

THE CARS



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PANORAMA

PANORAMA • THE CARS

A DARKER VIEW AND THE SHOCK OF THE NEW

As a band, The Cars were always so far ahead of their time, they managed to shake it up *not* on 1981's *Shake It Up*, but rather on one studio album earlier, 1980's *Panorama*. This was a gutsy song cycle that saw the group bravely expanding its wide-angle view of the musical universe. From that evocative racing finish-line flag image on the cover to the compelling and sometimes challenging music contained within, *Panorama* took Cars fans on a dark ride into the '80s that featured a few fascinating left turns and incorporated some experimental excursions along the way.

Ultimately, some saw *Panorama* as the band's most risky triumph, while others felt it hit a critical and commercial speed bump. Still, The Cars' career momentum was such that *Panorama* hit #5 on the *Billboard* 200 album chart, while the album's first and biggest single, "Touch And Go," managed to break into the Top 40, peaking at #37. Artistic success is not as easily charted, but "Touch And Go" was even singled out for praise by no less an authority than John Lennon, in one of his final interviews, for the ways the band was marrying rock's past and present. Ultimately, *Panorama* may not have been to everyone's tastes, but this dark gem found The Cars continuing to win by daring to wave their own creative flag boldly.

—David Wild



For years *Panorama* had been my favorite Cars album (it has since reverted back to The Cars' first album), and to me it represents The Cars' most stylized, adventurous and quirky period. It was also our first album of the 1980s, and we were absorbing more industrial and electronic influences.

Our first album, *The Cars*, was recorded at AIR Studios in London, and *Candy-O* was recorded at Cherokee Studios in L.A. For our third album, our producer Roy Thomas Baker suggested we pick where to record. We picked the Power Station in New York and spent two or three weeks working there before it became clear Roy was unhappy with the situation, so we moved back to Cherokee and L.A. and basically started over.

On our first two albums we recorded the basics together as a band and we had been playing most of those songs live for a while. On *Panorama* it was a whole new batch of songs, and we were starting to use drum machines and sequencers more. Sometimes one of the new songs might be started with a drum machine pattern and a couple of sequencers and then we would build up the track layer by layer. I had always thought of The Cars as a sort of "pop arty" band, and the new songs were definitely leaning toward the arty side, rather than the pop. Even the album's most notable single, "Touch And Go," has a quirky, syncopated feel to it. The verses in particular have an odd combination of a 5/4 time signature in the drums and bass and 4/4 time in the keyboards and guitars, and somehow they all meet up for the chorus. The song also contains one of my favorite Elliot Easton guitar solos ever.

The whole album was much moodier and darker than the first two albums had been. The opening song, "Panorama," is one of my favorites (perhaps the darkest song on the record) and contains none of the big background vocal hooks that had been part of our signature sound—it was replaced by a lone vocoder. "Misfit Kid" is another favorite (and should have been a single). A lot of the tracks have a more hypnotic feel to them, such as "Don't Tell Me No" (with a great vocal by Ben) and "You Wear Those Eyes," which has Ben doing the vocals on the verses and Ric singing on the choruses. "Down Boys" features a solo of electronic noises played by David Robinson on his Syn drums.



Panorama was a rewarding album to make. The Cars were all getting along together, and it was a creative period. However, at the time it was not especially well received by music critics. The *Boston Phoenix* started its review with the headline "The Cars Run Out of Gas." Oh, well. I guess you can't please everybody.

—Greg Hawkes



PANORAMA

i'm going to get what's coming to me
no surprises no impressions
hey what's wrong with you tonight
just sitting on your can can
doing the panoram
with nothing to contemplate
with nothing to search for
with nothing to integrate
with nothing to do
except think about you
with nothing to do
except fall for blue
i just want to be in your panorama
i'm going to take what's coming to me
no entanglements no compromise
get the picture i'm on my knees
looking at your hot shot
turning down your offer
i'm ripping it up
i'm looking away
i'm pulling my flag up
i'm miles away
with nothing to do
except think about you
i just want to be in your panorama
i'm going to find my way out of here
no pushing the buttons no deals with daddy-o
i'm going to get myself in trouble
and i'll take my chances
if i break your bubble

TOUCH AND GO

all i need is what you've got
all i'll tell is what you're not
all you know is what you hear
i get this way when you come near
then i know it's gone too far
oh oh i touched your star

and it felt so right
like the hush of midnight
until you said
with me it's touch and go
all i need is you tonight
i'm flying like a cement kite
in your headlock on the floor
who could ever ask for more
all i want is you tonight
i guess that dress does fit you tight
and how that look does make me shake
it almost looks too good to fake

