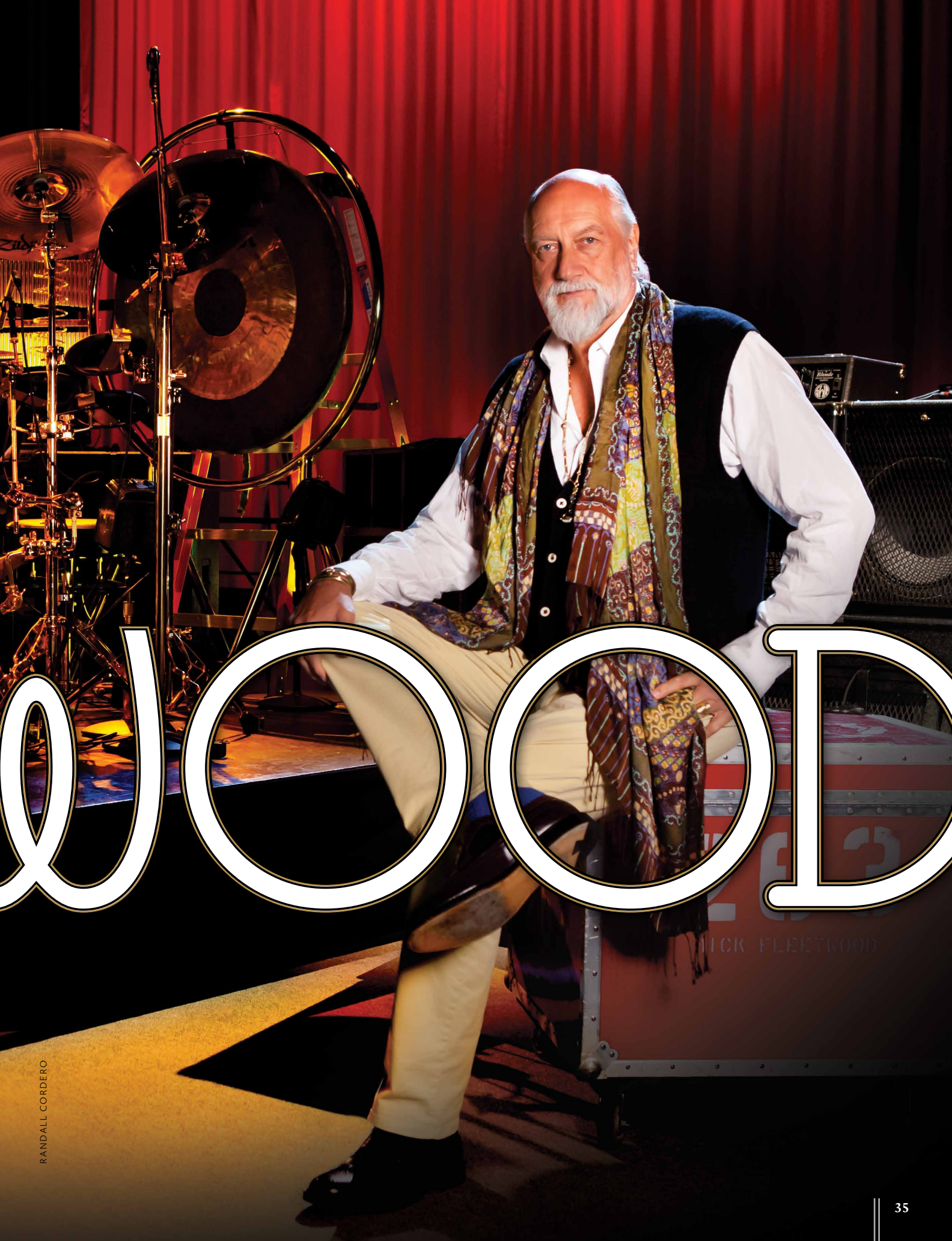


DON'T STOP
THINKING
ABOUT
TOMORROW

FLEET





WOOD

JACK FLEETWOOD



MICK FLEETWOOD has been at the helm of one of rock’s most enduring bands for over four decades. Fleetwood Mac began as a British blues band. But then something happened. The band went pop — but with a “dark side,” said Fleetwood — and the fans loved it. “Rumours,” the band’s 1977 album, won a Grammy award and sold 40 million copies, making it one of the 10 bestselling albums of all time. Overall, the band has sold more than 100 million records — and continues to sell. Through the decades, there have been numerous changes in the band’s lineup and style, the emergence of solo careers and personal tumult.

