



INTERVIEW
STEVIE NICKS

Deserted by Mick Fleetwood, bullied by her record company and haunted by the memory of four abortions, Stevie Nicks is rich but not happy. Spencer Bright breaks out the Kleenex for the woman who couldn't go her own way. Homely snaps by George Bodnar

I pull a Kleenex from its box and hand it to Stevie Nicks. She wipes a tear as it slides down her cheek. She cries when she speaks of Mick Fleetwood, she cries when she speaks of the babies she might have had and she cries when she speaks of the bullies in the record industry shoving her around. She's like a damsel in distress in her castle, and we're in her fairyland lounge. There is a warm glow from the chunky candles and the blue flame of the log fire, while outside in LA the temperature sizzles up in the '80s.

Stevie points out her favourite chaise longue. Her favourite doll, which resembles her, sits regally upon it. Shawls are draped about. One, a favourite 12-year-old garment, is loosely draped around the chanteuse. Stevie needs the comfort of long-familiar possessions: they stress a continuity and equilibrium that have been sadly lacking in her emotional life.

To say that Stevie Nicks is consid-

Baby doll: Stevie takes comfort in a collection of over 250 toy boys and girls

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ered flaky is a mild understatement. But, as with so many things Nicksian, it's a mythical fog that masks the true woman. She isn't just a mystical old crone running a witches' coven in the Hollywood Hills: the fantasy world she appears to inhabit actually stems from her love of England, notably its history, kings and queens.

Her home in Encino—up the road from Dave Stewart's house and over the brow of the hill from that of her former lover Tom Petty—is the sort of chocolate box creation you'd expect to find in a theme park. From the outside it's a Tudor mansion with elephantitis: as you enter there's a drained waterfall replaced by plants and flowers running

"I have told the world what a vile thing it was that Mick Fleetwood had done to me, who has fought like a dog for 15 years to keep this band from breaking up"

alongside the winding brick staircase.

Climbing the stairs it changes from medieval to Hansel and Gretel, as the carved wooden banisters meander perpendicularly up three more storeys. At the top of the house is an octagonal

bell tower, but there's no bell: just a viewing platform and windows where Stevie, her friends and employees go to watch the sun set over the San Fernando Valley.

I'm given a guided tour that the barman at my hotel would have died and gone to heaven for. There's Stevie's giant four-poster bed with lace cushions and lacy covers. In the adjoining dressing room a sweet musty smell of perfume hangs in the air. All around are satin and silk nightgowns bunched on hangers. Stevie says she bought this house because she could imagine Ann Boleyn living here.

When Stevie Nicks first made money with Fleetwood Mac she was able to

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perfect opportunity to learn about kings, queens, princes and princesses.

Fleetwood perfectly matched her dreams. "The first time Mick walked into the room I thought I was witnessing the entrance of an English king, because that's how he looked to me. He was wearing a burgundy-coloured, water silk vest (waistcoat) with a watch chain and a very long jacket that was really nipped in at the waist, and beautifully-made pants. I was awestruck, and still am to this day of Mick's presence. The whole air around him is power." The people who saw Fleetwood's performance on the Brits Awards with Samantha Fox may find this a little difficult to accept.

Previously, Lindsay Buckingham had dominated Stevie. He was the artist; he didn't know how to do anything except music. "What was he going to do, sell shoes? I had a \$50,000 education, I could do anything." Her waitress job paid for the rent, the food, the car. "I knew it was going to take my strength to push Lindsay and I over the edge if we were going to make it in the music business."

After Buckingham came a rogues' gallery of powerful rock'n'roll suitors not known for their wimpishness: Joe Walsh, Don Henley, Tom Petty and producers Jimmy Iovine and Rupert Hine. And the man who called his on-the-road dalliances an attack of "veal viper", Mick Fleetwood. All get their individual tributes on Stevie's 'Best Of' compilation album, *Timespace*.

In parallel with the last ten years of Fleetwood Mac, Stevie enjoyed the most successful solo career of the whole group. Her first solo album *Bella Donna* sold ten

million copies, and subsequent collections have enjoyed less spectacular but still respectable sales. Now, though, with the apparently final demise of Fleetwood Mac, Stevie is suffering a personal and professional crisis.

The recent Mac troubles can be traced to an old Nicks song called 'Silver Springs'. So taken was Stevie's mother by this number that she was moved to open an antique clothing shop in Phoenix with the same name. Stevie made a gift of the song to her.

'Silver Springs' nearly became a classic, but was dropped at the last minute from the 20 million-selling *Rumours* album. Stevie thought it would be nice to resurrect the song and place it on *Timespace*. But Mick Fleetwood refused to give up the group's performance rights: he wants the option of having the number on a boxed set due for this year's commemoration of Fleetwood Mac's 25th anniversary.

"I have told the world what a vile thing it was that Mick Fleetwood had



Stevie in younger, more innocent days, waiting for the knight on a white horse. She got Mick Fleetwood.

done to me, who has fought like a dog for 15 years to keep this band from breaking up. I don't really know what's going through Mick's mind. He never returned a phone call, and he never felt it was his duty to sit down and write a letter to tell me why.

"He's always been very English, and very proper and sometimes very arrogant, but to me, a very close and loving friend. And somebody that I always felt I could trust and love," says Stevie, wiping away the tears.

"He has always been the boss of the group. He has always made all the decisions. And he has always made them without asking anyone else. So he had no reason to do this to us. To break up the whole band." ▶



fulfil her Dickensian fantasies of looking like a "ragged doll"—she came out resembling between the Artful Dodger, Bill Sykes' girlfriend Nancy from *Oliver Twist* and Miss Havesham from *Great Expectations*.

