



**Todd Rundgren:** Vocals, guitars

**Elliot Easton:** Guitars, vocals

**Greg Hawkes:** Keyboards

**Kasim Sulton:** Bass, vocals

**Prairie Prince:** Drums

Let the good times roll... again. This ain't your father's automobile, or your older brother's for that matter, but the emergence of The New Cars, comprised of original members of The Cars. Joining Elliot Easton on guitar and Greg Hawkes on keyboards, will be an all-star group of rockers in Todd Rundgren, fellow Utopia bassist Kasim Sulton, and Prairie Prince, former drummer for The Tubes. Each shares a passion for recreating the ground breaking music of The Cars, one of the most successful (and influential) bands of the "new wave" era.

The Cars' initial success was immediate. The Boston-based group's demo version of "Just What I Needed" was the first single from the band's debut album, *The Cars*, which reached #3 on the *Billboard* Pop album chart upon its release in 1978, and produced further hits such as "My Best Friend's Girl" and "Good Times Roll." Under the guidance of ace producers Roy Thomas Baker and Robert John "Mutt" Lange, a string of smash albums and singles followed. The 1979 sophomore release, *Candy-O*, went Top 20, producing the hits "It's All I Can Do" and "Let's Go." *Panorama*, in 1980, cracked the Top 5 on the strength of the hit single "Touch and Go," while the Top 10 release *Shake It Up* produced the title track hit and "Since You're Gone" in 1981.

It's been 17 years since The Cars last toured. Since then, bassist Benjamin Orr passed away from cancer, and, despite discussions over the years, lead singer Ric Ocasek and drummer David Robinson have decided not to participate in a reunion. But that hasn't stopped Easton and Hawkes, who have longed to get back on stage and play. The Cars' material has remained

popular to this day, both on radio and on national commercials such as the current Circuit City television campaign featuring “Just What I Needed.”

“We tried approaching it in different ways, but at the end of the day, Ric and David didn’t want to do it, but Greg and I did,” says Easton, of the process, which took on momentum when Rundgren joined he and Hawkes in the studio to work on Cars songs. “After all, the guitar and keyboards were the band’s musical nucleus, in terms of arrangements and hooks. Greg and I put the flesh on the bones of Ric’s songs. We helped craft and carve out the sound that people recognize as The Cars’ music.”

“This is our way of bringing The Cars into the 21<sup>st</sup> century,” nods Hawkes. “It’s a good opportunity to renew and reconnect, and to put it into a modern context. It’s a pretty exciting opportunity.”

The addition of Todd Rundgren, a celebrated performer, songwriter, producer and technology groundbreaker (with hits like “I Saw the Light,” “Hello It’s Me,” “Can We Still Be Friends” and “Bang the Drum” to his credit) is particularly exciting, as is the involvement of his longtime Utopia bandmate, acclaimed bassist and singer/songwriter Kasim Sulton, who has played with the likes of Meat Loaf, Celine Dion, Hall & Oates, Ronnie Spector and the Indigo Girls in his distinguished career. Rounding out the five-piece band is Prairie Prince, who embarked on a staggering 15 world tours in his career with pop rock group The Tubes and recorded albums with a variety of rock’s most notable musicians – seven of them with Rundgren himself.

“Suffice to say, the list for lead singer was a short one and Todd was at the top of it,” says Easton. “And we were thrilled that he was interested.”

Rundgren knew Elliot from when his band Utopia toured with The Cars and also worked with him on an album he produced for Jules Shear. “This is kind of a hybrid,” he says. “We got together for a brief rehearsal in L.A., just to work up a couple of the songs and see if I felt comfortable singing them. We all felt it sounded pretty good, so we’ve moved on to the next step, which is negotiating all the paperwork it takes to get something as complex as this off the ground.”

“It was incredible,” says Elliot of that first session. “Like falling off a log. Todd did an unbelievable job with the music. And it sounded like The Cars.

There was a lot of common ground. We all grew up on '60s pop music, the Beatles and Brian Wilson.”

Expect to hear all of The Cars’ big hits in concert, as well as some of Todd’s material, along with several new songs the band has already recorded.

“I’m still an artist in my own right,” says Todd. “We want to pay homage to The Cars...the songs are the essential core, what we’re hanging our hats on. People know the material and want to re-experience it in a live context.”

The group points to other similar situations where bands were forced to replace their lead singers, such as AC/DC, Van Halen, Fleetwood Mac, Pink Floyd, the Doors, Queen, or the most recent example, INXS.

“This is The New Cars,” insists Easton. “We’ll play people favorites, but eventually, we’ll introduce new songs that will stand on their own merit. Go from strength to strength. We didn’t want to just find ringers for Ric and Ben, trot out the hits and play the casino and state fair circuit. We want fans to accept us as what The New Cars are today - strong artists, and artists who make it just as good as we were. Greg and I dedicated our professional lives to establishing The Cars’ stylized sound and innovative approach to rock music. It’s our right to carry on if we want to.”

With bands like Fountains of Wayne, the Vines, the Killers, Interpol, Franz Ferdinand and others carrying on The Cars sound, there appears to be a new generation hungering for the original.

“The Cars’ music has aged very well,” says Easton. “It’s amazing. I think it would be great to bring back the real thing. Todd, Kasim, and Prairie are very dynamic performers. This band is, in many ways, even a better live attraction. The unique thing about The Cars, and the thing that’s helped it last so long is, it was certainly pop music, but there was always this sense of irony about it. The lyrics explored a darker side of relationships and life. It would be great if we could capture people’s imaginations all over again.”

Look for The New Cars to release a live album comprised of the greatest hits of The Cars along with new material. They will also embark on a headlining tour this year. It’s time to let the good times roll...again.