GIMME SOME SLACK

i want to shake like liguardia
magic mouth in the sun
train ride to the courtyard
before you can run
down at the end of lonely street
where no one takes a walk
someone's lying at your feet
and someone's getting off
just gimme some slack
the seven floors of walkup
the odor musted cracks
the peeping keyhole introverts
with the monkeys on their backs
the rooftops strung with frauleins
the pastel pinned up sails
the eighteen color roses
against your face so pale
i want to float like euripides
all visions intact
i'm alright with felini fends
tripping over the track
down at the end of lonely street
where no one takes a chance
someone's in the cheap light
and someone wants to dance

DON'T TELL ME NO

it's my party you can come
it's my party have some fun
it's my dream have a laugh
it's my life have a half
don't tell me no
it's my transition it's my play
it's my phone call to betaray
it's my hopscootch light the torch
it's my downtime feel the scorch
it's my ambition it's my joke
it's my teardrop emotional smoke
it's my mercy it's my plan
i want to go to futureland

GETTING THROUGH

i don't want to be your party doll
all flaked out in tinsel town
circus mouth shooting all directions
with tv ads that sell erections
i got no clue what they want to do with you
it's just getting through getting through to you
living outside the misdemeanor
some get lost and some are screamers
it's easy to tell the great pretender
broken wings and flip top fenders
i don't want to be your suffering box
argue art or untie your knots
i don't want to be your bad connection
or fit into your reality vision

MISFIT KID

i dream frequently sometimes they come out funny
i go through insanity all they want is money
all these parties get so habitual
the same sea of faces
always pushing always pulling
always in the races
i get cooled out

i get the come ons
i get rumbled
i get crumbled
i'm the american misfit kid
still wondering what i did
i'm on the inside taking a fast ride
i'm stiletto so so sharp and i'm willing to cut
sometimes nebulous i'm ready to strut
lost and frantic new age romantic
checking out the race
never cared about what it meant
always loved disgrace
i get rhythm
i get cornflakes
i get fast love
i get wasted
i dream frequently sometimes they come out funny
i live with absurdity always warm and runny
all these parties get so ritual
lonely hearts and aces
always pushing always pulling always in the races

DOWN BOYS

you were trying to be cute
and it didn't work out
you were trying to be charming
and it didn't come off
you were trying to be clever
a big waste of time
you were trying to get rough
but you're waiting in line
you can't make it with the down boys
they don't hear a word you say
you can't make it with the down boys
just stay out of their way
you were trying to be sharp
but they couldn't wait
you were trying to be eternal
but that didn't rate

you were trying to be smooth
you're rough on the edges
you were trying to be hysterical
they didn't laugh
you were trying to be in
but they left you out
you were trying to be in
two different worlds
you were trying to be in
oscillation in shame
you were trying to be in
but you're lost in the game

YOU WEAR THOSE EYES

you wear those eyes that never blink
you always were the missing link
you paint your mouth you let me know
you really are the only show
just take your time
'cause it's not too late
i'll be your mirror
so you won't hesitate
i'm easy to be found
whenever you come down
you got that walk you do the stroll
you make me lose my ground control
you got that look i can't resist
like something missing never kissed
you do the pogo without the bounce
you got the name i can't pronounce
you fall in love you like the sting
you make believe it's everything

RUNNING TO YOU

i'm coming around
i want you to come
i'm coming around
just for the fun
i'm having a real time

taking what's not mine
and i'm doing what i want to do
that's running to you
you're looking for someone
maniacal shots
you're looking for someone
over the top
i'm having a real time
reading your headline
and i'm doing what i want to do
you're hoping for someone
fits in the plan
you're hoping for someone
two in the hand
i'm having a real time
taking what's not mine
and i'm doing what i like to do

UP AND DOWN

do you have to be so hard to get
especially with those emerald eyes
you might have been a neon lover
but you didn't have to advertise
well come on well come on
you might have been a crackshot shooter
hung up on your figurine
under the cold and darkly sky
you're the only light i've seen
well come on well come on
and it happens everytime
i'm still hanging on the line
don't want to go up and down
you don't have to be so tough
i'll tell you when i've had enough
you don't have to reek with charm
you won't have to twist my arm
well come on well come on

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