



FR 560034
© 2017 ELEKTRA RECORDS



CANDY-O • THE CARS

THE SWEET SMELL OF SUCCESS, THE SECOND TIME AROUND

BY ELLIOT EASTON, AS TOLD TO DAVID WILD

"There are no second acts in American lives," F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *The Last Tycoon*. Thankfully, there are second albums, and by the time The Cars' second album, *Candy-O*, hit record stores in June 1979, the band was, if not quite a group of rock 'n' roll tycoons, then definitely a road-tested unit firing on all cylinders in their increasingly high-profile musical lives. *Candy-O* found The Cars moving forward in high style. Instead of recycling a set of leftover songs that could have been on the band's smash 1978 debut, these young men and their famed producer Roy Thomas Baker opted to go west to Los Angeles, where they cut a strong and memorable set of mostly fresh new tracks.

Taken as a whole, the songs on *Candy-O* do not stray too far from the sonic territory The Cars had so memorably covered on their smash debut. Yet this time, the album's production seemed to more closely reflect the band's increasingly confident live sound with a slightly less glossy sonic texture featuring fewer stacked vocals. The result would prove to be a compelling second chapter in the sweet success story of The Cars, with *Candy-O* reaching #3 on the *Billboard* 200 Album chart—15 spots higher than the band's debut effort. Similarly, "Let's Go"—the instantly infectious, propulsive and upbeat first single from *Candy-O*—transported The Cars for the first time into the Top 15 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 singles chart. In the end, the deliciously titled *Candy-O*—graced by that alluringly sketchy and provocative cover image by famed *Playboy* and *Esquire* pin-up girl artist Alberto Vargas—forever captured the bracing sight and sound of a band rushing toward its destiny and confidently declaring "Let's Go."

—David Wild



How the hell do you overcome the dreaded sophomore slump?

With *Candy-O*, our band somehow managed to answer one of the eternal questions in rock 'n' roll history. In a way, that became our overriding theme for *Candy-O*. The problem for any group lucky enough to be making a second album soon becomes pretty damn obvious. Basically, it all comes down to this: you have your whole life to prepare for your first big album. Then once that debut comes out and actually hits, the clock starts ticking, and you have just a few months to try and follow up and not fall flat on your face.

So how exactly did The Cars manage to pull off this risky and often dangerous maneuver? First, it really helps if you've got a very talented and very prolific songwriter, and we definitely had one of those in Ric Ocasek. Right there, we were starting the second album process with another strong batch of songs. Humbly or not, it also helped a lot that we had a pretty great band to actually help arrange and play those strong songs. Thankfully, by this point in our story, Ric, Greg Hawkes, Ben Orr, David Robinson and I were really hitting our stride as a musical unit. We could take an excellent song and together transform it into an excellent record—which you soon learn can be two very different things. A strong demo is still just a demo, and Ric's demos in those days could be quite skeletal—maybe just Ric, a beat box, and a rhythm guitar. The way The Cars worked, we'd listen to Ric's demo and figure out together as a band where to take it.

At that stage, The Cars were already very much a band, and we would do what bands do best—kick around musical ideas until everybody was happy. And to have a legendary producer like Roy Thomas Baker there helped make all things possible. Roy had already done classics like "Bohemian Rhapsody" with Queen, and he brought an atmosphere of fun, where *everything* goes. At times, it was like making a record with a Monty Python character. There was no such thing as too much of a good thing with Roy. Sometimes he would use cardboard to cover up the VU meters on the board because the needles would be pinned past their absolute limits. We'd ask, "Gee, Roy, aren't you worried about distortion on the tape? Roy would just laugh and say, "No, my dears, this is called tape saturation and it gives a certain compression to the drums so they *pop*." The man knew how to manipulate analogue sounds to sound GREAT on radio then. And all these years later, these songs *still* sound great.

You can only make your big debut and be the new kid in town once, yet compared to our first album, *Candy-O* sounds a little more like our actual band—a little more stripped down, fewer big, stacked vocals. The reason for that is pretty logical. The Cars were only formally together for a year or so before we got signed to Elektra and went to London to cut our debut album with Roy. In a sense, we were still warming up and really becoming The Cars back then. Yet in many ways, we were *ready*. By that point, we'd all been in several bands. David had drummed with The Modern Lovers. Ric and Ben had been in Milkwood, and then joined up with Greg in Richard and the Rabbits. Then with me, we had already played as Cap'n Swing. So we were now all ready to really make a go of it.

Still, there was a big difference between the band that made *The Cars* in London and the same five guys that went to Los Angeles to record *Candy-O*. After all, we were working in L.A. now. So we saw a lot of things we had never seen before, and that's bound to affect the way Ric was writing and the way we were playing. We were so green when we made the first album, so excited to get to fly to London, work in AIR London studios. Suddenly, we'd had George Martin drop by to say hello, and Paul McCartney working in the next studio. For a Beatle-loving kid from Long Island like myself, who had never been north of Boston or south of D.C., this was pretty heady stuff. We had so much fun making *The Cars* album in London that I remember us sitting around at the time and talking about how we just hoped the album sold well enough so that we could make another one.

