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Book review

Reactive Intermediates in Organic Chemistry; by N.S. Isaacs, Wiley, London/New York/Sydney/Tokyo/Mexico City, 1974, xii + 550 pages, £12.00.

This book is intended for undergraduates, and there is no doubt that any student who has a good knowledge of its contents will be well-informed about organic reaction mechanisms. It brings together reactions which occur via a common type of intermediate rather than classifying reactions on the basis of the nature of the product, which is said by the publishers "to represent a major departure in the organization of organic chemistry texts". The chapter headings are: Physical principles of organic chemistry; carbonium ions; carbanions; radicals; carbenes (methylenes); dehydrobenzene (benzyne) and related intermediates; tetrahedral intermediates in reactions at the carbonyl and related groups; intermediates in oxidation; miscellaneous intermediates. Direct treatment of organometallic reactions is very brief, but 11 pages are devoted to transition metal complex intermediates.

The emphasis is on presentation of the present view of the mechanisms rather than on the methods used to establish them. I would prefer to recommend this to class as supplementary reading rather than as the main text; a student who already had a good knowledge of organic mechanisms would certainly find its different approach interesting and stimulating.

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