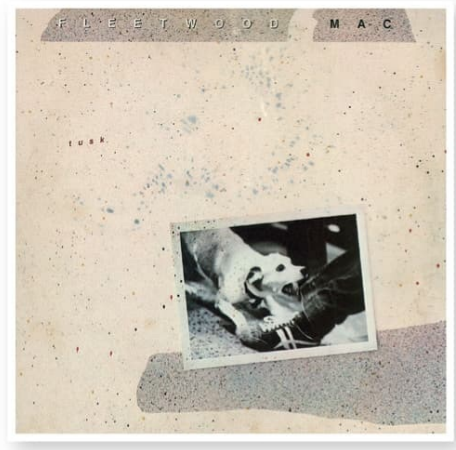
Released: Warner Brothers, October 12, 1979

Recorded: May 1978 to early summer 1979, The Village Recorder, Los Angeles

Producers: Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, and Richard Dashut

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, USC Trojan Marching Band, Peter Green

Tracks: “Over & Over” (Christine McVie), “The Ledge” (Buckingham), “Think About Me” (Christine McVie), “Save Me a Place” (Buckingham), “Sara” (Nicks), “What Makes You Think You’re the One” (Buckingham), “Storms” (Nicks), “That’s All for Everyone” (Buckingham), “Not That Funny” (Buckingham), “Sisters of the Moon” (Nicks), “Angel” (Nicks), “That’s Enough for Me” (Buckingham), “Brown Eyes” (Christine McVie), “Never Make Me Cry” (Christine McVie), “I Know I’m Not Wrong” (Buckingham), “Honey Hi” (Christine McVie), “Beautiful Child” (Nicks), “Walk a Thin Line” (Buckingham), “Tusk” (Buckingham), “Never Forget” (Christine McVie)



Mirage

Released: Warner Brothers, June 18, 1982

Recorded: May 1981–1982, Le Château, Hérouville, France; Larrabee Sound Studios, Los Angeles; and Record Plant Studios, Los Angeles

Producers: Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, and Richard Dashut

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Ray Lindsey

Tracks: “Love in Store” (Christine McVie, Jim Recor), “Can’t Go Back” (Buckingham), “That’s Alright” (Nicks), “Book of Love” (Buckingham, Richard Dashut), “Gypsy” (Nicks), “Only Over You” (Christine McVie), “Empire State” (Buckingham, Richard Dashut), “Straight Back” (Nicks), “Hold Me” (Christine McVie, Robbie Patton), “Oh Diane” (Buckingham, Richard Dashut), “Eyes of the World”



(Buckingham), “Wish You Were Here” (Christine McVie, Colin Allen)

Tango in the Night

Released: Warner Brothers, April 13, 1987

Recorded: November 1985–March 1987, Rumbo Recorders, Los Angeles and The Slope (Lindsey Buckingham’s home studio)

Producers: Lindsey Buckingham and Richard Dashut

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks

Tracks: “Big Love” (Buckingham), “Seven Wonders” (Sandy Stewart, Nicks), “Everywhere” (Christine McVie), “Caroline” (Buckingham), “Tango in the Night” (Buckingham), “Mystified” (Christine McVie, Buckingham), “Little Lies” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “Family Man” (Buckingham, Richard Dashut), “Welcome to the Room... Sara” (Nicks), “Isn’t It Midnight” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela, Buckingham), “When I See You Again” (Nicks), “You and I, Part II” (Buckingham, Christine McVie)



Behind the Mask

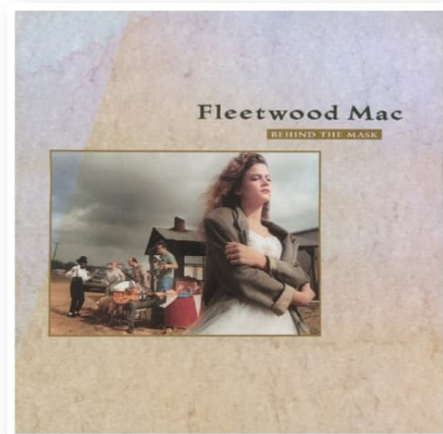
Released: Warner Brothers, April 10, 1990

