

# NOVAZON II



GUEST OF HONOUR: BOB SHAW

PROGRESS REPORT ONE

Another year, another NOVACON. Welcome to the first PR for the only convention that people could reach blindfold. -Yes, we're at the Angus again, and we hope to produce a con that will do justice to the past decade. There are a few changes from the established pattern of NOVACON committees - chiefly being the lack of Rog Peyton in any shape or form. He's decided to 'take the year off', but has compensated for this by becoming this year's chairman of the Brum Group.

This PR is going out to all people who registered for last year's NOVACON, and is your first chance to register for this one. -The booking form is on the back page: please return it as soon as possible!

#### TIME AND PLACE

NOVACON 11 will commence on the evening of Friday October 30th, and will continue through until about midnight on Sunday November 1st. This follows the pattern established last year, and, apart from anything else, allows us to keep the bar open all day on Sunday. As mentioned above, we will again be at the Royal Angus, a modern hotel in the city centre, which is by now very used to the quirks and foibles of fandom. The Angus can sleep 222 guests, with all bedrooms having their own bathroom, shower and TV.

#### ROOM RATES

Room rates for NOVACON 11 are as follows:-

Sharing a twin or double room - £10.50 per person

Single room - £13.50 per person

These rates are per night and include full English breakfast, service charge and VAT. Should the current VAT rate alter, then the room rates will be altered accordingly. In addition to the above, we have agreed a rate of £5 per night for an extra bed in parents' room for a child under twelve years of age.

#### REGISTRATION FOR NOVACON 11

Registration for this year's NOVACON will be a little different from usual. In order to comply with the Angus' fire regulations, we shall again have to limit numbers to 500. Last year, we had to assume that all supporting members might turn up at the convention wishing to convert to full membership. This of course did not happen, resulting in several people being needlessly turned away. Therefore it will be assumed that only those who register as full members will attend the convention. -You will not be able to convert from supporting to full membership at the con.

Full membership will cost £5.50; supporting membership will cost £2.50.

#### YOUR COMMITTEE

This year's NOVACON sees a return in force of Birmingham Science Fiction Group members to the convention committee. Our treasurers, Stan and Helen Eling, need no introduction. They've both been on more committees than most of us have been to conventions, so their experience will be invaluable. Jean Frost will be in charge of registrations and general secretarial work; this is her first con committee. Taking over my place in organising the usual NOVACON movie blunders will be Phill Probert, also on his first committee. Joe Nicholas is the foreigner amongst us, coming from London, and is once again handling advertising. As for myself - Paul Oldroyd - I still feel a Midlander, even if I did move to Leeds a year ago. This will be the third NOVACON committee in succession I've been on. I'd been planning on a nice, quiet con this year and, for my sins, got talked into being your chairman. Such is life ...

#### GUEST OF HONOUR

NOVACON has, over the past few years, mainly chosen a Guest of Honour for his links with fandom as much as his popularity as an author. This year is no exception, for we have as our GOH Bob Shaw, notorious for his fan writing and Eastercon speeches and with the added bonus of being one of Britain's most popular SF writers. To anyone who has ever attended a convention, Bob will need no introduction. To those less fortunate, he'll be the person sitting on the stage when even the most hard-core fan vacates the bar and heads for the con hall. Bob's talks are justly famous: their revolutionary ideas and strict adherence to scientific principles are guaranteed to convulse all but the most inebriated. He's agreed to appear in as many programme items as we can fit him into, so it will be advisable to have with you some means of curing stitch. You have been warned!

#### 'A Wee Appreciation of Bob Shaw'

I first came across Bob Shaw's byline late in 1965, when I was an eager 15-year-old reader of Moorcock's *New Worlds*. It appeared on a story called "And Isles Where Good Men Lie", tucked away at the back of the October issue of that magazine. The story immediately impressed me with its solidity and its author's apparent easy mastery of traditional SF virtues. It concerned aliens, war in space, the threat of alien invasion, and yet it was firmly rooted in realistic human characterisation. It seemed to be a perfect example of the sort of "intelligent space fiction" which Moorcock assured readers he was still interested in publishing (for, in the main, *New Worlds* was already becoming avant-garde and New Wave). If only more of the "trad" SF in *New Worlds* had been of the quality of this Shaw story, there is a strong chance that the magazine would never have folded.

