

# Fleetwood Mac

## Rumours

Any drummer looking for a clear example of what playing for the song sounds and *feels* like need look no further than this classic album.

Ask most pop fans about Fleetwood Mac's *Rumours* and you'll get an earful about heartache, freshly splintered couples trying to salve raw wounds, and kissing the past goodbye through song. But what of the heartbeat pulsing through that heartache, Mick Fleetwood's drumming? For all the praise heaped upon the time-capsule-worthy songs that Lindsey Buckingham, Christine McVie, and Stevie Nicks contributed to *Rumours*, Fleetwood's work doesn't get nearly the love it deserves—at least outside the many producers, engineers, and musicians who have for decades been chasing down the album's warm drum sound and impeccable feel. Those studio rats and musos refer to Fleetwood's playing on *Rumours* because it's a stellar example of just how integral tasteful and supportive drumming is to a great song, and how intoxicating a gorgeous groove played at just the right tempo on a fat-sounding kit can be.

"Dreams" is especially intoxicating, with

### Hot Stuff

**A touch of glass.** *Rumours* has its fair share of conventional percussion overdubs—tambourines, shakers, toms—as well as some rather unconventional ones. Mick Fleetwood adds the sound of shattering glass on "Gold Dust Woman," which he achieved during last-minute overdubs by dropping panes of glass and recording them breaking.

**Give the guitarist some.** The drumming on "Second Hand News" is a team effort, as guitarist Lindsey Buckingham plays the high-pitched tom fills and a dark 8th-note rhythm with sticks on the armrest of a Naugahyde chair. Listen closely and you'll hear these overdubs percolating just below the surface.

**Over the bar.** Of all the great over-the-barline moments on *Rumours*, one of the best happens in the first chorus of "Dreams." Fleetwood accents the arrival of the chorus by crashing again on beat 2—just like in the intro. His "late" entrance still feels right on time, as it introduces the Mac's signature three-part harmonies and the elegant strum of Buckingham's acoustic guitar.

Fleetwood and bassist John McVie locking in and making mid-tempo magic. After Fleetwood introduces the song with a tasty snare-to-tom fill, he crashes on beat 2 and the elements of a soft-rock classic—Nicks' airy lead vocal, Christine McVie's Fender Rhodes, and Buckingham's sparse electric guitar—are assembled inside the deep bass-and-drums pocket. It's a seemingly simple concept, that "heartbeat" feel. But the Mac's founding fathers don't just deliver it, they *own* it. It's difficult to think of another rhythm section that plays it like they do.

In contrast to the carefully measured pulse he lends to "Dreams," Fleetwood on "Go Your Own Way" is all primal kick, from the tom patterns of the verses and solo section to the surging feel of the chorus, where the rattle of overdubbed percussion pushes slightly ahead of the kick-snare-hats pattern and McVie's melodic bass line. Typical of so many of his fills, Fleetwood's best licks in "Go Your Own Way" feel like happy accidents, especially the way he fills into the chorus following the guitar solo but doesn't cap it with a cymbal crash. Instead, he subtly slides into double time. But because of the deep sound of his snare, you don't necessarily realize he's got the snare going four across the bar until a measure or two has passed. (This trick is repeated again to wonderful effect in the final verse of the buoyant "You Make Loving Fun.") Mick saves his best bit for last, at the 3:09 mark: two short 16th-note snare punctuations that squeeze the song's tension just enough as Buckingham digs deep into his searing solo before the fade.

Something else that makes the drumming on *Rumours* so classic is the amount of ground Fleetwood covers while serving the rhythmic needs of the band's three distinctly unique songwriters. To the rolling strum of Buckingham's "Second Hand News" Mick brings a rigid feel and a bright snare sound that's unrepeatable on the rest of the album. Here he mostly keeps it straight on the kick and snare, mixing things up with



### Rumours (1977)

Second Hand News • Dreams • Never Going Back Again • Don't Stop • Go Your Own Way • Songbird • The Chain • You Make Loving Fun • I Don't Want to Know • Oh Daddy • Gold Dust Woman

**Lindsey Buckingham:** guitar, vocals, percussion

**Mick Fleetwood:** drums

**John McVie:** bass

**Christine McVie:** keyboards, vocals

**Stevie Nicks:** vocals

Produced by Fleetwood Mac with Richard Dashut and Ken Caillat

tastefully dropped snare beats and a simple but sweet combination of 16th notes during the snare hits and cymbal crashes at 1:59.

On Christine McVie's "Don't Stop," Fleetwood taps into his blues roots, shuffling along on the snare and hi-hats. He keeps things loose throughout, occasionally answering the "don't" and "stop" in the choruses with crashes and building through the top of the measure in the final chorus.

The drama of "The Chain," a song credited to the whole band, hinges on Fleetwood's minimalist work in the front half—first the quarter notes from the kick drum in the hollowed-out verses, then the driving feel of quarter notes on the snare against 8th notes on the kick in the chorus. At the breakdown, Fleetwood quietly builds on the snare and floor tom, before McVie's classic bass line enters and the track heads toward its raging climax. More hypnotic minimalism follows on Nicks' "Gold Dust Woman," where the boom-TOCK, boom-TOCK of Fleetwood's simple bass drum and cowbell pattern in the verses perfectly underscores the song's witchy vibe.

"I'm just a guy who gets out his own emotions through a pretty simple formula of technique," Fleetwood told *MD* in his June 2009 cover story. That "simple formula" of hypnotic grooves and idiosyncratic touches serves the songs on *Rumours* perfectly.

**Patrick Berkery**

