

PROGRAMME BOOK



NOVACON IN 49

The logo features the text 'NOVACON IN 49' in a stylized, metallic font. The 'O' in 'NOVACON' is replaced by a blue circular graphic with a white spiral. A horizontal line with four dots passes through the 'O' and the 'I' in 'IN'. The '49' is rendered in a large, blue, metallic font. A black rocket is positioned at the end of the horizontal line, pointing towards the right. The background is a dark space scene with a bright blue star and a purple nebula.

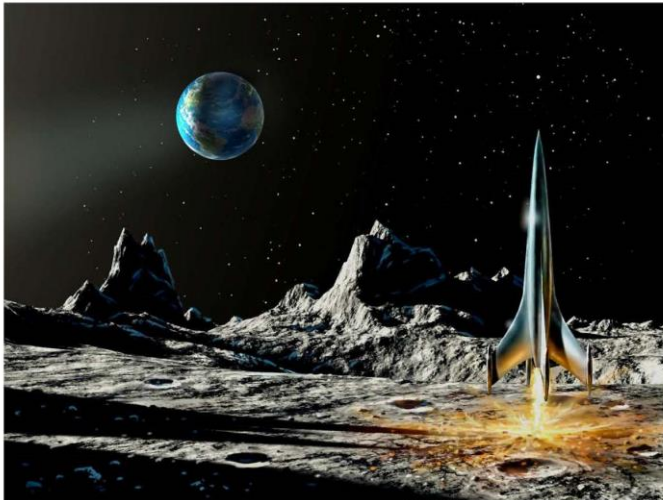
**8 – 10th November 2019**

**Mercure Nottingham Sherwood Hotel**

**Guest of Honour**

**Mike Carey**

**BIRMINGHAM**  
**Science fiction**  
**GROUP**



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**We meet on the second Friday of every month at the Briar Rose Hotel on Bennett's Hill in Birmingham, just 5 minutes walk from New Street Station and handy for all bus routes. Our meetings usually host a talk by an author or SF related guest. We have R. J. Barker in February and Ian Stewart, Danie Ware and Una McCormack later in the year. Our next meeting is our AGM and book auction on January 10<sup>th</sup> at 7.45pm. Admission to the AGM is free, normal meetings £6:00.**

**COME AND MEET US!**

**FOR ANY FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:**

**[WWW.BIRMINGHAMSFGROUP.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BIRMINGHAMSFGROUP.ORG.UK)**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>COMMITTEE PROFILES by DAVE HICKS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NOVACON CODE OF CONDUCT</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CONS, NO CONS AND NOVACONS by CHRISTOPHER PRIEST</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>GUEST OF HONOUR – MIKE CAREY by THERESA DERWIN</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CREEPY KIDS by MIKE CAREY</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>THE NOVACON PROGRAMME</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>MEMBERSHIP</b>	<b>29</b>

*Cover Image: Firework Nova - images-  
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## HELLO ALL

Welcome to Novacon 49.

The one thing I dislike about being Chair being required to write these pieces so this will be short and sweet, or at least short.

I hope you have a great time (or had a great time if you read this on the way home). All the preparation is done and we have a programme (*Doug we do have a programme?*)

The hotel is ready for us and the beer is here. So, all that is left is for you to relax and enjoy yourselves.

I would like to thank my committee for all the hard work that goes into making Novacon a good experience for you, John and Serena for a marvellous Art Show and a really big thank you to Mike Carey for agreeing to be our Guest of Honour.

Also, a thank you to you, our members as the most important thing about Novacon is you. You are the reason we do this.

So, relax and enjoy the weekend and don't forget to join Novacon 50 before you leave.

*Steve Lawson*

Ps: Regarding Novacon 50 and beyond, most of my wonderful committee have been running Novacon for a very long time and some of them are probably not going to continue after N50. I personally



*Figure 1 Chinese legend - Wan Hoo flies to the Moon*

would like Novacon to continue into the future but for that to happen we will need new people to take up the reins, yes I'm talking to you! Please think about helping out on the future committees. If you are interested please talk to me or any of the current committee, it really is a lot of fun. Honest.

*Image taken from – images-assets.nasa.gov /image /9513977 /9513977~orig.jpg*

## COMMITTEE PROFILES

The “end” of Game of Thrones, with its thrilling and bloodthirsty conflicts between noble and venerable houses, set me thinking about some other noble and venerable houses, indeed, ancient and feared houses within our own dear community of science fiction fandom...

### HOUSE LAWSON



Coat of arms: crossed gin & tonics on a giant spreadsheet.

Family seat: Castle Myrtle.

With his vast army of membership spreadsheets, this year's Chairman - and so often Memberships Officer for so many conventions - His Grace Steve Lawson commands a legion as fearful as any horde of the undead. And their e-mail addresses! Over the years he has amassed not just your contact details and dietary preferences in his Excel files, but the hexadecimal code for your very soul. There's only one thing stopping him from raising this mindless, undead army and destroying the world. He can't be bothered.

Ruling alongside, and slightly above, Steve, is Her Grace Alice Lawson. Alice is committee member without portfolio which is usually a euphemism for some sort of secret master or assassin in

these kinds of shows. While minions bring her craft gins with artisan tonics and Aldi pizzas, Alice wields power from behind the scenes without ever moving with arcane magic, or skype and e-mail as their acolytes call them.

