



In the
EYES
of the
WORLD

A Lindsey Buckingham Newsletter

Special to this Issue – April 21, 2001

What's New
Feature Interview
Feature Album Review
Feature Performance Review
Featured Song
Fun & Games

Feature Interview

Recording, Engineering and Production
August 1992

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

by Dan Levitin

As the arranger/producer behind Fleetwood Mac from 1975 - 1988, Lindsey Buckingham is largely responsible for that group's superstardom and megasuccess on the five studio albums, Fleetwood Mac, Rumours, Tusk, Mirage and Tango In The Night. As a songwriter, Buckingham's own compositions are some of the high-points in the group's long history. From 1975's "Blue Letter" and "I'm So Afraid" through 1988's "Caroline", he consistently combines pop elements into songs with depth.

Out of the Cradle is a true solo album, and finds Lindsey playing all the instruments, save for occasional assistance on bass and percussion from Larry Klein, Buell Neidlinger and Alex Acuña, and Mitchell Froom playing organ on one track. Buckingham's two greatest strengths, his abilities as a songwriter and as an arranger, are on exhibition here. As a songwriter, he has the ability to write songs that sound like you've heard them before but that hold your interest over multiple listenings. As an arranger, he brings in lots of musical ideas to his songs. Countermelodies, harmonies and clever melodic nuggets adorn the spacious halls of his songs like fine paintings in a house. It is easy enough to pass them by them and pay no attention to them; but if one stops and reflects on them for a moment, each supporting musical element reveals itself as being able to stand easily on its own as a complete song. Indeed, two of Buckingham's greatest talents - as a virtuosic guitarist and vocalist - are often overlooked because of his sharp instinct for balancing song elements so seamlessly that none stands out and takes attention away from any other.

Buckingham spoke to REP's Music Production Editor Dan Levitin about the new record, and his approach to production.



You told Timothy White in 1987 that you considered your main contribution to Fleetwood Mac as an arranger.

LB: Yes, if I were to pick one thing as my main contribution to the group, it wouldn't be as a guitar player, a singer or a songwriter, it would be as someone who could take raw material and forge it into something complete. I guess to some degree with more success than I can do with my own material a lot of times. If you heard the way some of their songs sounded in their raw state, and tried to make sense out of them...my contribution was to give them form and balance these things with what they would all have to offer ...

Yes, and the thing I like best about your three solo albums is similar. It's your idea of the song as containing an enormous number of musical elements - not just, you know, the rhythm section, guitar and vocal lines, but all these other musical parts that swim in and out of each other. That sense of craftsmanship and creating something is still there.

LB: Yes, definitely. A lot of times the message is in the form of what's going on as much as anything else.

How do you prepare for a career doing that? Clearly, if you want to be a guitarist, you practice guitar; if you want to be a songwriter you write a bunch of songs. During, say, the five years before your first record, how were you woodshedding and preparing to be someone who does this?

LB: Well that's tough. I started playing at such a young age. I'm forty-two and I started playing when I was about six. I never had any lessons and have never been taught, and I don't read music - and that's why talking to you guys makes me nervous, 'cause you could always tell me what I'm doing it wrong!

I didn't start writing until I was 21, but having had the guitar as an appendage, in a way, was so ingrained in me, that by the time I got into the idea of listening to parts and seeing how they fit together I wasn't also trying to overcome all the hurdles of learning to become a guitar player. The first thing that got me into the line that I'm on now is that I went out and got a Sony two-track tape recorder that had sound on sound, and you could bounce back and forth.

So you practiced multi-tracking...

LB: Well, since I was twenty-one, yeah. I remember at that age going down to Eber Hi-Fi and asking "do you have like 4-track tape recorders?" and they're looking at me like, "what are you, kidding?" Because at that time something like that didn't exist. And when I finally did get a 4-track, I got an Ampex AG440 with 1/2" tape which I managed to buy because an aunt that I never met, left myself and my two brothers a house which resold for about \$40,000. We split that three ways, so out of the blue I was able to afford a \$4,000 tape machine.

