

A Lindsey Buckingham Newsletter

Special to this Issue - August, 2001

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WHAT'S NEW?

RUMO RS



- Here comes the Mac! Whatever plans seemed to be in the works for a Lindsey solo release this summer have been put on the back burner in favor of regrouping with Fleetwood Mac. Stevie says she'll join Lindsey, Mick and John, who have rented a home in Bel Air where they are already working on tracks for the new album, when she's finished up with Trouble in Shangri-La.
- Is the solo album still a possibility? There are no definitive indications it's not, but Lindsey appears to be immersed in the band for the time being.

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New Song

A new song was released on a compilation CD to attendees at GLAAD's 12th Annual Awards ceremony. Don't hold me to these exact words; It's only what I think I hear without a lyric sheet . . .

Someone's Gotta Change Your Mind (Lindsey Buckingham, 2001)

Little children
Out in the rain
Slippin' and slidin'
Covered in pain
Bodies broken
Soaked to the bone
Little children
Goin' on home

I know, I know, I know Someone meant for you to find And so, and so, and so Someone's gotta change, Change your mind Flying down Juniper Freeway lines Long gone Kiss it goodbye Mother and father Covered in snow Little children Goin' on home

I know, I know, I know Someone meant for you to find And so, and so, and so Someone's gotta change, Change your mind

I know, I know, I know Someone meant for you to find And so, and so, and so Someone's gotta change, Change your mind

Ahhhhhhhhhh Ohhhhhhhhhh



Nothin' to prove Your blood is mine I have no children Just some designs Wove in mystery It fills up this womb No little children Left to go home

FEATURE INTERVIEW

Musician Player & Listener, No. 33 June 1981 LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM by Dan Forte

Guitarist, studio craftsman, singer and tunesmith, Lindsey Buckingham has emerged from the shadows of megapop's Big Mac as a creative force and stage presence. Herein he discusses the group's change in direction, its musical relationships, and his view of the recording process.



Summer, 1976

More than 60,000 file into the Oakland Coliseum's outdoor stadium for a "Day On The Green" featuring Peter Frampton, Gary Wright, and Fleetwood Mac. Bill Graham is billing the concert as the British Invasion, although two-fifths of one of the acts grew up in California. Guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, 27, was in fact born in Palo Alto, about thirty miles from the Coliseum, where he is now playing as part of Fleetwood Mac. In a white peasant shirt, beard and curly hair, Buckingham looks decidedly California. Since the vast majority of the sun worshippers have come to hear Frampton sing "Show Me The Way," Fleetwood plays a rather abbreviated set, only partially culled from their latest, self-titled album. Midway through the program, Buckingham, who has remained in the background for most of the set,

comes to the microphone. "We'd like to do a Peter Green song for you now," he says, almost self-consciously, before breaking into the band's 1970 hit, "Oh Well," written and originally sung by the group's founder.

February, 1977

Fleetwood Mac kicks off their 1977 tour with a benefit for the Jacques Cousteau Society at the Berkeley Community Theater. Except for a short film about penguins (long a symbol of Fleetwood Mac), the band is the only act on the bill. Material from their just-released *Rumours* LP is met with as much applause of recognition as songs from their previous album, which garnered three hit singles. Midway through the show it becomes apparent that vocalist Stevie Nicks, battling a strained throat, is not going to be able to make it through the set. The spotlight turns to the band's other two songwriters, Christine McVie and, more noticeably, Lindsey Buckingham, who



displays a degree of confidence and gu<mark>itar technique barely hinted at on album. T</mark>he concert climaxes near the end with Buckingham's drama<mark>tic "I'm So Afraid," taken a bit slower than t</mark>he recorded version.



December, 1979

Dressed in a black shirt and a plain gray suit, his hair cropped short, Lindsey Buckingham is pacing the stage of San Francisco's Cow Palace. The guitarist clearly stands out from the rest of the band, both musically and visually. Whether he is singing one of his own songs from the new *Tusk* album or backing Nicks or McVie on one of their tunes, Buckingham plays and looks like a man possessed-his fixed stare never leaving the audience, a sinister grin never leaving his face. With three rim shots from Fleetwood's snare drum and a piano glissando from Christine McVie, Buckingham shouts "What makes you think you're the one,"

pointing at his ex-girlfriend Stevie Nicks. As has come to be expected, the set's highpoint is "I'm So Afraid," a tour de force study in dynamics with Lindsey Buckingham's echoing guitar building in speed, volume and intensity.

In its fifteen years as a band, Fleetwood Mac has undergone more changes than any group from the Sixties that is still intact. Starting out as an English homage to Chicago blues, they have survived underground cult status to become one of the most popular groups in pop music today. They have endured what seems like one personnel change per album, especially in the guitar department, which has seen Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer, Danny Kirwan, and Bob Welch come and go. Bassist John McVie and drummer Mick Fleetwood are the band's only remaining original members.

In the past six years Fleetwood Mac's personnel has remained constant, if not necessarily stable, with Fleetwood, McVie, vocalist Stevie Nicks, McVie's ex-wife Christine on piano, and guitarist Lindsey Buckingham, who has individually gone through nearly as many changes as the band has collectively.

