

## Book Review

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### *Excited States of Biological Molecules.*

Edited by J. B. Birks, published by John Wiley and Sons, New York, 1976: price £ 18.50.

The research scientist overwhelmed by written material usually lets out another sigh when the proceedings of some distinguished international conference appear. This usually represents a heterogeneous collection of papers varying in quality and scope, generally appearing at a substantial interval after the gathering took place in a sunny part of the world. At the same time such a collection of material (often already available in the specialist literature) often may provide an overview of the state of the field at the time of the meeting. This can be useful to newcomers to the particular field of learning in providing at least an outline of where to begin. It can also help the more established investigator who because of his duties in administration as well as in research has to rely on secondary sources to keep up with the literature; but then more often than not such a person would be an "invited speaker" at the conference.

This book is no exception. Appearing approximately two years after the meeting it contains some 80 papers (some only in the form of an abstract or a short communication).

The six sections were introduced by a plenary lecture (printed in full) and were on: (A) excited states of organic molecules (Sir George Porter) which was subdivided into (A1) primary processes, and (A2) photochemistry and photobiology; (B) excited states of DNA and nucleotides (C. Helene); (C) excited states of photosynthetic pigments (H. T. Witt); (D) excited states of proteins and amino acids (G. Weber); (E) excited states of visual pigments (B. Rosenberg); (G) energy transfer in biological molecules (J. Eisinger). As one might expect these lectures contain interesting and useful review-type material of the authors' own work.

It would be impossible to report on the remaining papers in a unified sense, and perhaps insidious to select a few of these for special merit. They range from theoretical studies on *cis-trans* isomerizations to reporting a sensitive method for fluorimetric estimation of cannabis constituents after extraction from an ethanol/water mouthwash. I enjoyed reading the papers in the section on "Excited states of DNA and nucleotides" partly because I have not followed the literature in this area and partly because I found the quality of the work reported good.

For a biochemist the notion of "biological molecules" like pyrene in benzene (under "Photochemistry and photobiology") may seem rather strange but then nobody could deny the usefulness of this molecule's emission in membrane studies, a fact not referred to in the paper.

But there is, undoubtedly a lot of interesting material in this book. As it turned out, from my own point of view, several of the articles I would have liked to read in detail were only reproduced as abstracts or very sketchy, short articles.

Perhaps I would not have been prepared to spend £18.50 to buy this book but I am very glad to have it on my shelves.

G. K. Radda

## Conference Announcement

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### Lasers in Chemistry

An international conference on Lasers in Chemistry will be held at the Royal Institution, London, from May 31 to June 2, 1977, under the sponsorship of The Chemical Society, Institution of Electrical Engineers, Institute of Physics, Society of Chemical Industry, and The Royal Institution.

Original papers are invited which describe new scientific and technical applications of lasers to chemistry in such areas as Laser Spectroscopy, Photochemistry and photophysics, industrial processing, analytical applications, laser developments

### ABSTRACTS

Authors are requested to submit a 100-word abstract for examination by the Programme Committee. The author's name, affiliation, complete return address and telephone number must be included. If the contribution is accepted, this abstract will appear in the Advance Programme, and a more detailed paper (up to 4 pages size A4) will be required. The paper will appear in the Conference Digest. Abstracts should be sent to the Conference Organiser: Dr. Michael West, The Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1X 4BS, England