What year is this now?

LB: 1971. So I put that up in my father's coffee plant in Daly City and every night I'd drive up after he left and I'd just work until midnight or 1:00 putting my own material and some of Stevie's down. And I guess that whole Les Paul sensibility really just sort of became that much more a part of me. Then you start to understand how parts fit together and the jigsaw of all of it.

You know, you can apply that back to a band situation pretty easily.

The jigsaw metaphor is very apt. In your arrangements, a part will come in and then it will stop, and you'll leave just the right amount of space - fitting like a piece of sky in the jigsaw puzzle that fills the space between the mountains you're building. Or another part will come in that locks just right. You don't have the problem of parts just not making sense together...

LB: The only problem I have - one of the things about working alone is that it becomes more like

a painting where you're putting strokes on the canvas, and you may start off thinking this is your song, but by the time you're done, the canvas has led you off in a totally different direction. I guess that's as it should be, if your intuitions work correctly. One

of the byproducts of that is that sometimes you run into a little density problem. But that's something I'm working on.

Did you ever as an exercise take songs that you admired and try to piece them together track by track?

LB: You mean like Todd Rundgren doing "Good Vibrations" [on Faithful, Rhino Records 70868] or something like that? Not really, that's pretty academic...I certainly have come close to that by ripping off lots of stuff. But you know, I think you should have a good, healthy sense of borrowing. I think that's kind of important.

Speaking of academic and borrowing, there's something I've always wanted to ask you about Tango In The Night. You did something, perhaps unwittingly, that I thought was just brilliant.

LB: It was probably not unwittingly, but we'll see.

The variety of guitar sounds during the solos is very wide. I had imagined that you said to yourself, "I'm going to play guitar like Bob Welch here, and I'll do a Danny Kirwan here, and Peter Green here," and you encapsulated the entire history of Fleetwood Mac lead guitar players in the space of that album. [see accompanying sidebar].

Indeed, two of Buckingham's greatest talents - as a virtuosic guitarist and vocalist - are often overlooked because of his sharp instinct for balancing song elements so seamlessly that none stands out and takes attention away from any other.

LB: Well you're right - that was totally unwittingly! A lot of that might have been that we were using a lot of midi stuff, guitar synthesizers, so that's probably part of it. I didn't do any of that with Cradle.

I thought that was so hip, to do a group retrospective on your last album with them.

LB: Well that's great - I'll have to claim knowledge of that from here on out! But as far as arrangements are concerned, in Fleetwood Mac I approached the work from an orchestral standpoint. I wanted to find parts that were good for the song itself, and that made sense for the record, but they didn't necessarily stand out. You can listen to Everly Brothers records, for example, where Chet Atkins or somebody is playing a key part for the record but you don't really notice it, it's just in there.

There's a recurring guitar sound of yours I particularly like. It's on the intro to "Wrong" on your new album, and you used it on "World Turning" in 1975. It's sort of a Dobro-ish sound.

LB: Oh yes. That's actually a gut string recorded direct. One of the things we did on this album to prevent it from getting too dense, and not wanting it to come off too Phil Spector, and still dealing with a bulk of things going on, we made the decision to record a lot of things direct because then they are more contained. About halfway into the record, I turned on the T.V. and saw Daniel Lanois. He's great, I love what he does, and I've always thought we'd get along great. But he's kind of got this spacey air about him and he was going on and on, almost like Floyd the barber from Mayberry - [impersonating Floyd] "oh, well, you know, you just don't ever want to record anything di-rect because you lose all the dynamics without a mike..." And I thought, well, that's fair enough, but we were trying to keep things contained not only by recording a lot of stuff direct, but also in mono. The present train of thought is that if you want to record an acoustic guitar you set up a couple of mikes and maybe mix in the direct to get this spread. Well that already takes up so much space, so we thought, "why not try and make these things points?" So even on the densest of songs you've got points of things that you can pick out from left to right.