Recorded: 1989–1990, The Complex, Los Angeles; Vintage Recorders, Phoenix

Producers: Fleetwood Mac and Greg Ladanyi

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Stevie Nicks, Rick Vito, Billy Burnette, Lindsey Buckingham, Isaac Asante, Stephen Croes

Tracks: “Skies the Limit” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela) “Love Is Dangerous” (Vito, Nicks), “In the Back of My Mind” (Burnette, David Malloy), “Do You Know” (Burnette, Christine



McVie), “Save Me” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “Affairs of the Heart” (Nicks), “When the Sun Goes Down” (Vito, Burnette), “Behind the Mask” (Christine McVie), “Stand on the Rock” (Vito), “Hard Feelings” (Burnette, Jeff Silbar), “Freedom” (Nicks, Mike Campbell), “When It Comes to Love” (Burnette, Dennis Morgan, Simon Climie), “The Second Time” (Nicks, Vito)

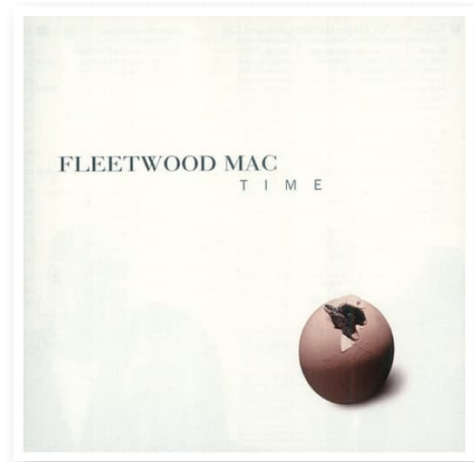
Time

Released: Warner Brothers, October 10, 1995

Recorded: 1994–1995, Ocean Way Recording and Sunset Sound Recorders, Los Angeles

Producers: Fleetwood Mac, Richard Dashut, John Jones, and Ray Kennedy

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Christine McVie, John McVie, Billy Burnette, Bekka Bramlett, Dave Mason, Lindsey Buckingham, Michael Thompson, Steve Thoma, Fred Tackett, Lucy Fleetwood



Tracks: “Talkin’ to My Heart” (Burnette, Deborah Allen, Rafe Van Hoy), “Hollywood (Some Other Kind of Town)” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “Blow By Blow” (Mason, John Cesario, Mark Holden), “Winds of Change” (Kit Hain), “I Do” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “Nothing Without You” (Delaney Bramlett, Doug Gilmore, Bekka Bramlett), “Dreamin’ the Dream” (Bekka Bramlett, Burnette), “Sooner or Later” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “I Wonder Why” (Mason, Franke Previte, Tom Fuler), “Nights in Estoril” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “I Got It in for You” (Burnette, Deborah Allen), “All Over Again” (Christine McVie, Eddy Quintela), “These Strange Times” (Fleetwood, Ray Kennedy)

Say You Will

Released: Reprise, April 15, 2003

Recorded: 1995, 1997–2002

Producers: Lindsey Buckingham, Rob Cavallo, and John Shanks

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, and Stevie Nicks

Tracks: “What’s the World Coming To?” (Buckingham, Julian Raymond), “Morrow Turning Over in His Grave”

(Buckingham), “Illume (9-11)” (Nicks),

“Thrown Down” (Nicks), “Miranda”

(Buckingham), “Red Rover”

(Buckingham), “Say You Will” (Nicks),

“Peacekeeper” (Buckingham), “Come”

