The Cars: this year’s model shifts into overdrive

Heartbeat City, the Cars on Elektra Records.

Ranging in style from the gritty guitar chording of “Magic” to the synthesized ambience of “Drive,” the Cars’ latest album is a consistently interesting synthesis of the experimental thrust of the albums Panorama and Betrayed (singer-guitarist Ric Ocasek’s solo LP), and the polished, hook-laden pop of Shake It Up. On 1983’s Betrayal, Ocasek – the Cars’ principal songwriter – made his most extensive use of synthesizers to that date, in both his new-waveish pop and his more experimental, atonalic pieces. A number of songs on this album are similarly synth-dominated, although more conventionally structured. “Looking For Love” sustains interest by alternating wistful yet sensuous passages a la Royalty with snappy pop passages in the chorus. “Drive” is a slow, moody song filigreed with precise, delicate keyboard lines and complemented nicely by bassist Ben Orr’s broadly crooning. “Why Can’t I Have You?” is another slow-paced, evocative song, with a synthesized string section before the fade and Ocasek’s most sensual lyric: “Dreamy lips set in motion flashing Bretonse bowls pouring soft tasting.” On the other hand, “It’s Not The Night,” a collaboration between Ocasek and keyboardist Greg Hawkes, seems an attempt to avoid Ocasek’s successes; growing guitars propel the song and keep it miles away from the unoriginal knob-twiddling of “Bettie-B柬deau’s” synthesizer effort, “Out of Control.” A brief synth solo of obnoxious sound effects, preceded by a chorus of Chipmunks-like electronic altered voices (“Hello Again”), is the only visible symptom of technological inflation. Ocasek doesn’t neglect the energetic guitar-driven pop that launched the Cars with “Just What I Needed” and kept them cruising smoothly with the Shake It Up.

Presidential politics was never this easy

President Carter’s decision to run for re-election has given everyone else who ever dreamed of being president of the United States, a State-  

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A different kind of Shakespeare

King Lear, by William Shakespeare, illus-  

ted by Ian Pollott, Workman Publish-  

ing, $18.95.

Perhaps the most grandiose of Shake---  

peare’s tragedies, King Lear has recently  

attracted multi-media attention. Dir. Laur-  

ence Olivier starred in a television version,  

Albert Finney portrayed a very aged  

Shakespearean actor who plays King Lear  

during World War II in the film The  

Dresser, and “Noted Neo-primitive  

pictures, an in-  

ventive  

synthesizer meshes with the heartbeat-steady  

mechanical sounding synthesizer; then the  

other instruments kick in, and the synthes-  

izer merges with the heartbeat-steady  

rhythm section.”

With the successful cross-breeding of di-  

verse styles, Heartbeat City offers some-  

thing for every music fan. Avoiding both  

mechanical synth-pop remoteness and  

unsuited guitar-grinding, the Cars’ latest album delivers a beat with heart.

Mark Pandors