Jefferson Airplane – Surrealistic Pillow (1967)



01. She Has Funny Cars (Jorma Kaukonen/Marty Balin) – 3:07
02. Somebody To Love (Darby Slick) – 2:54
03. My Best Friend (Skip Spence) – 2:58
04. Today (Balin/Paul Kantner) – 2:56
05. Comin' Back To Me (Balin) – 5:14
06. 3/5 Of A Mile In 10 Seconds (Balin) – 3:39
07. D.C.B.A.-25 (Kantner) – 2:34
08. How Do You Feel (Tom Mastin) – 3:27
09. Embryonic Journey (Kaukonen) – 1:51
10. White Rabbit (Grace Slick) – 2:29
11. Plastic Fantastic Lover (Balin) – 2:32
Bonuses:
12. In The Morning (Kaukonen) - 6:18
13. J.P.P. McStep B.Blues (Alex Spence) - 2:34
14. Go To Her (version two) (Kantner/Irving Estes) - 4:00
15. Come Back Baby (traditional) - 2:54
16. Somebody To Love (mono single version) (Darby Slick) - 2:56
17. White Rabbit (mono single version) (Grace Slick) - 2:30

Personnel:
- Marty Balin – vocals, guitar
- Grace Slick – female vocals, piano, organ, recorder
- Paul Kantner – rhythm guitar, vocals
- Jorma Kaukonen – lead & rhythm guitar, vocals
- Jack Casady – bass, fuzz bass, rhythm guitar
- Spencer Dryden – drums, percussion
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- Jerry Garcia - musical and spiritual adviser

The second album by Jefferson Airplane, Surrealistic Pillow was a groundbreaking piece of folk-rock-based psychedelia, and it hit -- literally -- like a shot heard round the world; where the later efforts from bands like the Grateful Dead, Quicksilver Messenger Service, and especially, the Charlatans, were initially not too much more than cult successes, Surrealistic Pillow rode the pop charts for most of 1967, soaring into that rarefied Top Five region occupied by the likes of the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and so on, to which few American rock acts apart from the Byrds had been able to lay claim since 1964. And decades later the album still comes off as strong as any of those artists' best work. From the Top Ten singles "White Rabbit" and "Somebody to Love" to the sublime "Embryonic Journey," the sensibilities are fierce, the material manages to be both melodic and complex (and it rocks, too), and the performances, sparked by new member Grace Slick on most of the lead vocals, are inspired, helped along by Jerry Garcia (serving as spiritual and musical advisor and sometimes guitarist). Every song is a perfectly cut diamond, too perfect in the eyes of the bandmembers, who felt that following the direction of producer Rick Jarrard and working within three- and four-minute running times, and delivering carefully sung accompaniments and succinct solos, resulted in a record that didn't represent their real sound. Regardless, they did wonderful things with the music within that framework, and the only pity is that RCA didn't record for official release any of the group's shows from the same era, when this material made up the bulk of their repertory. That way the live versions, with the band's creativity unrestricted, could be compared and contrasted with the record. The songwriting was spread around between Marty Balin, Slick, Paul Kantner, and Jorma Kaukonen, and Slick and Balin (who never had a prettier song than "Today," which he'd actually written for Tony Bennett) shared the vocals; the whole album was resplendent in a happy balance of all of these creative elements, before excessive experimentation (musical and chemical) began affecting the band's ability to do a straightforward song. The group never made a better album, and few artists from the era ever did.

[Surrealistic Pillow on CD has been problematic -- actually, make that a real pain in the ass. It's been reissued numerous times on compact disc, in distinctly different editions -- a plain 11-song disc from the 1980s that sounded wretched and was an embarrassment; a high-priced RCA-BMG gold-disc upgrade, with significantly better sound from the mid-'90s that encompassed the stereo and mono mixes of the album; a European version from 2000/2001 (with four bonus tracks but no mono mix or liner notes) that got into the U.S. as an import; a U.S.-issued 2001 upgrade, initially available in the bizarre four-CD box Ignition, which encompassed the stereo and mono mixes in a brighter, sharper, louder remastering than the 1996 version, but still -- in some listeners' eyes -- lacking the presence and the soaring sound of the original LP; and a 2003 reissue (on the BMG Heritage label), mastered by renowned reissue producer Bob Irwin (of Sundazed Records fame), including the mono single versions of "White Rabbit" and "Somebody to Love," along with the related bonus tracks "Come Back Baby," "In the Morning," "J.P.P. McStep B. Blues," and "Go to Her," which have previously been scattered around various anthologies and other expanded editions. Those tracks generally push Kaukonen even more to the fore and give the balance of the material a bluesier feel. ---Bruce Eder, allmusic.com

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