I never had any lessons and have never been taught, and I don't read music - and that's why talking to you guys makes me nervous, 'cause you could always tell me what I'm doing it wrong!

On "World Turning" that was a Dobro, but this was just a gut-string, recorded direct.

Wow! It doesn't sound like a gut-string. It sounds so metallic.

LB: Well, we put a lot of treble on it! Richard and I are not engineers in the way that Bob Clearmountain is. Our theory is we just turn the knobs until it sounds good. I'm not that well versed in technical things.

For instruments, I'm using mainly guitars, as opposed to my previous solo album, Go Insane, where I used a lot of Fairlight, I was very taken with the possibilities of it. This time, it just seemed to me that guitar was an important thing to try and flaunt; my chops are at about the top of their game right now and I feel like I've grown and am coming into a second stage now.

There are a lot of guitar sounds on Cradle. I like the cheap distorted sound on "This Is The Time."

LB: There are a lot of things that are guitars that are just used in unusual ways. If you can hear a sound in your head and you can get a sense and understanding of how it might work, it's not so important what equipment you use, it's what you do with it.

When we wanted a fuzzy or distorted sound, most of the time we wouldn't set up an amp, we'd go through the GT pre-amp.

What kind of equipment do you have in your studio?

LB: We have a black velvet Elvis, which was very important. We had that up on a wall, so it was like the Elvis shrine. The console is a Neotek 48-track; it has real nice, flexible and EQ. An SSL and compression on every channel isn't something we felt we needed. We did not mix the album at the house, all of that organization was done somewhere else. I have an Ausberger system, a JBL system and some NS10-s. This is all in what was my garage. I've got a couple of old AMSSs, Yamaha Rev 5 and Rev 7, Lexicon PCM42, PCM70 which is wonderful. The direct we use for all that stuff is a Bertech ITR1. We've got four LA4's which I like because they're really soft

sounding. We've got some other compressors which aren't soft sounding, the DBX160 limiters.

You used that on that lead guitar, I'll bet.

LB: Yes, that's right. I probably used that on most of the leads, 'cause it has a little more of an aggressive thing to it. I've got some Drawmer S201 gates.



What do you record your vocals on, an 87?

LB: Yeah, and also that smaller one that looks just like it, the 89. That's another thing, I have a few mics, but we pretty much just used one or two mics for everything. You can do that because you're not trying to get an array of colors all at one time so you've got a lot more control. A lot of it wasn't, "how do I get sounds through miking," it was more of a thought process - if you hear the sound then you know how to approach it. It's sort of the same psychology as using the same guitar for any number of sounds. It's not what you've got, it's what you do with what you've got.

There were a couple of special tunings that I used. I have an older Strat and for a lot of the chimey kinds of sounds, or for figures that I wanted to play that were in a more delicate vein, I would restring the Strat with all high Es and Bs - the first three strings would all be strung at high E and the lower strings at B. Then you can make a figure of six strings that would all be either a half or a whole step apart. You can get this whole kind of koto thing going, and fingerings where everything is open all the time.

How do you know, as the songwriter, performer and producer, whether you are being too self-indulgent? Whether you're being a good judge of how many parts to put in a song?

LB: Well, with respect to density, I think sometimes that is a problem for me. Having left a group situation, this [solo album] was the way I thought I could get my orientation back. So that I could get to the point where I wanted to work with musicians again. But in a general sense, I think that there were two things that helped that. Richard Dashut is my best friend and he co-produced; he has been through everything since Rumours, so he understands a lot of the process and he understands me. Because he's not a musician, he's great with the big picture. I can get lost in details sometimes and he'll walk in and cut through that. Also, he can sit down with a guitar and come up with a great seed for a song. He just has a general, good sensibility about things.

Also, Lenny Waronker, the president of Warner's, was coming up every month or so, and he's made the project one of his own things. He was reacting to everything that was being done. He was a producer for many years, too, so he and I have a lot in common and I respect his judgment. Between those two things I think it was easier to keep myself from going over the top.

You left one of the greatest rhythm sections in rock and roll history. At some point, don't you think you should hook up with another great rhythm section?

