

## The Twinkling Years Of Big Hats And Plenty Of Penguins

By Michelle Duffy Folk rock legends, Fleetwood Mac changed the face of this genre when they applied themselves with the diversities of Lindsay Buckingham and Stevie Nicks in 1975. This young, talented, but fairly broke couple joined the group after the bands long, established career with Christine Perfect (McVie) as the only female vocal. Domineering the folk rock world with their bluesy sound mixed in with the sultry, low tones of Perfect up until this time. The Nicks/Buckingham outfit launched the group on a unsuspecting, wider audience allowing the alternative talents of the song writing duo to unfold. In this album we find the very greatest song writing accomplishments from this English/American band up until the time of its release in 1988. Only a year after the incredible success of their 87 album, *Tango In The night*, it was a wise decision to launch this greatest hits album with immense gusto on the public. Including hits from their 'white album' in 1975 which was the debut album for Nicks and Buckingham up to *Tango In The Night*, it was a quick scan across the years of the full five member outfit. It was also the same year in which the master behind their success, Lindsay Buckingham decided to leave to peruse a long awaited solo career which was only accepted with optimism by a limited audience. We saw the entry of Billy Burnett, son of the legendary fifties swooner, Johnny Burnett, and guitarist Rick Vito. These two well accomplished guitarists appear on the inside cover photograph with the remaining members of the Fleetwood Mac. It was a brief union with the two young men and after a tour, Fleetwood Mac went through a transition where they came to realise the great gap in their creativity was the unusual, and departed, Lindsay Buckingham. Presented in no chronological order, these tracks skim over the very tracks that paid their bills. The highest ranking singles of that period are all here, although many Fleetwood Mac followers, myself included, would argue that their very best and most imaginative work is very much absent. Perhaps, and I say this with in trepidation, the first track we hear on this fairly standard album is the very over rated 'Rhiannon.' Marked in history as the single with the most haunting sound of Nicks' croaky and witch like voice, it failed in my mind to have any lasting effect. I would have preferred to have seen the appearance of 'Gold Dust Woman', from the 'Rumours' album. Firmly seating itself along the bench of mysterious, tribal drum based singles, it is still a favourite amongst Fleetwood Mac fans. Released originally in March 1978, it was not surprising that it failed to make any indentation at the time. Failing to even make the top forty, it now only has come into its own in recent years as being probably one of finest of Fleetwood Mac tracks. With it's unmistakable guitar riff at the opening, it reveals a tune that couldn't possibly be mistaken for anything else. For anyone lucky enough to have witnessed them live, it was a chance where Nicks would perform the most gliding of dances across the stage covered in floating scarves. A trade mark which caught in quickly with the help of this record. Undoubtedly, the most optimistic, feel good record by any artist in the twentieth century was 'Don't Stop.' Lyrically born out of emotional break ups and fraught tensions among the members at the time, it appeals to anyone wanting to cheer up and look forward to better things. Fast, catchy and most sing able, this track it a welcomed relief after the minor keys of the previous song. Led, vocally by Buckingham, he wasn't the world's greatest singer, however, he could put his entire being into a song and chant it with vast amongst of energy and strength. It is just merely his vocals on this track that are endearing, fascinating and so full of happiness and hope that keep this jumpy, finger clicking track timeless and ageless. Even in the event of it failing to crack the top thirty in April 1977, it was uplifting enough to stay on our minds for decades to come. The equally forward thinking, 'Go You Own Way,' follows in hot pursuit on this album, continuing in a happy theme. It is just as vibrant and glowing in its musical anthem. Very much, lyrically in the 'it's over' subject, it still holds us in that bright light of joyful wisdom. Stronger in lead, Buckingham sings a more powerful melody and the great agile chants are only left to the chorus. Including a spiralling guitar riff at the break, it is as definite and conclusive as its subject. Strangely, we remember that back in February 1977, we didn't think much of it. Scraping into the top forty as if no one was looking, it failed to amuse us enough to buy it. We find this hard to believe as this track, again, marks the dignity of the band as well as proving themselves to be craftsmen and professionals at their work. Winding down, we now take a glimpse at the strong vocal led album, 'Mirage' released in July 1982. The face of Transatlantic music was changing rapidly and this album showed us the path that Fleetwood Mac chose to follow. This track is a predominant piece of vocal led harmonies that was the very basis of the 'Mirage' album. The thunderous instrumental qualities had been dropped, albeit briefly. In this track we find another side to the band. Not only were they all accomplished musicians, individually, but they could also come together with immense tight knitted voices and use themselves as the back bone of a song. 'Hold Me,' was, in verse, a strong yet soft union of the voices of Buckingham and Christine (Perfect) McVie. Woven together like voices of Siamese twins, this track is light, airy and laces electronic keyboards with acoustic guitar. Released in July 1982, it surprisingly failed to enter the chart successfully despite it's unique production and perfectly formed vocal performance. Another of their 'hits' (and I really can't stand that word) is 'Everywhere,' taken from their 1978 *Tango In The Night* album. Led by Christine McVie, her voice was just soft and graceful enough to carry this whispery tune. Atmospheric and mysterious, this track epitomised the essence of the *Tango* album. A slight right hand turn for the band musically, it transported the band firmly into the grasp of the young set. Released in April 1988, it towered over all at number four. The highest position for the band since the arrival of Nicks and Buckingham. Dressed in swirling keyboards and a messy backing of the band's vocals, it is unlike anything ever heard before its release. Nick's, 'Gypsy,' seems bland in comparison to the rest of this album so far, but as it sinks into our ears, we realise that it was just as much a atmospheric and polished piece as the others. Nick's crackled, country sounding vocal was as mysterious and as 'Celtic' as the subject matter. She brought to the band her ballet styled glides of dance to the stage and her fascination with witchcraft, fairies, ghosts and anything magical entwined her song writing capabilities. The musical backdrop was always just as fitting, as with this record. Released in September 1982, it sat at a miserable number 46. It was a pity but the public weren't quite sure how to accept this occult style of song and sound. Probably the best track on this album is the inclusion of a very little known song. 'As Long As You Follow,' is led again by Christine who is in haunting heaven. This track bathes you in dreams and relaxes you with its soothing slide guitar giving it a touch of country and at the same time, it will dip you in melted chocolate. Allow this track to lap you with the waters of gentleness. The backing arrangements of the rest of the band's voices will make you think that they quickly invented surround