Then, with the first album coming out and doing so well, doors were opening for us everywhere, so we went everywhere in America, and in Europe too. That first album found us both opening for established acts and headlining our own shows, in smaller venues. So we might open for Foreigner in an arena, but we also might play our own gig in a theater, or even a small club like The Bottom Line. But by the time of *Candy-O*, we were a *much* more seasoned band. We knew a little more about the music business, and maybe about life too. I don't want to psychoanalyze Ric's intentions with the songs, but you could hear songs like "Let's Go" and "Dangerous Type," and sense we were a more worldly band.

While working on *Candy-O*, I remember recording at Cherokee Studios and living at the Sunset Marquis hotel with the guys. Los Angeles was sort of the center of the music world, so we ran into

everybody, but we still worked pretty hard. I recall staying up late at the Sunset Marquis working on my guitar solos—which were usually added last. Socially, The Cars were always an interesting bunch. This was definitely not a group of guys who went to high school together and were the same age and liked all the same records. Instead, we met in Boston, we came from all over the country, and there was an age spread in the band. And we all loved different music. So The Cars' chemistry wasn't so much about what we all had in common, as it was what we all brought to the party and how it all added up to even more than the sum of our assorted Cars parts.

One of my favorite songs on *Candy-O* has always been "Got A Lot On My Head." I was listening to a lot of Chris Spedding at the time, and I lifted a little of Chris' sound for that song. I loved "Candy-O," which really rocked, "Since I Had You," "Dangerous Type." I also really liked "Night Spots"—which was something we'd tried earlier for *The Cars*—and "Shoo Be Doo," which was sort of an homage to Suicide, who opened for us around that time and scared the hell out of our crowds. Greg and I would wait in the wings and watch Alan Vega from Suicide dodging cups of beer, ashtrays, everything being thrown their way by the crowd. Then, of course, "Let's Go" was a big hit—an easy to digest pop song that Ben just sang beautifully.

The fact that Vargas did our album cover for *Candy-O* was a big story at the time. That was one of the last things Vargas ever drew, and he even came to see us play at the Universal Amphitheatre. He was a sweet, cheerful guy, and I got the sense he loved seeing all the young pretty girls at our show too. I wasn't as involved with our album art as David Robinson, and personally I wouldn't have minded having the band on our covers more instead of all those pretty girls, but people seemed to like them.

Looking back, success wasn't spoiling The Cars around the time of *Candy-O*. We were a group of guys still full of excitement, but tempered by a little experience. From my point of view, I don't think we were overwhelmed by the pressure to live up to the high standards of the first album. Strangely, we were feeling pretty confident at that point. Ric was writing his ass off. It was like he was bringing us presents to open up and play with every day. Then it became a group effort to wrap those songs up just right, and I feel like on *Candy-O*, we did. We were not some band of brothers—we were different guys with different perspectives, but we spoke to each other and we listened to each other, and the rest became music history.



LET'S GO

she's driving away with the dim lights on
she's making a play and she can't go wrong
she never waits too long
she's winding them down on her clock machine
and she won't give up 'cause she's seventeen
she's a frozen fire
she's my one desire
and i don't want to hold her down
don't want to break her crown
when she says, let's go
i like the nightlife baby
she says, let's go
she's laughing inside 'cause they can't refuse
she's so beautiful now she doesn't wear her shoes
she doesn't like to choose
she's got wonderful eyes and a risqué mouth
and when i ask her before she said she's holding out
she's a frozen fire
she's my one desire

SINCE I HELD YOU

i really love the way you talk
i don't mind saying so
oo i love it when you dance
so silky slow, baby please don't go
i know you refuse to get involved
you won't help me out none
you run around like a paperdoll
pretending it's fun, baby please don't run
something in the night just don't sit right
looks like i'm going to be up all night
it's been such a long time
since i held you
i won't forget the way you said
it doesn't bother you much
tutor impressions in your head
just before the last touch that meant so much

IT'S ALL I CAN DO

one too many times i fell over you
once in a shadow i finally grew
and once in a night i dreamed you were there
i cancelled my flight from going nowhere
it's all i can do
to keep waiting for you
it's all i can do
one too many times i twisted the gate
when i was crazy i thought you were great
i kept my renditions of you on the wall
where holiday romance is nothing at all
you wait in the wing like a saturday flirt
protecting the judge you don't want to get hurt
once in a moment it all comes to you
as soon as you get it you want something new

DOUBLE LIFE

it takes a fast car lady to lead a double life
it takes a slow star lady if you want to do it twice
you take your backseat rumble
take your frontseat wife
it takes a fast car lady to lead a double life
it takes a light foot lady to lead a double life
it takes a good book maybe if you want to do it nice
when you idle at the stop light
you better get the signal right
light foot lady, you lead a double life
lift me from the wondermaze
alienation is the craze
and it's all gonna happen to you
and you think it's a phase
and it's all gonna happen to you
when you drive in a haze
it takes a freeway lady to lead a double life
it takes some leeway lady if you want to do it twice
neon blinking on the street
everyone is bittersweet
freeway lady, you lead a double life

