

**Song Exploder**  
**Fleetwood Mac - Go Your Own Way**  
**Episode 150**

Hrishikesh: You're listening to Song Exploder, where musicians take apart their songs and piece by piece tell the story of how they were made. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway.

*("Go Your Own Way" by FLEETWOOD MAC)*

Hrishikesh: Lindsey Buckingham is a singer-songwriter, a guitarist, and a producer. In 1974, he joined the band Fleetwood Mac, along with Stevie Nicks, his girlfriend at the time. A few years later, in 1977, Fleetwood Mac released the album *Rumours*, which would go on to sell over 40 million copies and become the eighth highest-selling album in history. In this episode, Lindsey Buckingham breaks down "Go Your Own Way," a song that he wrote for that album about his relationship with Stevie Nicks. This is the 150th episode of Song Exploder. I have some news about what's in store for the future of this podcast but more on that at the end of this episode. Please stick around for that. First, here's Lindsey Buckingham on Song Exploder.

*("Go Your Own Way" by FLEETWOOD MAC)*

Lindsey: My name is Lindsey Buckingham.

*(Music fades out)*

Lindsey: Stevie and I had done this album called *Buckingham Nicks* and it had sort of made a little dent, but you know, nothing to speak of. And one day, we were working on new material, Stevie and I, at Sound City, we were in the small studio in the back. And I went into Studio A where Keith Olsen, who had worked on both *Buckingham Nicks*, and later would work on the *Fleetwood Mac* album, the first one. He was playing a song from *Buckingham Nicks*, "Frozen Love." And here's this guy, Mick Fleetwood just grooving out to the song.

*("Frozen Love" by BUCKINGHAM NICKS)*

*(Music fades)*

Lindsey: I said, "Hello," and went back to work and a couple of weeks later Mick called and said, "Well, our guitar player Bob Welch is leaving. Would you like to join

Fleetwood Mac?" And I said "Well, I'm not sure but, you know, if I do join you'd have to take my girlfriend too [laughter]."

*("Frozen Love" by BUCKINGHAM NICKS)*

*(Music fades)*

Lindsey: And so, Stevie and I joined Fleetwood Mac in '74. That first album that we did came out in '75. And it had actually done very well, much better than anyone could have predicted. And, we had been on the road, touring, and were talking about beginning to prepare for our second album. We had this idea to take a break from the road, and to rent a house for like a week or so in Florida, and start working on some material for the album we know we're going to have to start in a few months. The very first thing that got presented was "Go Your Own Way." That was the first song that I wrote for the album that would become *Rumours*. And really, it was the beginning of my having a dialogue with Stevie, who had been my lover and musical partner pretty much through the time that the first album was made, and we were sort of on-again, off-again, on-again, off-again. But, by the time we got to *Rumours*, she had, sort of, split. And "Go Your Own Way" was written almost as a stream of consciousness.

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: I was just chunking away on those chords and coming up with the lyrics to go with it.

*(Vocals along with guitar: "Loving you isn't the right thing to do")*

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: If you start with the first lyric, "Loving you isn't the right thing to do," it sounds like you're beginning a conversation with someone. There was nothing about it that was thought out. It was just the raw expression of the emotion behind the song.

*(Vocals along with guitar: "How can I ever change things that I feel?")*

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: I sort of was coming to terms with the fact that I may not be over this person and, at the same time, I'm aware that I've got to accept what's happened and move on. I don't think there was ever any worry in my mind about trying to mask who I might have been talking about. And really, in the case of Fleetwood Mac [laughter], I mean, everything was so written on the sleeve, so to speak. I had broken up with Stevie at that point, John and Christine McVie, who had been married, had broken up. Three of those people were writers [laughter] and were writing to each other so, I mean, usually if you break up with somebody and you want closure, you know, you're going to not see them for a long time or maybe ever. And so there was this exercise of the making of *Rumors*, especially, where you had to kind of compartmentalize everything. Writing the song and singing it required me to do that.

*(Vocals along with guitar: "Tell me why everything turned around / Packing up, shacking up's all you wanna do")*

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: Initially, the song did sound very basically like that. I had not really thought about how to orchestrate it, per se. Most of that was done later when we actually got in the studio.

*(Guitar fades out)*

Lindsey: Mick had this bright idea of getting out of Los Angeles, almost an extension of the Florida idea I suppose. Let's make it a working vacation or something. So we went up to Sausalito, there was a Record Plant recording studio up there. We rented a couple of places to live and, you know, again, that was sort of my final nail in the coffin with Stevie because I thought maybe she and I would find a place together and she was not into doing that. But we settled in, in Sausalito. And, there was a song by the Rolling Stones that had a really great drum pattern that I thought would work over "Go Your Own Way." The song is "Street Fighting Man."

