

1984



*Rock Legend
Lindsey
Buckingham*

‘I’VE ALWAYS RISEN ABOVE PERSONAL DI

IN THE SPACE OF 3 YEARS, HE SURVIVED
A MAJOR HEALTH SCARE, FACED DIVORCE AND WAS
KICKED OUT OF FLEETWOOD MAC. NOW THE
GUITARIST IS LOOKING FORWARD TO WHAT’S NEXT

By **TOMAS MIER**



FLEETWOOD FRACTURE

"It dishonored our legacy of five," Buckingham (inset, ca. 1975 with John and Christine McVie, Stevie Nicks and Mick Fleetwood) says of his 2018 feud with his former bandmates.

FFICULTIES'

FROM LEFT: AARON RAPOPORT/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES;
GLOBE PHOTOS/ZUMA; LAUREN DUKOFF

Lindsey Buckingham has always been a loner, which helped make adjusting to lockdown life a cinch when the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March of last year. “I can’t say it was so hard for me,” the former Fleetwood Mac singer and guitarist says over Zoom from his hotel room in Pittsburgh during a stop on his current world tour. “I have a pretty well-developed inner life, so I relied on that.” But just months after stepping away from the stage and recording studio, Buckingham, 71, had to confront deep cracks in his marriage. “A lot of people’s relationships were tested by the lockdown. I think my wife had a bit of a harder time with it,” he says of Kristen Messner, 51, an interior designer and photographer he married in 2000.

After more than two decades with Buckingham, Messner—who helped nurse him back to health after his emergency triple heart bypass in February 2019—filed for divorce in June. But Buckingham is fighting to save his marriage. “Relationships in the long term can be challenging, and they have their ups and downs,” he says. “But you’ve got to take that ride—and be *willing* to take that ride.”

He’s used to the roller coaster, but the last few years have been especially dizzying. In 2018 he was fired from Fleetwood Mac after asking the band to delay their upcoming tour for three months while he worked on solo music. Following weeks of discord, Stevie Nicks, Mick Fleetwood, John McVie and Christine McVie voted to oust him from the band and replaced him with Neil Finn of Crowded House and Mike Campbell of Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. “I wasn’t particularly disappointed to be excluded from the tour,” says Buckingham, who calls his self-titled solo album (out Sept. 17) a music “reboot.” “What I was unhappy about was

STRONG FAMILY BONDS

“It’s amazing how quickly they grow up,” says Buckingham (with, from left, Messner, Stella, LeeLee and William in 2018) of his children. “I’ve tried to be a dad who’s supportive of what they’re doing.”



ROCK-STAR DAD

“They are proud of me and think Dad is pretty cool,” he says of his kids (ca. 2007). “But I don’t try to live that.”

that for the 43 years I was in Fleetwood Mac, our legacy in many ways was this fact that we were always able to follow through on the bigger picture. *That* was being harmed.”

