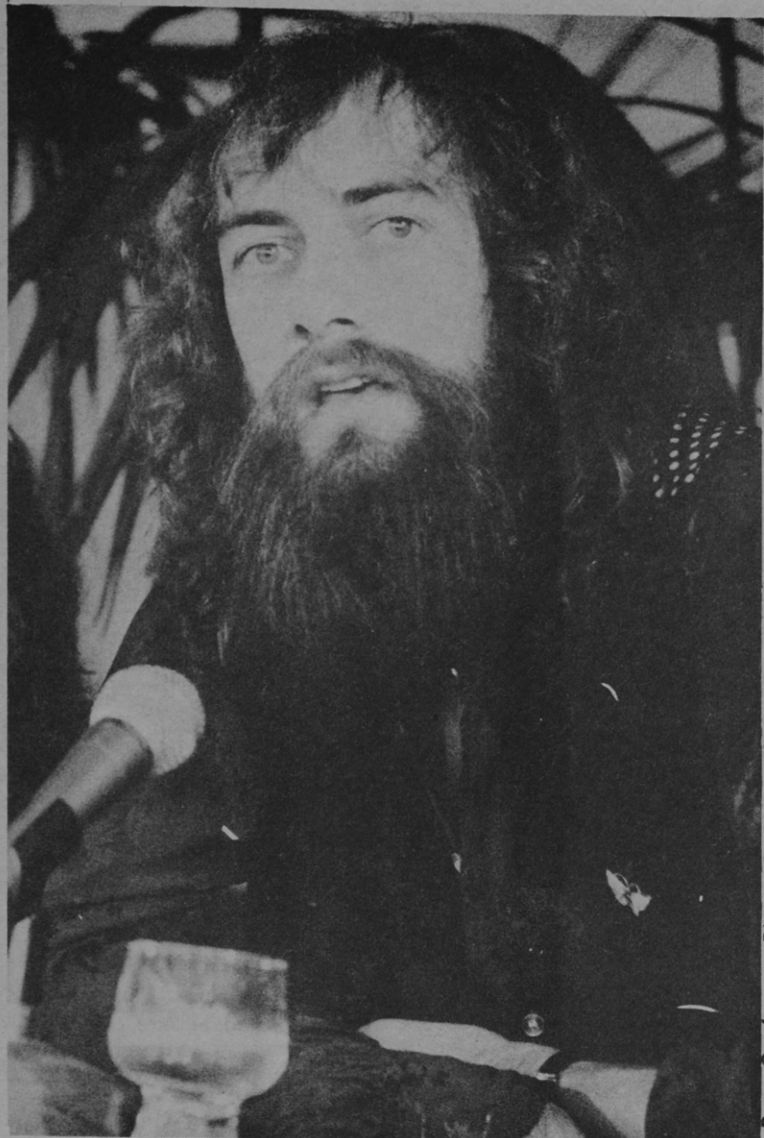




Prism



Mick Fleetwood

Press Conference Photos By Murray Cammick



Blondes have more fun An interview with Debbie Harry

Debbie Harry in Auckland



Debbie Harry, lead singer of New York group Blondie and cover girl to a hundred punk rock fanzines, was in Auckland with her manager about two months ago before flying on to Australia, hoping to give some publicity to a December tour of Japan, Australia and New Zealand. *The Auckland Star* put her photo on the front page that evening, with a three-line caption. Television One carried a short news interview with her. The truth was that very few people knew anything about her. Blondie's first album, released in the States in December — last year — hadn't been released in New Zealand at that time.

The album was produced by Richard Gottehrer, co-writer of the Chiffons' "My Boyfriend's Back", producer of the McCoys' hits (including "Hang On Sloopy"), and his influence had some critics calling it a nostalgia album, placing Blondie — purportedly a New Wave band — in a strange position.

For, as Debbie Harry explains, "... it worked well for us commercially but artistically some of us were at odds with it. But for a first record I think it was great... We sound much harder and much rawer when we are live... the record to me is slower".

Gottehrer first approached Blondie after seeing them play at New York's CBGB's where, prior to forming Blondie, Debbie Harry had sung with a group called The Stilettoes. Chris Stein, Blondie's guitar player, was guitarist with The Stilettoes.

