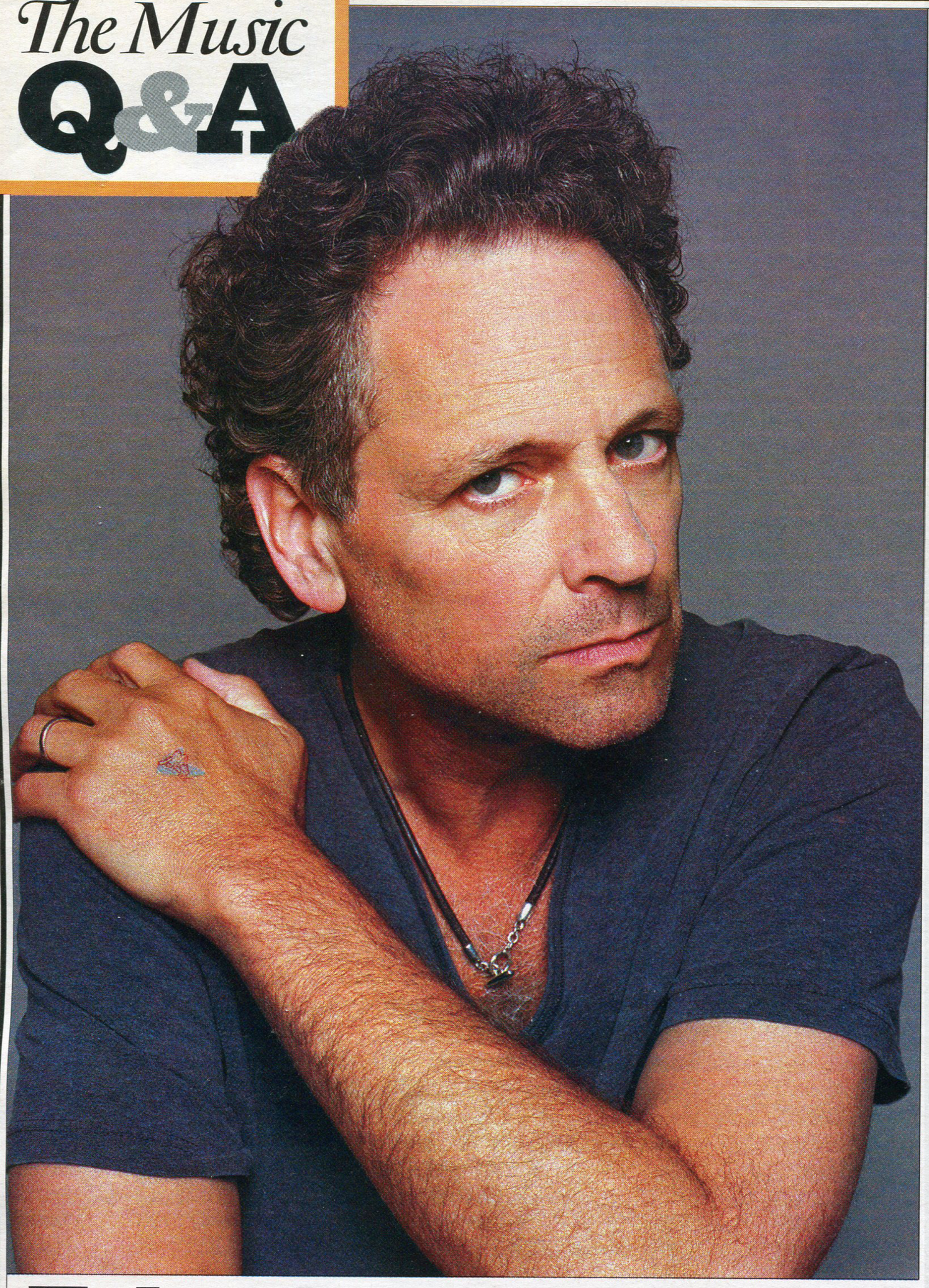
The Music Q&A



Lindsey Buckingham

Before he met Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood Mac's guitar man was into Barbra Streisand, Patti Page and Donna Reed

By DAVID WILD

IF IT SEEMS LIKE THERE'S A LOT of good guitar playing on the new Fleetwood Mac album – and there is – that's because it began life six years ago as a Lindsey Buckingham solo disc. *Say You Will* is the Mac's first record of new material in eight years, and their first without singer-keyboardist Christine McVie in thirty-three. Buckingham took a break from rehearsals for the band's upcoming summer tour to talk about the time he spent in the Sixties as the one guy in the Fillmore West not on drugs.