## HOUSE STANDAGE-BOWLES

Coat of arms: Bunions rampant above stacked Indian take-away menus.

Family seat: Castle Harold (No, not “Castle Howard”, one of our finest stately homes – an ex council house in Oldbury)



What has become of Lord Richard and Lady Helena? For so long stalwarts of the Novacon committee they are nowhere to be seen at meetings. Have they been supplanted by their ambitious and ruthless daughter and committee member for social media, Viscountess Maggie Standage-Bowles? Are they, as they claim, busy eating curry and studying chiropody, or has Maggie thrown them into the dungeon (actually it's an outside privy) to claim her own seat at the big table\*

\*The 'big table' is in Tony Berry's dining room and is approx. 5' x 3'.

## HOUSE HARVEY

Coat of Arms: A big, I mean, really, big bottle of excellent red wine they got for, like, only 3 Euros just down the road from this little place, the lucky b\*st\*rds; on a background of roasted ducks.

Family seat: Le Chateau Banger de Mur.



Treasurer and web site manager respectively, the Lady Eve Harvey and Lord John Harvey are truly venerable. Really, really venerable. We're talking back when you could join Novacon with a postal order (all right, so we're a little bit older, now get on with it, you cheeky sod! – Eve). After leading long, brutal reigns of terror in fandom, first in Leeds then

London, House Harvey now presides over a brutal reign of nice dinners in Southern France.

## HOUSE GOODWIN

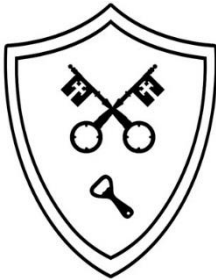
Coat of arms: Withdrawn

Family seat: Castle Black, otherwise known as the Briar Rose, Bennetts Hill, Birmingham.



This year's publications are brought to you by Dame Carol Goodwin, who committed some unspeakable crime and has been despatched to restore her family's good name by serving as commander of a collection of reprobates and brigands in the Night's Watch, I'm sorry, chair of the Birmingham Science Fiction Group.

Brandishing the fearsome weapons of Brum Group News in hand and a Novacon Progress Report in the other, Carol battles valiantly but mostly in vain so that one day somebody might, just might, submit their article before the deadline.

**HOUSE BERRY**

Coat of arms: Novelty bottle openers of the world in splendour; arrayed on a field of crossed keys.

Family seat: Ghasterly Rock

Ennobled due to a typing error, Baron Anthony (Tony) M Berry, Master Locksmith (ret.) is your hotel liaison for Novacon 49. You may think House Bolton's dungeons of hideous torture were bad, but until you've seen what the Baron can do with a searing griddle and red-hot tongs to an innocent sausage at a Committee barbecue, you ain't seen real suffering. The Baron's fortress is the principal venue for committee meetings which in true medieval style feature much quaffing and swearing.

**HOUSE SPENCER**

Coat of arms: Clangers trippant on an MC Escher style background where full beer glasses mysteriously turn into empty ones.

Family seat: Halfway House



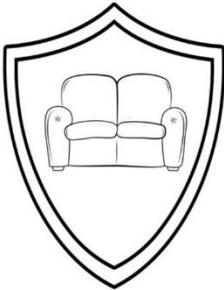
King Douglas of Spencer (not to be confused with King Spencer of Douglas who ruled the Isle of Man between Olave the Red and Eodred the Taupe in the 12th century) presides over a mighty empire that stretches from the comfy chair in the corner as far as the bit of the coffee table where the remote control usually lives. His majesty is responsible for this year's programme and has engaged at great expense\* a cavalcade of jugglers, fire eaters, tumblers, voluptuous gypsy dancing girls and even some writers of science fiction.

\* For 'great expense' please read 'minimal expense'.



## HOUSE COAST-HICKS

Coat of arms: A man with his trousers down above a woman covering her face in embarrassment.



Family seat: A knackered leather settee.

Your committee scribe is the Low Queen of the East Midlands, Cat Coast. As secretary she records every word said at meetings using ancient techniques such as quill pen and vellum, or MS Word 2008. Every action point is agreed, recorded and disseminated by Raven, resulting in prompt and decisive action by the rest of the committee (and if you believe that you've never been on a con committee!). Meanwhile the Low King is having this year off, driving the Queen to meetings, fetching drink and nibbles and being sarcastic in the corner. Some committee members claim not to have noticed any difference.

*Dave Hicks*

## NOVACON CODE OF CONDUCT

A Convention is a private event and, as such, the Committee has always had the right and the ability to remove any attendee for antisocial behaviour. Over recent years, it has become standard practice for such events to publish a Code of Conduct providing guidelines as to what that antisocial behaviour may include.

The Code of Conduct governs not only behaviour at Novacon, but also in certain spaces elsewhere, including but not limited to activity online, such as in messages or replies to Novacon accounts on social media, and posts in Novacon pages and groups.

The Novacon Code of Conduct team receives complete information from preceding Novacon Code of Conduct teams, and passes complete information to future Novacon Code of Conduct

teams. It also maintains an awareness of activity which has been of concern to other conventions.