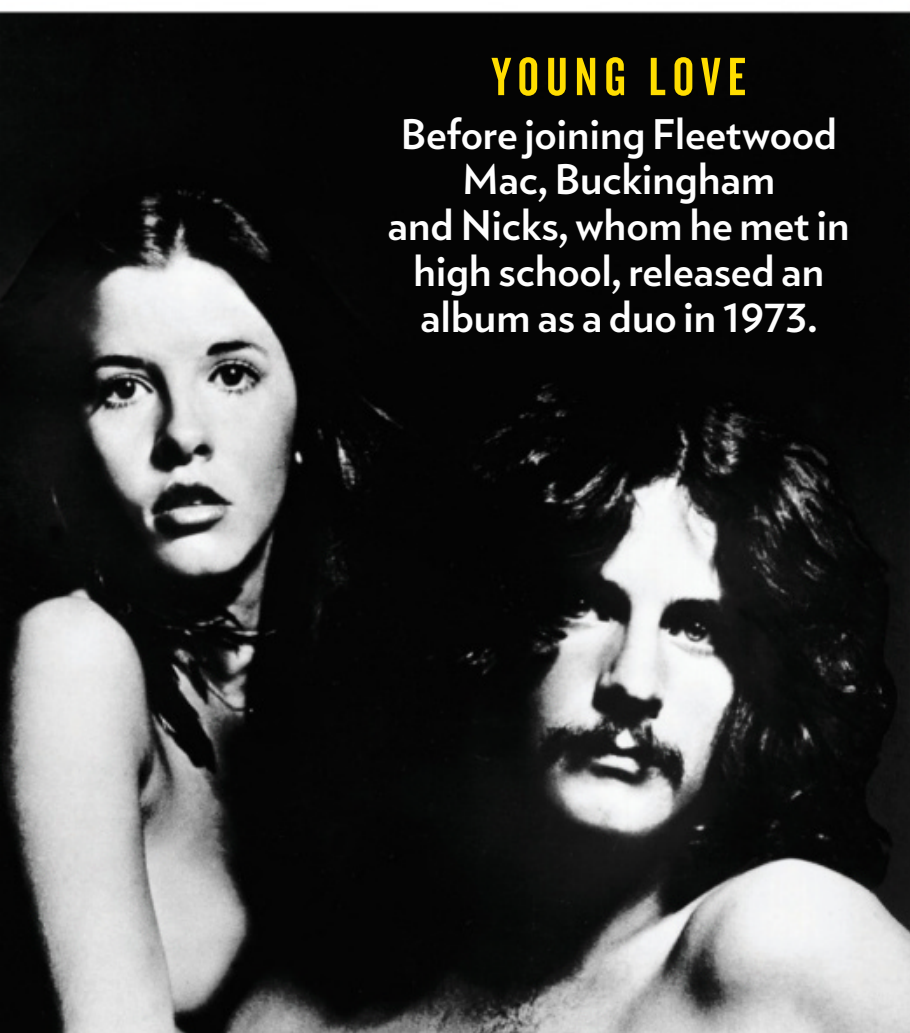
Three years later, Buckingham insists Nicks, his former romantic partner and Fleetwood Mac’s frontwoman, was behind his firing. “It was all Stevie’s doing,” says Buckingham. “She basically gave the band an ultimatum that either I had to go or she would.” In a statement Nicks, 73, calls Buckingham’s take “revisionist history,” adding: “To be exceedingly clear, I did not have him fired, I did not ask for him to be fired, I did not demand he be fired.”

TOP: COURTESY LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM(3)

FAME, FEUDS AND UPS AND DOWNS WITH FLEETWOOD MAC

YOUNG LOVE

Before joining Fleetwood Mac, Buckingham and Nicks, whom he met in high school, released an album as a duo in 1973.