I naturally assumed that "And Isles Where Good Men Lie" was a first story by a young writer - which made it all the more impressive an achievement. Little did I know that Shaw was in his mid-30's and already a big name in Anglo-Irish SF fandom, co-author of the fanzine serial "The Enchanted Duplicator" among many other good things. In fact, I was to discover years later that Bob Shaw had been a published author since 1954. His early stories, about half a dozen in all, had appeared in the minor British magazine *Nebula*. Few of those early stories have resurfaced, which is perhaps just as well. Feeling dissatisfied with his apprentice work as a writer, Shaw had taken several years' holiday from the field in order to learn more about life. He had been away in Canada, working as an engineer, and since his return to Northern Ireland had been employed in industrial journalism. "And Isles Where Good Men Lie" was in fact his "comeback" story; its assured tone was a result of real experience and long practice.

In 1966 Bob Shaw published one more story in *New Worlds*, the excellent "Pilot Plant", and then he really made his name by publishing in *Analog* a perfect gem of a story called "Light of Other Days". Although by some incredible oversight (or cock-up) it failed to win a Hugo or Nebula award, this has become the most anthologised of modern SF stories - indeed, it is perhaps the most famous SF story published anywhere in the 1960's. It is, of course, the story which introduced the concept of "slow glass", a form of glass which retards the passage of light and allows viewers to see scenes from the past. This clever notion was to be used by Bob Shaw in a couple of subsequent short stories and in the novel *Other Days, Other Eyes* (1972). An important point to make is that the original story works quite brilliantly as a human narrative; it makes use of its SF gimmick without being dominated by it. As in most of Shaw's work, the characters are skillfully drawn: they make the story.

In 1967, Shaw's first novel, *Nightwalk*, was published by Avon books in the USA. Apparently, it was rejected by the leading British publishers - which



just goes to show how wrong publishers' editors and readers can sometimes be. (Gollancz eventually realised their mistake and issued the novel in hardcover in the mid-1970's.) So the book which introduced Bob Shaw to most British readers was in fact his second novel, The Two Timers (1968), a delightfully complicated SF thriller about a man hunted (and haunted) by his doppelganger-self. This was followed by The Palace of Eternity (1969), One Million Tomorrows (1970), and Ground Zero Man (1971) - good novels all. His first collection of short stories, Tomorrow Lies In Ambush, was published in 1973. Then, after a brief hiatus, there appeared the two Bob Shaw novels that are my favourites: Orbitsville (1975) and A Wreath of Stars (1976). Reviewing the last named novel for Foundation in 1977, I wrote the following:-

"Bob Shaw is a reliable writer who always produces works which are readable and entertaining. Inevitably such a statement sounds like damnation with faint praise. 'Reliable', 'readable' and 'entertaining' are safe middle-of-the-road adjectives for a reviewer to use when he has enjoyed a book but does not believe it to be particularly outstanding. But how am I to express my very high regard for Bob Shaw's writing without using such terms? For Shaw is the quintessential craftsman of science fiction, an author whose reliability, readability and ability to entertain strike me as more and more astonishing with each new book... One of the important points to make about Shaw is that he takes his stand at the exact centre of the genre. He believes in science fiction, and he wishes to excel as an SF writer, no more. Unlike many of the most talented writers of today, he does not attempt to explode definitions, to leap barriers... If, for the moment, we accept science fiction as a closed and conventional genre, then it is fair to claim that Bob Shaw is the finest SF writer currently at work (though I have qualified this statement with some care, again, I do not intend this as faint praise, but as a genuine tribute.) To whom should we compare him? Poul Anderson? Larry Niven? He seems to me to be much superior to both these authors. How much better Tau Zero and Ringworld would have been if Shaw had written them!

"In the novels he published between 1967 and 1975, he explored a set of standard themes and SF situations. He produced a time-travel story (The Two Timers), a space-war story (The Palace of Eternity), tales of pursuit (Nightwalk and Ground Zero Man), a marvellous-invention story (Other Days, Other Eyes), an immortality story (One Million Tomorrows) and a tale of men encountering a vast alien artifact (Orbitsville). All were handled with considerable skill and most were intelligent treatments of a subject-matter which had already been worked over by other SF writers. Although he has not yet given us a fully-fledged disaster novel, it is beginning to look as though Shaw has worked his way through most of the conventional SF scenarios. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that his latest book, A Wreath of Stars, is based on the most unusual idea we have yet encountered in a Shaw novel. It opens conventionally enough, with the approach of a mysterious interstellar object towards the Earth... but it soon veers into the unexpected when the precise nature of the cosmic visitor becomes apparent. The object is an anti-neutrino planet, and it can only be seen when the observer is wearing 'Amplite' spectacles (another of those vision-enhancing devices that Bob Shaw is so fond of in his stories). Instead of colliding with the Earth it passes nearby, and since it consists entirely of anti-neutrinos it has no immediately discernable effects on our world. However, the wearers of Amplite lenses soon begin to see some very strange things....."