For most people, the simple principle of “Behave like a decent human being” is enough of a guideline. However, just in case, these are the behaviours we feel lead to that result:

1. **Be welcoming.** We expect all our attendees to respect each other’s right to be at Novacon. In particular, discriminatory behaviour or harassment will not be tolerated.
2. **Be courteous** and aware we all have different sensitivities. If your language or behaviour is unwelcome to another attendee then stop. Anything else may be considered harassment.
3. **Be respectful** of other people’s boundaries. Physical contact should only occur with all parties’ enthusiastic consent. Remember, not everyone likes being hugged.
4. **Be aware** that communication may be verbal or non-verbal.

**Discrimination** includes, but is not limited to, discrimination on the grounds of: sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexuality, ethnicity, age, religion and mental or physical disability.

**Harassment** includes, but is not limited to, any behaviour that can be reasonably expected to disturb or intimidate another convention attendee. It includes the wearing of symbols associated with fascism and racism, independent of the intent of the wearer. Harassment may be verbal or non-verbal.

### **Dealing with discrimination or harassment**

If you feel comfortable, address the person and the problem behaviour directly. In most cases this will be all that is required.

If you are not comfortable with a direct approach, or it proves insufficient, then either:

- report the matter to the Duty Committee Member (look for the gold waistcoat). He/she will contact the Designated People who will come to talk to you as soon as possible, or
- contact one of the Designated People directly on the number below.

### **Convention Response and Responsibilities**

The Novacon Convention Committee is responsible for enforcing the Code of Conduct and for maintaining confidentiality. This responsibility is delegated in the first instance to a team of three people (the Designated People); at least one will always be a member of the Novacon committee, and at least one will not.

The complaint will be heard, in confidence, in a private place, and an appropriate response agreed upon with the complainant. This may be any of the following:

- Arbitration between the parties involved
- One, and only one, verbal warning.
- Rescinding of convention membership without refund and/or refusal of membership at future Novacons.
- Reporting the incident to the police.

The committee's decision in this matter is final.

If a complaint is made about you, either to your face via the Duty Committee Member or via the Designated People, your interaction with the complainant is over.

In cases of a dispute with the hotel, the committee will support the hotel and the hotel's own Code of Conduct.

The standard of judgement in these matters is the "reasonable person" standard as applied by the designated committee members. Attempts to "rules lawyer" the Code of Conduct will be seen as a sign of bad faith.

This Code of Conduct is considered to be a living document and is expected to evolve year on year. In advance of each convention, we fix the Code of Conduct for that convention. This is the iteration that will be in use Novacon 49. Constructive comments are welcome and will be considered when drawing up the Code of Conduct for next year's Novacon. Please address suggestions to the Code of Conduct team on the email below.

**Designated People for Novacon 49: contact numbers and email**

The three Designated People are **Alice Lawson, Douglas Spencer, and Laura Wheatley.**

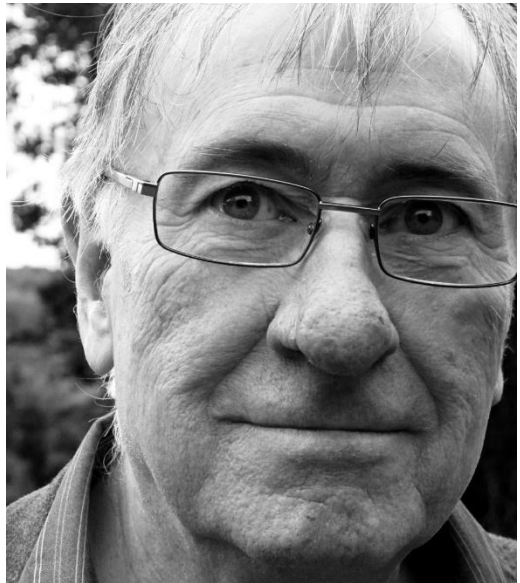
**Code of Conduct contact phone number: 07514 867 770**

**Code of Conduct team email: [CodeOfConduct@novacon.org.uk](mailto:CodeOfConduct@novacon.org.uk)**

## **Cons, No Cons and Novacons**

### **By Chris Priest**

I missed the first Novacon, in 1971. I can still remember as far back as that, but the reasons I didn't go to the convention have vanished. I suspect that the expense had something to do with it – I was always broke in those days. I had been freelancing as a writer for two or three years, but money was a constant struggle. I went to Novacon the second year, and for several subsequent years. It was soon for me a favourite, always affordable somehow.



Nearly half a century later a lot of things have changed, but astonishingly Novacon goes on. I was born near Manchester (in fact, in a semi-posh suburban village called Heald Green, on the southern edge of the city), and all through my childhood I felt Manchester-centric. My parents were Londoners – they had moved north in 1940 to escape the Blitz, and clearly missed their southern background. But I only knew Manchester, which in those days was not at all like what it is now. Much of it had been flattened by German bombs (there turned out after all to be no escape from the Blitz), and what had not been turned into acres of wasteland and rubble was grubby with the black grime of industry. I grew to know it, though, and came to terms with it.

At the end of the fifties the family moved back south, which because I had to leave everything and everyone I had known was an upheaval. Suddenly living near London, and working as a naive school-leaver in my first job in the city, was a novelty, although that soon wore off. I was being trained as an accountant: a cruel and horrible experience, which I failed at, and from which I was unceremoniously booted out in due course. There is nothing whatsoever to recommend it.