Buckingham was born in 1949 and took up guitar at seven strumming along to his older brother's collection of Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly and Everly Brothers records. He

later turned to folk music (the Kingston Trio, Ian and Sylvia, John Herald), studying banjo and fingerpicking styles. In the late Sixties he played electric bass in a Bay Area rock band called Fritz, which featured vocalist Stephanie Nicks. When Fritz broke up, Lindsey and Stevie stayed together, both musically and romantically, and recorded one album for Polydor, *Buckingham Nicks*, produced and engineered by Keith Olsen (with an assist from Richard Dashut).

In December of 1974, Mick Fleetwood was looking for a studio at which to record Fleetwood Mac's next album and came to Sound City in Los Angeles where Keith Olsen played him a track from *Buckingham Nicks*, "Frozen Love." Two weeks later guitarist Bob Welch announced that he was leaving Fleetwood. On New Year's Eve the drummer telephoned Olsen to ask about the pair he'd heard on the record Olsen had played him. As it turned out Buckingham and Nicks were there at a party at Olsen's house. Without so much as an audition Fleetwood offered them both a job with the band.

Fleetwood Mac was recorded early in 1975 and gave the band an element that had previously been missing-catchy, well-crafted hit singles. "Over My Head," "Rhiannon," "Say You Love Me"-virtually every cut on the LP probably could have become a hit single, but the band had the good sense and taste to stop after three or four and record a follow-up album.

Rumours was recorded in 1976 amid tensions that saw the McVies divorce and Lindsey and Stevie split. When the album was released in 1977, Fleetwood Mac found themselves almost simultaneously on the covers of Rolling Stone and People Magazine. Rumours spun off as many hits as the previous album -"Go Your Own Way," "Dreams," "Don't Stop"-and became one of the biggest selling albums in pop music history.

Tusk, the group's quirky follow-up, sacrificed cohesion at the expense of a few million in record sales: Less a group effort than the

previous LPs, it has repeatedly been compared to the Beatles' White Album-Nicks doing her songs with instrumental backing from the other members, McVie doing her

numbers, very little harmonizing, Buckingham recording several tracks by himself at a makeshift home studio. But, while it may not hold together well as a unified album, the individual performances on *Tusk* are nevertheless outstanding, especially Buckingham's which display a startlingly new approach to recording structure, mix, and instrumentation.

Last December, after a solid year of touring, the band released its first live LP, *Fleetwood Mac Live*, before taking five months off from touring and recording. They are scheduled to go back into the studio in May to begin work on their next album.

The reasons for Fleetwood Mac's ascent to the top are hard to pinpoint. Chemistry is often a word that's batted about. Having three singer/songwriters the caliber of Buckingham, Nicks and McVie certainly doesn't hurt. But there is obviously a whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-the-parts element at work when the band is really on.

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On guitar, Lindsey is as unorthodox as he is underrated. Still basically employing the techniques he learned on banjo and fingerstyle folk guitar, he sort of trails and flails his way through solos, often ending the night by bandaging bloodied fingertips. Buckingham will probably never place at the top of *Guitar Player Magazine*'s reader poll as Best Rock Guitarist, but a more tasteful lead guitarist would be hard to find. In the words of John Stewart, "He knows the magic of one note."

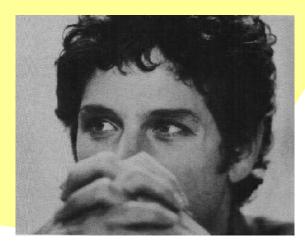
Because of his innovative work on *Tusk*, Buckingham has become a much sought after producer, although he turns down far more offers than he takes on. He produced Walter Egan's *Not Shy* alb<mark>um and *Bombs Away Dream*</mark> Babies for one of his early influences, John Stewart, who regards Buckingham as "the only genius I've ever worked with in the studio." The former one-third of the Kingston Trio recounts, "Lindsey came down when we were doing the mix, and he was turning all the pots, layering the quitars. I was watching him and I said' 'Lindsey, some time you've got to tell me what you're doing.' He said, 'I'm turning the knobs till it sounds right.' A few people I know of really know how to make that mystical 'thing' happen with a record. Brian Wilson is one; Lindsey Buckingham is the master at it." (Ironically Stewart an acoustic folkie for twenty years, began playing electric lead quitar by listening to Lindsey's work before discovering that Buckingham had in fact learned to play acoustic quitar listening to Stewart's records with the Kingston Trio. "I got the *Fleetwood Mac* album," Stewart recalls, "and something about it sure sounded familiar." The one-note solo on Bombs Away's top ten single "Gold," while it is one of the best examples of the "Lindsey Buckingham" quitar style," was actually played by Stewart.)

Onstage, perhaps even more so than in the studio, Lindsey Buckingham has become the clear leader of Fleetwood Mac. In six years he has evolved from guitarist to creative force to kinetic focal point. Even New Wavers, ready to poo-poo anything by a band that produced such soft-core rock as "Dreams" and "Over My Head," regard Buckingham as a force to be reckoned with.

While the other four members of the band have been splashed across every phase of the media, Buckingham has remained somewhat mysterious, in the shadows. As he points out in the following interview, he seldom gets fan mail and can walk down the street completely unnoticed. "Whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now," he states, "is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully-it's more fundamental... it's been honest-that's for sure."

