

The Synthetic Organic Chemist's Companion, by M. C. Pirrung, Wiley-Interscience, Hoboken, 2007, softcover, 198 pp, € 35.00, ISBN 978-0-470-10707-2

Fans of the Donald Duck comics know about the 'Junior Woodchucks Guidebook' in which Donald's nephews find helpful advice and information for almost any situation in life. Many of us have wished that someday a similarly powerful source would be available for survival in an organic chemistry laboratory, where one can find tricks to free stuck joints, get information about the NMR signals of residual solvents, and read about the safe preparation and use of diazomethane. The eminent synthetic organic chemist M. C. Pirrung has written such a book in which he shares valuable advice and tricks with the reader.

The organisation of the book parallels the processes involved in planning, executing, and analyzing the synthetic preparation of a molecule. The fewer than 200 pages unfortunately do not provide sufficient space for a comprehensive discussion of the topics of the 17 chapters. As a consequence, a few chapters, especially the one about the use of gases, have become so superficial that they are not very useful for the readers. On the other hand, the majority of chapters (especially, Chap. 2 'Reagents', Chap. 8 'Conducting the reaction itself', Chap. 10 'Working up

reactions', and Chap. 13 'Purification of products') are absolutely fantastic and even experienced readers will learn new lab tricks that they will want to use in the future. An absolute strength of the book is the many case studies which the author uses, from his wealth of experience, to illustrate a technique or to advertise a best practice. Many gems that have so far been hidden in experimental procedures in the primary literature, have been uncovered for this book and are now presented for the first time in a textbook to a general audience.

For whom is this book written? To the novice organic chemist I would recommend the classic books by J. W. Zubrick (*The Organic Chem Lab Survival Manual*) or J. Leonard, B. Lygo, G. Procter (*Advanced Practical Organic Chemistry*) in which the apparatus and basic techniques are presented in more detail. But every chemist who has mastered the undergraduate organic chemistry lab will benefit from *The Synthetic Organic Chemist's Companion*, which I highly recommend for reading. The short time required to read this concise book will save many days of struggle and despair in the research lab.

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