"The Stilettoes were together in 1973, before punk rock was called punk rock. We were one of the first punk groups on the scene. It was an all-girl trio with a three-piece band. We would all wear ripped clothing and garters. We looked exactly like the punk kids do in London now but we did it two years before they did it. We had songs like "Platinum Blonde", "Poor Fool"... a whole bunch of stuff like that. Real rough, bitchy songs.

"We did some slow songs, some

cabaret-type numbers. We did some r & b, some girl-group-type songs — like the Shirelles or Supremes. "Platinum Blonde" was one of my songs from that period, "Rip Her to Shreds" and "Man Overboard" were leftover songs from that period.

"We were the house band at CBGB's. We played there every single weekend with Television when Richard Hell was the bass player. We got the Ramones their first gig there... ah, that was after The Stilettoes, as Blondie.

"We were into a lot of camp and a lot of schtick. Like knives on stage and day-glo crosses and all kinds of weird stuff... blood. It was definitely punk. It was ahead of its time."

The Stilettoes played in New York for seven months before splitting up; Debbie and Chris forming Blondie with James Destri on keyboards, Gary Valentine on bass and Clement Burke on drums. They played at CBGB's, didn't move out of New York until February this year. In March and April they made their first national tour, as opening act to Iggy Pop and David Bowie ("it was a big thrill and Bowie and Iggy were great"), in May and June they toured England.

Since they recorded their first album, Nigel Harrison, originally bass guitarist with Michael Des Barres' former group Silverhead, has replaced Gary Valentine, Frank Infante (Debbie calls him Frank Freak) has moved from his position as temporary bassist to add a second guitar to Blondie's line-up. A new album, as yet untitled, was recorded in August and is due for release in Japan this month, in the States in January. Like the first album it was produced by Richard Gottehrer but the band was more sure of itself this time and more sure of the sound they wanted.

These days Blondie doesn't play CBGB's. Last time they played there they broke all the club's attendance records.

Jeremy Templar

seven year romance wilted and died. Quite a strain for five people to persevere under.

"To start with there were problems," says Christine. "Normally when a couple separate they just separate. They don't see each other. In our situation we had to work it out where we just had to be with each other for the sake of the rest of the members of the group."

The emotional traumas held up the recording of *Rumours*, which took 11 months to record, although actual studio time would amount to about eight months.

Stevie Nicks: "A lot of the delay was technical, a lot of it was emotional. We didn't want to release it until it was right. It was important to all of us to keep the band together."

Mick: "It was horrendous, but despite the emotional problems never once did anyone consider leaving the band. It wasn't because of the money... and it's nice to know that the money wasn't the reason. We were very involved in the energy of the band and we felt we had to get through it. It was a growing up process. A lot of people felt it would be absolutely impossible to do but the point is we did it and what's more we came out the other side smiling."

"We all know each other very well, probably a lot better than before and the people concerned have done something very hard, that is going from an emotional relationship to one which is professional."

Fleetwood shrugs off any suggestions of overnight success, pointing out to those who don't know that the band members have been around a long time and Fleetwood Mac, while not the world phenomenon it is today, has never been without a modicum of success. He is, however, careful to avoid overexposure, and notes "we have been approached to do some things that are tacky. There can be overkill."

He patiently explains to those trapped in a 12-bar time warp that Fleetwood Mac ceased being a blues band a long time ago.

He'll talk about Peter Green, but the subject is not to be dwelt upon: "He's living with his mother and father. He's not happy. He was thinking himself into a corner when he left the band and he's still in that corner. Peter's a very sensitive person. The money thing freaked him out. He stopped

playing guitar and denied what he was best able to do. If he asked me to play with him again I would, but it's not likely to happen.

"He's pleased with what Fleetwood Mac are doing now. He likes the album."

The band has plans to take a two to three month break after the Far East tour before starting work on a new album.

Mick: "I don't think we plan to copy the success of *Rumours*. We will just go and make another album. It would be naive to think the next album will be a total failure so there's no overwhelming pressure. Even if it sold only half as many copies as *Rumours* (nine million or so) it would still be a success."

When you're riding the crest of a wave what's the next direction?

Lindsey Buckingham: "Downhill, I guess" (slow-breaking grin).

Christine McVie: "If I've changed it would show more to friends of mine than it would to me. I haven't become particularly snotty nosed or anything I don't think. "I think you become more discriminating about the reasons people want to be friends of yours. All my friends are long standing friends from years gone by, very few are newly acquired. When you do become very successful people often have ulterior motives for being your best buddy."

Ken Williams



Stevie Nicks