Going from total obscurity to the top of the charts is what most struggling musicians hope and pray for every day of their lives. But have there been any drawbacks to that level of *People Magazine* stardom?

Well, you see, I don't feel like I've been in the limelight as far as the attention focused on the group. Stevie, in the beginning, her visual presence and just her personality were so strong. That was always the figurehead of the group, and still is, in a way. In that way, I really haven't had to deal with a barrage of external adulation by any means. I very seldom get a fan letter.



Can you walk down the street and not be recognized?

Exactly. Oh yes. I can walk anywhere and no one cares. Also, I'm always changing my hair, so that helps.

Most people, when they think of Fleetwood Mac, probably still have an image of Stevie Nicks in a top hat and cape. But onstage your position seems to have evolved from being more or less a member of the rhythm section to being the focal point of the band, especially on the *Tusk* tour.

It's certainly working that way; I don't know if that's good or bad. It really can't be helped. But whatever appreciation is being offered towards me now is the kind of appreciation that I would like to get. It's more from a musicianship standpoint, hopefully it's from people who

appreciate serious things about music. It has nothing to do with costumes or even image-it's more fundamental. It's nice to open a *Rolling Stone* and see that you have the big picture for a change, but even so, the whole external aspect of the success hasn't really gotten

through. I don't feel that it's changed me, because it hasn't barraged me very much at all. It's been slow. It's been honest-that's for sure.

Has your growth within the group corresponded with you growing in confidence? Did you feel like you had to try and fit in when you first joined, and now you can do what you want to do?

Yeah. It's been very much a series of situations, of having to adapt. The kind of role that, say, Stevie and I had towards each other and that I had in Buckingham Nicks as compared to what happened six months after we joined Fleetwood Mac-I really had to turn around. It was a very good thing to happen. I gained so much more appreciation for Stevie that way. I had to reevaluate the whole thing. There's been a lot of



adapting to do. When I first joined the group, I had to go and play Bob Welch's songs and all this strange stuff that had nothing to do with me or me growing as an individual. But that was all

part of it; I needed to do that one way or another. Once Stevie and I had broken up and had sort of gotten through that, it was just a question of seeing what I really had to offer and trying to establish that, and saying, "Hey, I do have more to offer than just being part of the

rhythm section." Also, people don't see what you contribute in the studio, and you can't expect them to. That's one thing that's always been visible to people very close to me, but never to anyone else.

Was the change from *Rumours* to *Tusk* a conscious attempt to not get pegged as a pop song group?

Well, it's really hard to say. In a way, yes. Speaking for myself, my songs are probably more of a departure than Stevie's or Christine's, but even theirs, the arrangements are slightly different. There's been little effort made to fit them into a single mold, whereas on *Rumours* every song was more or less crafted as that kind of song. It's not that the songs on Tusk are long; in fact, someone asked me when the album first came out why all my songs were so short. I just said, "Well, rock 'n' roll songs were traditionally short songs." But, for me, it was a question of experimenting with a new format in recording. Some of those tunes were recorded in my house on my 24-track. The overall atmosphere of the album just evolved by itself. We wanted to do a double album-I don't think we knew exactly where it was going. But I was interested in pursuing some things that were a little bit rawer. You just hear so much stuff on the radio that has the particular drum sound. I mean, everything is worked around the drums these days. It's all so studio-ized; I thought it was important to delve into some things that were off to the side a little bit more, so that we're not so clichéd. And we certainly did that-at the expense of selling a few records. Between the *Fleetwood Mac* album and *Rumours* we changed the people we were working with totally, even though *Fleetwood Mac* had sold two and a half or three million copies. We could have stuck with a good sure thing, and we went through a lot of hell reestablishing a working relationship with other people to move forward and to try to grow, which we did on the *Rumours* LP. Now on *Tusk* we more or less did the same thing and took a lot of chances, but we did it because it was

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something we felt was right to do and was important, and it shook things up. It certainly shook people's preconception of us up a bit. We divided our audience a little bit. A lot of people who were sort of on one side and saw *Rumours* as kind of MOR were really pleased by *Tusk*, and a lot of people were very disappointed, because they were expecting more of the same thing. You can't let what you think is going to sell dictate over what you think is important.

What sort of music were you listening to that might have influenced the outcome of *Tusk?*

Not that much of anything, specifically. The fact the New Wave stuff was emerging helped to solidify or to clarify feelings or give one a little more courage to go out and try something a little more daring. But as far as the actual way the songs turned out, it wasn't a question of listening to a certain group and trying to emulate them at all. No one in particular; the whole scene just seemed so healthy to me. The stuff on the album isn't that weird to me, but I guess it is for someone who's expecting "You Make Loving Fun" or something. I was surprised, because I was, at that time, and still am, ready to hear some things that I felt were fresh and I thought were approached slightly differently, in the spirit of the old rock 'n' roll but contemporary as well. The LP sold about four million albumsnothing to cry about. It was interesting to see the reaction. Most of the critical response to the album was real good, and then some of it wasn't at all. But we definitely divided our audience.

When you write songs, do you make a complete demo tape of it and play it for the band?

Yes. Now I make masters, though. I've got a 24-track. There are two or three songs on *Tusk* that were done that way, just at my house, and they went onto the album.



With you playing all of the instruments?

Yeah. "The Ledge," "Save Me A Place," and "That's Enough For Me."