I won't give away the story of A Wreath of Stars here, in case there are NOVACON members who haven't yet read it. Since that fine novel, Bob Shaw has published such books as Cosmic Kaleidoscope (short stories), Medusa's Children (an extremely Tall story), Who Goes Here? (an outrageous piece of humour), Vertigo (one of his most cleverly thought-out works) and Dagger of the Mind (a horror story with some moments of real horror). The sure, confident tone of Bob Shaw's story-

telling rarely falters. Recently, he has slowed down his production once more, but there is a novel to look forward to in 1981. In all, his works of the past five years have confirmed his standing as the finest entertainer in the science fiction field of today.

-- David Pringle

#### THE NOVA AWARD

The Nova Award is presented annually by the BSFG to the editor of the fanzine voted 'Best of the Year'. It is designed and made by Ray Bradbury, landlord of the 'Ivy Bush', where the monthly BSFG meetings are held.

The award was started in 1973; past winners are:-

- 1973 SPECULATION edited by PETER WESTON
- 1974 (tie) BIG SCAB edited by JOHN BROSNAN  
and ZIMRI edited by LISA CONESA
- 1975 MAYA edited by ROB JACKSON
- 1976 MAYA edited by ROB JACKSON
- 1977 TWILL DDU edited by DAVE LANGFORD
- 1978 GROSS ENCOUNTERS edited by ALAN DOREY
- 1979 SEAMONSTERS edited by SIMONE WALSH
- 1980 ONE-OFF edited by DAVE BRIDGES

This year we are considering adding new categories to the Nova Award. The editor of the best fanzine would still receive the specially designed award while goblets would be presented to the best fan artist and best fan writer.

The rules for the Nova Award are too lengthy to reproduce here, but anyone wanting a copy can obtain a set by sending an s.a.e. to: Joe Nicholas, Room 9, 94 St. George's Square, Pimlico, LONDON SW14 3QY.

#### ADVERTISING

Anyone wishing to advertise in Progress Reports 2 & 3 or the Programme Book should note the following:-

Rates for PR 2 & 3 are:-

- Professional £16 per page - part pages pro-rata
- Amateur or fan £10 per page - part pages pro-rata

Rates for the Programme Book are:-

- Professional £20 per page - part pages pro-rata
- Amateur or fan £16 per page - part pages pro-rata

All copy should be supplied camera-ready, size A4 with allowance for borders, suitable for reduction to A5. Half-tones, reversing out, bleed offs, etc. will be charged extra at printer's rate plus 20%.

Deadlines for copy are:-

- PR2 - May 1st - mailing will be late May
- PR3 - September 18th - mailing will be early October

All correspondence regarding advertising should be sent to: Joe Nicholas, address as above.

#### ART SHOW

The NOVACON Art Show is this year being run by Pete Lyon, who has also kindly agreed to do the artwork for the PRs and Programme Book. He also designed this year's NOVACON logo. The Art Room will again be in the Lower Angus. If you have material to display, we'll be pleased to see it. If you wish to put your exhibit into the Art Auction, the convention will take a 10% commission of the amount raised. Any correspondence should be sent to Pete at: 2 New Row, Old Micklefield, LEEDS LS25 4AJ.

#### FILMS

We are in the process of booking the usual selection of films in the inimitable NOVACON tradition. We are hoping to show the following:

Zardoz: A 1973 John Boorman film starring Sean Connery. -A post-apocalypse story, with the survivors split into the very rich and knowledgeable and the savages. Mr Connery is one of the savages determined to destroy the system.

Twilight's Last Glimmer: A film about which I know very little, except that Joe Nicholas says it has a crummy plot but some ace photography.

