

Novacon 30



Progress Report #1

Novacon 30

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £23.00 until 8th November 1999, then £28.00 rising to £32.00 from 25th April 2000 and costs £35.00 on the door. Postal registrations should be received by 3rd November 2000, after this time please join on the door. Supporting membership costs £15.00 throughout. Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to "Novacon 30" and sent with your completed form(s) to: **Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ**. Further information is available at <http://www.cooky.demon.co.uk/n30/n30.html>.

Room Rates: £37.50 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms and £42.50 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). NB: Hotel booking forms, and deposits of £20.00 per person, must be received by Steve Lawson no later than **14th October 2000**. Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". Enquires regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Steve at the address above or to xl5@zoom.co.uk (tel: 0114-281-1572).

Advertising Rates: Advertising is welcome for both the next three Progress Reports and for the Programme Book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets): Progress Reports - Professional £25.00 (£13.00) full page, £14.50 (£8.00) half page, £8.50 (£5.00) quarter page. Programme Book - Professional £60.00 (£31.00) full page, £32.00 (£15.50) half page, £18.00 (£9.50) quarter page. Anyone interested in advertising should contact Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail empties@breathemail.net). Deadlines for camera-ready advertising copy are detailed below.

Deadlines: PR #2: 3rd March 2000, to be mailed late April 2000; PR #3: 1st July 2000, to be mailed late August 2000; PR #4: 1st September 2000, to be mailed mid October 2000; Programme Book: 15th September 2000, distributed at Novacon 30.

Book Room Rates: Tables will cost £15.00 each for the whole weekend. To book a table (or tables) you must be a member of the convention and complete and return the booking form enclosed with this Progress Report.

Committee: Tony Berry (Chairman), 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP, (tony@berryt.freemove.co.uk); David T. Cooper, 51 Meersbrook Avenue, Sheffield, S8 9EB, Maureen Kincaid Speller (Programme), 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ, (novacon@acnestis.demon.co.uk); Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ (xl5@zoom.co.uk); Pat McMurray (Hotel Liaison), 28 Plaistow Grove, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3PB (pat@cooky.demon.co.uk); Chris Murphy (Operations), 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (chris.murphy@bigfoot.com); Martin Tudor (Publications), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, Willenhall, WV13 1HX (empties@breathemail.net).

Acknowledgements: Thanks to Steve Green, Dave Hardy, Dave Langford and Committee for their articles. Uncredited contributions were written by Martin Tudor. This PR was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

Novacon 30

Date: 10th-12th November 2000.

Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

Guest of Honour: Christopher Priest.

Special Guest: Rog Peyton. **Guest Artist:** David A. Hardy.

Chairman's Piece by Tony Berry

Novacon 30 in the year 2000. A couple of milestones there, and a lot of zeros. Extensive scientific research has shown that 2000 is the number of books owned by the average SF fan, while 30 is the I.Q. of the average Villa fan. But enough of these distractions.

For the 30th Novacon we needed a suitably impressive Guest of Honour. I cast my mind back to my very first Novacon, which was number 9, held at the Royal Fungus. GoH was Christopher Priest, and I reckoned that it was about time we had him back again. In the intervening 21 years, Chris has become one of our most respected authors, writing both genre and mainstream fiction, though even his mainstream work tends to interweave fantasy and reality in order to explore the characters' changing perceptions of the world around them.

As Special Guest, we have Rog Peyton, one of the driving forces behind the Birmingham SF Group and Novacon itself. Lifelong SF fan, owner of the longest established SF and Fantasy bookshop in the world (it says over the door), and auctioneer at countless conventions, we'll drag him away from the dealers' room to talk to us.

Our Guest Artist is another BSFG stalwart -- David A. Hardy. He has been producing art commercially since the early fifties, and has since become internationally known for both SF and Space art. He has published a number of books, sold shedloads of posters and cover art, and worked in both TV and films. He is currently President of the International Association of Astronomical Artists, and is a mainstay of the Novacon artshow.

We're back at the Britannia hotel again (you can get a lot of reading done while waiting for a lift to arrive), so join now while the rates are low.