Socially I was adrift. I realized that deep down I must be a Londoner somehow, because as the novelty of living there disappeared I gradually began to know and feel at home in the place. I was still saddled, though, with the Mancunian accent I had picked up at school. I discovered that Londoners tend to treat strangers with northern accents as being a bit moronic. I set about trying to lose my flat Mancunian vowels, just as many years earlier, when I had started school, I had had to lose the London vowels I learned as a small child from my parents. I don't think I ever quite made it.

By the middle of the 1960s I was at the end of my accountancy career (that's not the right word for it – my accountancy debacle). I had gained an interest in science fiction and had started, extremely tentatively, to try writing some of the stuff myself. The

first convention I went to was in 1964, in Peterborough. No one knew I was a wannabe writer – even I wasn't sure so I kept it strictly to myself. I was amazed and pleased to be surrounded by like-minded people from all over the country: notably with contingents from Belfast, Liverpool, Manchester and Brum, as well as London, etc. The variety of regional accents made me believe I was in a big family. I think it was partly this that made me feel at home at a convention. I have never really lost the habit since.

But in recent years I have had to ration myself. I am invited to many conventions abroad, so have cut down on cons in the UK. Going abroad is not always as wonderful as it might seem on the face of it. I have been in dodgy foreign hotels, eaten much horrible food, suffered silently on European, Asian and Australian railways and buses. Some conventions are greatly enjoyable. Others – well, my lips are sealed, in any one of the dozen or so languages I have discovered I do not speak. The people who invite you mean well, and it's not always their fault. Travel broadens the mind, it is said, but in my experience of many cramped budget flights and interminable train journeys it also wears out your bum, makes your back ache and sometimes (not always) gives you the squits. You learn a lot about other countries' ideas about science fiction. That's intriguing, and not at all what you expect. You feel inadequate not being able to communicate in Portuguese, Ukrainian, Hebrew, Italian, French, Russian, etc. From this humbling experience you learn how important interpreters are, and how hard they work for you. Even so, there is for everyone always something to gain, something to learn from, something to enjoy.

But after more than fifty years in this business, I am now cutting down on the perverse delights of Easyjet and the many European versions of Ferrovie Italiane. Where once I tripped the light fantastic, or at least flew from Stansted, now it is once again a matter of the West Coast mainline and the crowded pleasures of great British motorways. For me, Nottingham and Brum have replaced all

the charms of Tel Aviv, of Nice, of Eindhoven, now more or less absent in my life. As I am wont to say: onwards!

**GUEST OF HONOUR - MIKE CAREY**  
**By Theresa Derwin**



I first met Mike Carey, aka M. R. Carey at an Alt Fiction/Edge Lit Con held annually at The Quad, Derby. This was when I was a fledgling and hopeful young author around ten or so years ago. I attended the day-long Con initially to network. But I'll be honest, it was also to stalk a few authors, including Tim Lebbon and Mike.

I remember watching a panel with Mike on it, hanging on every word; because I'd become a huge fan of the Felix Castor books. **THE DEVIL YOU KNOW: A FELIX CASTOR NOVEL**, was released in paperback on 6th April 2006. I bought the first one on a

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Waterstone's recommendation, probably even Helena thinking back. Either way, after devouring the soul of the first book, I used my mystical powers to track down all of the books released at that point.

The blurb on Amazon starts like this;

“Felix Castor is a freelance exorcist, and London is his stamping ground. At a time when the supernatural world is in upheaval and spilling over into the mundane reality of the living, his skills have never been more in demand. A good exorcist can charge what he likes - and enjoy a hell of a life-style - but there's a risk: sooner or later he's going to take on a spirit that's too strong for him.”

And it's more sooner, than later. I immediately fell in love with Felix, or Fix. He was gruff, a pretend-grinch, kind of hot in a noir vibe way, and funny as hell.

I liked the British-Dresden feel of the series, and I was desperate to find out the fate of his best friend Rafi Ditko, possessed by the demon Asmodeus. In book five, which I won't spoil, there is a major shift in Rafi's circumstances, leaving Fix in a real fix (pun intended). There was blood, violence, swearing, sex and comedy. And I adored it.

There are five books so far, but the climax of book five leaves it open to a highly anticipated book six. But as is always the way with these things, it's down to sales, and numbers.

However, given Mike's career now, I'm pretty sure he'd have no trouble releasing that one and making a quid or two.

Back to that Alt Fiction. Mike was warm, friendly, and sort of shocked when I turned up with five books to get signed. It wasn't long before we met again, and again, and ended up becoming Con-buddies. I attended a dialogue workshop of his a few years ago that improved my technique and got me writing *Avengers* fan fiction. And to top it off, I later got to interview Mike for the BSFG in April 2018.



It comes as no surprise to his fans, that Neil Gaiman approached Mike to write the *Lucifer* run of comics separate from *Sandman* after his run on *Constantine*.

Mike has gone on to bigger and better things, including THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS, and I couldn't be prouder and happier for him. And proud to still call him a friend.

## CREEPY KIDS

### By Mike Carey

DEADKIDSONGS is the title of a Toby Litt novel – translating the German KINDERTOTENLIEDER. To be honest, although it's a very cool and clever book it doesn't really deliver on that title. It hardly has any dead kids in it at all. But the horror genre as a whole seems to subsist on a steady diet of dead kids these days, and it's way past time somebody worked up a full taxonomic survey.