Though tested, the band did not break up, a tribute to Fleetwood’s leadership skills — a well-orchestrated mix of cheerleading, positive messages, hugs, appropriate levels of worry and (when needed), a little maneuvering.

Fleetwood’s Mac’s roots are in London. In 1967, Peter Green, a blues guitarist, started the band with 20-year-old drummer Mick Fleetwood and 22-year-old bass-guitarist John McVie. In 1968, the band had its first No. 1 blues single in the U.K., the instrumental “Albatross.” In 1970, keyboardist Christine Perfect — later to become Christine McVie — joined the band. Not long after, Peter Green left the group. In 1975, guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and singer Stevie Nicks joined, changing the band’s sound markedly. Soon Fleetwood Mac became known for the tangled web of relationships that developed among its members. The album “Rumuors” was a product of that time, and so was its title.

INTERVIEW BY MICHAEL DISTEFANO & JOEL KURTZMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY RANDALL CORDERO

BAND GOVERNANCE: A Q&A WITH

Fleetwood Mac had idle periods when it stopped touring and recording, in particular after guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and singer Stevie Nicks took an indefinite leave. Then, in 1993, the band was called upon to perform at the inauguration of President Bill Clinton. The appearance was welcome news to the band’s huge fan base, and Fleetwood Mac began touring and recording.

At the time of this writing, the group was in the midst of a sold-out world tour — not bad for a band that’s older than many of its fans. What kept it alive while other bands failed? Two constants: Fleetwood and McVie, the band’s two original members, resolved to keep it together, with Fleetwood at the lead.

Fleetwood, a gifted drummer with an intuitive style, lives on the Hawaiian island of Maui. He is also an entrepreneur, having started Fleetwoods on Front St., a restaurant and shop in Lahaina, and Mick Fleetwood Private Cellar, which markets his favorite wines. To find out how

Fleetwood got his beat, Michael Distefano, Korn/Ferry’s chief marketing officer, and Joel Kurtzman, editor-in-chief of *Korn/Ferry’s Briefings on Talent & Leadership*, met with him at the band’s rehearsal space in Los Angeles. What follows are excerpts from that conversation.





MICK FLEETWOOD

“I think about the little 12-year-old drummer boy I was, who didn’t know what he was going to do, but loved being around people. And I’m really happy that I still do what I love.”



Q: *Playing in a rock and roll band is everybody’s fantasy, and your band reached a place not many achieve. What was it like when you realized you made it and that your band was big?*

FLEETWOOD: You mean the a-ha moment, the epiphany?

Q: *Yes.*

FLEETWOOD: When it was all happening, I didn’t really think about it. I do now, and it’s all in segments. But the immediate thing was that when you’re in the arts, you’re often told by people to “go get a job.” Luckily, my parents didn’t do that.

Q: *Your dad bought you your first drum kit.*

FLEETWOOD: Yeah, my parents were totally into it. They knew that following the dream was probably the only thing that was going to work with the little creature I was back then. And it did. For me, it was just realizing that you can do something and sustain it as your life, and not be beholden to anybody, and also put food on the table. And then it just all unfolded from there.

Q: *How did it feel when you realized you could put food on the table playing music?*

FLEETWOOD: I was on a ride. Much later there were all of the problems of lifestyle excesses and all that stuff, that I had to face. But behind all that was just this dream and vision that we could do it. It was a dream — maybe, what we call in England, a pipe dream — but this one came true. And I realized I had to be careful because I was aware that my pipe dreams could actually come true and I could actually implement them, and that I would have the wherewithal and the finances, to make them come true.

Q: *When you were starting out, was your aim just to be part of a band or to become famous, or something else?*

FLEETWOOD: You know, we never aspired to be big and famous. I really don’t think that was it for me at all. I know it’s not part of Stevie Nicks’s make up, who’s the leader of the pack in terms of her huge successes on her own. And Stevie’s this mythological creature, anyway, and a star. But she’s no diva — she just isn’t. And I would say none of us are. We all



Mick Fleetwood on the Sony Studios rehearsal stage in Culver City, Calif., earlier this year, just prior to the band's 2013 world tour. At right, a 1979 press conference in Los Angeles.



just feel sort of lucky we can do this. So we're not jaded and we know that what we're doing is a really, really a cool thing.