Capricorn One: A 1977 Peter Hyams film starring Elliott Gould as a down and out reporter who discovers some very sinister events surrounding the launch of the first manned mission to Mars.

We also hope to show some 'shorts' before the main films.

#### OTHER PROGRAMME ITEMS

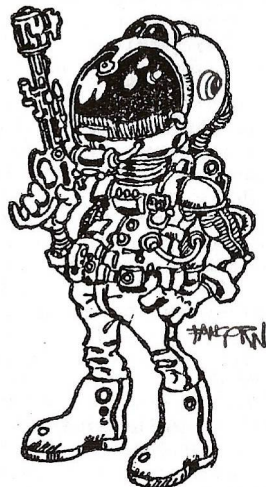
The programme will consist of old favourites sprinkled with a few new ideas. So far confirmed are a talk on Robotics by Professor Young of Aston University and the now-traditional SF University Challenge. We have come up with more items than we can possibly use, so we will be sorting through them and will let you have more details in the next PR.

#### NOVACON 11 SPECIAL

Over the last two years, the NOVACON GOH has written a short story which we have published as a convention 'special edition'. Bob Shaw has agreed to write one for us this year also, which will again be published in a limited edition of 550 copies and will be free to all supporting and attending members of the convention. Small numbers of each of the previous editions - THE MAKING OF THE LESBIAN HORSE by Chris Priest and A ROMANCE OF THE EQUATOR by Brian Aldiss - are available from Andromeda Bookshop, 57 Summer Row, Birmingham, B3 1JJ, price £1, including postage and packing.

#### OTHER CONVENTIONS

- YORCON 2     17th - 20th April 1981 at the Dragonara Hotel, Leeds. GOH Ian Watson, Thomas Disch. Details from: Graham James, 12 Fearnville Terrace, Leeds, LS8 3DU.
- FAIRCON 81     24th - 27th July at the Ingram Hotel, Glasgow. GOH John Brunner. Details from: Faircon 81, c/o 200 Woodlands Road, Glasgow, G3 6LN. (SAE please)
- FILMCON 81     27th - 29th November 1981 at the Grand Hotel, Birmingham. GOH Ray Harryhausen. Other guests: Madeleine Smith, Ingrid Pitt, Pat Roach and many more. Organised by the Birmingham SF Film Society. Details from: Kath Holmes, 75 Willows Crescent, Cannon Hill, Birmingham 12.



Any correspondence about NOVACON 11, apart from that mentioned within, should be sent to one of the following addresses:

Registrations, etc. to Jean Frost, 49 Humber Tower, Francis Street, Birmingham, B7 4JX.

Nova Award and advertising to Joe Nicholas, Room 9, 94 St. George's Sq., Pimlico, London SW1Y 3QY.

Art Show to Pete Lyon, 2 New Row, Old Micklefield, Leeds LS25 4AJ.

All else to Paul Oldroyd, Garforth House, 118 Domestic Street, Holbeck, Leeds LS11 9SG.

\*\* If you change your address, please let us know; we can't be expected to send future PRs to your new home otherwise! \*\*



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# FILMCON

## THE MIDLANDS FIRST SF/FANTASY HORROR FILM CONVENTION

# '81

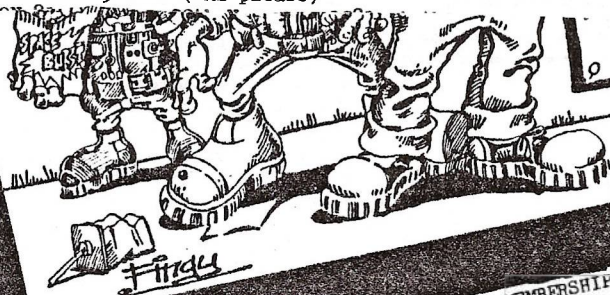
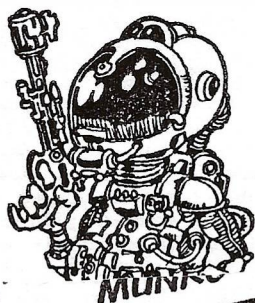
ADVANCE BOOKING  
OFFICE

27th-29th

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SUPPORTING MEMBERSHIP £5.00  
ATTENDING MEMBERSHIP £13.00  
WALK-INS AT DOOR £14.00

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AND A CHEQUE/P.O. TO:-  
FILMCON 81 75 WILLOWS CRESCENT  
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