

**The following interview with LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM was conducted by the Library of Congress on March 18, 2025.**



**Library of Congress: How, and by whom, were you first contacted to join Fleetwood Mac?**

Lindsey Buckingham: It was one of those very...kind of quirky things that often are happy accidents. Stevie and I had just finished and put out the “Buckingham/Nicks” album and we did that at what we called our “home away from home” which was Sound City studios in the Valley. And the guy there that was the main engineer, he was the one that helped in getting us to LA and even let us stay at his house and get us a record deal. Sound City was like family to us.

That album was not a huge thing commercially but it was sort of rearing its head regionally, in parts of the country, in the South, and we were wondering, “Would it really click if we gave it more time?” But that was something that was kind of in the rearview mirror, and that thought came and went. I mean we were proud of it and we were doing some touring...

We were at Sound City—like I said, our home away from home—and its owner Joe [Gottfried] gave us some free studio time in Studio B whenever we needed it. So, we were in Studio B one night working on a new album, just by ourselves. And [our engineer] Keith Olsen was there; Keith was always there doing one thing or another. He was in Studio A and I went over to say “hi.” So I left the control room and wandered across the hall to Studio B and, as I’m walking in, I’m hearing one of the “Buckingham/Nicks” songs, “Frozen Love,” being played at top volume. It’s near the end of the song. That song has a screaming guitar solo; it wears its instrumental is on its sleeve for sure.

And I go in and I see this very tall gent with his eyes closed and he’s bopping his head to the song. And Keith and he wave to me but we all wait for the song to finish. The music stops and Keith says, “Lindsey, I want you to meet Mick Fleetwood.”

What had been happening was that Mick--living down in Laurel Canyon—had been doing albums with various incarnations of the band, of Fleetwood Mac. It was a sign of the times and the decision making was from the top down [from the label]. The band was making no money for them but the label just kept Fleetwood Mac on to kind of see what happens.

So they wanted to make another album. Mick had met Keith and Keith didn't show him the "Buckingham/Nicks" album, per se: what he did want to show Mick was something he was proud of as an engineer because they were thinking about using Keith for the next Fleetwood Mac album. So it was in the context of all that that I met Mick. Mick and I chatted for a minute; Mick was very complimentary.

Then I walk back to Studio B and I say to Stevie, "I just met Mick Fleetwood!" And I had been a fan of them, especially in the Peter Green format. [I thought] they were very progressive.

So... we went on with our session and thought no more of it. Then: a week or so later, I get a call from Keith first, I think, and he said, "Mick Fleetwood want to talk to you." Then I get a call from Mick. Bob Welch had decided to depart the band.

Timing is a whole thing. Mick was wonderfully intuitive and he could just see the bigger picture. He got us from hearing that one song. He saw the skill set and the range that I had.

So he asked, "Would you like to join Fleetwood Mac?" I don't remember saying "Let me think about it" or if we had a follow-up phone call... But I thought about it and thought about Stevie. And I eventually said, "That might be something I might consider but you have to take my girlfriend, too."

Christine was already in the band and they had to discuss that with her. Christine in particular: I mean, was she open to another female in the band?...

He got back to me and said "okay" and we talked about it and... You know, it was not a clear... Like I said, "Buckingham/Nicks" was connecting with southern radio... So it was not an easy, clear decision to make. Was there going to be a possibility for us just on our own?

But we decided, well let's give it a shot.

**LC: Were you hesitant about joining up with an already-established entity like Fleetwood Mac? Were you afraid that you—and Stevie—were going to get lost within the group?**

LB: That was certainly one of the pieces of the puzzle, probably more for me than for Stevie. She was going to stand up there and sing in either group, whereas my thing was a bit more complicated. As a guitarist with his own distinct way of what I was doing, was I going to be able to fit into this established sound? They already had a sound and it wasn't going anywhere--but was I going to have to adapt fully to it? And could I influence it? At the same time, they were what they were already, and I can't remake them for my own agenda....

I think I needed to do, again, be mindful and figure out how to use my skills as a guitarist and *as a producer* and apply them all that to them. And, if I had to change, well, that's part of being in a band....

We went and rehearsed before going into the studio. My songs had been demo-ed, they were already blocked out. But it was so profound for me—I could find a place for me that was effective and *needed* in Fleetwood Mac.

The first night of rehearsal, we did [Christine's] "Over My Head" and I changed the bridge. It was too angular originally. It didn't go from where the song begins and it was hard to come back to where it had to go. Christine was open to it; she saw that the song immediately improved.

