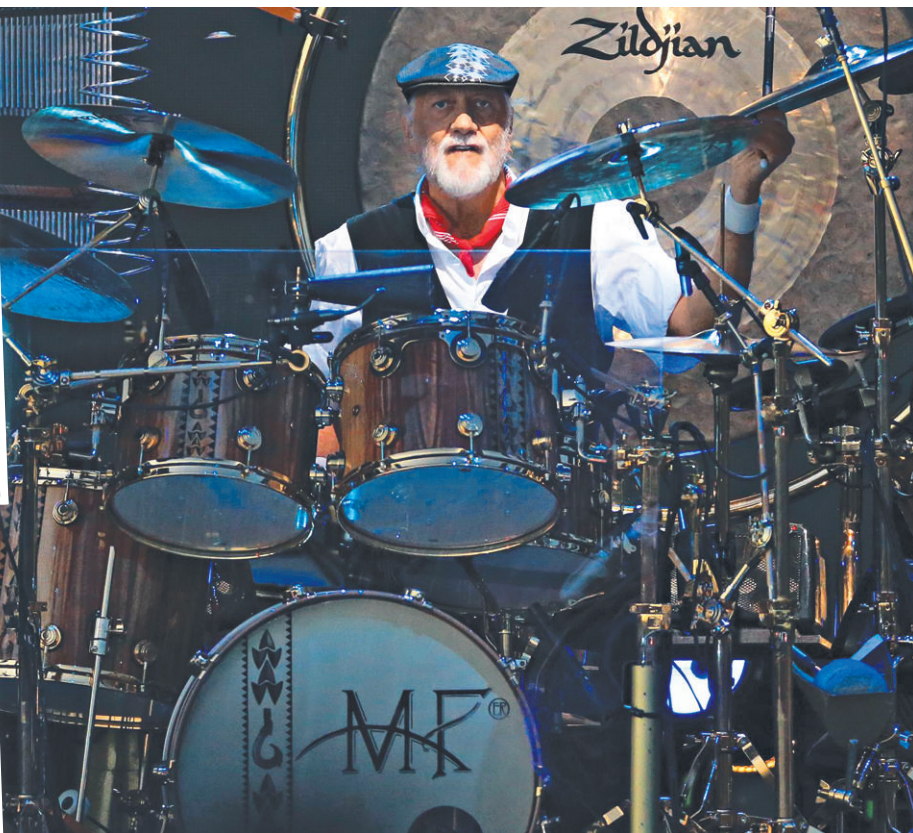


FROM LOVE THAT BURNS: A CHRONICLE OF FLEETWOOD MAC



PETER RISTEVSKI



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Mick Fleetwood, centre; the teen drummer with his first kit, top left; with Australian musician Billy Thorpe in 1991, bottom left; Fleetwood in the early 1960s during his time with the Cheynes, above

Still, forget drum solos. “I hate them. Inherently drummers are forced into shit like that, like when the power goes off in a club. You ever seen Charlie Watts do a drum solo? Ringo? Any drum solo I do is buffoonery, theatre; I shout in the microphone, talk in tongues. Though Peter did give me a talking drum once,” he says of the West African tama, an instrument that is clamped under an elbow and played with a stick. “I had great fun running around the stage with that.”

Green is a spectre in our conversation, garnering more mentions than, say, any of Fleetwood’s ex-wives: Jenny, sister of Pattie Boyd (who was married to Eric Clapton), who he married and divorced twice (and is the mother of his two daughters, Amy and Lucy); Sara, the former bestie of Nicks; Lynn, with whom he has twin girls, Ruby and Tessa. His current partner, Chelsea, here today, is a language teacher who lives with him in Maui, on a spread with three dogs, a pig and her daughter’s 25 exotic chickens. “They’re like cockatoos.”