sound and multiplied vastly over night. Soft and sincere in its subject, it is a moving piece yet inoffensive. It is Fleetwood Mac proving to us that at the time of this album's release, they could still pull a brand new rabbit out of the hat with ease. Released in November 1988 with an exceptional live cut of the rock anthem, 'Oh Well,' as its B side, it climbed rather pathetically to number 66. Not fitting for the Yazz filled charts at the time of the late eighties, it fell on deaf ears. It is within this set on this album, that it truly belongs and nestles in cosily very well. The slightly up tempo-ed 'Say You Love Me,' is a quick jaunt back to Christine's days with Chicken Shack as the feel of this song is very much the same, (pre Fleetwood Mac for this singer/song writer) this track has been taken from the 'white album,' of 1975. Stripped of all puff and fluff from the other tracks, this is certainly dated in its production yet it still stands the test of time as a song in itself. Piano based, Christine is at the keyboards and leads both the lead and the backing vocal. Slightly folksy, it is a camp fire song, with lots of swaying and joining in. Simple in its subject, it is far from the same in its quality. Chirpy and reluctant to give us any more than it has to, it is a pretty, for The boring, whining 'Dreams,' appears next, and one can't help but remember back to recent days when The Corrs literally took this song, ripped it into shreds and threw it around the studio a few times. Then allowing the bruises to show, they promptly released it as a single of their own. It is still only the very fact that Nick's vocals of here, a very young, squeaky quality, that we still remark on this track as being ground breaking. Personally, it never did anything for me! In July 1977, it reached number 9, so we must have liked it at the time. All I know is that I was too young to buy records at the age of five. Dancing our tango, we are thrown forward a decade as we are launched into 'Little Lies.' Given the first class vocal treatment by Christine McVie, it is laced with the haunting backing vocal of Stevie Nicks. Full in its base drum beat and neatly decorated with tiny bells and dancing keyboards, just the percussion element in this track was worth an Oscar. It is enchanting and provocative (but not as much as 'My Sharona by The Knack..') and it will cast a spell over you in the shape of a tall, lanky Mick Fleetwood shaking fierce looking Maracas and chanting.. 'you will enjoy this record!' Released in September 1987, it reached number 5. Perhaps the most captivating song of the album is the ever distant 'Sara,' (pronounced, Sarah) This track it a strong tribal drummed theme that grows ever more cloudy and mysterious as the song continues. Stevie's young, gypsy voice is swathed in soft, whispered backing vocals led by Buckingham who was a man who could do feminine whispers one minute and bear like growls the next. Stevie's voice trails off to much that you actually feel that she's walked away from the microphone and ground out of the building. She is practically standing outside in the street by the end of the song. I jest, but it is hard to capture this track in a simple piece of prose. It is to be listened to for its amazingly crammed in content. Fleetwood Mac very rarely leave any room left for more percussion improvement and this track is no exception. Released in December 1979, it went straight over our heads and landed itself at number 37. Perhaps it had been a little too deep and meaningful for us to really appreciate it. Perhaps 'Tusk' could break the hardened prog rock audience of the mid seventies with a bit more gusto. It certainly worked as we all rushed out to get this tribal motioned piece with its experimental brass section and whirling chants of muttering voices. It all sounds awfully like some extreme Yes piece, but somehow 'Tusk,' cut the mark with us. The title came from, apparently, the word that Mick Fleetwood calls his manhood, for want of a better expression! First appearing on the double album of the same name in 1979, it shot straight to number one. Led, creatively by Buckingham, it gave us an insight to the future solo workings of the artist. He had, however, found his experimental behaviour slight clipped in the band, thus prompting his departure in 1988. This track uses the same set up as some of The