Protecting Groups; by P. Kocienski; Thieme: Stuttgart, **2003**; 3rd Edition, 668 pp, € 129, ISBN 3 -13-137003-3

This is a 'must-have' book for all organic synthesis chemists. Not only does it contain a wealth of new information but also it is beautifully written and is a pure joy to read. It is not just a book on protecting groups rather it guides the reader, through its choice of selected examples, to a deeper understanding of the subject which is so important for the finer details of synthetic planning and is the true art of the subject.

Chapter one is particularly instructive in setting the scene for what follows and also very clearly catalogues and defines the concept of orthogonal sets and the principal types of protecting methods one experiences in synthesis programmes.

While the next chapters detail protection methods for specific functional groups these are not covered in isolation and their compatibility with other functional arrangements was clearly evident. The colour coding in all the examples was helpful and provided a very rapid focus for the key transformations. I liked particularly the wide choice of examples and the breadth that was covered. I especially liked the informative examples where things did not go to plan or where the methods were contrasted with alternative procedures or conflicted with other previous observations. The experimental detail over the arrows was a great improvement over other texts, as were some of the tips and tricks of the trade that have been gleaned from the original publications.

After reading the various chapters one has considerable confidence of what is likely to work in specific situations, but more importantly one comes away with improved knowledge that protecting groups are not innocent bystanders and are very much an integral part of all-successful organic synthetic planning. To relegate them in the design component of a synthesis courts disaster.

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