Christopher Priest, Apparently by Steve Green

I saw an advert recently for a touring magician named Chris Priest. A cursory glance at the accompanying still was proof enough that Novacon 30's guest of honour wasn't moonlighting on the night club circuit, but it seemed amusingly appropriate, given Christopher Priest's mastery of the literary illusion.

It's 21 years since "our" Chris Priest trod the boards as a Novacon GoH. He'd written five novels by then: *Indoctrinaire* (1970, revised 1979), *Fugue for a Darkening Island* (1972), *Inverted World* (1974), *The Space Machine* (1976) and *A Dream of Wessex* (1977, aka *The Perfect Lover*). All evidence a keen intellect and a growing literary confidence, but it's the last which signposts the territory which has dominated his work in the decades since: the mindscape of consensus reality.

By 1981's *The Affirmation*, Chris's readership – increasingly drawn from outside the ranks of sf – could no longer trust either the characters or the narrative; to those familiar with his "Dream Archipelego" stories (included in *An Infinite Summer*, 1979), the novel was a bizarre fantasy with roots both in that land and our own Britain, but it could just as easily be read as a chilling portrait of mental collapse. Similarly, *The Glamour* (1984) explored the nature of identity and the reader's relationship with the text, using a startling literary trick to subvert them both.

The Quiet Woman (1990) echoed the dystopian near-futures of his first two novels, whilst *The Prestige* (1995) returned to the 19th Century tone of his fourth and *The Extremes* (1998) the virtual reality themes of his sixth. But these are no idle re-mixes: *The Prestige* is an intricately woven mystery, which flamboyantly provides not one but two solutions, whilst *The Extremes* raises serious questions about the human capacity for inhumanity. No wonder Chris was hired to produce the novelisation of David Cronenberg's *Existenz*, albeit as "John Luther Novak".

Given how many of his books involve illusion and deliberately dangle their loose ends or even close halfway through a sentence (no artificial tidiness for this author, perhaps part of the reason for his criminal neglect by most of the London Literati), perhaps we should get Chris to promise that he won't sneak away as soon as his GoH spot begins, leaving behind a waxwork dummy and a tape recording of his speech. Or then again

Rog Peyton

an unreliable memoir

by Dave Langford

He was there at the first convention I ever attended, Novacon 3 in 1973, when I was a hapless neofan entrusted with the mission of restocking the Oxford University SF Group library. How I remember Rog Peyton's kindly smile as he welcomed me to fandom, assured me that my book-buying troubles were over, and -- in a simple but moving gesture of friendship -- took my wallet.

What can one say about Rog Peyton, giant of fandom and pusher of fine sf? That he used to have rather more hair? That he memorably co-founded the Birmingham SF Group in 1961? That his fan credentials include editing the BSFA's critical magazine *Vector* from 1964 to 1966? That during this period he launched the Andromeda book company that was to grow into a mighty 1990s empire stretching from 2 Suffolk Street, Birmingham, to 5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham? That his first convention committee appearance -- preceding work for countless Novacons -- was on Bruncon 2, the 1965 Eastercon? That his capacity for gin and tonic has passed into myth alongside the Norse story about Thor being tricked into swallowing the ocean? But all this is common knowledge.

I have especially fond memories of Rog's small press Drunken Dragon, which among other titles has published the most superbly wonderful collection of SF parodies produced by a small press in 1988, being *The Dragonhiker's Guide to Battlefield Covenant at Dune's Edge: Odyssey Two* by some guy called Langford. Uniquely among my publishers, small or large, Rog celebrated the launch of this masterwork with copious champagne and even invited the grateful author, who still remembers every detail of his hangover.

