

Song Exploder
Buckingham Nicks - Frozen Love
Episode 302

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. I'm Hrishikesh Hirway.

On September 5, 1973, the first and only Buckingham Nicks album was released. It wasn't a huge hit, but it was how the world was first introduced to the music of Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham, before they went on to become members of Fleetwood Mac. Their time together in Fleetwood Mac led to some of the best-selling, most critically acclaimed, and most influential albums of all time. Their individual talents, their musical chemistry together, and the ups and downs of their romantic relationship all eventually became legendary.

Despite all that, the Buckingham Nicks album went out of print not long after it came out. For over 50 years, it wasn't available, until it finally got re-mastered and re-released in September 2025. So for this episode, I spoke to both Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham about the making of one of the songs from that album, called "Frozen Love." It's the only song on the album where they're credited as co-writers, and it's the song that led Mick Fleetwood to invite Lindsey Buckingham to join Fleetwood Mac. But Lindsey would only join if Stevie could, too, and that's how that story began. So this episode is about a beginning and an ending. It's the story of how Stevie and Lindsey first met, and how they made "Frozen Love," and how that song really led to the end of their band.

I also want to mention that, not only was Buckingham Nicks out of print for all those decades, no one has heard the isolated tracks that you're about to hear. To make this episode, there was an epic search for the original master tape from Sound City, the studio where they recorded the album with producer Keith Olsen. It took months, but the tape was finally tracked down and digitized, and it feels very special to be able to present this for the first time here, along with the memories and stories from Lindsey Buckingham and Stevie Nicks.

("Frozen Love" by BUCKINGHAM NICKS)

(Vocals: "And if you go forward (You go forward), I'll meet you there / And if you climb up through the cold freezing air / Look down below you, search out above / Cry out to life for a frozen love / Cry, love")

Lindsey: My name is Lindsey Buckingham.

Stevie: And my name is Stevie Nicks.

Hrishikesh: Do you still remember the first day you two met?

Stevie: I do. Lindsey and I started talking about it last night and it was like, it's, this whole thing seems really like yesterday to us.

Lindsey: I was a junior in high school and she had transferred in as a senior.

Stevie: We met at a party in San Francisco. I heard this guy singing from a long way away, in this big room. And he was singing "California Dreamin'." And I thought, oh, I know that song. So I kind of made my way over. And I saw him and I thought, I'm gonna walk up there and sing. Oh, he's gonna hate me. Oh, I don't care. I'm going.

So I went up and I just smiled at him and I stood behind him and I sang the harmony to "California Dreamin'," and it was fantastic. And I thought, oh, I better get outta here now before he gets really mad when it was gonna end, right? So I just, like, disappeared into the shadows. And so, we didn't meet. I didn't turn around and say to him, "Hi, I am Stevie Nicks," and he's like, "Oh, hi, I am Lindsey Buckingham." That did not happen. I just disappeared. And I really didn't know who he was.

And then we didn't see each other or talk to each other again for like, I think close to two years.

Lindsey: It wasn't until really my senior year of high school that a friend of mine, who was a drummer, asked if I would be in a band called Fritz, just to play at an assembly.

And the guy who was sort of leading it was a guy named Javier, who was actually quite a good songwriter and played keyboards.

Hrishikesh: And so you were one of the singers, and you played bass in Fritz?

Lindsey: That's right.

And so we got up and did two or three songs for the assembly...and I think blew a lot of people's minds.

("Louisa Joy" by FRITZ)

(Vocals: "Louisa / Polly Anna Louise, Louisa Joy / Polly Anna Louise, please, let me be your boy")

We graduated high school and when we all got to the same college, junior college, the next fall, there was some interest in picking up what we'd done.

But the girl who had been singing in the band at the assembly had gone off somewhere else to school. But Stevie, who was a year older, but was still going to that same junior college, was around. So we sought her out.

Stevie: It was actually Bob Aguirre that called me, who was the drummer. And he just said, "How would you feel about joining a band?" And I said, "What kind of a band is it?" And he said, "Well, it's a hard rock and roll band." And I kind of said, "Just a minute." And I walked around the room for a second and, like, went, yes!

Because I'd always had it in my heart of heart, even though my granddad was a country singer and there was a lot of other kind of music in my life. And I said, like, (whispers) that's just what I wanted.