That first night: I could see how this was going to go. There was something else *larger* here going on. That's how I approached that in my mind. I never thought I was losing myself.

But other dues do have to be paid. For years onstage, when we didn't have a lot of our own material, I was just the guy covering Peter Green....

I think the "Tusk" album is when we were really started doing a set we could call our own.

**LC: I wanted, of course, to ask about the making of "Rumours." Legend has it that those were some notorious and emotional recording sessions. Is all that accurate?**

LB: ...We didn't have Keith Olsen for that album. He's one of the best engineers but there were places he didn't want to go. It would frustrate me as a producer.

As I said, for that first album ["Fleetwood Mac," 1975] we rehearsed, we worked the stuff, we worked out all of Christine's stuff. It went very quicky—four months or so.

Then, unlike that album, [for "Rumours"] we discarded using Keith so that I could take on a larger role and flex my production muscles.

Everything by that time was quite different. First, John and Christine were in the process of breaking up but it was the early days. Stevie and I had had some problems; we were on again and off again, but, generally speaking, on.

"Rumours" was a year and a half to make. And, later, all of this dynamic... We had gone through and had come out the other side. John and Christine were divorced. Stevie and I were not together. The living situation was different; the guys were all living somewhere else. It was so stark. And it informed the material; it was ultra-autobiographical in a way. Just more focused on the trauma....

And also the fact that by that time it was clear...that first album had had three successful singles and sold several million. Then, suddenly, we went from starting from scratch (or what felt like scratch) to now seeing ourselves as a successful band. There was this sense of destiny to fulfill.

Unfortunately, it was difficult emotionally. There was no closure for anyone. We had to be around each other all the time. I didn't get the chance to get over Stevie; I wasn't over her. Then, as a producer and in bringing her songs to life in the studio, I had to be in touch with my

better self. We saw it all as this destiny to fulfill. We were in a place where we had to—like it or not—get in touch with our better selves and rise above.

I think that was much of the appeal of the album's appeal, how autobiographical it was. And that we made something significant in spite of all the troubles.

**LC: Do you think that is why “Rumours” has so, so strongly connected with people both back then and up to today?**

LB: Yes, a good portion of it. The band has a legacy. Even now, post-2018 between me and the band; I mean that was just a blip on the radar.... That does not affect my perception of the body of work we have done.

The repetition of what you are doing over the years is its own thing, too. You do a concert and look out and see three generations of people. It takes the equation of time to know if you have done your job properly and bought into existence something exemplary, rising above the bullshit on some level.

You know, maybe we [as individuals] didn't even belong in the same band together but the sum was greater than the parts. I think that has had some effect on the album's lasting popularity.

**LC: Can you tell me about Christine McVie?**

LB: Christine was great antidote. It was hard for John to be in a band after they weren't together, as it was for me with Stevie after all those years. A part of me never got over Stevie and I think a part of her never got over me. There's a great deal of denial going on.

Christine was the closest thing I ever had to a sister. Unlike Stevie who played minimal guitar, Christine knew her stuff musically. She and I had another bond in that way. Stevie never understood what I was doing with her songs though she appreciated it. But I don't think she grasped the process that you need to get from point A to point B.

Christine was more hands on and appreciated what I could do being more skilled herself. She read music. I don't read music; my guitar playing is all self-taught. It's a big help to have around who is a schooled musician.

She was always that sisterly presence. Her spirit...just keeping things afloat. She could always help if things began to spiral down, she could bring it back.

**LC: Over the years—and this is acknowledged in some of the liner notes of various Fleetwood Mac albums—you seemed to become the leader of the group. How did this role come about and was it something you wanted?**

LB: I always liked it. It's not like I wasn't doing anything different from the very first album or from “Rumours” or “Tusk” or anything that followed.

Mick didn't feel comfortable giving me production credit but my skill set and my contributions were not any less than when I was given credit. There's a lot of inner politics of the band and I think, for a long time, the band just said, "Put 'Produced by Fleetwood Mac.'"

I think it was by the time we got to the "Tango in the Night" album, at that point, I had paid certain dues and [was credited].

I didn't care about that credit. What mattered to me was the outcome of the work.

**LC: Looking back at the "Rumours" album from today, is there anything you wish you had done differently on it?**

LB: I don't think so.... We were in this moment. We were writing these songs—having these cross conversations with each other in the studio, in the songs. I think we got it pretty right. A little raw-er than the first album but with more of a sense of truth.