Do you still think of those as "Fleetwood Mac songs"?

Well, I'm not sure they see them as Fleetwood Mac songs [laughs]. I don't see why they can't be. I think of them as Fleetwood Mac songswe've done some of them live. We ran down "The Ledge" a whole bunch of times and almost started doing that in the set; we were doing "That's Enough For Me" live. But we had a lot of problems trying to integrate the stuff from *Tusk* with the old set.

Do your songs come out differently if you work alone as opposed to working them out with the band members?

I think we're starting to do that more. One of the things that was exciting about doing *Tusk* is that we can take some of that and reapply it to a collective thing a little more than we did on *Tusk*. Certainly in terms of a group there's a desire to do that, especially after experimenting with something that was less of a cooperative venture. I think the next Fleetwood Mac studio album will be more group-oriented, it certainly won't be less. It's not like it's moving in one direction or the other; it's just expanding and contracting.

Do you think you'll ever record a solo album?

Sure, why not? I don't think there's any stigma to it, other than misunderstanding from the external world. If it makes you feel good, I don't see why not. But I'm not in any great hurry to do my solo album.

Would you see a solo project as an outlet to experiment more or just a chance to put more of your own songs on LP?

Some of both, I would say. It wouldn't be radically different-it couldn't get much more different than *Tusk*. See, one of the things about being in Fleetwood Mac is that Christine writes pretty much soft, pretty songs, and Stevie more or less does the same thing, too. They both write rock 'n' roll songs from time to time, and do it very well, but the burden of the real gutsiness usually is on me. So if Christine has X amount of

songs, and Stevie has X amount of songs, my slot must, almost out of necessity, be filled by pretty tough kind of stuff. I think it would be a lot of fun to just experience making a statement in a broader range of things. If you took all of my songs from *Tusk*, they would probably make a more cohesive album than the whole *Tusk* album, just in terms of cohesion. I wouldn't want to get too much more fringey than something like "The Ledge," you know. The funny thing is, so many people reacted to that song like, "My God, what is that?" It didn't even seem that radical to me. See, I'm trying to learn more about writing.

Has the creative process of how a song takes shape changed much from *Buckingham Nicks* to *Tusk?*

I'd say it's come back around full circle, in a way,

except with a whole lot more knowledge, I would hope. I've learned so much from John and Mick.

In terms of what, since they don't write songs?

In terms of musical sense. Mick's musical sense is hard to pin down, because it's just such an instinctive thing. But in terms of just writing songs, that hasn't changed, no. For instance, Stevie will write her words, and everything will be central to that. That's good; sometimes I wish I could do that. Mine are usually central to a groove of some sort, and everything else will follow. That hasn't changed over all this time. A lot of rock 'n' rollers do that.



Does that method make your songs more traditionally structured than Stevie's?

They can be, yeah. Which isn't necessarily good. There's a fine line. You take someone like Springsteen, who has the best of both, I think, in terms of being a writer and someone who knows what he's doing. His phrasing can go from a certain timing in one line, and in the next line it'll be totally different, because the words are different. Whereas if I was thinking of those two lines in a song, I might just think of repeating the same thing over and over, because it would still be sort of nebulous in my mind. I wouldn't have the words completely formed. So there's an advantage by far in being able to do that, because it gives the whole feeling of the song a certain spontaneity. He's feeling the words in a certain way, and he's putting them down, and everything else will

follow that. Stevie does the same thing with her words; she surprises you with phrasings. But there's an advantage to the other way, too. If you can eventually get around that, and make it so that your vocal doesn't

sound stiff, then the advantage is that you're so much more aware of how to make one track sound totally different from the other, in terms of applying a certain instrument to it or something. But in terms of a structure-like A-B-A-B-C or whatever-my songs are probably a lot more that way than Stevie's, because she doesn't really know A-B-A-B-C. She writes like Mick drums.

Are your recording and producing techniques pretty much intuitive?

More or less. This is the first time I've had a real setup. Doing *Tusk* I had a 24-track little MCI board that I was working on. Now I've got a Stude<mark>r 24-track which</mark> the band bought quite some time ago. It's a full-size console and gives me something to work with-some limiters, some EQ, some big speakers, some real equipment. For the first time I'll be able to realize or not realize some of the things that I've felt I could do. It's very frustrating sometimes in the studio, because you've got so many people in there, and technically I'm not there to twist knobs or anything. A lot of times you feel you could do a better job than somebody else, because you have the intuition and they really don't. They've had a few years technical experience, but they

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then. Try to pursue things that you

can't make the connection from feeling the song to this, to this, and do it all the way a painter paints, where suddenly all the intuition takes over and you're just there doing it. That can be what it's like, and I think it offers a lot more opportunity for very unusual things to happen. Things present themselves, and if you have the intuition to pick them up when they present themselves and not let them go by, you can get some very unusual sounds. I feel real good about my capabilities as an engineer.

Do you think trained engineers, in their pursuit to make something sound neat and clean, can destroy the emotion?

All the time. The idea is to capture the moment that you perceived something to be a certain way and pursue it right then. Try to pursue things that you can hear in your head to their ultimate disaster or whatever.

Do you plan on doing more outside production work with other artists?

