



Stevie Nicks

Timespace

09/1991

Modern Records

On *Timespace* by Stevie Nicks

Karen Hopper Usher

I'd been lying about liking Stevie Nicks.

I was nine or ten when my dad bought his first CD player.

I remember my bewilderment that he'd bought it at all—I'd figured he'd wait a few more years, as he'd made clear to me that the evolution from records to eight-tracks to cassettes to CDs was clearly a scam "they" weren't done pulling.

But there was a woman involved, I think. Either my now-stepmother or the girlfriend who came before, I don't remember now.

I liked the new gadget.

I would thumb through Dad's CDs in the corner spare bedroom where he kept his stereo equipment. It always felt brand-new in there, probably because of the natural light, but I didn't understand that then.

My old twin bed was in there, too. It had a headboard cut-out shaped kind of like a stirrup and sometimes I would straddle the headboard with my feet wedged into the hole from both sides and pretend to ride Wonder, a race horse from a book series for kids called Thoroughbred.

In Dad's CD collection, I wrinkled my nose at Vivaldi, but it was a "yes" to a then-recent Steve Miller Band release and even bigger yes to a similarly-named person.

Besides the Thoroughbred series, I was also reading a lot of The Saddle Club, a sort-of Babysitters Club for horse-loving tweens. One of the characters was named Stephanie but went by Stevie.

Looking at my dad's CDs, I guessed that the timid-looking blonde on the frothy pink CD was a girl named Stevie, like the girl in the Saddle Club books. That meant the CD was sort-of horsey and therefore on-brand for me, though I'd yet to hear the term.

Nevermind that Steve Miller had a song actually referencing horses—I wanted to like the girl music.

I've always felt that I didn't naturally fit into other people's ideas of what girls should be like.

But I was certain getting as close as possible was a matter of survival. Whenever I could push myself to something pinker, something daintier, something more refined, I did. I am not proud. I am also not trans or gay—it was a purely hetero chafing at and ultimate submission to gender roles.

Honestly, the "Street Angel" album was kind of a turkey, as I recall. I can't remember a single song from it now. But the CD was pink and the lady was blonde and she had a wise face and the word "angel" was right there in the title.

Girl things.

I built a fiction that I liked it.

Then when I was in sixth grade and got a portable CD player for Christmas, one of the CDs that Dad and his new girlfriend (now my stepmom) gave me was *Timespace*, the Stevie Nicks greatest hits album.

I wondered if I should confess that I didn't like Stevie Nicks that much after all; that I'd repeatedly picked the girliest CD he owned just as an excuse to operate the stereo equipment.

But then I listened to it.

And oh my god.

Right from the top, with the riff leading into a tinkling intro, "Sometimes It's a Bitch," felt like a grand entrance. I knew I'd be listening to the album for the rest of my life, when I was a famous jockey or a Supreme Court justice or a doctor or an actress or something else spectacular.

Also, it had a swear word that drove my dad crazy, which felt like winning.

Knowing what I know now about Stevie's life, I think: "Really Dad? The swearing is what bugs you? I would have expected you to be more judgmental than that."

Musically, "Sometimes It's a Bitch" is not her strongest song. But it works as a thesis statement for her career and it's a fitting lead for the album.

And the first track spoke to my burgeoning life philosophy. Sometimes it IS a bitch. Dad wasn't a fan of that philosophy, either, harping on what he called my "defeatist attitude."

But mostly I think I liked the way the words tripped off my tongue when I sang along: from "bitch" and "breeze" to "love's blind" and "it sees" to "roses" and "weeds," I liked the poetry of it.

Sorry, poet friends. My tastes have not evolved beyond that.

And then there was "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," which though it would be another eight or nine years before I had relationship drama of my own, felt like an accurate description, if not of romance, then of the general piss-poor attitude of my own heart. It wasn't some guy dragging my heart around. It was my own heart, abusing itself and changing course as quickly as it takes to listen to a song.

When I listen to "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around" now, it sounds like a teenager's song. I don't become wistful for an erratic, youthful love. I question the maturity of someone willing to go there at all.

But that's not how I heard it then. If I related to it by casting my own emotions as the man, I understood it as a song about a woman standing up for herself, claiming her power—and a man who feels similarly unstable because of a capricious lover. I heard it as a call for mutuality.

The sense of power and independence comes through again in "Whole Lotta Trouble," a big, brassy number where Stevie proclaims "When I want something . . . I get it."

I was used to being seen as bossy, and a couple years later, when Ally McBeal and “theme songs” became something I thought about, I imagined that “Whole Lotta Trouble” would be mine.

In real life, the only kind of trouble I am is my own. And it’s not so much “when I want something, I get it” as “when I want something I think about it endlessly and convince myself I’ll get it but don’t lift a finger to actually do it, then have the audacity to feel depressed when it doesn’t work out.”

But by that point, the album is in full-on storytelling mode, and I’d imagine myself as the star of “Stand Back,” “Rooms on Fire,” “Leather and Lace,” and “Has Anyone Ever Written Anything For You.”

And mostly I’d just dance to “I Can’t Wait” and “Edge of Seventeen.”

I remember my fantasies around “Leather and Lace” particularly well. There was a guy, a tall guy with curly hair who looked a little like my dad. I daydreamed we’d been picked to sing the song in front of the school, and that he’d look at me and fall totally in love with me while we were singing it.

It never happened, obviously. A couple years later, he made fun of me, coldly, with contempt, in front of our peers. I don’t remember the details of what he said, but I do remember it wasn’t the usual “teasing to feel better about himself” or the mythical “teasing because he likes you.”

Most of the time, when I think about listening to *Timespace* when I was a teenager, I don’t feel as connected to the actual memories of listening to the CD as I do to the movies that played in my head at the time.

I know I listened to it in my bedroom at my mother’s house. I know I listened to it at school one time. I know I listened to it in my stepmom’s dining room.

But it’s the things that never happened that feel like the stories I should be telling.

With *Timespace*, Stevie compiled a vision of womanhood, a story about life and love that I believed in, that I thought might be my own romantic future.

I had the daydream about the boy in the gym, sure.

But I never really expected things to work out.

I imagined dramatic, meaningful break-ups where you’re always a little bit in love with them afterward, instead of doomed flings where you always believe that if they knew you just a little bit better, they’d like you more and also know you were worth absolutely nothing.

When I started listening to *Timespace* again to write this piece, I realized I was wrong. I thought I’d be listening to *Timespace* for the rest of my life, but in fact, I stopped listening to it a few years ago when my music collection changed over from stuff I’d ripped and put on an iPod to stuff I bought online.

Dad would probably say “I told you so.”