One of the stipulations of Drunken Dragon Press was that no page numbers should be listed on the contents page ... er, sorry, it's just that we all missed that in proof. Another was that a drunken dragon must appear, forcing me to insert a brief Anne McCaffrey spoof, with lovely but bitchy dragonrider Vanilla failing to control her dragon's thirst for the methylated spirits which seemed a logical source for these great beasts' fiery halitosis. Hence the Teaching Doggerel of the Weyr:

*Dragonman, avoid excess,
Tell your beast to tipple less:
The Harper is a licensed sot,
But drunken dragons slow the plot.*

Another Peyton sally into publishing was the Venture SF space-opera imprint that he and his Andromeda partner Rod Milner edited for Arrow in the mid-1980s -- promising 'no short stories, no fantasy, no boredom', and thoughtfully helping out the then-struggling artist Eddie Jones by using his cover paintings on all 25 selections. According to some low rag called *Ansible*, the Venture flyer memorably began: 'DO YOU REMEMBER when humans were heroes, androids didn't have social hang-ups and the only good alien was a dead one?' And so several SF classics were saved from the oblivion of Robert Hale & Co, such as *Come, Hunt an Earthman* by Philip E. High, *Sold -- For a Spaceship* by Philip E. High, and *Speaking of Dinosaurs* by Philip E. High.

Rog has enlivened innumerable conventions as a raconteur, a splendidly theatrical auctioneer, and a cheery bookseller whose infectious enthusiasm has persuaded so many of us to try the novels where he sees star quality, like Ken Grimwood's *Replay*, Mary Doria Russell's *The Sparrow* and Philip E. High's *Come, Hunt an Earthman*. He richly deserves his honour as Novacon 30's Special Guest.



Pigments of the Imagination

by Dave Hardy

I'm David A Hardy (Dave to my friends), and I produced my first space art in 1950 (at the age of 14)-- which, much later, I discovered was the same year as Alexei Leonov, the Russian cosmonaut/artist and Kasuaki Iwasaki, the leading Japanese astronomical artist. I illustrated my first book -- *Suns, Myths and Men*, for Patrick Moore -- in 1954 at the age of 18. I had five days to produce eight black-and-white illustrations before joining the RAF for National Service, which seems to have been the story of my life ever since! I worked at Cadbury's near my home in Bournville, Birmingham, UK-- literally painting chocolate boxes -- while I learned my trade as an illustrator, then became freelance in 1965 after being asked to work on the film *2001* -- though for various reasons I never did.

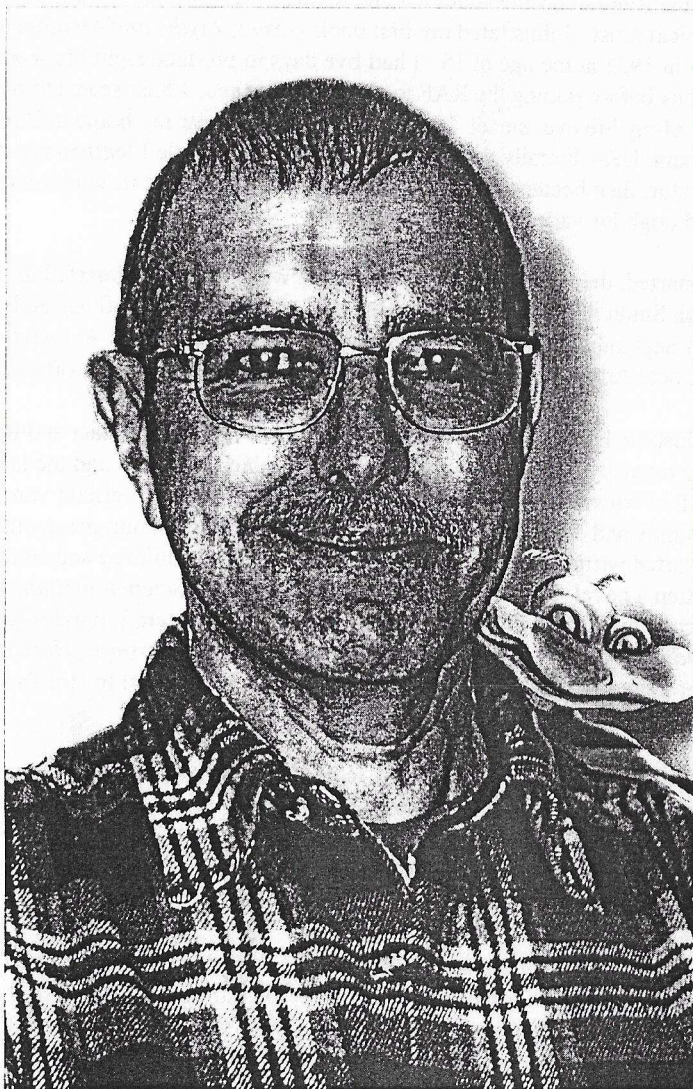
When I started, the only space artists I knew of were Chesley Bonestell in the USA and Ralph Smith in the UK (whom I met), and of course I was influenced by both of them. In September 1996 I became President of the International Association of Astronomical Artists (IAAA), which has well over 120 members worldwide.