LB: Most definitely. For all the construction on this you could certainly make the case for that being one of the weaker parts on this album. There definitely is something to be said for having somebody else playing - I'm very aware of that. That's why I say that getting through this album was only a step in getting out from one group and into another. I'm planning on touring, so that's going to come up soon anyway. There's no replacement for five or six heartbeats all beating at the same. It was a question of timing and whatever my own needs were at the time.

The rhythm section is very important. When I put a band together, I want to first find a bass player and drummer who are on the same wavelength; it's important to have the core as the bass and drums.

Feature Album Review

The Washington Post
Thursday, November 19, 1981

The Cost-Effective California Sound by Geoffrey Himes

Lindsey Buckingham has never been bashful about his admiration for Brian Wilson. As leader of the Beach Boys, Wilson established the southern California rock 'n' roll of optimistic melodies, yearning harmonies and hot-rod rhythms. In the solitude of Hollywood's Goldstar Studios, Wilson created a mythical aural California quite unconnected from the real one.



As the dominant figure on the last two Fleetwood Mac albums, Buckingham has rediscovered the sound of that utopian California. On his first solo album, "Law and Order" (Asylum, 5E-561), Buckingham expands the boundaries of that land. Much like the hermitic Wilson, Buckingham shut himself up in a Burbank studio, where by engineering ingenuity and sheer imagination he has built an enchanting world removed from current music fashions and real-world bitterness.

Thousands of musicians have imitated the Brian Wilson sound, but only a handful -- Buckingham, Paul McCartney, Christine McVie, Wendy Waldman, Roger McGuinn -- have captured its essence. Most imitators make the mistake of reducing the Beach Boys songs to common elements, which quickly become bland formulas (the Eagles, for example). Buckingham is sharp enough to realize that idiosyncrasies were the key to the Beach Boys' sound.

"Law and Order" is full of quirky touches. On "Bwana," the sweet vocals are given a sudden nasal twist, and the guitar solos are voiced like kazooos. The dominant instruments on "I'll Tell You Now" are the cymbals; they wash over the lead vocal and merge into the shimmering backing vocal. "Johnny Stew" is so heavily echoed it becomes an urban nightmare of a million guitars imitating ambulance sirens, train brakes and radio announcements. "Love From Here, Love From There" is an original Dixieland tune with the electric guitar sounding like a clarinet, the electric bass sounding like a tuba and the trashy drums subverting everything.

Except for the rhythm track on "Trouble" and the backing vocals on two other songs, Buckingham handled every instrument and vocal himself. Much of the album was recorded in a small Burbank storeroom with minimal equipment. With a nod to the reclusive Wilson, Buckingham sings: "That's how we do it in L.A. It's a lonely, lonely, lonely place. But it's the only, only, only place." The result of this isolation is an intensely personal music of internal monologues. It should be recognized, however, by anyone who spends much time mulling things over alone. "Bwana," for example, is not about any jungle in Africa but about the imagined jungle to which "our demons . . . escape."

For all these esoteric techniques, the resulting songs are quite gorgeous and accessible. "Trouble," the first single, has the floating backing vocals that always buoyed the Beach Boys' surf ballads. Threaded through the song is splendid Spanish picking on acoustic guitar. This romantic music contains disturbing music. As the singer begins to fall in love, he says, "I should run on the double; I think I'm in trouble." "Mary Lee Jones," a snapshot of a woman's life falling apart, begins with breathy harmony vocals, but a grating guitar track emerges from the background to swallow the song.

In addition to eight originals, the album contains three covers: Skip & Flip's 1959 doo-wop hit, "It Was I"; Kurt Weill's torch number, "September Song"; and the folkie standard, "A Satisfied Mind." Buckingham fills up all three with idealistic California harmony vocals and young, brash

guitars, much as Wilson once filled out old songs by Chuck Berry and the Weavers.