There's been a lot of blood under the bridge since Henry James observed that dropping a child into the middle of a scary story “gives the effect another turn of the screw”. Nobody has strenuously disagreed, as far as I know, and if they ever did the triumphant

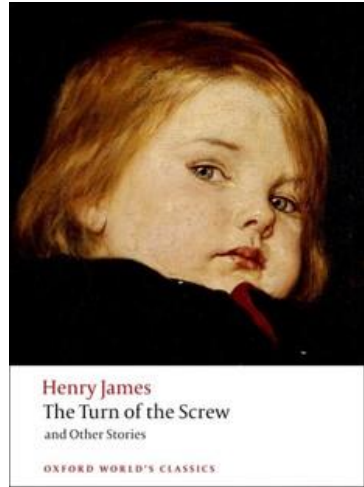


Figure 2 Ringu - 1988 film

arrival of RINGU in 1998 (the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of James's novella) ended the debate for good and all.

Not all creepy kids are equal, though, and – in the words of the old Japanese proverb – one Sadako doesn't make a Summer.

The narrator in *THE TURN OF THE SCREW* starts off as a listener, part of the audience for a spine-tingling tale in which a ghost appears to a little boy and terrifies him when his mother is sleeping in the same bed. Not a creepy kid at all, in other words; just a threatened one, with the elements arranged to provide maximum terror. The child is young, innocent, helpless; the adult who ought to protect him is close at hand but unavailable. Enter ghost, stage left, and action.



*Figure 3 The Turn of The Screw – Henry James*

James's narrator, Douglas, counters in a way that we can all recognize and maybe relate to. "I'll see your little boy and raise you a little girl." It's that blunt and basic: my story will beat yours by doubling down.

Which it does. Or maybe doesn't, depending on how you feel about *THE TURN OF THE SCREW*. But Douglas's story doesn't just raise the stakes numerically – it raises them existentially too, by making the children, Miles and Flora, be vectors of evil as well as victims of it. The ghosts prey on the kids, but also possess them and enlist them in some dark and corrupt enterprise that's never entirely specified.

So the kids have an ambivalent status in the story. The governess fights to free them from the clutches of the evil dead, but at key points she seems to treat them as enemies in that fight, or at least as being co-opted by the enemy and not to be trusted. And (spoiler alert) her final solution to the dilemma is kind of reminiscent of that Peter Arnett quote from the Vietnam War: "In order to save the village, we had to destroy it".



*Figure 4 Ju-On film 2002*

It seems to me that this ambivalence has been the cornerstone of the creepy kid sub-genre of horror ever since. A child is the perfect signifier for imperilled innocence. So perfect that adding a big helping of evil intent doesn't change a thing. The child who wants to eat your brains or rip your heart out or drag you down to Hell is still a victim as well as a monster. Sadako in RINGU is murdered by her father. Okay, maybe she was already evil before that, and the murder is just a belated attempt to assert some parental discipline. But Toshio in JU-ON/THE

GRUDGE is a complete innocent until he's killed, and the dark magic that swallows him and transforms him comes from somebody else's vengeful rage. Pity and terror are meant to be the core emotions inspired by tragedy. The monster-child arouses both.

Of course, once that template exists you can play variations on it until the cows come home. The cute little dead girls in THE SHINING are conceptually very close to Toshio – innocent victims swallowed up and transformed by the same evil that killed them. But Tomas in The Orphanage is ambivalent in a different way – tragically misinterpreted by the adults who see him, and only lethal because of the actions he prompts in others.



*Figure 5 The Shining film 1980*

And Eli in Lindqvist's sublime *LET THE RIGHT ONE IN* steers a relentlessly autonomous course between the adult characters, whose cruelties and failings put the curse of vampirism into a very different perspective.

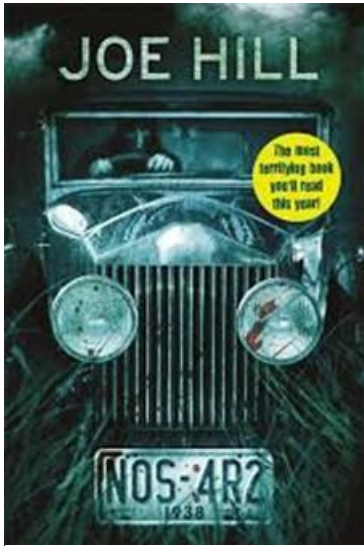


Figure 6 *NOS-4R2* by Joe Hill

them to save, and if there is how do you access it? It's a wonderful book, as terrifying and emotionally intelligent as all Hill's work, and it starts where most creepy kid narratives leave off.