I have illustrated and produced covers for dozens of books, both fact and fiction, including many by Patrick Moore and some by Arthur C. Clarke and the late Carl Sagan, all of whom own (or owned) my originals, along with Wernher von Braun, Isaac Asimov and even Brian Jones of the Rolling Stones, among many others! In 1974 I started writing my own non-fiction books for both children and adults. I've also written a novel. I've worked on SF mags (*Fantasy & Science Fiction*, *Analog*, etc.), factual mags (*New Scientist*, *Focus*, *Astronomy Now*, etc.), movies (eg. *The Neverending Story*), TV (*Blake's Seven*, *The Sky at Night*, *Cosmos*, *Horizon*, etc.), computer games (*Kristal*, etc.), record covers (from Hawkwind to Holst's suite), video-- in other words, I don't like to get in a rut. . .

Which is why, after getting an Atari ST with 512K of RAM in 1985, I've worked my way up to a PowerMac G3 400 with 512MB (yes, that's right!) and now do the majority of my art using Photoshop 5 -- though I still paint, using acrylics and airbrush, or oils, or whatever, when asked or for fun; one of my latest pieces is *Neighbours*, which I recently sold.

Of the books which bear my name as author (or co-author) as well as illustrator, the ones of which I'm most proud are *Challenge of the Stars* with Patrick Moore (1972/1978 as *New Challenge of the Stars*), which I've been delighted to find seems to have inspired quite a few of today's younger space artists, just as Chesley

Bonestell's *Conquest of Space* inspired me; *Galactic Tours* (1981) with the late Bob Shaw -- a sort of interstellar travel brochure, which led to my becoming Thomas Cook's consultant on space tourism some ten years later; and *Visions of Space* (1989/90), in which I collected nearly all the space artists of note at the time -- 72 in all, and I now count many of them as my friends.



Programme

by Maureen Kincaid Speller

Thirty years; that's plenty of time for traditions to gather around like cobwebs round a convention. Like the one where you have to start writing about next year's Novacon programme before you've even seen the current one to completion (and thus haven't got the faintest idea which ideas actually worked and which, like the Giant Rat of Sumatra, the world wasn't ready for). It's also traditional to helpfully say, 'there will be a programme'. So, there, I've done it again. I like to honour good fannish traditions.

One of the most notable things about the science fiction community, fans and professionals alike, is that it has a keen awareness and appreciation of its own roots, its history and traditions, and has charted them in great detail. Thirty years is a milestone in any life, but particularly in the life of a convention, and I rather suspect that the history and traditions of science fiction and fandom will be very much on the convention agenda next year. With guests like Christopher Priest and Rog Peyton, how can it be otherwise? While their professional lives are bound up in science fiction, both are known as much for their involvement with the fan community, Chris through his fanzines and articles, and the creation of GUFF the UK-Australian fan fund, and Rog through his involvement with the Birmingham SF Group and the British Science Fiction Association, not forgetting his legendary ability to auction anything, and I mean anything. And, of course, both have a long association with Novacon.

The temptation is to look back, but Novacon 30's programme won't be a total nostalgia-fest. Standing on the cusp of two centuries, we naturally look behind us and marvel at how far we've come, at how we've become a part of the fictional future we once read about. But we're science fiction fans, right? We're looking forward as well and wondering what the coming years will bring. William Gibson has lately opined that sf can't exist in its classical form any more and is probably now 'a largely historical project'. Novacon 30 should provide an ideal opportunity to examine that proposition and to think about what we want from the future rushing to meet us.