The best song on "Law and Order" is "Shadow of the West." The lovely melody, a singing cowboy's lament, is shadowed by Christine McVie's husky harmonies. The lyrics, though, reveal the melancholy that always lurks behind the optimism of Fleetwood Mac and the Beach Boys and thus gives it depth. Buckingham may have captured every Californian's private fear when he sings: "The setting of the sun scares me to death. I'm a shadow of the West."



A Closer Look

Shadow of the West

(Lindsey Buckingham, 1981)

Dancing ever changing desert sand
I was burned by the touch of her hand
The setting of the sun
Scares me to death

I'm a shadow
Shadow
Shadow of the West

Once upon a time
I was strong and proud
Everything that the law would allow
But more and more
I feel less and less

I'm a Shadow
Shadow
Shadow of the West

Memories like shadows
Scorched in the sand
I'm alone, a lonely man
The setting of the sun
Scares me to death

I'm a shadow
Shadow
Shadow of the West

"Shadow of the West" is sort of, I suppose you could say, the sad side of "September Song." "September Song" he's looking back at his life, and realizing that he's had a rich life - good and bad times - and is ready, more or less, to accept the final years of his life. "Shadow of the West" is someone who may not have been able to reconcile his life. And uh, he's still not living in the present. Maybe he made the wrong choices. He's alone. It's like he's in a desert emotionally. The sun is slowly going down, he's watching it, and he knows it's going to be dark pretty soon.
~ Innerview, 1981

Here's an analogy to the way you feel sometimes, when you feel as if you're over the hill or you've seen things that meant a lot to you suddenly disappear. Gone. It's about having to deal with loss, basically -- loss of time, loss of memories, love, youth. Musically, I had wanted to record a Sons of the Pioneers song for a while, and then Richard said, "Why don't you write one yourself?" So I did.
~ Song Hits Magazine, May 1982

[The lyrics aren't on the album sleeve because] the artwork had to be in before I had the lyrics (laughs). We were still in the studio finishing the music and the printing had to all be finished up.
~ Innerview, 1981

Feature Performance Review

Philadelphia Inquirer
Friday, September 10, 1982

Pop/Rock - Opposites Attract Rock Harmony by Ken Tucker, Inquirer Popular Music Critic

Fleetwood Mac's new album "Mirage" (Warner Bros.) isn't as incisive as "Rumours" (1977) nor as adventurous as "Tusk" (1979) but it is a lovely album nonetheless: dreamy, urgent, slyly amusing. "Mirage" is well-titled, since its best songs are ethereal.



The theme of the US Festival was "Unite Us in Song," yet the biggest act of the festival was one that prides itself on its glorious disunity

If Fleetwood Mac, which will come to the Spectrum tomorrow night, was nothing more than a manufacturer of lyrical pipedreams, however, its music would be too precious to be enjoyable. No, what fuels this veteran band is its clash of personalities and musical styles. Fleetwood Mac is a band of opposites: from the terse, pounding rhythm section of drummer Mick Fleetwood and bassist John McVie to the feathery voice of Stevie Nicks; from the firm, hard-headed romanticism of keyboardist Christine McVie to the loopy surrealism of guitarist-producer Lindsey Buckingham. Fleetwood Mac is the only superstar band that will never be accused of being "faceless"; its five prickly characters rub against each other and create fierce, vivid friction.

Thus it was a delightful irony that Fleetwood Mac was chosen to close out the massive US Festival in California last weekend. The theme of the US

Festival was "Unite Us in Song," yet the biggest act of the festival was one that prides itself on its glorious disunity - this is, after all, the band whose best-selling album, "Rumours," is almost entirely about inter-group love affairs that were disintegrating during the recording sessions.

Indeed, by the time Fleetwood Mac appeared at the US Festival Sunday night, it looked like a band that was slowly unraveling. When Lindsey Buckingham was singing his lungs out, Stevie Nicks would stroll around the stage, the expression on her face suggesting that she was visiting some alternate universe. Over in a corner, Christine McVie sat behind a bank of keyboards as if it was an office desk; but when it was her turn to sing a song, she came to breathy, urgent life.