Vincent Cronin's *THE PASSAGE* also tilts the clichés on their axes. His protagonist, Amy, makes the transition from human to vampire very early on in the narrative, but the subset of vampire traits she takes on allows her to remain a

One of my favourite recent iterations of the scary child trope is Joe Hill's *NOS4A2* (or *NOS4R2* in my UK edition). The ontological status of Charlie Manx's child victims remains a mystery throughout the book, and is only resolved when Vic McQueen finally gets to visit Manx's nightmare theme park, Christmasland, for herself. Vampirised by Manx's Rolls Royce, which is somewhere between a feeding appendage and an evil twin, the kids have become amoral monsters – but is

there anything human left of

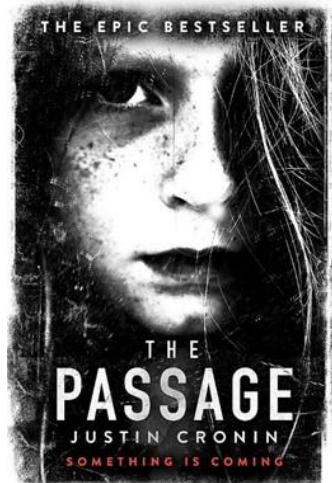


Figure 7 *The Passage* - Justin Cronin

sympathetic and relatable character – while also allowing us as readers to peer into the greater depths of alienation experienced by the vampire hive-minds of the Twelve.

I've been working my way around to my own novel, *THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS*, for which I'd like to give a subtle plug while we're in the neighbourhood. My scary child protagonist, Melanie, is in some ways a lot like Eli and Amy. Like Eli and Amy she looks at us across a sort of great divide – clearly and definably no longer human. And as with Eli and Amy our reaction to her monstrosity is tempered by the various kinds of human evil she encounters. She's unlike them in other respects, though. When we first meet her she has far less autonomy, less freedom of choice and action. Confined on an army base and almost completely ignorant of what's outside it, she relies on old stories and superannuated textbooks to build up a sense of the world.



*Figure 8 The Girl With All the Gifts - film 2016*

When the base is destroyed, she has to learn for herself how the world works – and what her own place in it is. The novel dramatises that coming of age process, while also retelling the myth of Pandora in a post-apocalyptic landscape. But it's Melanie's experience that drives it, and Melanie's realisation of her own differentness that pushes it to its final crisis.

I was aware as I was writing it that every monster worth meeting ultimately shows us our own reflection. Through the creepy child, specifically, we can explore notions of innocence and experience, power and powerlessness, parental and social

responsibility. And of course, as in all good horror, what it means to be human.

## **NOVACON 49 PROGRAMME**

### **Friday**

#### **19:00 Opening Ceremony**

Meet Guest of Honour Mike Carey and the entire Novacon 49 committee, and find out what the weekend has in store.

#### **19:30 Desert Island Books**

Guest of Honour Mike Carey has chosen six books and two pieces of music to accompany him to his desert island. Here he tells us what he's chosen, and why. Beware, there may be anecdotes. Eve Harvey helps to steer his reminiscences.

Mike Carey; Eve Harvey

#### **20:30 Room closed for turnaround to cabaret style layout.**

#### **21:00 A Celebration of Mike Carey's Work**

A chance to meet our guest in a less formal setting. There will be wine and nibbles – please imbibe responsibly.

#### **22:30 Competitive Whingeing Open Mic**

Now's your chance to step up to the microphone and have a whinge about what's going wrong in your world. Fierce members of the committee will be on hand to call time on dull contributors and enforce the Code of Conduct.

Alice Lawson



# ELEMETAL TALES

by Garry Kilworth



*"...one of our best storytellers, with a bold imagination that takes us places we never knew we would enjoy so much. The idea for this book, excellent in itself, spurs him to all kinds of alchemical magic reminiscent of the Arabian nights and similar story collections, but always pure Kilworth."*

—Kim Stanley Robinson



[www.pspublishing.co.uk](http://www.pspublishing.co.uk)

## **Saturday**

### **10:00 Science Talk: Dark Energy in the Laboratory**

When we look at the universe on the largest scales, we find that space is expanding. In fact, not only is it expanding, but its rate of expansion is accelerating, and we really don't know why. One possible explanation is that our theory of gravity is incomplete -- perhaps there is an as-yet unobserved type of particle that mediates gravitational forces. This solution is termed dark energy. An exciting theory of dark energy is the hypothetical chameleon particle, which has a rather curious property: its mass is not fixed, but rather varies depending on its surroundings. But chameleons, if they exist, cannot hide forever: a host of ingenious laboratory measurements are currently being performed to try to detect them. The hunt is on!

Benjamin Elder, University of Nottingham

### **11:30 Two SFF Librarians**

25 years ago, a slimmer and hairier Andy Sawyer set forth as librarian of the Science Fiction Foundation Collection at Liverpool University Library, and Arthur C. Clarke was awarded the first Honorary Degree ever conferred by satellite link. Andy will recall those nervous moments waiting for the links between Sri Lanka and Liverpool to actually connect, his favourite book from the collection, and other memories, and will talk about sf with his successor Phoenix Alexander.

Phoenix Alexander; Andy Sawyer

### **13:00 YA - Not Just For Kids**

Once upon a time there was no YA, just children's and adult's books. Many SF & F classics would be YA today eg Ender's Game, Anne McCaffrey's Menolly books etc. Yet many people



won't even try a book marketed as YA. The panel will discuss some of the reasons why the term YA arose, what it encompasses, and how useful or otherwise it might be for authors and readers. They will also discuss the perception versus the reality of what YA is, why there might be prejudice against it and where they see YA developing in the future.

Helena Bowles; Carol Goodwin (moderator); Anne Nicholls, Stan Nicholls; Elizabeth Priest

### **14:30 Mike Carey and Garry Kilworth in Conversation**

Garry and Mike talk about the short story form - its place in their own fiction, its relation to other media, their favourites and their approaches. They will also introduce their recent short story collections, and read short passages from recent work.