A few people have wanted me to produce them lately, and it's nice to know that people want you to work with them, but I just don't think it's the right time for me to do that.



Nicks, Egan & Buckingham

With Walter Egan and John Stewart, it just seemed like the right thing to do at those particular times. I'm real good at editing out this section, or saying, "Let's do this in here." That's the thing I'm probably best at-being able to think abstractly and say, "This isn't making it here; let's do this; put this part in here, and it'll make all the difference in the world." But choosing to do that as a whole project is something that I don't do very often. On *Bombs Away Dream Babies*, I

wasn't in the studio with John as much as I would have liked to have been, because we were working on *Tusk* at the time. It kind of blew John's mind when I first met him, because I knew all his songs. I had almost all of the old Kingston Trio albums-although very few people will admit that these days. Steve Stills, I'm sure he had them all, too, but he wouldn't admit it [laughs].

Usually the lead guitarist is one of the most visible members of any band, but in your case, even with Fleetwood's phenomenal popularity, your guitar playing seems to be very underrated, if not overlooked entirely.

It's like being an actor and being good enough at it so that no one realizes you're acting. A bad actor is someone who looks like he's acting, and he's ranting and raving up there. I mean, a part that you're not aware of so much, that's a supportive and integral part of the song is a lot harder to come by, I think, than a part that you must be aware of that's so aware of itself.

Do you have any specific influences as far as playing lead guitar?

I can't really think of any. See, I never played "lead," per se. I started playing quitar when I was seven years old, and I played rhythm chords to the old rock 'n' roll songs. Then I got into fingerpicking, and I was very good at melodic fingerpicking. But I never played lead until 1971, because when I was in Fritz I played bass. And the reason I played bass was because I couldn't go whoo-whoo at all. I couldn't play screaming lead. When I later started playing lead I was probably listening, oddly enough, to Peter Green, and then Clapton and some of those people-to cop the white blues licks. But that's about as deep as it goes-which isn't all that deep. I've always played lead begrudgingly, I'd say. There's not that much lead on the *Tusk* album. for that same reason. There's almost an underplaying of lead, to make people think, "Where's the leads?" I was just more interested in colors on that album. I'm getting better at it, though; there's some pretty decent leads on the live album.

Do you practice the guitar much these days?

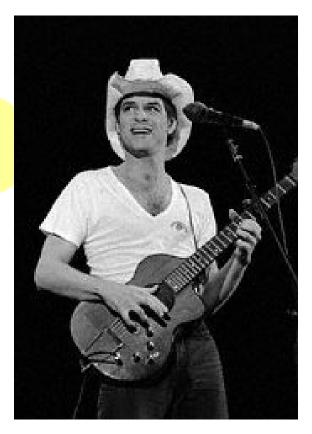
From time to time. Probably not as much as I should. But I'll start to and then I'll think, what for? It's just a question of what direction you want to go, and right now I'd rather put more energy into trying to understand how to write better. So much of the playing comes out of just being in a state of mind where you're not conscious of what you're doing -it just comes out anyway. I'd never sit around and just try to play scales, I don't think. I probably should [laughs]-sometimes on stage I wish I had. I do a lot of thinking about the guitar, just in my head.

Your stage demeanor has changed tremendously in the past five years. The guy with the peasant shirt and the beard and the curly hair of a few years ago hardly seems like the same person as the one on the *Tusk* tour, with the gray suit and short hair and the demonic stare fixed at the audience. Did that change come about as the result of any groups you'd seen or listened to?

No, absolutely not. I'm not even aware most times of what I'm doing when I'm up there doing that.

But what about the change in appearance?

Well, I decided to cut my hair long before everyone else did. It wasn't necessarily to look punk or anything. I was just tired of the beard, so I shaved it. Then the hair didn't look right without the beard, so I cut the hair. It's all been gradual. Found a couple of new clothes stores, started buying some new suits...



As far as the movements, it's funny, because I used to do more of that when I was playing bass in Fritz. I think maybe when I first joined the band, it was such a new thing, and I wasn't sure of my role. I just sort of withdrew into the back. It's not something that wasn't there before, as far as the stage presence; it just wasn't coming out for a long time. It was sort of beaten back, I quess.

Lindsey Buckingham's Equipment

Lindsey Buckingham is currently using a Turner electric guitar, "I've got four Turners-two 6-strings, so I'll have a backup onstage in case I break a string; one with two pickups; and a new model that's got a two-octave neck. It's got a boost and a couple of parametric equalizers on it, and that's about it. It's a fairly simple guitar, which is nice - doesn't have too many gadgets. Rick [Turner] always made John's basses when he worked at Alembic, so he was always trying to sell me Alembics on the road, but I never liked them because they were very sterile sounding and didn't feel very good. During the first few months of recording *Tusk*, Rick showed me a blueprint of this new guitar; he said, 'I'm trying to make it more mellow-sounding, warmer sounding-sort of a combination Les Paul and Alembic."

Buckingham uses flatwound strings on the Turner to, as he puts it, "get more of the note and less of the overtone. It's a little less 'wire' sound."

