



JUST FOR THE RECORD

by Dennis Barker



The Great Society: *White Rabbit*

*"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....."*

Grace Slick

As the mid 1960's unfolded, San Francisco, which had been a center of the folk music scene, would begin exhibiting an experimental, almost anything goes atmosphere. As the creative focus shifted away from the coffee houses to the Haight-Ashbury district, along with the newly arriving hippies and their drug culture, Folk and Rock would give way to more improvisational music which would become the soundtrack for the new youth counterculture. By 1966, San Francisco had become the cradle of the American psychedelic music movement, and The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Moby Grape, Blue Cheer and others would assault the senses of American youth with feedback, distortion and sound effects designed to expand the mind of their audience.

The firstborn child of the new acid rock genre was Grace Slick's "*White Rabbit*". Although most listeners tend to associate the song with the more commercially successful 1967 Jefferson Airplane version, Grace had already penned and begun performing this haunting psychedelic masterpiece in 1966, as a member of "*The Great Society*". Named to make fun of Lyndon Johnson's description of the American public, the band, formed in 1965, by Grace, her husband Jerry Slick, his brother Darby and David Miner, would make its debut at the Coffee Gallery in San Francisco's North Beach on October 15, 1965, and continue to perform throughout 1966, opening for the Airplane and other successful local bands.

By late 1966, the Great Society had itself moved to the forefront of the San Francisco acid rock scene, and, shortly before their breakup would release *Someone to Love*, the bands only recording. Penned by Darby Slick, and released on the North Beach label, the record sold few copies, and garnered little attention outside of the Bay area. The Great Society, one of the more groundbreaking bands of the 1960's would disband after less than 2 years. *Conspicuous Only In It's Absence*, The Great Society album containing Grace's original version of *White Rabbit*, was released in 1968, from material recorded live during 1966.

Shortly after the breakup of *The Great Society*, Grace Slick would join the Jefferson Airplane, replacing singer Signe Anderson, who had left the Band. Along with her edgy voice, Grace would bring two songs to the Airplane. *White Rabbit* and *Someone to Love* (re-titled *Somebody to Love*) would both appear on *Surrealistic Pillow*, the Airplanes breakout album, and become classic's in the psychedelic genre. The rest as they say

My last memory of Grace Slick is hearing the inane pop tune "*We built this city on rock & roll*". It makes you wonder, I suspect Grace did go down the rabbit hole.

The Great Society: *White Rabbit* (Conspicuous Only In its Absence)

Columbia #CS 9627 (RELEASED 1968)

Goldmine record album price guide, Values original copies of *Conspicuous Only in Its Absence*, with original cover & sleeve, in near mint condition, at \$25.00

To listen both versions, and read the lyrics, visit our website at:

<http://newcenturycollector.com/records>