Beatles working for Sgt Pepper. Creating a back drop of crowds of voices, it chants its title at repeated moments. Released as a single in October 1979, it only reached number 6. Still, a piece of creative Mac and still treasured amongst fans. Ending the set, Stevie gives us a performance that would have also suited one of her successful solo albums. Laced with the atmosphere of the members of Fleetwood Mac, it is still a strong Nicks piece. Most average music fans will find this track too middle of the road and too dull, yet Nicks fans (like myself) will be pleased with its appearance. It engages in the usual mass of swirling noise that became the back drop of the very flat and equally received 1990 album, Behind The Mask.' This terrible album was about the worst composition that the band had come up with so far. The event of Buckingham leaving was strong enough to allow the creativeness of the band to come crashing down to the ground. Any decent Fleetwood Mac fan will notice the disappearance of Buckingham in this track. It lacks the punch and the unique originality that Buckingham brought to the band. However, it is fundamentally a Nick's track. Listeners may feel free to use this particular track as a taste of her solo work if already not experienced. As with all 'greatest hits' albums, one gets the impression that you're actually listening to the band but only listening to the bits they want you to hear. It's a 'Hey, this was all our good stuff, so forget the bollocks we gave you in between, this is everything we want to be remembered for, and we are strapped for a little cash, so please feel free to buy this, even though our fans will have all of these tracks already' It is this piece that I have chanting in the back of my mind when ever I see someone drudging out another hits album. Fleetwood Mac, I guess, for this time, could be forgiven as it was their best release until almost ten years later with 'The Dance.' It also marked, and celebrated the arrival home of Buckingham and 'Say You Will,' followed in 2003, just after a wait for it another hits album. arrrrggghhh!!!!!! In conclusion, it is a record of all their best single releases, but as you can see, those releases didn't amount to much at the time. Personally, their best work in the 1975 to 1988 period is very much missing. If you could possibly dig deeper into your pockets, then the albums worth purchasing here are the very ones where these songs came from for those of you who are lazy and just want a brief history, then you may, buy this one. It will guide you, although, quickly, through the life of Fleetwood Mac. But there was a hell of a lot more to them than this. .But that's another album.. Stevie Nicks - percussion/vocals  
Mick Fleetwood Mac - drums and general mucking about  
Lindsay Buckingham - guitars/vocals and anything he could get his hands on Christine McVie - writer/performer/pianist and generally nice all round person  
John McVie - ex husband of Christine and a fairly good guitarist. All songs written by Fleetwood Mac  
1988 Warner Bros Records Songs taken from; 'Fleetwood Mac' 1975

'Rumours' 1977

'Tusk' 1979

'Tango In The Night' 1988.

Bought on vinyl at a record fair for three pounds, also on CD for six pounds 2001 ©Michelle Duffy 2006 (on dooyoo -sam1942)

## About the Author

Michelle is a freelance writer in the South of England and owner of the websites, <http://www.generationsounds.co.uk>, <http://nevermindthebloggers.bravehost.com> and their successful sister, 'Never Mind The Bloggers' at <http://paperback-writer29.tripod.com> She has been writing over the two years, for five major consumer websites across the world and is one of the only two music category advisors for one website in the U.K. Her websites promote young, amateur and professional bands/artists/musicians and their fan clubs whilst also reviewing them for local and world wide promotion. She has also launched the blogs; 'The Ramblings Of An Old Rocker,' 'Bohemian Waffle,' 'The Rhythm Rock And Blues Machine,' 'The Moped's Musings,' 'Generation Sound Suite' and 'Rock Cocoon.' She is currently working on two shops selling her music styled artwork on cafepress.com. Article Source: [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Michelle\\_Duffy](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Michelle_Duffy)

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