

## White Rabbit (1967)

### Jefferson Airplane

#### LISTEN FOR

- Surrealistic lyrics
- Spanish inflections
- Musical ambition contained in pop AABA form
- Overarching dramatic arc (cf. Ravel's *Bolero*?)

#### CREATION

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*Songwriters* Grace Slick  
*Album* *Surrealistic Pillow*  
*Label* RCA Victor 47-9248 (single); LSP-3766 (stereo album)  
*Musicians* Electric guitars, bass, drums, vocals  
*Producer* Rick Jarrard  
*Recording* November 1966; stereo  
*Charts* Pop 8; Album 3

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#### MUSIC

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*Genre* Psychedelic rock  
*Form* AABA  
*Key* F-sharp Phrygian mode  
*Meter* 4/4

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#### LISTENING GUIDE

| Time | Form       | Lyric Cue | Listen For  |
|------|------------|-----------|---|
| 0:00 | Intro (12) |           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bass guitar and snare drum suggest the Spanish bolero rhythm.</li><li>• Phrygian mode common in flamenco music.</li><li>• Winding guitar lines evoke Spanish music.</li><li>• Heavy reverb in all instruments save drums.</li></ul> |

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| Time | Form   | Lyric Cue            | Listen For   |
|------|--------|----------------------|--|
| 0:28 | A (12) | "One pill makes you" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocals enter quietly and with echo, with only bass, guitar, and snare drum accompaniment.</li> </ul>  |
| 0:55 | A (12) | "And if you go"      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Just a little louder and more forceful.</li> </ul>  |
| 1:23 | B (12) | "When men on"        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Music gains intensity: louder dynamic, second guitar, drums with more traditional rock beat.</li> </ul>                                     |
| 1:42 | A (21) | "Go ask Alice"       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vocal now much more forceful.</li> <li>Accompaniment more insistent, especially rhythm guitar.</li> <li>Drives to climax at end.</li> </ul> |

## LYRICS

One pill makes you larger  
 And one pill makes you small  
 And the ones that mother gives you  
 Don't do anything at all  
 Go ask Alice  
 When she's ten feet tall

When the men on the chessboard  
 Get up and tell you where to go  
 And you've just had some kind of mushroom  
 And your mind is moving low  
 Go ask Alice  
 I think she'll know

And if you go chasing rabbits  
 And you know you're going to fall  
 Tell 'em a hookah smoking caterpillar  
 Has given you the call to  
 Call Alice  
 When she was just small

When logic and proportion  
 Have fallen sloppy dead  
 And the White Knight is talking backwards  
 And the Red Queen's "off with her head!"  
 Remember what the dormouse said;  
 Feed your head

## SOURCES

- Katherine Charlton, *Rock Music Styles: A History*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2011), 161.
- John Covach and Andrew Flory, *What's That Sound*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 266–67.
- Roberta Freund Schwartz, Course Notes for MUSC-309 at the University of Kansas.
- <http://www.sing365.com/music/lyric.nsf/White-Rabbit-lyrics-Jefferson-Airplane/7109AE560A05F54748256BF40008120A>.