Mike Carey; Garry Gilworth; Nicky Crowther (PS Publishing)

### **16:00 To the Stars – on a Paintbrush!**

It is just about twenty years since the first planets were detected orbiting another star — ‘exoplanets’, as they have become known. Obviously, it is impossible to photograph them, so it is down to the artist to give us some idea of what they might look like, and what sort of conditions future star-travellers may expect to find. Hardy was one of the first artists to attempt to depict exoplanets; he also shows the vehicles which might take us there.  
Dave Hardy

### **17:30 How Fandom Turns Fans Into Pros**

One could argue that our kind of SF Fandom makes fans become pros in a way which other fandoms (romance novels? football?) don't. Why and how does that happen? What else does our fandom do that others don't? Is it changing?

Dave Hicks (moderator); Garry Kilworth; Christina Lake;  
Christopher Priest; Kari Sperring

**18:30 Room closed for turnaround to cabaret style layout.**

**19:00 Poetry Open Mic**

We promised the poets this item would run; if you like to hear poetry, this could be fun. It need not be all science-fictional verse. It need not be lengthy; it need not be terse. It need not have rhyme, or a metre, or form, but in Douglas's writing it seems that's the norm. If you write it, then bring it: a mic is available (we can't say if what you hear here will be saleable).  
Chris Morgan; Pauline Morgan; others

**20:30 Muddling Through – A Very British Dystopia, part 1**

A team-based workshop – what makes a dystopia? Are we in one now? How do we survive them, personally and as a society? Our facilitator has been busy watching and reading dystopian fiction and fake news and has lots of tricky questions.

Fran Dowd

**22:00 Dave Hick's Hovel of Games:**

A science fiction themed tribute to Richard Osman's *House of Games* hosted by Dave in the refined, sophisticated style you've come to expect from late night Novacon game shows. Specially selected witty and intellectual people recoiled in horror when asked to participate until Dave showed them the compromising pictures. As usual, we will also keep a score for the audience who usually win. Extra points for extreme pedantry.

Dave Hicks

## Sunday

### **10:00 Science talk: The Mysterious Pull of Dark Matter**

Every experiment we do in space tells us that most of the matter in the Universe exists in a form we cannot see. Not only is it dark in the literal sense, its precise nature also remains elusive. Yet although we cannot pinpoint the exact nature of Dark Matter, we know a remarkable amount about its properties. And most incredible of all, we can actually use it to probe deeper into the universe than ever before.

Rachael Livermore, Imperial College

### **11:30 Working With Artists**

What do editors and publishers do in order to find or commission the art they want? How do they combine it with other work from writers, designers and so on? What challenges are there in communicating with artists, and are there differences in communication styles? And what could they do better from the artists' point of view? How important is the artist to the finished product – the cover of a novel, the artwork in a comic?

Peter Buck; Zoe Burgess; Mike Carey; Pat McMurray (moderator); Alex Storer

### **13:00 Muddling Through – A Very British Dystopia, part 2**

A panel – with feedback from the earlier workshop, practical suggestions, and a reading / watching list.

Fran Dowd (moderator) plus representatives from yesterday's discussion

### **14:30 Art Auction**

A chance to buy more stuff. You know you want to. The more

you pay, the better your favourite artist will feel and the longer they'll be able to keep working.

**16:00 Clanger Cuisine**

Another chance to hear a Serious Scientific Talk from Satellite Six, in which we hear about the work of the soup dragon, discover the restorative power of blue string pudding, and explore what we might infer about the local biology.

Douglas Spencer

**17:30 Handover Ceremony**

We wrap up matters for the current year, thank those who made it happen, and discover the results of the raffle. The Novacon 50 team is announced, and plans for the future are revealed.

**18:30 Room closed for teardown.**

**19:00 The traditional Novacon Beer Tasting**

Bring three bottles of interesting and unusual beer to Registration to get a badge which qualifies you for participation, or cough up the required fee. There will be an opportunity to raise a glass to Absent Friends, particularly to Martin Hoare.

**19:30 The Novacon Banquet**

Tickets are available at Registration. A chance to sit down and eat with your fellow fans and to tell each other about the bits of the convention they missed.

- |     |                          |     |                  |
|-----|--------------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1.  | Mike Carey               | 25. | Rob Jackson      |
| 2.  | Chris Beckett            | 26. | Tim Kirk         |
| 3.  | Adrian Tchaikovsky       | 28. | ½r               |
| 4.  | Steve Lawson             | 29. | Harpal Singh     |
| 5.  | Tony Berry               | 30. | Harry Payne      |
| 6.  | Cat Coast                | 31. | Omega            |
| 7.  | Carol Goodwin            | 32. | Hal Payne        |
| 8.  | Eve Harvey               | 33. | Jodie Payne      |
| 9.  | John Harvey              | 34. | Steve Davies     |
| 10. | Alice Lawson             | 35. | Giulia De Cesare |
| 11. | Douglas Spencer          | 36. | Marcus Rowland   |
| 12. | Magdalen Standage-Bowles | 37. | Neil Summerfield |
| 13. | Gary Starr               | 38. | Brian Ameringen  |
| 14. | Serena Culfeather        | 39. | Caroline Mullan  |
| 15. | John Wilson              | 40. | Emjay Ameringen  |
| 16. | Dave Lally               | 41. | Michael Abbott   |
| 17. | Steve Jones              | 42. | Anne Wilson      |
| 18. | Richard Standage         | 43. | Niall Gordon     |
| 19. | Steve Rogerson           | 44. | Dave Hardy       |
| 20. | Dave Tompkins            | 45. | Claire Brialey   |
| 21. | Peter Cohen              | 46. | Mark Plummer     |
| 22. | John Bray                | 47. | Tim Stannard     |
| 23. | Chris Stocks             | 48. | Julia Daly       |
| 24. | Ron Gemmill              | 49. | Roger Robinson   |