Stevie is not quite sure where this obsession with things English came from: "It was born into me. Maybe my last life was in England." Thus when, in January 1975, a 6' 5" English eccentric named Mick Fleetwood came and asked Stevie and her boyfriend Lindsay Buckingham to join his band, she had to say 'yes'. "Just the idea that this band was English was reason enough to join. It was a dream come true." At the age of 26, Stevie saw the new group as the



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◀ In the tradition of rock'n'roll's longest running soap opera, Stevie has Fleetwood's soon-to-be ex-wife Sarah on her side. "She's singing with me now, she's a very good friend. She's divorcing Mick after being with him for 13 years: they are completely separated. She doesn't understand."

Stevie has included 'Beauty And The Beast' on *Timespace*, a song written after her affair with Mick in the late '70s. She explains that it is not a dig at him being a beast, but about the beauty and the beast within us all. The album's sleeve notes are full of similar references to her ex-lovers.

Was there a common thread among her men? "They are all very smart and very loving, and they all had a difficult time with my life and the way that I live it and how busy I am." For four lovers, a crucial test came when she became pregnant and opted for terminations. "It's always been a tragedy. But they understood." But they didn't really. "Eventually their hearts couldn't take it, they couldn't understand quite enough, how deeply embedded in this I was. And so it eventually hurt them too much and they had to leave, or face devastation on their own."

She put her relationship with her fans before a relationship with one man. Ever since she saw Janis Joplin perform, Stevie has wanted to emulate her, to achieve that state of communion with the crowd. "I just wanted to be in



SHOOTING STEVIE

VOX was privileged to receive a guided tour of Stevie Nicks's home. However, since several previous attempts at photographing the interior of her mansion had not matched up to her idea of how it should look, Nicks chose to recreate the interior in sympathetic lighting conditions.

Two days later Ms Nicks summoned our photographer to a professional sound-stage at a studio near LA International airport. There, with the aid of two articulated lorries of furniture, clothes, dolls and assorted knick-knacks, she recreated her bedroom.

A staff of more than a dozen people—including caterers (note bulging fridge), lighting men, set builders, make-up artists, hairdressers and a mysterious 'personal assistant'—spent a whole day recreating the authentic ambience of Stevie's home.

All of this was done at her own cost. But Ms Nicks is no stranger to excess. During the last Fleetwood Mac world tour she had every hotel room she stayed in re-decorated to her personal taste—and at her own considerable cost.

love with my audience and I wanted them to be in love with me back."

But now there is remorse at the havoc her abortions have wreaked on her psyche. "To give up four [babies] is to give up a lot that would be here now. So that really bothers me, a lot, and really breaks my heart. But, they're gone, so..." she composes herself. "But I couldn't because I was too busy. And I had all these commitments." She wants to adopt, but age and single-parenthood are against her.

"I've also thought about having one myself but I'm booked up for the next four years. I don't know, at my age, if I can get pregnant right away, do an album at the same time, have a baby, promote the album, go out on tour with the baby. So I'm going back and forth in my mind. At 43 years old, my time clock is ticking, so I can't afford to wait around for very long." Surely these are the same excuses she made on the last four occasions—with two important differences. There is no obvious candidate for the father, and even if there were, the decision remains totally in her hands.

In an epic inversion of the star's role, she is subservient to the 40 people who depend on her for their livelihoods. "I don't know quite how to walk away without hurting a lot of people—even though every one of those people would say 'You've done a lot for us and we know that you love us, but go and do something for yourself for a change'. But I just can't."

The determination, toughness and pragmatism that helped her achieve success now seem elusive, but what hurts most is being pushed around by business moguls. She is smarting from the inclusion—against her wishes—of Jon Bon Jovi's aptly-titled song 'Sometimes It's A Bitch' on *Timespace*.

"I was told at the beginning of this year that if I didn't do a song by Jon Bon Jovi then my career was over. I don't have any reason to hate Jon Bon Jovi. He wrote me a song, that was a very wonderful thing to do. I knew that just me singing that kind of song wasn't going to go over with a lot of my fans, which it hasn't. But I was told by the industry, by management, by the record companies, and by everybody else, that if I did NOT do this, and reach this new audience, that my career was, simply, finally, completely over.

"They exerted all the pressure you could possibly exert, they scared me to death. So I did the song, and is it a big hit song? No, it's not."

She found it particularly distasteful

to sing the word 'bitch', which she considers a swear word. Stevie concedes that she has difficulty challenging authority figures.

It all makes her appear so fragile. While we speak she only opens her doe eyes to wipe away the tears, preferring instead to look down when talk gets serious. There are no crutches any more. She gave up the cocaine and alcohol in 1986 when she admitted herself to the Betty Ford Center.

Bad as she was, she still had the inner strength to take control of her destiny, probably because she sensed she was in mortal danger. One night while there she was inspired to write a personal creed: "I am not special. I am not infallible. I am dying."

"I started crying really hard, and I wrote under it something to the effect, never forget these three lines. And so I feel that yes, I can write stories for people. I can tell stories to people, but that I'm not indestructible and that I'm not special. And that I was dying. So, that was a very big turning point at Betty Ford for me."

If Fleetwood Mac had been told to do 'Sometimes It's A Bitch' she thinks she knows what would probably have happened. "Mick would've ridden in on his white horse and swept me up and told them all to go to hell and say I won't let her do it." The tragedy is that after all these struggles, Stevie Nicks is a victim once again.