("Wondering Why" by FRITZ)

(Vocals: "Guess you never knew life after all / 'Cause when you hear the truth you feel so small / You played the fool and now you've lost it all / Set me free / Now let me go home")

It was really Javier's band because he wrote the songs. And, you know, in two or three weeks, we were, like, playing shows. And it was really, really exciting and fun. We got to the point where we were playing like big shows. We opened for Chicago at Fillmore West. We opened for Jimi Hendrix for 75,000 people. And so it was like, in our own minds, we were already famous. And we loved it. And then Keith Olsen was there with his, kind of, partner, after we played. And it was a big show. And they said, we would really like to maybe work with you. Why don't you guys come down to Los Angeles?

Lindsey: And so Fritz went down and did a bunch of performances for people at labels. Keith was extremely supportive. But Fritz was never able to secure a record deal. But what did happen was that, not just one, but a number of labels expressed interest in Stevie and me.

Stevie: So Keith Olsen called us and said, they really like you and Lindsey, but they don't appreciate the importance of the other three members of the band, which was terrorizing to us. Because we loved these guys. So we were not at all happy about that. But there was nothing that we could do. And that was very sad and very hard. It hurt us, you know? It was our first, like, super disappointment, I think, in the music business.

Hrishikesh: But it must have been a little bit mixed, right? Because even though you had to leave those three other guys, it was still sort of an invitation to maybe get to another level?

Stevie: It was an invitation to greatness. And we both knew it.

Lindsey: We thought, well, okay, if we're gonna pursue that and we still wanna keep going with music, then what does that mean? So one of the things that it meant was that I had to start writing songs. You know, Stevie was already a fairly prolific writer.

Stevie: I think I wrote my first song when I was 15 and a half. And it was about a lost love. Therefore began my tragic love songs.

Lindsey: And for me, the timing couldn't have been better. Because I was now being influenced by a new kind of music that had started to come in. When James Taylor hit the scene, or when Joni Mitchell hit the scene, these were people who were right up my alley in terms of my style of guitar playing. All of this was obviously and ultimately going to help define myself as a writer. So I just started writing songs.

So, while we came back to Northern California somewhat in defeat from having not been able to get a record deal as Fritz, it became a catalyst for Stevie and me to bond in a different way.

Stevie: We probably never would've even had a relationship had it not been that we had to fire the rest of our band. That was just such a crushing blow and it drove us together because we just couldn't figure it out. And then we fell in love, you know, with each other. And that was it. We were together.

We started writing songs, you know, like, ourselves, and brought our songs in to each other, and decided which ones we wanted to do.

Lindsey: My dad, who was in the coffee business and had a coffee plant south of San Francisco, let me go up there nights and take my four track tape machine. So I would take my songs and I would take the songs Stevie had and I'd go up and work and she'd come up some of the time and sing.

Stevie: And we just sat on the floor and he worked on the music, and I crocheted and was the cheerleader. And we started to work on the songs that then became the *Buckingham Nicks* album.

And "Frozen Love" started, kind of, as a full on folk song. 'Cause I wrote it on guitar. I'm not the greatest guitar player in the world. I play just good enough to write.

The song I think is about two people that were in love, that had a lot of differences and saw the world slightly differently, but had this like relationship that

seemed to be, you know, like a gift. So it was like, a strong relationship, and then also a strong musical relationship. And those two relationships together made for a pretty determined relationship.

If you read just the poem, from me, before it ever went to Lindsey, it was: "You may not be as strong as me, and I may not care to teach you." That's pretty flippant, isn't it?

"It may be hard to keep up with me, but I'll always be able to reach you." Even more flippant.

But I liked to think of it as like *Wuthering Heights* or *Great Expectations*. You know, like modern day love affair tragedies. Because nobody really loves happy songs. Certainly I didn't, and neither really did Lindsey. So for us, the more dramatic it was, the better. And so, "Frozen Love," to me, was a lot of fun, because it was so dramatic.

That was where we, I think, found that strain that was like, don't be afraid to write a poem that's a little bit about me. Because what else are you gonna write about? It was never like, "Was that about me? How come you wrote that about me?" Because we never went there. We were just like, "That is great." If I went in there with two verses of it and the chorus, you know, with my simple, simple guitar playing, and he would just go like, "Keep writing. I like it."

Lindsey: She was very confident, as she should have been, in her lyrics, and didn't necessarily have a motivation to run them by me or to discuss them.

Stevie: Sometimes after we started living together, I would write a song and I'd put it on a cassette and I'd leave it by the coffee pot and I'd just put a note saying, you know, "Here it is. Produce it, but don't change it. Don't change the actual core of it."

Lindsey: I don't think she craved my input on that level, and nor did I crave hers on production or instrumental level either. You know, I mean, she understood that I was transforming things for her, and I understood that I wouldn't have had anything to transform without the beautiful center that she'd given me to work with.

Stevie: And I would just wait to see what he did.