FEATURE ALBUM REVIEW

Rolling Stone August 30, 1984

Go Insane (4 out 5 stars) Elektra/Asylum

Lindsey Buckingham's Tuneful Triumph

Fleetwood Mac's guitarist sounds like an Eighties version of Brian Wilson

hen many California-based musicians were taking the punk-New Wave movement as a personal affront, Lindsey Buckingham of Fleetwood Mac was taking it as a challenge. From 1979's *Tusk* on, this songwriter, singer and guitarist has struggled to combine the wildest possibilities of new music with the folk-fostered melodies that have marked his most commercially fruitful efforts. *Go Insane* is a triumphant culmination of this effort - the richest, most fascinatingly tuneful album of the year.

Buckingham's strongest influence has always been Brian Wilson, the outthere but studio-savvy Beach Boy with an impeccable pop ear. Yet while Wilson's music speaks with an airy, wouldn't it be nice optimism, Buckingham's work reveals a slightly warped obsessiveness. He uses music the way Talking Heads' David Byrne uses words: taking simple, even clichéd, constructions and tossing them together in unexpected combinations.

That potent, brainy mixture is further invigorated on Go Insane by a dollop of seething sexual passion. "I guess I had to prove I was someone hard to lose," Buckingham chants before kicking into the dazzling, "I Want You," perhaps his most nakedly emotional song to date. A gleeful keyboard hook explodes into an aural torrent: synthesizers, guitars and drums rage, as Buckingham furiously cries out his heart's dichotomy: "I'm a bundle of joy, a pocketful of tears/Got enough of both to last all the years."

Lyrically, *Go Insane* limns a painful breakup: "Hey little girl, leave the little drug along," he pleads in "I Must Go," and similar strains of dark-etched longing appear throughout the record. But Buckingham's words - although they are intriguingly unsettling - take a back seat to the parade of toe-tapping sound here. Even though he plays almost every instrument on the album, Buckingham avoids the cluttered, too-

perfect sheen often associated with West Coast music. The rough edges are still there, and the overall sound has lightness that enhances the record's emotional impact.

On that score, "Bang the Drum" is *Go Insané's* finest achievement. Its ticktock, ethereally intoned verse drifts off into a gloriously cascading chorus and a bridge that's thick with ear-pleasing harmonies, with a stinging guitar solo to boot. More of Buckingham's axe work is on display in the uptempo "Loving Cup," which fuses the snaky lines of "Gold Dust Woman" with the spare, threatening whomp of *Tusk's* undiscovered treasure, "Not That Funny."

Even the more commercially minded songs are infused with Buckingham's newfound boldness. While his first solo album, *Law and Order*, featured the mild-mannered "Trouble," Go Insane offers the Mark Lindsayish title song, all hard edges and

pungent longing ("I call your name/She's a lot like you"). Similarly, a whipcrack backbeat kicks "Slow Dancing" out of the living room and onto the dance floor where it belongs.

Admittedly, the found-sound antics of the two-part "Play in the Rain" (glasses of water being poured, heels clipclopping across a sidewalk) pale after a couple of listenings, though Buckingham's sitarlike

fretboard runs add some excitement. But then there's "D.W. Suite," a three-part valediction to the late Dennis Wilson in which Buckingham really pulls out the stops: Laurie Anderson-style vocal effects, a harp interlude, a synthesized Ed Sullivan introduction, a Beach Boys-type chorus and a Scottish flute march. "D.W. Suite" may be pop's most elaborate farewell, but its flashy eclecticism is reined in throughout by Buckingham's keen rock & roll sense.

Artistically, *Go Insane* is a breakthrough album not just for the thirty-six-year-old Buckingham, but conceivably for rock & roll as well, representing as it does the most successful combination yet of hummable Seventies slick rock and Eighties avantedge. If Lindsey Buckingham really is following in the footsteps of his idol, then *Go Insane* is his *Pet Sounds*: possibly his least commercial work, but also his most daring and savory.

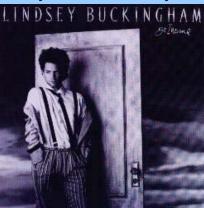




Photo by Matthew Rolston

The Artist's Vision: Go Insane

[A] lot of the subject matter had to do with a real live break-up. Actually it wasn't a break-up per se. It was a sort of slow deterioration of a relationship, which had four wonderful years and a couple of sort of very gray years. That's, in a sense, what is being talked about-the effect that watching that has on you and has on both people from their perspectives. Everything can be very gray. The black and white just seems to go away and it's hard to tell what's even wrong sometimes. It can be a kind of trying situation. . . . It's hard to know when to call it quits, yeah. You hope that things will get from one side to the other and things will hopefully start working themselves out again, but you can only take that so far. All the intense emotional presentation that's on the record was not performed per se. It was going on a year or two previous to making the record and it was still not resolved when the album was being made. I feel that having addressed a lot of these things and having gotten them down on vinyl was quite cathartic and helpful to me. Halfway through the album things got pretty resolved I'd say. Not resolved but pretty much finished. So I feel pretty good. ~Song Hits Magazine, May 1985

I feel my emotions have deepened and the lyrics are far more important running through this album than they ever have been to me in the past. ~Hit Magazine, No. 10, Fall 1984

[T]here is a disappointed painful side but I felt that it had a certain optimism to it, certainly by the end of the record anyway. I feel like it was healing for me in some senses. I make the joke flippantly but it was probably a lot more fun and a lot cheaper than say, going to a shrink. ~Song Hits Magazine, May 1985

Working on the album was one of those fateful things where you're being pulled along without really having control over it-which are the times when the best work is done. I can remember feeling that way toward the end of "Rumours," sort of "God, something is going on here." Which isn't to suggest the end result will be similar in any way. But the feeling is there. ~Record Magazine, November 1984

FEATURE PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Los Angeles Times December 12, 1992

Buckingham Soars as a Solo

His Energized Concert–Whether a Debut or Comeback–Is a Triumph

by Mike Boehm, Times Staff Writer

It's hard to pick the right descriptive noun for Lindsey Buckingham's concert Thursday night at the Coach House. Was it a comeback? Besides a few cameos and TV appearances, Buckingham hadn't played in public since 1982, when he was a member of Fleetwood Mac.