Q: *You say not jaded. Going over your history, some people might say you have plenty to be jaded about, because a lot of people tried to take advantage of you.*

FLEETWOOD: There have been the one or two....

Q: *Why do you think you've been able to escape being jaded?*

FLEETWOOD: I think it's because we — *all of us* — really, really love what we do. I think everyone in the band feels that way. I think we would all be doing what we do in some shape or form with or without the success. It's what all of us are driven to do. I know it's true for me. The fact is, I've done other things, which have continued to be a lot of fun, and are challenging and frightening and all that stuff. But really, I'm just a kid who aspired to be a drummer and worked really hard at it. And as I worked at it, my life unfolded.

Q: *Unfolded on its own or due to your efforts?*

FLEETWOOD: The way I think about it is I play O.K. I was gifted with that. But my journey as a person, I think comes from the way I was brought up. I didn't excel in academic ways. But I had, by my nature, an instinctual survivalist approach to life as a child. I also was hugely nurtured by my parents. I have no complaints at all. When people say, "I had to fight so hard to get where I am," I don't have that. That's not me. What I have is just that I was adrift, and I put all my energies into surviving as a person.

Q: *What do you think of as some of your biggest successes?*

FLEETWOOD: I think the survival of this band, no doubt, is one of them. It's really an accomplishment, even though sometimes it doesn't seem that way. But when you realize what we're all part of, and what we do, and that — "oh my God, people want to come see us again!" It's a big reminder. And we get reminded every day. But we don't buy into any type of blustering. Not for a moment. What we are is a bunch of people who are just trying to get through life, and do our thing. So, I think about the little 12-year-old drummer boy



The early years: the band rehearses on the set of a television show in early 1969.

I was, who didn't know what he was going to do, but loved being around people. And I'm really happy that I still do what I love. I say that because there are a lot of very lonely people, for one reason or another, and I am definitely not one of them.

Q: You're in the middle of a tour. What do you do to get in the mood before a performance?

FLEETWOOD: A form of meditation called punching the walls. Not really. But you really have to be careful things don't get away from you. I've had hypnosis and all sorts of crap just to handle it. And in a way, I look at it as basically, what I do comes just from here, from my heart. It's all instinct, at least a great deal of it. I'm not a technician. Feeling it from inside has become part of the charm of my playing. For me, it's when you sort of know what you're doing and sort of don't know what you're doing at the same time.

Q: Are you saying your music comes from your heart, not your intellect?

FLEETWOOD: I'm saying, when you realize that you really don't know what you're doing — that's the element you've got to make robust. I think it's a part of the charm of Fleetwood Mac. And Stevie's much like me. She's very in the moment. Lindsey Buckingham is more metered about what we do creatively. But when you're playing you're sort of protecting the child element in yourself. And then the magic, my form of magic, unfolds. You've got to be very protective of it, 'cause if you close down, and you overthink things too much, you lose the creative process.

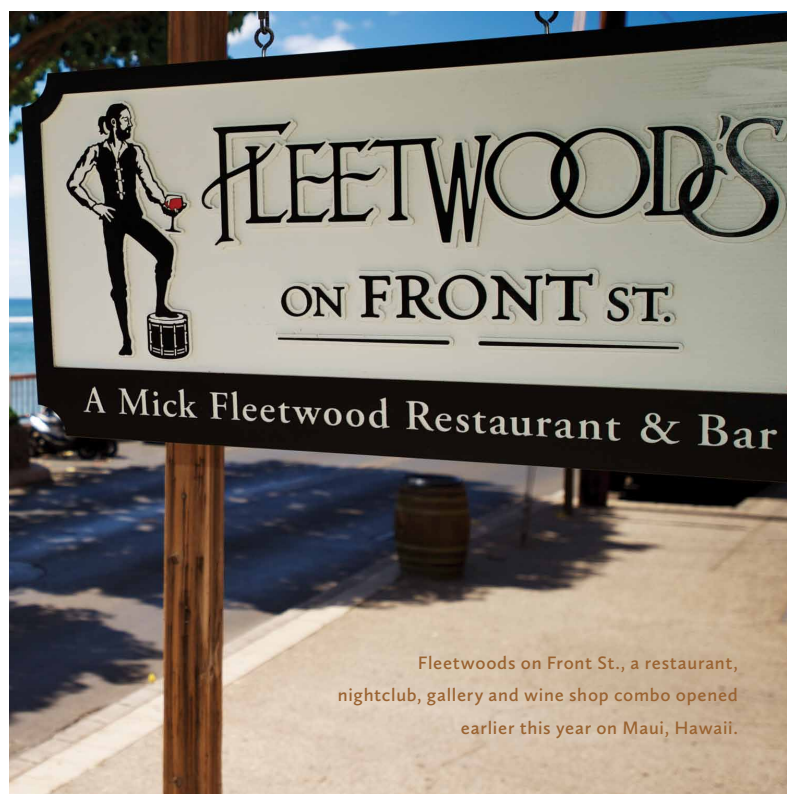
Q: Does that mean each performance is different?