(Buckingham, Neale Heywood), “Smile at

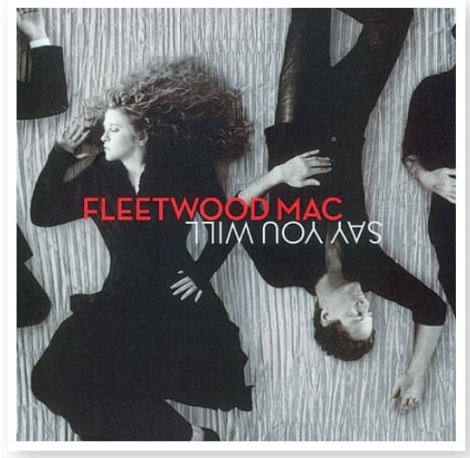
You” (Nicks), “Running through the Garden” (Nicks, Ray Kennedy, Gary

Nicholson), “Silver Girl” (Nicks), “Steal Your Heart Away”

(Buckingham), “Bleed to Love Her” (Buckingham), “Everybody Finds

Out” (Nicks, Rick Nowels), “Destiny Rules” (Nicks), “Say Goodbye”

(Buckingham), “Goodbye Baby” (Nicks)



Extended Play (EP)

Released: LMJS Productions, April 30, 2013

Recorded: 2012–2013

Producers: Lindsey Buckingham, Mitchell Froom, and (on “Without You”) Stevie Nicks

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, and Stevie Nicks

Tracks: “Sad Angel” (Buckingham), “Without You” (Nicks), “It Takes Time” (Buckingham), “Miss Fantasy” (Buckingham)

LIVE ALBUMS

Live

Released: Warner Brothers, December 8, 1980

Recorded: 1977–1980, various venues

Producers: Fleetwood Mac, Ken Caillat, and Richard Dashut

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Christine McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks

Tracks: “Monday Morning” (Buckingham), “Say You Love Me” (Christine McVie), “Dreams” (Nicks), “Oh Well” (Green), “Over & Over” (Christine McVie), “Sara” (Nicks), “Not That Funny” (Buckingham), “Never Going Back Again” (Buckingham), “Landslide” (Nicks), “Fireflies” (Nicks), “Over My Head” (Christine McVie), “Rhiannon” (Nicks), “Don’t Let Me Down Again” (Buckingham), “One More Night” (Christine McVie), “Go Your Own Way” (Buckingham), “Don’t Stop” (Christine McVie), “I’m So Afraid” (Buckingham), “The Farmer’s Daughter” (Brian Wilson, Mike Love)

Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac Live at the BBC

Released: Castle Communications, 1995

Recorded: November 1967–circa January 1971, BBC Radio, England

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer, Christine Perfect

Tracks: “Rattlesnake Shake” (Green), “Sandy Mary” (Green), “I Believe My Time Ain’t Long” (Robert Johnson, arranged Spencer), “Although the Sun Is Shining” (Kirwan), “Only You” (Kirwan), “You Never Know What You’re Missing” (Spencer), “Oh Well” (Green), “Can’t Believe You Wanna Leave” (Lloyd Price), “Jenny Lee” (Spencer), “Heavenly” (unknown), “When Will I Be Loved” (Phil Everly), “When I See My Baby” (Kirwan), “Buddy’s Song” (Ella Holley), “Honey Hush” (Big Joe Turner), “Preachin’” (unknown), “Jumping at Shadows” (Duster Bennett), “Preachin’ Blues” (Robert Johnson), “Long Grey Mare” (Green), “Sweet Home Chicago” (Robert Johnson), “Baby Please Set a Date” (Elmore James, Marshall Sehorn), “Blues with a Feeling” (Little Walter Jacobs), “Stop Messin’ Round” (Green), “Tallahassee Lassie” (Frank C. Slay Jr., Frederick Picariello, Bob Crewe), “Hang On to a Dream” (Tim Hardin), “Linda” (Spencer), “Mean Mistreatin’ Mama” (Leroy Carr), “World Keeps Turning” (Green), “I Can’t Hold Out” (Elmore James), “Early Morning Come” (Kirwan), “Albatross” (Green), “Looking for Somebody” (Green), “Got to Move” (Elmore James, Marshall Sehorn), “Like Crying Like Dying” (Kirwan), “Man of the World” (Green)