Or was it a debut? Until he stepped on stage to open his two-night stand, Buckingham had never fronted a band of his own, even though he is now on his third solo album, following five studio releases with Fleetwood Mac and one with Buckingham Nicks in a recording career that dates back 19 years. (His shows Thursday and Friday were warm-ups for an upcoming TV concert taping and a tour planned for early next year.)

Comeback or debut, Buckingham's concert was confident, energized, accomplished, wide-ranging and surprising. Heck, as long as we're slinging modifiers, why not go all the way? As comebacks and/or debuts qo, this one was triumphant.



Instead of easing back into the fishbowl of live performance, Buckingham, a competitive swimmer as a youth, took the cold plunge, starting the show with a solo-acoustic version of the Fleetwood Mac hit, "Big Love." Here was Buckingham, who has a reputation for holing himself up hermit-like in his home recording studio for years at a time, whose lavishly assembled, one-man-band solo albums

indicate that he may never have met an overdub he didn't like, taking one of the grandest production numbers of his career and stripping it to its naked elements.

It was as if Buckingham were saying up front that, though we may have forgotten it, he isn't just a studio jock, but someone who can make a song work in real time, using only the most basic means. He proved his point with a gutsy, shouting performance that strained and frayed his distinctive, reedy tenor as he pumped "Big Love" full of as much big drama as he could. When it got a big cheer, Buckingham did a frisky little step, then gave a sheepish " 'tweren't nothing" grin. That opener pretty much established the tone for the 18 songs that followed in a too-short 85-minute set: Buckingham emphasized the dramatic, delivered it with intensity and skill (especially in his often remarkable finger-picked acoustic- and electricquitar work), and exuded obvious pleasure in being back on stage.

Live, Buckingham was able to extricate songs from the heavily produced, hothouse ambience of his latest album, "Out of the Cradle," and allow them to breathe. While most of the evening's full-band arrangements closely followed album versions of Buckingham's solo and Fleetwood Mac material, many songs took on a different and unusual cast thanks to the unorthodox setup Buckingham chose in recruiting a band of nine young, unknown players. There were five guitarists (counting himself), three percussionists weaving light, nimble patterns instead of the usual blatant rock 'n' roll smash-andthud, plus a bassist and a keyboards player. Always a great arranger, Buckingham used that large arsenal to produce clarity and nuance rather than clutter and brute brawn.

Not that Buckingham and band couldn't muster brawn when they wanted to in an exceptionally varied performance. Buckingham played a half-dozen solo-acoustic tunes, mostly using lustrous, nylon-string guitar tones. He offered choral numbers that employed as many as six backing voices—"All My Sorrows," a Kingston Trio cover from his latest album, had the lushness of the Association singing "Cherish," while an encore version of the Mac-era "Save Me a Place" recalled the Beach Boys in its sumptuous fullness of harmony.

While Buckingham's selection of seven Fleetwood Mac songs included well-wrought versions of such

classic-rock hits as "Go Your Own Way," "The Chain" and "Tusk," he didn't have to rely on nostalgia value to stir the audience. "I'm So Afraid," a less-famous track from the 1975 "Fleetwood Mac" album, swarmed up grandly as Buckingham capped it with a dark, wailing solo that took on the clenched intensity

Buckingham, showing complete ease in

front of his fans, introduced songs in the

mid-set acoustic sequence by alluding to

some hard emotional times that inspired

him to write or reinterpret them.

of one of Neil Young's patented workouts with Crazy Horse. It drew a standing ovation.

"This Is the Time" was the other set-piece for guitar

heroism. This time, Buckingham displayed a showman's instinct, turning his guitar squadron into a screaming relay team, each player carrying the solo baton in a game of pass-the-distortion. It was a fun, crowd-pleasing stroke that ended with Buckingham giving new meaning to the term "necking" as he playfully rubbed his fret board against that of one of his cohorts, Janet Robin.

Given his skills as an arranger, it's no surprise that Buckingham's concert followed a well thought-out sequence. After opening with solo versions of two hits, "Big Love" and "Go Insane," Buckingham brought on the band and alternated between oldies and new songs while steadily turning up the heat. Then it was back to solo performance, three songs ending in a fine, intimate version of "Never Going Back Again."