FLEETWOOD: Yeah. I never play a song the same way, ever. The basis of it is the same. And it's the same movements. But it changes. And then you have the element that you have to hand it over, because you have no control. So it's all of that, no matter what. There's a basic form of training, just because of the fact that you've done it for so long. But there are very different people doing what I do that know much more technically about what they're doing than I do, while I simply have not a clue. When someone says, "What was that you did," I go, "What do you mean?" And they say, "Well, the one in the third chorus, the third verse, and that beat and that push —" and they explain it, musically and technically. When they do that I'm left like a kid. And I have to say, "I actually don't know what that was." They say, like, "You're kidding me, right?" And I say, "No, I actually don't know what it was. I just follow my instinct." That's me.

Q: There's an interesting passage in your 1990 book, *Fleetwood: My Life and Adventures in Fleetwood Mac*, about losing the beat during a performance, and having Peter Green, who started the group in 1967, come back and help you find it.

FLEETWOOD: Well, reminding me about that is going to cause me some huge anxiety today! And you're right. I didn't know what the "on" and the "off" beat were for years. I still don't really know. So that can make you nervous. I mean, you play drums, and everyone assumes you're going to do a

GETTY IMAGES



Fleetwoods on Front St., a restaurant, nightclub, gallery and wine shop combo opened earlier this year on Maui, Hawaii.

fantastic job. But actually, I don't know what I'm doing, but I have a good time, and I enjoy the music.

Q: *In the book you talk about the connection you felt at that moment when Peter Green came back to help. What did you mean that?*

FLEETWOOD: I was happy for the help. And it became part of my style, that I always felt there is a kind of charm about being on the edge. And what I said earlier, about protecting the child-like approach, what I meant was the perfect blend is an incredibly astute player, with a player who's in the moment.

Q: *Are you saying your performances are like jazz?*

FLEETWOOD: Yeah, in many ways, yeah. Just a very simplistic form. I mean, jazz, to me, is usually played by people who have incredible technique. However, they've also stayed completely connected to the thing that I'm talking about, which is playing in the moment. That's the real stuff — the combo of moment and technique.

Q: *When you were starting out in the London rock scene, could you look around and see who was going to make it and who wasn't?*

FLEETWOOD: Not back then. But, I would say I learned, and still hang on to, what I learned from Peter Green, which is knowing what "it" is. And [though] it's a little cruel and presumptive to say, you either got it or you don't. And it's fine

not to, because you can still have fun, you know? A lot of it is about being objective in a healthy, humorous way about what you're capable of. But also not giving up. You can't say, "Well, that's it, I'm not going to aspire to do this anymore." I'm not saying that. I learned early on when we were playing blues — which Peter Green was extremely good at. And he was also a good actor. And back then I learned that, "we know Peter's acting, but he *owns* the part he's playing. So he's transcended the acting." Back then, our aspiration was to play blues music, which was not ostensibly from whence we came. Even so, Peter had, and the band had, the ability to own that real estate. We were so young, and I don't really know where it came from. But it came, and it was under the heading, "this was *it*." And there was a huge amount of power behind that it. So, it was no longer, "They're just doing rehashes of the music." It became like watching a great play and realizing, "I've been transported," and what transports people is *it*. I learned that from Peter.

Q: *So did you know you were going to make it when you were starting out in music?*

FLEETWOOD: No. Not in terms of any commercial aspirations, but in terms of commitment to what we were doing? That's different. I don't think in those days we would have sat down and analyzed it. But, looking back on it, I'm not surprised. I say that because you do learn to give yourself a certain amount of credit for what you've done without being all puffed up.