The Dance

Released: Reprise, August 19, 1997

Recorded: May 23, 1997, Warner Brothers Studios, Burbank, California

Producers: Lindsey Buckingham and Elliot Scheiner

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Christine McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, Brett Tuggle, Neale Heywood, Lenny Castro, Sharon Celani, Mindy Stein, USC Trojan Marching Band

Tracks: “The Chain” (John McVie, Nicks, Fleetwood, Christine McVie, Buckingham), “Dreams” (Nicks), “Everywhere” (Christine McVie), “Rhiannon” (Nicks), “I’m So Afraid” (Buckingham), “Temporary One” (Christine McVie), “Bleed to Love Her” (Buckingham), “Big Love” (Buckingham), “Landslide” (Nicks), “Say You Love Me” (Christine McVie), “My Little Demon” (Buckingham), “Silver Springs” (Nicks), “You Make Loving Fun” (Christine McVie), “Sweet Girl” (Nicks), “Go Your Own Way” (Buckingham), “Tusk” (Buckingham), “Don’t Stop” (Christine McVie)



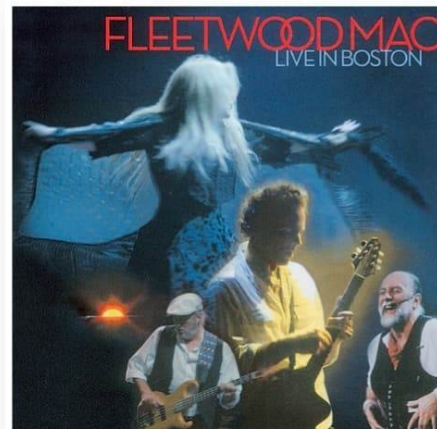
Live in Boston

Released: Snapper, 1998

Recorded: February 5–7, 1970, The Boston Tea Party, Boston

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer

Tracks: “Black Magic Woman” (Green), “Jumping at Shadows” (Duster Bennett), “Like It This Way” (Kirwan), “Only You” (Kirwan), “Rattlesnake Shake” (version one) (Green), “I Can’t Hold Out” (Elmore James), “Got to Move” (Elmore James), “The Green Manalishi” (Green), “World in Harmony” (Kirwan, Green), “Oh Well” (Green), “Rattlesnake Shake” (version two), “Stranger Blues” (Elmore James, Marshall Sehorn), “Red Hot Mama” (Elmore James), “Teenage Darling” (Spencer), “Keep A-Knocking” (Richard Penniman), “Jenny Jenny” (Enotris Johnson,



Richard Penniman), “Encore Jam” (Green, Kirwan, Spencer, Joe Walsh), “Jumping at Shadows” (Duster Bennett), “Sandy Mary” (Green), “If You Let Me Love You” (B. B. King), “Loving Kind” (Kirwan), “Coming Your Way” (Kirwan), “Madison Blues” (Elmore James), “Got to Move” (Elmore James), “The Sun Is Shining” (Elmore James), “Oh Baby” (Elmore James), “Tiger” (Ollie Jones), “Great Balls of Fire” (Jack Hammer, Otis Blackwell), “Tutti Frutti” (Richard Penniman, Dorothy LaBostrie, Joe Lubin), “On We Jam” (Green, Kirwan, Spencer, Fleetwood, John McVie)

Shrine '69

Released: Rykodisc, 1999

Recorded: January 25, 1969, Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles

Musicians: Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Danny Kirwan, John McVie, Jeremy Spencer