Lindsey: And so, the center of the song was there. But, rhythmically, I wanted to create something that would have interest, in terms of guitar. I was interested in coming up with my own tunings. And that was, what was that? It was like uh, an open D tuning. Do you want me to show you?

Hrishikesh: Yes, please.

Lindsey: If I can. I don't know if I'll... (plays guitar riff) You get the idea.

Hrishikesh: Amazing. What an honor.

Lindsey: (chuckles)

Hrishikesh: Thank you so much.

("Frozen Love" by BUCKINGHAM NICKS)

(guitar riff in the actual song)

Stevie: From the very beginning I wanted us both to take one of those verses so that it was both of us. So that it was more a relationship made of two, instead of a relationship just made of one.

Lindsey: Both the verses lyrically are written from Stevie's point of view, at least in my opinion. But I, I think we had just an idea that it was gonna play better if it felt a little bit more like a dialogue.

(Lindsey's vocals: "You may not be as strong as me / And I may not care to teach you / It may be hard to keep up with me / But I'll always be able to reach you")

The song is about, sort of, love interrupted, so to speak. This love that we had, which somehow got intruded upon by other things. Some of those were my fault and some of those were her fault.

Stevie: This was a pretty, like, not really a hateful song, but it's a little bit mean. That's what I said about great tragedies; they're not always nice. Our relationship was up and down and up and down and up and down and difficult. But, at the same time, fantastic. And what we were doing was so fantastic that it was worth putting up with the trials and tribulations of a relationship that's difficult.

Lindsey: But I think she just saw herself in that role, that, even then, even though I was sort of the producer and I was sort of the musical leader, I think she felt like she was the one who was ahead of the game in some ways. And she was probably right.

(Stevie's vocals: "Love gave me you, there the change was made / There's no beginning over / You are not happy, but what is love? / Hate gave you me for a lover")

Stevie: "Life gave me you, the change was made and there's no beginning over. You are not happy. But what is love?" That sounds like an old person, doesn't it? And then I've got here written, this is a question that I've gone back and forth over, for the last few days. "Fate gave you me for a lover." I would swear to God, the words I wrote was "Fate gave you me for a lover." Fate. But when I hear myself sing that line, it sounds like I'm saying "hate."

(Stevie's vocals: "Hate gave you me for a lover")

But I would *never* have written "Hate gave you me for a lover," 'cause I never felt that way. I can't even imagine that I didn't hear that in time to change it. So that's not good! (chuckles) I'm sorry, Lindsey! I'm calling him later. (chuckles)

And then we would just play around with it and have really a lot of fun working out harmonies.

(Vocals together: "If you go forward, (you go forward) I'll meet you there / And if you climb up through the cold freezing air / Look down below you")

Lindsey: That was always something Stevie and I would figure out, you know, sitting in our living room, basically.

Stevie: We would sit and start going, like, okay, let's sing the words. You sing the lower part and I'll sing the higher part, and then we'll both sing a higher part above that.

Lindsey: And when you balance my vocal and her vocal, and listen to it as a two part, I mean, that's, that's a thing that uh, we had, you know, that was noteworthy. And it was ours.

(Vocals: "Cry out to life for a frozen love / Cry, love")

Hrishikesh: My conversation with Stevie Nicks and Lindsey Buckingham continues after this.

Lindsey: Keith Olsen had been a, a, a producer for a while. Plus, was an excellent engineer as well, and had a studio, which was Sound City. That became our home away from home. And we were off to the races.

(drum fill)

It wasn't a song you could really think about cutting live with drums. Because the

number of twists and turns rhythmically that the guitar manifests, so we pieced it together with a click. And then, when the rest of it was done, or most of it, anyway, we had our friend Gary Hodges, who was quite a good drummer, come in and (chuckles) and overdub drums. Which is not an easy thing to do anyway. But on a song like this, what a difficult evening that was for him, trying to get the drums on this. And yeah, I can see why.

(drums with guitar - verse)

Hrishikesh: So you two would write songs individually.

Lindsey: Mm-hmm.

Hrishikesh: "Frozen Love" is the only song on the album that's credited to the two of you as co-writers. And I was wondering, how did that work? What did that collaboration look like and, and how did that come about?

Lindsey: Well, I mean, it isn't strictly a collaboration, you know, like, two writers who are co-captaining the entire process. With "Frozen Love," the verse and chorus parts, where the singing is, that was Stevie's basic song.

But we wanted to do this one song that would have this epic quality to it. In order to create, sort of, a mini movie in the middle. Still allowing you to get back into the song at the end.