Q: *What was behind your passion for the band, Fleetwood Mac?*

FLEETWOOD: To play music. It was absolutely that. Us bunch, we just wanted to play what we loved to play, and we were really blessed. We were, because sometimes you just never get back to the thing that you're really meant to be doing. You go, and you do things, and it's not really you. But that's not my case. I'm doing what I'm meant to do, and, you know, it's sort of easy. I mean, we were blessed. We were a bunch of kids playing blues in a pop market in England, where there were bands with spandex pants on and stuff, and then here's us, a bunch of guys basically wearing T-shirts, and not even thinking about anything, and we suddenly have a No. 1 album of blues material. Most of the audience probably thought that it was some new sound, when really it was us, taking a source of information, the blues, and refurbishing it, but still keeping it very close to the original American blues heroes we admired. I mean, this was not part of some master plan or commercial aspiration. Not at all. We loved what we were playing and we were blessed.

Q: *Where did your confidence come from, that sense that you could do it?*



FLEETWOOD: The confidence came from all of us in the band, especially Peter. For me, I found a medium, a type of music that I could play really well. And it was all about emotions, and it still is. I mean, this band — you know the stories. And it still unfolds. It's not just the music. It's about everything with us. It's all about the right of it and the wrong of it. This band is very much a human story.

Q: *You've said as a percussionist, a lot of your job is listening to the rest of the band. It seems when you say that, you're talking about more than playing music. What do you mean by listening?*

FLEETWOOD: I've just seen so many things that are not necessarily super-duper in the way the results are, and it's usually because someone hasn't listened. You can take that and apply it to any field. It's not rocket science. It's a very normal thing. But it's so simple, you can forget it, you know? But the point

went from happiness to pain. People became invested in that journey. That's my explanation of it. But let me also say, me and John McVie have been in the band from the beginning and we sometimes just sit and go, "Wow, how did that happen?"

Q: *How did it?*

FLEETWOOD: For me and John, it was about having a resolve. John would be the first to say, "Mick did most of the worrying and stuff," which is true. I did. But it's also a good formula, because John and I just made up our minds we weren't going to break the band up. Throughout the journey, people sometimes said, "Are you kidding me? Why don't you just give it up?" And I think because John and I weren't in the front line — John plays bass guitar and me on drums — it helped us. But in the end, John's my partner, and we're this strange couple that sort of needed a job, and then found ourselves in control of that job. I think if I'd had a huge ego,

“The secret ingredient is that the audience is involved with us as people, as much as they are with the band.”

is, you can lose the plot pretty quickly if you aren't actually listening. So, I have to remind myself a lot about that.

Q: *Is the way you lead the band by listening?*

FLEETWOOD: Without any listening at all, there's not a hope in hell we would be on stage, you know? I mean, we've all been emotionally involved with each other. It's well known. So, in truth, it's a harder journey, because you can't just take care of things in a businesslike fashion. We have to blend that with the emotional stuff. But once it's blended, it's very real. I think it transcends into our audience and into credibility of what we do.

Q: *The band was formed in 1967, and a number of people have been in and out of it, and along the way, the music changed. And yet your fans are still loyal. How do you explain that?*

FLEETWOOD: The secret ingredient is that the audience is involved with us as people, as much as they are with the band. Quite early, we became a sort of pop-orientated band, even though we don't think of it that way. But we weren't candy floss. We had this sort of darkness about us. What I'm saying is that there was a form of human investment in us that

and I was another guitar player, I'd have probably gone, "Oh, screw it, I'll go and form my own damn band," or whatever. But I already had my band. And the band represented something important. And as long as it didn't completely disintegrate like an old flag on the battlefield, we'd just meet the challenges as they came and do it with resolve. That's the premise. So we just kept on building and building.

Q: *It sounds like you're saying you didn't start a band to watch it die. Is that true?*

FLEETWOOD: That's entirely correct. We wouldn't allow it. And now were sitting here in the midst of a sold-out tour. Against all odds we prevailed creatively, and quite frankly we prevailed as a business.

Q: *You've recently opened a restaurant on the island of Maui and you also make wine. What drew you to those kinds of businesses?*

FLEETWOOD: I just think it's really exciting, and I think for me, it's part of applying what I'm good at — working with people and working with ideas. I like that feeling of being with the team. K/F

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**MICK
FLEETWOOD**
BAND GOVERNANCE