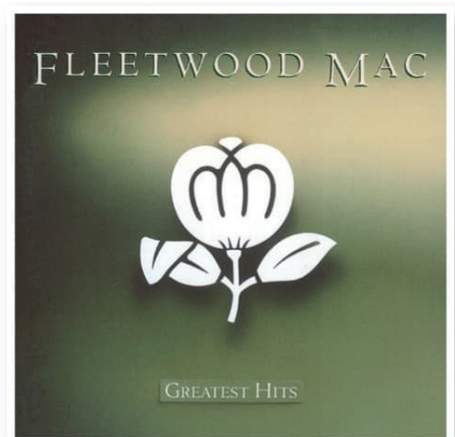
Tracks: “Tune Up” (uncredited), “If You Be My Baby” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Something Inside of Me” (Kirwan), “My Sweet Baby” (Homesick James), “Albatross” (Green), “Before the Beginning” (Green), “Rollin’ Man” (Green, Clifford Adams), “Lemon Squeezer” (James Lane), “Need Your Love So Bad” (Mertis John Jr.), “Great Balls of Fire” (Jack Hammer, Otis Blackwell)

BEST OF ALBUMS

Greatest Hits

Released: Warner Brothers, November 15, 1988

Tracks: “Rhiannon,” “Don’t Stop,” “Go Your Own Way,” “Hold Me,” “Everywhere,” “Gypsy,” “You Make Loving Fun,” “As Long As You Follow,” “Dreams,” “Say You Love Me,” “Tusk,” “Little Lies,” “Sara,” “Big Love,” “Over My Head,” “No Questions Asked”



The Best of Peter Green's Fleetwood Mac

Released: Columbia/Blue Horizon, November 11, 2002

Tracks: "Albatross," "Black Magic Woman," "Need Your Love So Bad" (US version), "My Heart Beat Like a Hammer," "Rollin' Man," "The Green Manalishi," "Man of the World," "Something Inside of Me," "Looking for Somebody," "Oh Well" (Parts 1 & 2), "Rattlesnake Shake," "Merry Go Round," "I Loved Another Woman," "Need Your Love Tonight," "Worried Dream," "Dragonfly," "Stop Messin' Round," "Shake Your Moneymaker," "I'd Rather Go Blind" (by Chicken Shack with Christine Perfect), "Albatross" (by Chris Coco featuring Peter Green)

The Very Best of Fleetwood Mac

Released: Reprise, October 12, 2002

Tracks: "Monday Morning," "Dreams," "You Make Loving Fun," "Go Your Own Way," "Rhiannon" (single mix), "Say You Love Me" (single mix), "I'm So Afraid" (live 1997), "Silver Springs," "Over My Head" (single mix), "Never Going Back Again," "Sara," "Love in Store," "Tusk," "Landslide," "Songbird," "Big Love" (live 1997), "Storms"

BOX SETS

25 Years—The Chain

Released: Warner Brothers, November 24, 1992

Notes: This four-CD box set has tracks from throughout the first twenty-five years of their career, including some unreleased studio and live material, alternate and non-LP mixes, and a track from Jeremy Spencer's 1970 solo album. It also has four new recordings specifically earmarked for this project.



The Complete Blue Horizon Sessions 1967–1969

Released: Blue Horizon/Sire, 1999

Notes: Six-CD box has all of the albums and singles released by the Blue Horizon label during Fleetwood Mac's early career, along with numerous previously unissued outtakes and alternate versions recorded during the same era.

Rumours: Expanded Edition

Released: Rhino/Warner Brothers, January 29, 2013

Notes: Besides including the original *Rumours* album, this three-CD expanded edition has the B-side "Silver Springs," a disc of outtakes, and another disc devoted to previously unreleased recordings from their 1977 tour.

Tusk: Deluxe Edition

Released: Rhino/Warner Brothers, December 4, 2015

Notes: Besides presenting the original *Tusk* album on one CD, this has two CDs of outtakes, singles, demos, alternate versions, and different mixes; two CDs of live recordings from different stages of the *Tusk* tour in 1979 and 1980; a DVD with a 5.1 surround mix and 24/96 stereo audio of the original album; and two vinyl LPs replicating the format in which the music was first released.

