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Stevie Nicks

It was just after she had seen the Twilight film, *New Moon*, while on tour in Australia. Stevie Nicks was so taken by the fated love story that she stole upstairs to her Melbourne hotel room and wrote a five-page essay about iconic love affairs – she wrote about Bella and Edward, about Beauty and the Beast and about her own love story, between herself and her musical partner in life, Lindsey Buckingham, of Fleetwood Mac.

The similarities between their story and Bella and Edward's in *New Moon* were uncanny. "A forbidden love. A love that cannot work," she describes it.

She went back to see the film the very next night at midnight to reflect on it again.

Meanwhile, a united Fleetwood Mac were playing sell-out shows around Australia. When they reached Brisbane, her hotel room, the presidential suite, contained a piano.

While fruit bats clung to the lush Moreton Bay figs outside, Nicks sat down at the piano, the love story of Bella and Edward fresh in her mind, its metaphors and messages still relevant, and out poured a collection of notes and words that were to become the song *Moonlight*.

Having no recording equipment, she recorded the song on video camera.

"When I was done I got up, went in and said to my assistant, I'm ready to make a record now. It was so great because had there not been a piano there, it may not have been written. So this record started in Australia."

That was the beginnings of *In Your Dreams*, Nicks's first record in 10 years. The record has received a great response from critics and the public alike, becoming a top 10 album in the US.

Today Nicks is in good spirits chatting on the phone from her home in Los Angeles. The night before, she celebrated her 63rd birthday at a showcase gig in Los Angeles. She was joined on stage by Buckingham, Dave Stewart of Eurythmics fame, her co-songwriter and producer, and Mike Campbell of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers. The crowd ended up singing Happy Birthday to her.

"It was pretty amazing," she says with a smile in her voice. "Not the best singers in the world, but they put their heart into it." It's a fantastic next chapter for the famous gypsy queen, who has managed to retain her status as an icon of romantic rock.

The record gives an insight into Nicks's world, not only her *Twilight* fascination, but also her love of other gothic literary works. *Annabel Lee* is based on a poem by Edgar Allan Poe. The rockin' *Wide Sargasso Sea* is based on the 1966 novel by Jean Rhys, a prequel to *Jane Eyre*. In the upbeat song *New Orleans*, she sings about wearing feathers and lace, and references Anne Rice, the queen of vampire tales before Stephenie Meyer usurped her throne. Her most talked about song, though, is *Secret Love*, which was written at the time of the *Rumours* album, but didn't make the final cut. There has been much speculation about who her secret love is, but Nicks won't be drawn on his identity.

For this record she worked closely with Stewart. It was the first time in her 40-year career she had sat down in the same room as another songwriter.

"All the years of Fleetwood Mac I would basically just

GYPSY GOLD

The Twilight inspiration for the first album produced by Stevie Nicks in 10 years marks the beginning of an almost fairytale new chapter for the famous gypsy queen of romantic rock

BY
SALLY BROWNE



give Lindsey a tape or a CD with a song on it and say you can produce it but don't change it," says Nicks. "I had never sat across the coffee table with a guy playing guitar in front of a fireplace and recited a poem and written a song in 10 minutes. This was exciting."

They worked quickly at Nicks's home, creating a lively atmosphere as various musician friends dropped around and stayed for dinner. As well as Buckingham, who performs on the moving *Soldier's Angel*, drummer Mick Fleetwood also contributed to the album.

The seminal Fleetwood Mac are also on the radar again for a different reason. A whole new generation has once again embraced their classic songs, thanks most recently to TV show *Glee*. The musical show devoted an entire episode to the classic *Rumours* album, catapulting the record back to the top of the charts after 35 years – it reached No.2 on the ARIA charts here.

The band have always acknowledged their Australian following and only two years after their visit, Nicks is excited to announce she will be coming to Australia for a solo visit in November.

"We love playing in Australia," she says. "We have a real connection I think, and we always have the best time there."

Though Fleetwood Mac went on to release six more albums, the fascination with *Rumours* still holds, largely because of the fated fairytale that surrounds its main characters.

The record documents a period when the relationships between members of the band were falling apart. Nicks and Buckingham were going their own ways, and bass player John McVie and singer-songwriter Christine McVie divorced after almost eight years together. Mick Fleetwood's marriage was also in trouble.

The record represented lovers torn apart who could only communicate in song. But what were painful experiences for the individuals involved proved to be musical and inspirational gold.

Despite their upsets, the band, forged by a solid song-writing team of Buckingham, Nicks and Christine McVie, produced many more hits. Nicks pursued a successful solo career, cementing her reputation with albums *Bella Donna* and *The Wild Heart*. Fleetwood Mac came together again in the 1990s and have been on and off the road since. Whatever the magic between them, it's clearly still there.

The fated fairytale began when a young Nicks met Buckingham at high school in the Bay Area south of San Francisco. There the blonde-haired gypsy girl, aged 17, met a 16-year-old boy, singing at a party.

"He was playing his guitar and singing and I walked up to him and started singing along with him, which is me being my brazen self," she recalls. "And when it was over I just kind of walked away." Two-and-a-half years later, she was contacted by the drummer in Buckingham's band who asked her to join them.

"I said, 'so what kind of a band is it?' and the drummer said, 'this is San Francisco Stevie, this is a really hard rock San Francisco band' and I said to myself, 'OK, I can do that, I think!'"

They were called Fritz. It was the height of San Francisco's hard-rockin', long-loving, never-ending summer and they supported acts such as Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin.

Stevie was in the band for three years, but she and Lindsey were never more than friends, both having partners at the time.

The band headed down to Los Angeles to perform for record labels. It was a bittersweet result for Fritz. The labels liked Nicks and Buckingham but asked them to sack the other members of the band.