*("Street Fighting Man" by THE ROLLING STONES)*

Lindsey: It's going from the snare, ta, to the toms, bom, bom, bom.

*("Street Fighting Man" by THE ROLLING STONES)*

*(Music fades)*

Lindsey: I said, Mick, I think this pattern going from snare to tom, snare to tom, not in the chorus, but in the verses would be just great. But, Mick is someone who, he's playing strictly from the heart and from the gut. And as such, he just has to do what feels right to him. So when I showed him the pattern, he couldn't actually play it. And finally I'm just saying to him, "Look, I mean, is there a way you can paraphrase that to make it your own?" Which he does.

*(Drums along with guitar)*

Lindsey: He opens up the kick and keeps a 4/4 going on it, and instead of going from snare to tom, which felt wrong to him, he's playing the tom across the beat and letting the kick drum be the middle beat.

*(Drums along with guitar fade out)*

Lindsey: Then it came to the bass.

*(Bass)*

Lindsey: That was an interesting exercise for me as well because John McVie is not someone who enjoys playing eighth note bass.

*(Bass ends)*

Lindsey: In fact, he's pretty averse to doing it. We started tracking it and he was playing like a back and forth, ding, dic a ding, dic a, thing and it was making the song sound sort of country. And I was like, "I know you don't like this, but could you play an eighth note?" He says, "Well, you're playing eighth notes."

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: So I said, "Well yeah, but that's really the point, you know? We don't want this to get too ornate. In the verse I think we just have to hold this tension

*(Bass joins)*

Lindsey: where everyone's kind of holding it in, holding back,

*(Drums join)*

Lindsey: waiting for that chorus to open up where, of course, John came up with that great melody line.

*(Bass along with drums and shaker)*

*(Bass along with drums and shaker fade out)*

Lindsey: I'm playing all the guitars.

*(Guitars)*

Lindsey: The objective was to try to get a few guitars to meld and sound like just one very extraordinary sounding guitar.

*(Guitars)*

Lindsey: There is something that's dirtier and has less transients and less clarity.

*(Dirty guitar)*

Lindsey: And then there's something else which is going to be a little clean on its own,

*(Clean guitar)*

Lindsey: which might be a little anemic if you were only using that. But then you put them together.

*(Guitars together)*

Lindsey: And that's just a technique of having a little bit richer landscape to work with.

*(Guitars end)*

Lindsey: With *Rumors*, we were trying to make something rawer. We wanted to use a B3 organ in a more, shall we say, grittier way, not so much in a polished way.

*(Organ)*

Lindsey: Christine played the organ.

*(Organ)*

Lindsey: It was clearly a guitar song.

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: And I was not wanting her piano textures and her weaving around that she could do so beautifully. I just wanted to keep it very direct.

*(Vocals along with guitar: "You can go your own way, go your own way")*

*(Vocals: "You can call it another lonely day")*

Lindsey: There's a lot of oomph behind the lead vocal in "Go Your Own Way" because there was a lot of resolve behind the subject matter. I was feeling a lot of that subject matter as being something I was living. And so, it was a bit cathartic to get that vocal out. It was a way of exercising certain hurts.

*(Vocals: "You can go your own way, go your own way / You can call it another lonely day")*

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: As a kid, Stevie was uprooted repeatedly from her environment because her dad changed jobs and changed cities, probably six or seven times, while she was growing up, but it also set, kind of, a life rhythm for her. I think she was uncomfortable having things go on too long. And so, there is a little bit of that observation in the chorus, "You can go your own way," but, "You can call it another lonely day," because what happens, ultimately, is that you will continually find yourself being alone rather than pushing through to the next level with a particular situation.

*(Harmonized vocals: "You can go your own way, go your own way")*

Lindsey: The backing vocals on, "Go Your Own Way," are very straight ahead. Once the lead vocal had been done, you know, then the three of us worked out just a triad.

*(Harmonized vocals: "You can call it another lonely day")*

Lindsey: Christine and Stevie were the other two voices.

*(Stevie's background vocals: "You can go your own way")*

Lindsey: That's Stevie's.

*(Christine's background vocals: "You can call it another lonely day")*

Lindsey: And that's Christine. And we worked that blend to our advantage almost every time.

*(Harmonized vocals: "You can go your own way, go your own way")*

Lindsey: The acoustic guitar part on "Go Your Own Way" almost didn't make it on this song.