What's the first song you ever played?

I didn't get a guitar until my brother brought home "Heartbreak Hotel," so probably that was the first song I tried to learn. That or whatever Patti Page song was around the house. Things were very Donna Reed for us back then.

"My first concert was the Smothers Brothers."

Growing up, who were your guitar gods?

I really came in the back door. All the Jimi Hendrix and the Clapton types who were wearing their style on their sleeve were not the people I was listening to. It was probably people whose names I wasn't even aware of so much, like Chet Atkins and Scotty Moore. The lead playing you usually associate with the "rock guitar god" thing was the last thing I picked up. I couldn't even play lead for a long time.

But on this new album you've gone insane – I've never heard you play so much or so fast.

Yeah, for years we would always remark on the difference between our record-making approach and our stage approach. My songs for this album started off as a solo album, and I was trying to take that raw energy we got onstage with the band I took on the road after my last solo album, *Out of the Cradle*. I was lucky enough to have Mick Fleetwood and John McVie play on those tracks, even back when it was a solo project. So this stuff has a predestined three-piece feel. I think it also had something to do with trying to fill in for the lack of Christine.

What was your first concert?

It wasn't a rock concert. Maybe the Smothers Brothers. I remember I did see Barbra Streisand when I was about thirteen. She must have been around nineteen then. When I was a little older, I went to shows at the Fillmore in San Francisco, but even then I was this kind of zoned-out individual who wasn't partaking of a culture in the broad way that most of my friends were. It was a rare occasion when I would find myself sitting on the floor of the Fillmore.

What's the first song you wrote?

I started writing late. I met Stevie when I was sixteen. She was already writing songs and considered herself to be a young poetess. I was more a player. I didn't think of myself as an artist, more as someone who had guitar playing as a hobby and would go on to do something more sane and respectable. I don't think I even wrote a song until I was twenty-one. The first song I wrote, I think, was called "Butterfly," and it was in the vein of something off [James Taylor's] *Sweet Baby James*.

What song do you wish you had written?

Anything by Burt Bacharach, or Lennon and McCartney from a certain point on. No one will do those kind of things any better. But then on the other side, God, I wish I had written "Louie Louie."

Your new single, "Peacekeeper," is all too timely, but you wrote it years ago.

Yeah, "Peacekeeper" in a strange way is about what's happening right now, but originally it was more about the whole idea of an ever-increasing desensitization to brutal events.

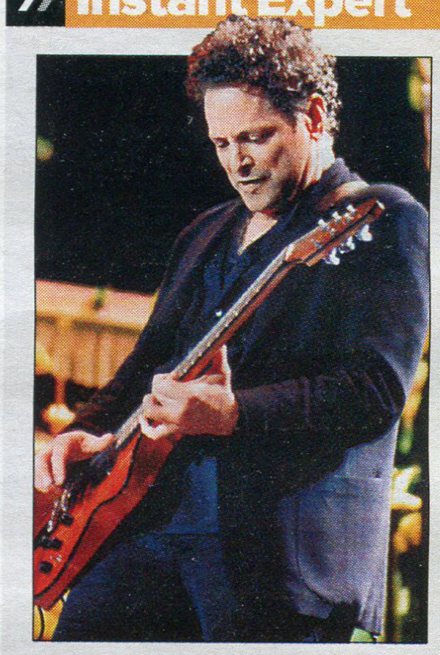
The new album ends with two farewells: your "Say Goodbye" and Stevie's "Goodbye Baby." Are we to gather this is Fleetwood Mac's swan song?

I hope not. There have been times when I have had my doubts. Near the end of the recording there were arguments, and it got a little tense. We had been looking at this as a long-term plan – touring a lot and doing another record – and maybe it looked like that wasn't going to happen. If I had to guess, I would say that we will do another album.

What's the strangest thing in your CD player these days?

The *Tusk* album redone by Camper Van Beethoven. I thought it was great. They took many, many liberties, which is as it should be, considering we were taking liberties of our own back then.

Instant Expert



1 Fleetwood Mac began in 1967 as a British blues band.

2 George Harrison's favorite Buckingham song was "Holiday Road," on the *National Lampoon's Vacation* soundtrack.

3 1979's *Tusk*, the follow-up to the 18 million-selling *Rumours*, cost about $1 million to make and sold 5 million copies.

4 Buckingham doesn't use a pick to play guitar.

5 Buckingham and Nicks joined the band in 1975, creating its tenth lineup.

Mac's Back

See the band do "Peacekeeper" at *rollingstone.com/fleetwoodmac*