It was another fated turn in their story and the pair became a couple and a musical entity, a folk duo performing under the moniker Buckingham-Nicks. They lived and recorded together for five years. "That's when we realised we had a destiny, I think," Nicks says.

By the time they joined Fleetwood Mac, the rhythm and blues band established by namesakes Fleetwood and McVie, Nicks and Buckingham had already known each other for eight years.

Certainly Buckingham has not been the only love of her life but their relationship will always hold an exalted place for Nicks. When it broke down, a year after joining Fleetwood Mac, it was a devastating blow. That's why Bella and Edward's story resonated with her so much.



"I think, especially the *New Moon* story – the part when he left her, when he said, 'I'm leaving you because you're not good for me.' And he was really leaving her because he was not good for her. And that really touched me, because that kind of thing happened to me. And in the movie when she's sitting in the bay window and it goes 'October, November, December' and she's still sitting there, I really went through that at one part in my life and it just brought it all back, flooding back."

It's a common story, to humanity and to fairytales. "It's just that forbidden love, love that cannot work. Whether it's *Beauty and the Beast* – you fall in love with the noble and beautiful beast who is cursed, but no matter what he's still a monster – or you fall in love with Edward, who's beautiful and sensitive and sweet, but he's still a monster. And when you really start looking at it that way, that's the main underlying story in all fairytales. But sometimes it happens to you in real life."

Being a songwriter, Nicks could filter her experiences through her art, but it also meant she would revisit it often, and she still had to see her ex-amour through work. Now she and Buckingham have a different relationship – one of good friends and collaborators.

"He came and played on my song, *Soldier's Angel*, and he really saved the day on that one," Nicks says. "And I think that really is a super tie between us because I think that song's going to last forever. And it's him and me. It's as Buckingham-Nicks, as we have been since 1973."

Nicks is quite fatalistic, but says she could have seen her life on a different path. A mother in the suburbs of San Francisco, perhaps, had Buckingham-Nicks stayed there. But the unusual path her life did take, she considers was meant to be.

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Stevie Nicks

"I think that if in another world, if Lindsey and I had not moved to LA, if we had gotten a record deal in San Francisco, that it's very possible that we would have gotten married and had kids and still been famous, and still done our music and been Buckingham-Nicks."

After she joined Fleetwood Mac it was a different story. For a successful band which sold millions of albums and toured constantly there was no time for children.

"Mick had kids from when Fleetwood Mac was first formed, before Lindsey and I even joined the band, so Mick kind of started off with kids. But John and Chris never had children, Lindsey and I never had children because there was no time for kids," Nicks says.

"There was no time for being pregnant, for sure. If Chris and I had gotten pregnant, we would have shut the band down for two years. If either one of us had had a child that would have broken up the band."

Though she has no children of her own, Nicks, the feminine fairy godmother, delights in her extended family of various nieces and goddaughters.

"I think it was exactly the way it was supposed to be," she says, again fatalistically. "Mick Fleetwood has twin daughters who are nine and they are my fairy goddaughters. I have goddaughters all the way up to 37 years old. And I have a 19-year-old niece. I have so many little girls around me that I'm fine. My whole motherly thing is totally satisfied."

Her bond with the young women gives her the chance to pass on things, like some of her favourite clothes. In the film clip to *Secret Love*, for example, she communicates with her younger self in the form of her friend's daughter.

"That green outfit that she's wearing, that's an outfit that my designer made for me in 1976. It was so strange to see her walking away in that outfit. We were going, 'were we ever that tiny?'"

That is the look that I put together and I watched her walk away in it and I'm like, 'wow, that was me.' I loved it.

"I put the hat on her head and said, 'what do you think?', and she said, 'Oh my God, I love it.' So, it was a little fantasy outfit and it certainly lasted through the years. It did exactly what I wanted it to do – it carried me from 28 years old, to now."

At 63, Nicks is still a role model. While she doesn't love getting older, she's good at it. "I don't think anybody loves getting older," she says. "Women from the beginning of time have faced this problem and they've all managed to get through it. All that you can do is try to stay young on the inside. I think that's what makes people young."

She writes about her experiences in a journal, a habit she has kept up for years since high school. Her mum still has her early ones. Most recently she wrote about being on *Oprah* or *Dancing with the Stars* or *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. "I write almost every night, because there's always something happening," she says. "Those are the things that when I'm 90, I don't want to forget."

The memories are also for the younger generation. "I want to have it, for those little girls I was talking about. I want to have my life written down so when I'm not here anymore, they have it. So I always try to chronicle all the good stuff, all the exciting stuff."

Stevie Nicks and Dave Stewart perform at Brisbane Riverstage on December 3. Tickets on sale from 9am on July 6; ticketmaster.com.au 136 100

U WIN

Thanks to *U on Sunday*, you could win one of five Gold double passes to see the legendary Stevie Nicks performing all her solo and Fleetwood Mac classics, with special guest Dave Stewart from Eurythmics, on Saturday December 3, at Riverstage. Winners will also receive a copy of her brand new album *In Your Dreams*, out now on Warner Music. To enter, email your name, address, postcode and contact phone number to competitions@thesundaymail.com.au with Stevie Nicks in the subject line. Total prize pool value approximately \$1750.

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Competition closes at 23:59 Friday 01/07/2011. Winners will be drawn at 10am on Monday 04/07/2011. Winners will be notified by phone/mail. Only ONE entry per email address per person will be accepted. Total prize value approximately \$1350 incl GST. The prize is strictly as stated. The prize is not exchangeable and cannot be taken as cash. Only Queensland residents are eligible to enter. This information is being collected by NQ for the purpose of this promotion only.