With any other band, these might be taken as signs of imminent collapse, or at the very least an indication of a severe lack of discipline. But let me hasten to say that Fleetwood Mac's set was wonderful, an exhilarating mixture of humor and a heavy beat. The songs that sound slight and wispy on "Mirage" - tunes like Nicks' "Straight Back," Buckingham's "Oh Diane" - gain a lot of volume onstage, if for no other reason than Mick Fleetwood slams the vague beat of each song into proper shape. And Nicks, for all her self-indulgence, really is a charming live performer who reaches out to her audience with an extraordinary fierceness, as if she desperately needs reassurance that her music is loved.



Featured Song

Innerview, 1984

The concept for breaking up the vocals is something that is repeated on several different songs on the album, and the idea of that was to depersonalize the performance – not the message, or the emotion that is created, or the energy that is created – but to try to orchestrate the vocals and sort of have them become a part of the track a little more. Those were not done strictly by turning a pan pot – those were performed separately. We broke the syllables down and I sang them in half-words. The bells on there were . . . that's something off the Fairlight which was used extensively on this record.

That song is interesting for a number of reasons – first of all, it opens the album with a recitation, which is . . . which I sort of perceive as a body rhythm. It's like an obsession that you might have – an idea or a rhythm that you carry around with you. It's something that you might fall asleep to at night, and then in the morning, the alarm goes off and it's the first thing you're thinking about. I think that's something we can all relate to.

The production in general on that song, although it is quite layered and sophisticated . . . the general tone of that song I wanted to make it sound pretty much like a bunch of 16-year-olds in a garage. (hehe) I mean, you're into the point where the sound is almost . . . bordering on being substandard on that, you know, as if it were recorded in a garage. And the performing is ALMOST at the point of being out of control.

The other interesting thing about that is the way in which "I want you" is meant. Really, it isn't in the sense that "I want you physically or sexually" – it's "I want you . . . the way you were . . . when I met you."



I Want You

(Lindsey Buckingham, 1984)

I want you
I have for so long
I want you
Was I right, was I wrong
I want you
Through the pleasure
and the pain
I want you
Again and again

I want you
I have for so long
I want you
Was I right, was I wrong
I want you
I guess I had to prove
I want you
I was someone hard to lose

I'm the spartan slasher
Defensive man of steel
If the right don't get ya
The left one will
I sleep all alone
It's all I can do

I want you
I want you right now
I want you
I want you right now

I'm a bundle of joy
A pocketful of tears
Got enough of the both
To last all the years
I live all alone
It's all I can do

I want you
I want you right now
I want you
I want you right now

We are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love, never so helplessly unhappy as when we have lost our loved object or its love.
- Sigmund Freud, 1930

Fun & Games

Trivia

1. At the beginning of which Fleetwood Mac track (on the CD version, but not the album version), can Lindsey be heard whispering the dreaded "F" word in frustration?
2. In which two Lindsey songs does he use the lyrical phrase, "faces of liars, faces of glass?"
3. What cover of a Fats Domino song did Lindsey cut, but never made it to an album?
4. What did Lindsey ask second engineer John Boghosian to go out and record for background noises in "Bang the Drum?"
5. Lindsey sang and played guitar on a track on what raspy-voiced blonde's album in 1985?
6. Which Eagle has Lindsey collaborated with?
7. On which 1984 Christine McVie US top-10 solo single did Lindsey play guitar?
8. What did Lindsey fail to break on his first attempt for Fleetwood Mac's "Hold Me" video?
9. Which of Lindsey's songs was covered by the punk band Limp on their album, **Pop and Disorderly**, in 1997?
10. In 1984 Lindsey was contacted about starring opposite Linda Ronstadt on Broadway in what musical production?

Answers

1. The Chain
2. The Loving Cup, On the Wrong Side
3. Blue Monday
4. Kids playing at a playground
5. Kim Carnes
6. Don Henley
7. Got A Hold On Me
8. The mirror
9. Holiday Road
10. La Boheme