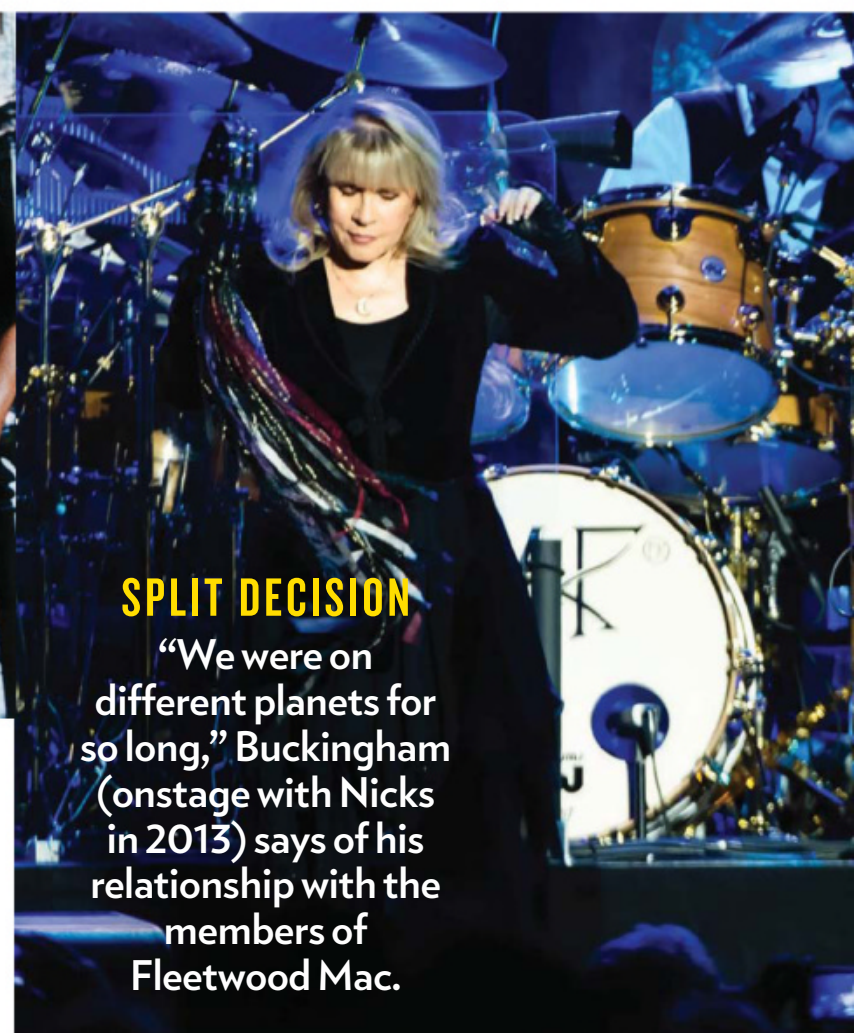


THE ‘MUSICAL SOAP OPERA’

As Fleetwood Mac’s success reached its peak in the ’70s, so did their internal strife. “It was a very unusual situation to have four out of the five people be two couples and to have those two couples break up,” says Buckingham (with the band in the mid-’70s).

SPLIT DECISION

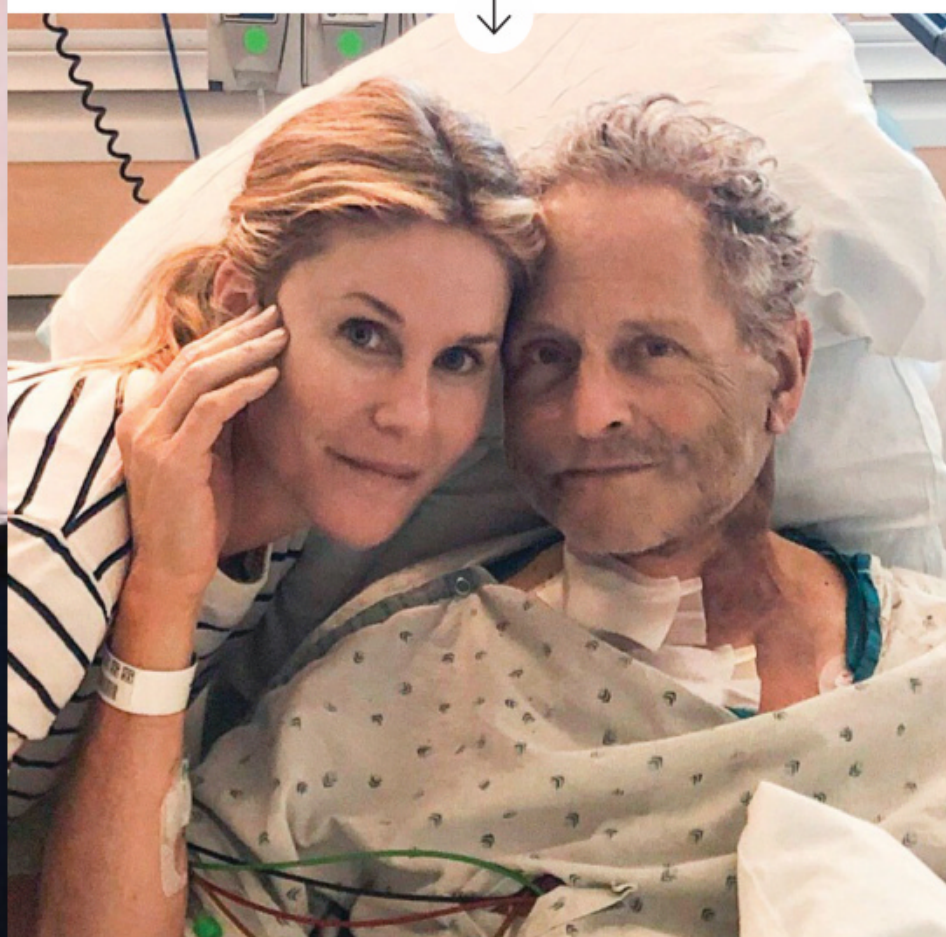
“We were on different planets for so long,” Buckingham (onstage with Nicks in 2013) says of his relationship with the members of Fleetwood Mac.