SINGLES

All singles were issued in the United States unless noted:

- 1967 "I Believe My Time Ain't Long"/"Rambling Pony" (UK)
- 1968 "Black Magic Woman"/"Long Grey Mare"
- 1968 "Need Your Love So Bad"/"Stop Messin' Round" (UK)
- 1968 "Need Your Love So Bad"/"No Place to Go"
- 1968 "Albatross"/"Jigsaw Puzzle Blues"
- 1969 "Man of the World"/"Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked in Tonight" (UK) (B-side issued under pseudonym Earl Vince & the Valiants)

1969 "Oh Well"/"Oh Well Part II"
1969 "Rattlesnake Shake"/"Coming Your Way"
1970 "The Green Manalishi"/"World in Harmony"
1971 "Jewel Eyed Judy"/"Station Man"
1971 "Dragonfly"/"The Purple Dancer" (UK)
1971 "Sands of Time"/"Lay It All Down"
1972 "The Green Manalishi"/"Oh Well"
1972 "Sentimental Lady"/"Sunny Side of Heaven"
1972 "Did You Ever Love Me"/"The Derelict" (UK)
1972 "Spare Me a Little of Your Love"/"Sunny Side of Heaven" (UK)
1973 "Black Magic Woman"/"Albatross"
1973 "Remember Me"/"Dissatisfied"
1973 "Did You Ever Love Me"/"Revelation"
1973 "For Your Love"/"Hypnotized"
1974 "Heroes Are Hard to Find"/"Born Enchanter"
1975 "Over My Head"/"I'm So Afraid"
1975 "Warm Ways"/"Blue Letter" (UK)
1976 "Rhiannon"/"Sugar Daddy"
1976 "Say You Love Me"/"Monday Morning"
1976 "Go Your Own Way"/"Silver Springs"

1977 "Dreams"/"Songbird"
1977 "Don't Stop"/"Never Going Back Again"
1977 "Don't Stop"/"Gold Dust Woman" (UK)
1977 "You Make Loving Fun"/"Gold Dust Woman"
1977 "You Make Loving Fun"/"Never Going Back Again" (UK)
1977 "You Make Loving Fun"/"The Chain" (Germany)
1979 "Tusk"/"Never Make Me Cry"

1979 "Sara"/"That's Enough for Me"
1979 "Not That Funny"/"Think About Me" (The Netherlands)
1980 "Not That Funny"/"Save Me a Place" (UK)
1980 "Sisters of the Moon"/"Walk a Thin Line"
1980 "Think About Me"/"Save Me a Place"
1980 "Think About Me"/"Honey Hi" (UK)
1981 "Fireflies"/"Over My Head"
1981 "The Farmer's Daughter"/"Monday Morning"
1981 "The Farmer's Daughter"/"Dreams" (UK)
1982 "Hold Me"/"Eyes of the World"
1982 "Gypsy"/"Cool Water"
1982 "Love in Store"/"Can't Go Back"
1982 "Oh Diane"/"Love in Store" (Germany)
1982 "Oh Diane"/"Only Over You" (UK)
1983 "Oh Diane"/"That's Alright"
1983 "Can't Go Back"/"That's Alright" (UK)
1987 "Big Love"/"You and I, Part I"
1987 "Seven Wonders"/"Book of Miracles"
1987 "Little Lies"/"Ricky"
1987 "Family Man"/"You and I, Part II" (UK)
1987 "Everywhere"/"When I See You Again"
1988 "Family Man"/"Down Endless Street"
1988 "As Long as You Follow"/"Oh Well" (live)
1988 "Isn't It Midnight"/"Mystified" (UK)
1989 "Hold Me"/"No Questions Asked" (UK)
1990 "Save Me"/"Another Woman (live)"
1990 "In the Back of My Mind"/"Lizard People" (UK)
1990 "Hard Feelings"/"Freedom"

- 1990 "Skies the Limit"/"The Second Time"
- 1992 "Paper Doll"/"The Chain" (CD single)
- 1997 "The Chain" (live)
- 1997 "Silver Springs" (live)
- 1998 "Landslide" (CD maxi-single)
- 2003 "Peacekeeper"
- 2003 "Say You Will"





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Mac Music/
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GYPSY

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