Sounds very serious, doesn't it? Too serious, maybe? I don't think so. A good thought-provoking programme is the backbone of any convention, large or small. Even if you're not actually attending programme items, the programme should be buzzing in the background, stimulating discussion, fomenting revolution, encouraging people to rise up and ... sorry, got a bit carried away there, but yes. I

do believe a solid programme is an important, in fact a vital part of a convention. And yet, with a convention as long-running as Novacon, other traditions of course pertain, like the silly games and quizzes, the beer-tasting, and plenty of time to hang around in the bar, talking to people, drinking, talking, drinking ... Novacon might be thirty now, might not be exactly in the first flush of youth but that doesn't mean it takes itself too seriously. Far from it. Like any thirty-year-old, Novacon still knows how to have a good time, and that's what we hope you'll find at Novacon 30.

Hotel Bookings by Pat McMurray

Well, there isn't much to say about the hotel that you don't know already. It's the Britannia Hotel in New St Birmingham, same as this year and last year. The room rates are unchanged from Novacon 29 at £42.50 pppn for a single and £37.50 pppn for twin or double, and we still want a £20 deposit with the hotel booking form.

It is probably safest to assume that the Corporation will close New Street just before the convention, especially as we're a week later than before.

We shall probably fiddle around some more with how we use the hotel space, as a result of Novacon 29's experience.

The only big change is that I'm the hotel liaison for Novacon 30, and the forms for the hotel should be sent to Steve Lawson, along with the deposit cheques, payable to "The Britannia Hotel", the new address is:

**Steve Lawson,
379 Myrtle Road,
Sheffield,
S2 3HQ.**

I am also interested in your comments and suggestions. Write to me at the above address, or email me at pat@cooky.demon.co.uk

Operations

As we are sure most of you are aware Novacon, like most conventions in Britain, is run by volunteers and we can't have too many of them! So if you are willing to help out at the convention - anything from moving chairs to helping with tech ops or

working on the programme, please contact our Ops Manager, Chris Murphy, at 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail chris.murphy@bigfoot.com).

The Nova Awards by Tony Berry

Created in 1973 by the late Gillon Field, the Nova Awards are presented annually for work in fanzines. Until 1981 only one award was presented, to "Best Fanzine" and decided by a committee of well-known fans. In 1977 voting was extended to all "Active Fans" who were members of Novacon, and then in 1981 two further awards were added: "Best Fanwriter" and "Best Fanartist".

For a fanzine to qualify for the award in 2000, one or more issues must have been published between 1st October 1999 and 30th September 2000. For a writer or artist to qualify, they must have had at least one piece of work published for the first time between those dates.

A "Fanzine" is defined as an amateur publication which is concerned with sf, fantasy, sf and fantasy fans and related subjects, copies of which may be obtained in exchange for other fanzines or in response to letters of comment. An "Active Fan" is defined as someone who has received six or more different fanzines during the year (different publications, not different issues of the same publication. The various official organs of a group, society or convention do not count as different fanzines).

Voting is open to full or supporting members of Novacon 30 who meet the requirements above, and can be made by post (ballots will go out with the fourth progress report) and at the convention itself.

[If you have any enquiries about the Novas or you want a copy of the Rules (50p to cover copying and postage), contact Tony Berry at 55 Seymour Road, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 4EP. Or check out the Novacon web site at <http://www.cooky.demon.co.uk/n30/n30.html>]

SIGNING SESSIONS THIS WEEKEND !

Friday 5th November (at NOVACON)

BRIAN ALDISS

will be signing copies of his new novel

WHITE MARS

**and the paperback of his autobiography
THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE**

(see Programme Schedule for time and place)

Saturday 6th November (noon at the shop)

JOSH KIRBY

will be signing copies of his new artbook

A COSMIC CORNUCOPIA

and will also sign the new *Discworld* novel

THE FIFTH ELEPHANT

already signed by

TERRY PRATCHETT

COMING SOON! SIGNINGS WITH TOM HOLT & ROBERT RANKIN

ANDROMEDA

2-5 Suffolk Street, Birmingham B1 1LT

Tel: (0121) 643 1999 Fax: (0121) 643 2001

<http://andromedabook.co.uk> e-mail: mailorder@andromedabook.co.uk