Buckingham, showing complete ease in front of his fans, introduced songs in the mid-set acoustic sequence by alluding to some hard emotional times that inspired him to write or reinterpret them. Building back up with the band, he ended the set proper with the expected "Go Your Own Way," his

most famous song. (Early on, he had made a joking bargain with the full-house crowd: "As long as you don't call out, 'Go Your Own Way,' too soon, we'll get along great.")
Buckingham easily topped

"Go Your Own Way" in the encore, leading the band through a lesser-known Fleetwood Mac song, "Eyes of the World," that cantered ahead with a Buddy Holly-ish combination of chunky rock guitaring and light-stepping, exuberant rhythm. Buckingham sang "Soul Drifter" as a brief solo coda. In one last thespian gesture in a show that included a couple of poems recited as song intros, Buckingham dropped to a whisper on the final words, "the soul drifter—that's me," as the lone spotlight went black.

The only question left unanswered was: If that's him, why on earth has he been hiding himself so long?



"This Nearly Was Mine . . . this was one of my father's favorite songs. Street of Dreams . . . That song was written about a time when I was sort of drifting creatively and wasn't quite sure what I was doing. And my father, who had passed away many years before . . . I used to go up to my home town and sit and talk to him and try to imagine what he would say to me, what advice he would give me. So these two things kind of hang together as a mood, so we'll start with the instrumental and go into the other song."

FEATURED SONG

That song is about taking off and leaving it up to fate as to what will happen. ~ Rocky Mountain News, April 1993

I have a studio in my house. We had recorded almost all of "Tango In The Night" up here. And right towards the end of that, when I knew I was going to be leaving, the band was in the studio recording and I was across the hall in my bedroom writing "Soul Drifter." It's a song about jumping over into some new territory - "out of this town, ain't no use hangin' round." And there's something very symbolic about that. In a sense that song is very much representative of the emotional thread that runs through the album. It certainly has a nod to the Tin Pan Alley style of writing, which I was very interested in. And uh . . . the song itself, being the first one, because it really was dealing with that emotional tone, was pretty much a springboard for everything else, I think, on the record. ~ ABC, In Concert, 1992

There are certain songs, such as "Soul Drifter," that was kind of blocked out and completed, wordswise, before ever committing it to tape. It was done with a Tin Pan Alley sensibility in mind. . . . Actually, Lee Hirschberg, who used to work with Sinatra a lot downstairs here at Warners, he was making some copies for us. And when that song came on, he said, "Oh, a real song!" [Laughs] It's also the song my mom likes the most.

~ Songwriters On Songwriting, © 1997

Soul Drifter

(Lindsey Buckingham, 1992)

I'm a soul drifter And I'm out of this town Ain't no use hangin' round You see -

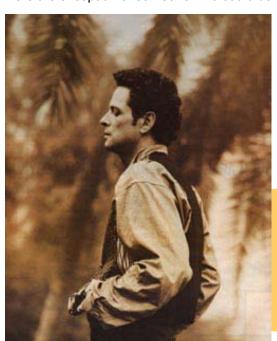
My heart was broken
My part was spoken
Now the ground has opened
All around me

I'm a soul lifter And it's out of my hands So it's off to other lands You see -

It's a new dawn So it's so long For the soul lifter The soul drifter

That's me

I don't know if you'd call them roots. But that was some of the first stuff I heard, because in the early '50s, before Elvis hit, that's exactly what parents were listening to. But those songs really were great, and they hold up so well. Writers like Rodgers & Hammerstein and George Gershwin really knew what they were doing. And really, when you get down to it, the Beatles, and maybe just a few other artists from that time were the exception of someone who could do something on that level without having to train to do it.



Everyone since then has tried to pull that off, but it's really hard to do without musical training and knowledge. I mean, I can't even write or read music, so I really don't know. But I do think there's a lot to be looked at in that type of music. I tried to get that traditional, Tin Pan Alley sort of approach when I was writing "Soul Drifter," so I think there's a lot of validity, just looking at that stuff and appreciating it. Especially if it's part of your background. ~ BAM Magazine, May 1992

If we must accept Fate, we are not less compelled to affirm liberty, the significance of the individual, the grandeur of duty, the power of character. ~ Emerson, "Fate," The Conduct of Life, 1860

FUN & GAMES

Trivia

- 1. What member of Lindsey's family came up with the name for the "Mirage" album?
- 2. On whose album did Lindsey appear to collaborate on a cover of Jackson Browne's "Something Fine?"
- 3. Which of Lindsey's songs was covered by Seaweed for the soundtrack to the motion picture, "Clerks?"
- 4. For which of Lindsey's Rumours songs did he "lift a few textures" from the Bee Gees' "Jive Talkin'?"
- 5. Which of Lindsey's albums (solo or Fleetwood Mac) is dedicated, in part, to his dad?

Word Scrambles

Unscramble the following song titles.

- 1. FOASIMDIRA '
- 2. DAEWNDSONSNEHC
- 3. LAYFINMMA _____ __ __ __ ___
- 4. URETOLB ___ __ _ _ _ _ _

Fun with Pictures

Good hair day...

Bad hair day...





Hmm, what *are* he and Chris talking about?



The new Fleetwood Mac! Mick, Jack, Lindsey, Stevie, Sally and Christine!



Trivia Answers

1. Aunt Nancy Buckingham
2. Leo Sayer on Leo Sayer, 1978
3. Go Your Own Way
4. Second Hand News
5. Tusk
Word Scrambles
1. I'm So Afraid
2. Second Hand News
3. Family Man
4. Trouble
5. You Do Or You Don't