SHOO BE DOO

it's funny honey but you don't care
you never want to take me anywhere
you ride around in your cadium car
you keep wishing upon a star
why is it you don't care
don't you go making eyes at me
don't remind me
don't you tell me what to do
shoo be doo

CANDY-O

candy o i need you
sunday dress ruby rings
candy o i need you so
could you help me in
purple hum, assorted cards
razor lights, you bring
and all to prove you're on the move
and vanishing
candy o i need you so
candy o i need you so
the edge of night distract yourself
obstacles don't work
homogenize, decentralize
it's just a quirk
different ways to see you through
all the same in the end
peculiar star that's who you are
do you have to win

NIGHT SPOTS

could be you're crossing the fine line
a silly driver kinda, off the wall
you keep it cool when it's t-t-tight
eyes wide open when you start to fall
you go dancing in the dim lit club
some pressure cooker crawls up on his knees

flashing sensation like a one on one
stomping around in the jitterbug breeze
oo how you shake me up and down
when we hit the nightspots on the town
it's all behind you when you do catch on
you keep your lovers in a penny jar
a real romantic with a sultry stare
you keep messing with your blonde long hair
it's just an automatic line

YOU CAN'T HOLD ON TOO LONG

i can't put out your fire i know it's too late
i can't be up for hire it's not my best trait
the gallow glass is cracking it's starting to smash
how can you cry without blinking a lash
you're feeling cross and wavy on the edge of the cuff
you're pushing and popping you don't get enough
you wish that it was over you never slow down
you're looking for kicks there's nothing around
you can't hold on too long it's alright
you can't hold on too long it's alright
you're surrounded by the laughing boys
they puncture your style
they send for their bandanas you try for their smile
you'd like to come in colors you don't know which one
you can't be too choosy it's just for fun

LUST FOR KICKS

he's got his plastic sneakers
she's got her rosbuck purse
he's got his butane flicker
she's got it worse
they're crazy about each other
like a misplaced fix they're mad about each other
they blame it all on the lust for kicks
he's got his own dumb waiter
she's reading one fell swoop
he gets around to it later

she fills the scoop
he's just a hit parader
she's just a cycle ride
he likes to masquerade her
and she tells him lies

GOT A LOT ON MY HEAD

i got a lot on my head
most of it is you
i got a lot on my head
can't forget about you
lock me away where the silly boys go
i'm on top of my nerves don't you know
take me apart 'cause i'm out of control
send me a letter on a midnight scroll
dance by the window in flamingo pink
go through the motions in your romeo mink
condition's red disposition's blue
why am i so attracted to you
trip down the alleyway take the back stairs
i know it's good but good isn't fair
that's what you said flashbulb in your eye
how can i hold you when you're waving good bye

DANGEROUS TYPE

can i touch you are you out of touch
i guess i never noticed that much
geranium lover i'm live on your wire
come and take me who ever you are
she's a lot like you
the dangerous type
she's a lot like you
come on and hold me tight
inside angel always upset
keep on forgetting that we ever met
can i bring you out in the light
my curiosity's got me tonight
the museum director's with their high shaking heads

they kick white shadows until they play dead
they want to crack your crossword smile
can i take you out for a while

all songs written by ric ocasek © 1979 lido music, inc. (ascap)

ORIGINAL ALBUM CREDITS:

PRODUCED BY: ROY THOMAS BAKER
ENGINEERED BY: GEOFF WORKMAN FOR A.T.B.
AUDIO VISUAL PRODUCTIONS LTD.
ASSISTANT ENGINEER: GEORGE TUTKO
RECORDED AT: CHEROKEE STUDIOS, L.A.
MASTERED AT: STERLING SOUND, N.Y. BY GEORGE MARNO

REISSUE CREDITS:

REISSUE PRODUCED FOR RELEASE BY JOHN HUGHES
MASTERED BY TED JENSEN AT STERLING SOUND
MASTERING SUPERVISED BY RIC OCASEK
TRACKS 12, 15 & 16 PRODUCED BY ROY THOMAS BAKER
PRE-PRODUCTION & ENGINEERING BY MICHAEL YOUNG ON TRACKS
12, 14, 16 & 17
PRODUCT MANAGER: STACY CONDE
ART DIRECTION: DAVID ROBINSON
DESIGN: MIKE JOYCE
PHOTOS: JEFF ALBERTSON & ERIC BLUM
MODEL IN COVER PAINTING REFERENCE SHOTS: CANDY MOORE
MANAGEMENT: JEFF KRAMER AND DAN BARNARD FOR
OK MANAGEMENT CO.
PROJECT ASSISTANCE: KRISTIN ATTARWAY, REDDIE COLLINS, SHERYL
FARBER, SUSANNE SAVAGE, SHANNON WARD, STEVE WOOLARD

