

Shatter Your Illusions

By Michelle Duffy Formed somewhere in London around the mid sixties, Mick Fleetwood, Peter Green, Bob Brunning (later axed for Jon McVie) and Jeremy Spencer drove a rough old van around the lesser known delights of The Swan in Fulham and The Toby Jug in Tolworth hoping for something better. It was probably far from their minds that it would take Fleetwood Mac a line up change and another ten years to finally reach the dream of sky high success. And this was it. 'Rumours' was the rather aptly named album from Fleetwood Mac released in February 1977 following the success of 'Fleetwood Mac', the first album introducing Stevie Nicks and Lindsay Buckingham, the lovers of both themselves, each other as well as songwriters and performers in their own right. The controversy surrounding the long awaited 'Rumours' was not of the usual political sense like their contemporaries, but born out of the emotion traumas of the personal kind. At the very start of the back breaking recording of the album that by the end, had taken a tiresome 11 months, the band had just about endured all personal losses evolving each other that any human being could possibly face. Mick Fleetwood had come into the first of two divorces from wife, Jenny Boyd (sister of the lyrically famed Patti Boyd, the subject of George Harrison's 'Something' and Eric Clapton's 'Wonderful Tonight'), a weary and draining separation, but short lived as only four months after their finalisation of divorce, they married again. Being the 'father' of the band and the one when other band members turned for security and stability, he had not only had to face the crumbling shambles of his own marriage but also to be the rock for the others when their personal troubles came to a head. Nicks and Buckingham, the golden couple of both visual beauty as well as creative genius were failing hard at their own personal relationship. After being together for some considerable length of time, they became bitter towards each other and this reflected in their song writing. Nicks, shortly after breaking up with Buckingham, started dating Don Henley from The Eagles, this added more bitterness to Buckingham's material. The final couple of the band were the McVie's. Christine and Jon had been married for a few years and had enjoyed Fleetwood Mac together before the arrival of the younger two. Jon drank to excess and although well mannered when sober, became irritable and argumentative when drunk. They split and Jon started dating quickly, but perhaps only to black out the love affair of Christine McVie and Curry Grant, the lighting technician for the band. Perhaps it is not obvious then as to why this million selling album became the very pinnacle of all that was, from then on, Fleetwood Mac. There has never been an album of this kind ever since by any other artist. 13 times Platinum in the U.S and 10 times in the U.K, it held its number 1 position in the American album charts for a breath taking 31 weeks. Over here it shot to number 1 again and remained in our charts for an unbelievable 447 weeks. Rewarded a Grammy for Outstanding Contribution in 1988 and entered into the rock and roll hall of fame, it is not easy to find another band such as this in the 20th century. Surprisingly, the only number 1 that the band have ever had was with 'Albatross' in December 1968. It is even more surprising to find that from any of the singles from the 'Rumours' album, not one of them made it any where near the top 20. Where Jon McVie came up with the title of the album, he was reported to have said later that it should have been called 'Gossip' as it was a mere collection of whispers, between each member about each member. What we hear then perhaps is something that is so personal that the listener feels that he is almost intruding on conversations that shouldn't be heard by anyone else other than the band. Each track was heartbreakingly true, coldly written and soul baringly correct that it appears like a musical diary of the vents that were taking place within the band at the time. It could be said that the best albums in the world are born out of tragic loss, even death amongst the groups. Do we hear their pain and relate to it on an intense personal level? This could be said for maybe a small minority of listeners. The rest of us just hear a tune that we like the sound of. The album was purely inspirational, not just to themselves but to other artists that followed them. A gruelling schedule of 18 hours a day in the recording studio was what it took after the first two months peppered with technical difficulties and production hitches that in the end, the entire album was recorded in 4 different studios panning from California to Florida. It was no wonder that none of the members couldn't stand to see the sight of each other every morning, but yet, these strong willed, hard headed, passionate people may have lost their passion for each other for good, but this only drove the desire to produce an album of such strength and quality in its place. Despite the troubles of this band and the desperation they individually felt throughout the recording of this album, it is the very last thing that the listener experiences. I have never owned such an enlightening, inspiring and soul lifting album. Born out of fears of the heart, it gives the listener joy and hope. On a dull, miserable, wet and dark February afternoon, do yourself a favour, dig this album out, blow the dust of it, and watch the sun come up in your room.. Tracks include; Second Hand News, Never Going Back Again, Don't Stop, Go Your Own Way, Songbird, The Chain, You Make Loving Fun, I Don't Want To Know, Oh Daddy, Gold Dust Woman. ©michelle duffy 2006 Warner Bros. Records Inc. fleetwoodmac.com

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