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- |     |                    |      |                        |
|-----|--------------------|------|------------------------|
| 50. | Pat Brown          | 89.  | Julie McMurray         |
| 51. | Vernon Brown       | 90.  | Hazel Ashworth- West   |
| 52. | Alan Woodford      | 91.  | Yvonne Rowse           |
| 53. | Anne Woodford      | 92.  | Ian Sorensen           |
| 54. | Jamie Scott        | 93.  | Fran Dowd              |
| 55. | Tony Rogers        | 94.  | John Dowd              |
| 56. | Steve Dunn         | 95.  | Peter Harrow           |
| 58. | Morag O'Neill      | 96.  | Helena Bowles          |
| 59. | Margaret Austin    | 97.  | Judy Perrin            |
| 60. | Martin Easterbrook | 98.  | Barbara-Jane           |
| 61. | Al Johnston        | 99.  | John Richards          |
| 62. | DC                 | 100. | Maerryn Richards       |
| 63. | AC                 | 101. | James Odell            |
| 64. | Bridget Wilkinson  | 104. | Peter Wilkinson        |
| 65. | William Armitage   | 105. | Stan Nicholls          |
| 66. | Vanessa May        | 106. | Anne Nicholls          |
| 67. | Adrian Snowdon     | 107. | Sue Jones              |
| 68. | Michael Davidson   | 108. | Helen Gould            |
| 69. | Christine Davidson | 109. | Mike Gould             |
| 70. | Simon Beresford    | 110. | Bernard Peek           |
| 71. | Peter Wareham      | 111. | Mary Peek              |
| 72. | Gwen Funnell       | 112. | Peter Buck             |
| 74. | Gerry Webb         | 113. | Alison Buck            |
| 75. | Mali Perera        | 114. | Martin Hoare           |
| 76. | Alan Webb          | 115. | Sally Rowse            |
| 77. | Pauline Morgan     | 116. | Wendy Smith            |
| 78. | Chris Morgan       | 117. | Chris Priest           |
| 79. | Sue Edwards        | 118. | Nina Allan             |
| 80. | Dave Hicks         | 119. | Mike Scott             |
| 81. | Penny Hicks        | 120. | Tobes Valois           |
| 82. | Paul Dormer        | 121. | Fritz Urban Gunnaesson |
| 83. | Steven Cain        | 122. | David Tamlyn           |
| 84. | Alison Scott       | 123. | Eira Short             |
| 85. | Jim Walker         | 124. | Cuil Short             |
| 86. | Roger Earnshaw     | 125. | Smuzz                  |
| 87. | Laura Wheatly      | 126. | David Laight           |
| 88. | Pat McMurray       | 127. | Shona McNeill          |

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128.	Pete Wright	162.	Kate Solomon
129.	Anne-Marie Wright	163.	Malcolm Davies
130.	Henrick Pålsson	164.	Jonathan Earl
131.	Dominika Klimczak	165.	Helen McCallum
132.	Andy McKell	166.	DM Sherwood
133.	Jonathan Baddeley	167.	Mark Meenan
134.	Tony Keen	168.	Ian Whates
135.	Greg Pickersgill	169.	Luke Burgess-Foreman
136.	Catherine Pickersgill	170.	Dave Packwood
137.	Garry Kilworth	171.	Nigel Rowe
138.	Annette Kilworth	173.	Jessica Price
139.	Ian Maughan	174.	Mark Slater
140.	Elizabeth Priest	175.	Elaine Coates
143.	Janet Jenkins	176.	Esther MacCallum-Stewart
144.	Jilly Paddock	177.	Austin Benson
145.	Dave Brzeski	178.	Caro
146.	Morgan Fitzsimmons	179.	Phoenix Alexander
147.	Andy Sawyer	180.	Melica Smith
148.	Anders Hedenlund	181.	Robert Smith
149.	Chris Murphy	182.	Jane Cooper
150.	David Langford	183.	David Cooper
151.	Sandy Morrison	184.	Kari
152.	Noel Collyer	185.	Phil Nanson
153.	Diane Young	186.	Hannah Jenkins
154.	Clint Wastling	187.	Hannah Jenkins
155.	David Breslin	188.	Bogna Hutchinson
156.	Christina Lake	189.	David Hutchinson
157.	Doug Bell	190.	Bethany Fovargue
158.	Alex Storer	191.	Victor Gonzalez
159.	Alexa Dubreuil-Storer	192.	Justin Nash
160.	Zoe Burgess-Foreman	193.	Robbie Guillory
161.	Stephen Burrige	194.	Nicholas Jackson

PROGRAMME BOOK

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Guest of Honour

**Alette de Bodard**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow**  
**22nd — 24th May, 2020**

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