



Classics in Total Synthesis II



More Targets, Strategies, Methods. By Kyriacos C. Nicolaou and Scott A. Snyder. Wiley-VCH, Weinheim 2003. xix + 639 pp., hardcover + disc € 99.00.— ISBN 3-527-30685-4

Extensions of successful Hollywood movies into series usually go hand in hand with increasing boredom. Gratifyingly though, this rule does not extend to chemistry monographs as witnessed by “*Classics in Total Synthesis II*” by K. C. Nicolaou and S. A. Snyder, the follow-up compendium to *Classics I* published by the same principle author together with E. J. Sorensen in 1996. The authors succeeded in improving the format even further while keeping the successful concept of immersing minireviews on relevant and timely synthetic methods into the context of some of the most advanced and challenging synthesis projects published during the last decade.

All chapters start with a retrosynthetic discussion to acquaint the reader with the specific problems posed by a given target molecule. A detailed discussion of the synthesis in the forward sense then shows how these challenges have been met. This interplay had already shaped *Classics I*, and the authors have now included two new and highly favorable pedagogic features: First, each chapter starts with a box summarizing the “key concepts” to be discussed. This gives the reader a chance for an honest check-up of what he/she knows about topics as important as cascade reactions, chemical biology, biomimetic synthesis, metathesis or combinatorial chemistry, etc. before going through the concise discussion of these subjects that follows. The other innovation in *Classics II*, which many readers will appreciate, involves the presentation of multiple syntheses of the *same* molecule within a single chapter. Although clearly differing in the level of detail, these comparisons set a broader context, show trends in modern synthesis more clearly, and illustrate the virtuosity and ingenuity with which demanding structures can be reached.

In this way, the conquest of 21 target molecules of biological significance published since 1992 is laid out. Although one can possibly argue about the selection made, which definitely shows a certain bias and reflects the major research interests of the principle author during the last decade, nobody can deny that a very broad range of molecular architectures is covered and an even broader spectrum of synthetic strategies and reactivity patterns is highlighted in the individual chapters of this monograph. Who but time is to say what a classical synthesis might be? So why

not take the book as what it is: an excellent compendium that provides an insightful and authoritative coverage of demanding synthetic endeavours presented in such a way that they can be digested by the student, yet be enlightening for the more experienced reader.

As was already the case in *Classics I*, the layout of the book is superb and user-friendly. All relevant structures are displayed on the page on which they are discussed. Each chapter can be read as an individual offering, leaving the choice to the reader. The book comes as a “nice-price” paperback version or as a hard-bound edition, which includes a CD-ROM containing extra teaching material. As such, *Classics II*—very much like *Classics I*—will directly make its way into seminars and lecture rooms as an advanced textbook. Needless to say, the specialist will equally benefit from this source of information and inspiration. *Classics II* is undoubtedly an excellent bargain that is highly recommended to everybody interested in advanced organic chemistry.

One of my co-workers confessed that *Classics I* was the book on his bedside table while he prepared his thesis defence. Isn't that the highest distinction for a monograph? I have every reason to believe that *Classics II* will equally stand the selection process by students (and probably their supervisors too).

Alois Fürstner
Max-Planck-Institut für Kohlenforschung
Mülheim/Ruhr (Germany)

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