More mentions, too, than his band mates past and present — especially, and consciously, Buckingham and Nicks, the blonde fairy goddess whose quavering voice and wafting chiffon outfits became a vital part of the Fleetwood Mac brand. “Well, the book is not about them, and the whole point of this interview is about the book,” says Fleetwood, who took over manage-

ment of the band in 1974, the year *Love That Burns* finishes, the same year he overheard a folk duo called Buckingham Nicks performing in a recording studio he happened to be visiting, and was stopped in his tracks.

“The book concludes with a picture of me outside the restaurant where I introduced John and Christine to these two lovely people that I heard by happenstance,” he says. “How did all this happen?”

The question hovers, rhetorically. “It’s unbelievable!” he says. “So I am looking up at the sign and over to what will be the next part of this historic journey.”

The story has long been out there: of how Fleetwood and Nicks had a brief intense fling after the recording of *Rumours*. How Fleetwood dumped Nicks for her pal, Sara Recor, which a wounded Nicks then wrote a hit song about. The post-1974 Fleetwood Mac wasn’t shy about airing dirty laundry (*Sara*, *Over My Head*, *Go Your Own Way*), all while fulfilling every rock ‘n’ roll cliché going.

Fleetwood’s 2014 autobiography *Play On* tells of cocaine use that began modestly enough (“We discovered a toot now and then relieved the boredom of long hours in the studio,” he writes); he has previously estimated that if his lines of coke were laid end to end they would run to about 11km long.

The bankruptcies came later, too. Fleetwood admits he has never been great with money, although his current sideline, a restaurant and bar in Maui called Fleetwood’s, where he performs from time to time with a blues band, is healthy enough. His first bankruptcy came in 1984, not

long after he’d shelled out on Wensleydale, a sprawling property in Mittagong in the southern highlands of NSW, having fallen for Australia on Fleetwood Mac’s regular visits (a world tour next year is in the works).

“It was a pipe dream of a utopian lifestyle,” says Fleetwood, forgetting that we’ve strayed off-book. “Typical me, Irish dreaming nut case. I intended to live there, emigrate, the whole thing. But it became apparent that Australia was too far away for me as a sort of gatekeeper of Fleetwood Mac’s survival.

“The politics of Fleetwood Mac are well known and I couldn’t see the band going on if I kept the house. It was hard, all of it,” he sighs, “including getting my green card back.”

Still, nothing seems to have affected Fleetwood as much as the departure of the legendary Green. According to rock ‘n’ roll legend, Green’s drift away from the band was tied in with health problems caused by his increasing LSD use. Having quit the band in 1970 and re-

leased several albums under his own name, he still lives in Southend on Sea, 65km east of London, a virtual recluse, the subject of ongoing fascination.

Fleetwood will be visiting his great friend in a couple of days, as he likes to do when he is in Britain. Whether Green appreciates the gesture is hard to say. “Peter is not the same person he was back then. He’s quite detached. He is someone who should never have taken acid, but that was only part of the reason he left Fleetwood Mac,” Fleetwood shakes his head.

“Life became so heavy for him. I’ve had my whole life to look at what happened with Peter with sadness; we lost someone so dear who became so altered that you didn’t, you don’t, really know ...” He pauses, recalibrates.

“There isn’t a reciprocal connection. You go, ‘Well, he might not even miss me.’ But I love him and in many ways owe him everything.”

So of all the iterations of Fleetwood Mac, was the blues-playing, Swinging London version — Peter Green’s Fleetwood Mac — his favourite?

“It was the most important because it’s how we started. We were doing what we wanted to do in this hugely exciting place, London, which was full of creativity and possibility and like-minded people. I can picture it so well.”

Fleetwood nods towards the street. “I still get a buzz being back here, even now.”

Mick Fleetwood is at two evening events in Sydney on November 28 and 29 and Melbourne on December 1 and 2.

Love That Burns — A Chronicle of Fleetwood Mac, Volume One: 1967-1974 is published by Genesis in a limited edition run of 2000 copies.

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MICK FLEETWOOD

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