ROAD TO RECOVERY

In early 2019 Buckingham underwent emergency heart surgery after experiencing chest pain. Both his father and brother died of heart attacks at a young age. “We feel so fortunate he’s alive,” Messner shared with fans at the time. Today, he says, “I’m feeling good.”



Buckingham—the youngest of three sons raised by dad Morris, who owned a coffee company, and mom Rutheda in Atherton, Calif.—first met Nicks in the late ’60s when he was a student at Menlo-Atherton High School. They later formed a band called Fritz, started dating and then became a two-piece ensemble called Buckingham Nicks, releasing a self-titled album in 1973.

A year later the British drummer Mick Fleetwood invited both of them to join Fleetwood Mac, a blues-rock band that had already achieved a degree of international success. As the group skyrocketed to superstardom with their self-titled

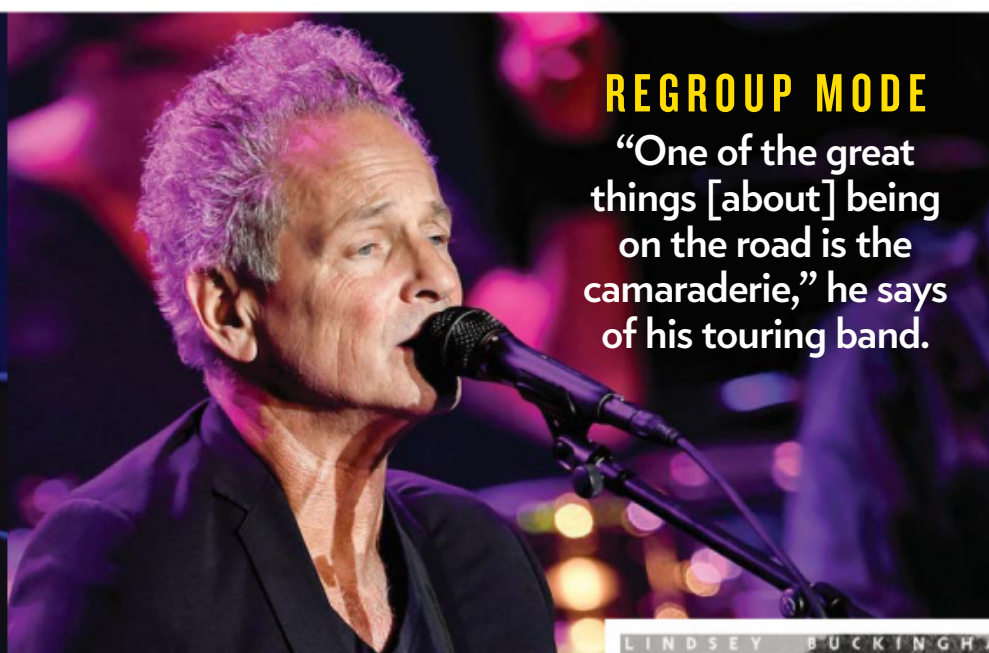
‘MUSIC IS SOMETHING THAT DEFINES ME AS A HUMAN’

—LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM

1975 album and its 1977 follow-up *Rumours*, one of the bestselling albums of all time, Buckingham and Nicks’s drama-filled split took center stage. “She was the one orchestrating our breakup,” says Buckingham. Their bandmates John and Christine McVie divorced in the mid-’70s, and the “dysfunction [in the group] was beyond anything that we could really call functional at all,” he says. Buckingham—who took a 10-year hiatus from Fleetwood Mac beginning in 1987—says he continued struggling with Nicks. “I was harboring a lot of hurt and disappointment and a sense of alienation,” he says. “For her and for me, those were things that never quite worked themselves out over the years.”

Despite being dismissed from the group he helped make legendary, Buckingham says he harbors no ill will. “I speak with Mick on occasion, and we text all the time,” he claims. “Christine texted me and said, ‘I’m really sorry I didn’t stand up for you when that happened.’ I know that Mick and Christine were doing what they did, to some degree, out of weakness.” In October 2018 Buckingham sued Fleetwood Mac, accusing the band of breach of fiduciary duty and oral contract. (The suit was reportedly settled out of court for an undisclosed amount.) Even so, he’s not ruling out an eventual reunion. “The right thing to do would be for the five of us to reconvene,” he says. “Mick knows I would come back like a shot.” But first he has to make peace with Nicks, who he says messaged him after his heart surgery. “You have to forgive,” says Buckingham. “You have to let things go and remember we’re all doing the best we can.”

Now that he’s back on the road solo, Buckingham isn’t taking his health—or family—for granted. “One of my brothers and my dad passed away of a heart attack,” he says. “The recovery process from something that invasive takes months, but I’ve looked at the bypass as a gift.” Adds his longtime producer Rob Cavallo: “Lindsey is a fighter. Nothing’s going to keep that guy down. Music has been one of his salvations.” While they were written three years ago, many of the songs on his new album have taken on new meaning. “Before this all went down, I was not aware that many people file for divorce and then choose not to follow through,” Buckingham says. “Kristen and I agree that is the best course to follow, focusing instead on working on our relationship.” A large part of their motivation is their three children: son William, 23, and daughters LeeLee, 21, and Stella, 17. “They all seem to be on a [successful] path, and that’s the main thing,” he says. “I can be up onstage doing what I’m doing, but at home I’m just another schlubby dad.” Still, returning to the road has been a rejuvenating experience. “To be back [playing in front of] all these people, it’s healing,” he says. “It feels like the wait was worth it.” ●

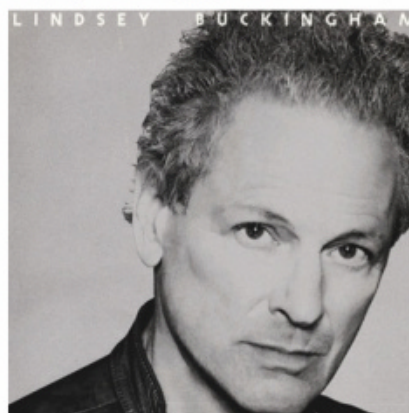


REGROUP MODE

“One of the great things [about] being on the road is the camaraderie,” he says of his touring band.

ON HIS OWN

“There was something meditative about it,” he says of recording his new solo album. “Much like a painter with his canvas.”



BOTTOM, FROM LEFT: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; EVERETT; RICHARD ISAAC/LONDON NEWS PICTURES/ZUMA; STEVE JENNINGS/GETTY IMAGES