*(Acoustic guitar)*

Lindsey: It was not something that I had preconceived going in. And yet as we lived with the track and as more things went on, I felt like there was something in the area of the counterpoint to the verse that was missing. The verse vocals were sort of timed in a strange way and I think that was what made me feel I needed something on the other side that was equally timed strangely to counter balance as a call and response. Otherwise the verse vocal felt like it was dangling a little.

*(Vocals along with acoustic guitar: "If I could, baby, I'd give you my world / Open up, everything's waiting for you")*

*(Acoustic guitar fades)*

Lindsey: It was clearly the missing part. It was also, ironically, a source of some disorientation for the sense of the beat of the song.

*(Acoustic guitar ends)*

Lindsey: Cut to months later, I was back in LA and I was in my car. And there was a DJ in LA back then whose name was B. Mitchel Reed.

*(B. Mitchel Reed show)*

Lindsey: I was listening to him in the car and he says, "Hey, I've got the new Fleetwood Mac single for you now. I'm going to put that on right now." And he plays it, and I'm sitting there grooving to it in the car. Yeah. First time I've heard it on the radio.

*("Go Your Own Way" on the radio)*

Lindsey: He comes back on, he goes, "That was the new Fleetwood Mac single." He takes a beat. He goes, "I don't know about that one." [Laughter] And I was able to call up the station in that moment after hearing that, and be put through to B. Mitchel Reed, while a song was on. And you know, he got on the phone, I said, "Hey, B., this is Lindsey Buckingham here." "Oh, hi Lindsey." "You just played my song "Go Your Own Way" and you said you weren't sure about it. What didn't you like about it?" He said, "Well, you know, I couldn't find the beat." [Laughter] I went, "Oh, okay." I mean, that was an element to "Go Your Own Way." But obviously it didn't make any difference in the long run. I was proud of what I was hearing on the radio and that's all that mattered.

*(Drum fill along with guitar)*

*(Guitar)*

Lindsey: "Go Your Own Way," really was the first song that kind of expressed acceptance of the fact that there was a bigger picture beyond my own needs and beyond our issues as two people.

*(Guitar fades out)*

Lindsey: Our sensibilities were so disparate. It was just a very unlikely group of people to end up in the same band, and yet it was those differences that added up to something greater than the sum of the parts.

Hrishikesh: And now, here is "Go Your Own Way," by Fleetwood Mac, in its entirety.

*("Go Your Own Way" by FLEETWOOD MAC)*

Hrishikesh: Visit [songexploder.net](http://songexploder.net) for more on Lindsey Buckingham and Fleetwood Mac, including a link to buy or stream, "Go Your Own Way." Lindsey Buckingham has



a deluxe album, spanning his career called *Solo Anthology: The Best of Lindsey Buckingham*. And I've got a link to that up on the site as well.

As I mentioned at the beginning of the episode, this is the 150th episode of Song Exploder. The first episode of the podcast came out in January 2014, and now in December of 2018, my fifth year of the show is coming to a close. And with that, I'm going to be taking a break from hosting and producing the show. Next year, Thao Nguyen from the band, Thao & the Get Down Stay Down is going to fill in for me as the host. You've heard her on the show before as both a guest and as a guest host. She interviewed Neko Case for episode 141. And I'm so excited that she's going to be taking over for a while. You'll hear her voice as the host, starting in January, and next week, I'm going to re-issue the episode where she took apart one of her own songs. I'm also stepping back from editing and producing the podcast, and Christian Koons will be stepping up. He began on this show as a production assistant in 2015, and has gone from there to assistant producer to associate producer, and now full fledged producer. I'll still be part of the Song Exploder team as the creative director but I'll be more behind the scenes. I'll be doing a few live events and other Song Exploder related projects here and there that I didn't always have time for while putting out episodes. And I want to take a second to say, thank you so much for listening to the podcast. And thank you to all the musicians who have been guests on the show and have let me share their stories and their songs. I've learned so much over the past five years, and I'm really excited to see the podcast continue to evolve from here. This episode was produced by me, along with Christian Koons, with booking help from Mac Burrus. Kathleen Smith handles music rights, Kathleen Unwin handles sponsorships, and Carlos Lerma makes original illustrations for each episode. Song Exploder is a very proud member of Radiotopia. Radiotopia is a podcast network that empowers independent creators to make creative work. You can learn more about all of our shows at [radiotopia.fm](http://radiotopia.fm). I'm on Twitter and Instagram @HrishiHirway if you want to keep in touch with me. You can find Song Exploder on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram @SongExploder. My name is Hrishikesh Hirway, thanks for listening.