Because I was a huge Jimmy Page fan. Not just of Led Zeppelin as a whole, but just of him as a producer and how he approached what he did. If you think of "Stairway to Heaven" or something, they would start off with a basic song and it would go through all sorts of angular changes and work its way back to the beginning.

(guitars - instrumental break)

So all of that, I think, helped get me to where I needed to be for "Frozen Love." It really evolved into an opus of sorts because those middle sections that it goes through were, were not part of the original, uh, plan in her mind. The middle is probably longer than the song itself, so that was the main reason for a co-writership.

Stevie: The orchestrated part, that's my favorite part, pretty much of the whole record. It's my favorite part. Because I started to look at it as a dark ballet.

(flutes)

You know, with one of us standing on each side of the stage and having like, I don't know, the Bolshoi Ballet or something, dancing to this recording.

(strings build in)

And how, like, Swan Lake-esque it was, you know. Total tragedy. Which I just absolutely loved, and so it just couldn't be better.

(orchestral section fades out)

(electric guitar riff)

Hrishikesh: How did you write your electric guitar parts?

(one guitar plays)

Because you recorded three different guitar tracks.

(three guitars play)

Even in the guitar solo. And so, was everything written out, or would you improvise the solo, and then go back and re-track what you already did?

Lindsey: Most of my solos are a balance between what you discover when you improvise, and things that will help it to remain thematic. I needed to be paced exactly right over a very long period of time. So it had to be very specific.

(solo back into verse harmony)

(Vocals: "It may be hard (may be hard) to keep up with me (to keep up with you) / I'll always, yes, I'm always going to be able to reach you")

Hrishikesh: How did you feel about this song when you finished the recording?

Lindsey: Well, (chuckles) I think we loved it. I think we were really quite happy with the album as a whole, and having this be the last track felt like it really finished up in an artful and ambitious way that satisfied both of us.

Stevie: When I listen to "Frozen Love," I remember when I first wrote it. I remember when I brought it in. I remember Lindsey and me working on it in different places. I remember thinking that the world was gonna be "Frozen Love"'s oyster. I remember being so proud of it, because it is the stepping stone of how Lindsey and I sang together, how we like, just were so good at doing harmonies together and if it had just remained my song and Lindsey hadn't have written that whole

French ballet part, it wouldn't have been the same song. And I felt that it was going to lead us to other places.

Lindsey: And then the *Buckham Nicks* album had been put out and it had not done great. We had gone out and done some shows. But there was a kind of a, a, a feeling that, whatever its arc was, that it had happened. So Stevie and I were in the process of putting together a new album.

And one of the things about Sound City as a studio was that Studio B, the small room, was almost never used. And Joe Gottfried, who was the owner of Sound City, was very supportive of us and let us use that room for free whenever there was time in there. And so, we were in Studio B, working away. With some sense that *Buckingham Nicks* had happened, and now we gotta move on.

You know, we're picking ourselves up, brushing ourselves off, getting on with *Buckingham Nicks II* or whatever. We were in Studio B. I knew Keith was there and I thought I'd go over and say hi to him at some point. And I, I walked over to Studio A and I could hear "Frozen Love" at really, like top volume being played. You know, I could hear it through the door and I'm going, what the hell?

And so I open the door and I go in and I see this tall guy, like, standing there, listening to "Frozen Love." And he's just rocking away to this song and I'm going, what is going on here? And so the song finishes, and Keith says, oh, Lindsey, hey, this is Mick Fleetwood.

Stevie: Fleetwood Mac came out of the woodwork.

And it's like, I would've been happy to have been in Buckingham Nicks for years. And I think he would've too, you know, because we really thought we had something great.

Lindsey: I think we did pretty good for a couple of kids, yeah.

(Vocals: "For a frozen love / Cry, love")

Hrishikesh: And now, here's "Frozen Love," by Buckingham Nicks, in its entirety.

("Frozen Love" by BUCKINGHAM NICKS)

Visit songexploder.net to learn more. You'll find links to buy "Frozen Love," and the Buckingham Nicks album, back in print after more than 50 years. You'll also find links to the Fritz albums, and footnotes for the other artists that were mentioned.

This episode was produced by me, Craig Eley, Mary Dolan, and Kathleen Smith, with production assistance from Tiger Biskup. The episode artwork is by Carlos Lerma, and I made the show's theme music and logo. Thanks to Karen Johnston for recording Stevie Nicks' side of the conversation when I interviewed her, and a huge thanks to everyone at Sound City who was involved in tracking down the original recording of "Frozen Love", so that we could make this episode.

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I'm Hrishikesh Hirway. Thanks for listening.