



**nNiOnVeAtCeOeNn**

**Progress  
Report 2**



## NOVACON 19 - Important Information

### Venue and Dates

The Excelsior Hotel, Birmingham, 17th - 19th November 1989

### Membership Rates

£12.00 per person before 30th October 1989

£15.00 per person on the door

Day memberships are available on request - contact Bernie Evans for details

### Advertising rates

Progress Reports: £28 per page, £14 half page, £7 quarter page

Programme Book: £36 per page, £18 half page, £9 quarter page

(for payment in advance of publication, the following special discount rates apply: £32 per page, £16 half page, £8 quarter page)

Send camera ready copy to:

Martin Tudor, 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4SH  
(Telephone: 021-558 0997)

### Advertising and Copy Deadlines

Third Progress Report: 30th August 1989

Programme Book: Space to be reserved by 30th August 1989

Copy (plus payment if discount taken) to be received by 30th September 1989

### Hotel Room Rates

Single Room: £25 per night

Twin/Double Room: £20 per person per night

These prices include full English breakfast and VAT at 15%

### Book Room Rates

£15.00 per table for the weekend

Dealers must also be members of the convention

### Creche Rates

Limited creche facilities will be free of charge to children of convention members

### All Purpose Contact Address

For all convention enquiries please contact:

Bernie Evans, 7 Grove Avenue, Acocks Green, Birmingham, B27 7UY

Telephone (evenings): 021-707 6606

### Chairman's Bit: The Hotel

Our plans for NOVACON 19 are proceeding: Helena has the programme well in hand (as you can read elsewhere); Pam has (as you can see) been doing an excellent job with the Progress Reports and has some exciting plans for both the Programme Book and the Souvenir Booklet; Tony is wandering around with a silly grin on his face, so I believe our finances are in order (although it might just be that he's been at the Murphy's again...); Nick has almost finished putting together his Operations team; and Bernie assures me that Registrations are coming in thick and fast. The Book Room...will have books, and the Art Show looks like being one of the highlights of the convention, as we hope to feature an exhibition of Sacha Ackerman's work, including all of the illustrations which appeared in Unwin Paperback's Unicorn edition of Geoff Ryman's THE UNCONQUERED COUNTRY, along with several pieces which didn't see print.

So, with the rest of the convention coming along nicely in the hands of the committee, it comes down to me to tell you more about our hotel. The Excelsior Hotel is conveniently situated on the A45 between Coventry and Birmingham, next to the Freeport, one mile from the airport, Birmingham International railway station and the National Exhibition Centre. There are 138 bedrooms, consisting of 18 singles, 65 twins and 55 doubles, which means that the hotel can sleep 258 people if all of the rooms are used appropriately. To enable us to ensure that the maximum number of attendees are placed in the Excelsior, we would greatly appreciate it if, where possible, couples would take advantage of the large number of double rooms available.

We are currently negotiating with two overflow hotels, the smaller of which is located right next door to the Excelsior; the larger of the two is about a five minute drive away. But if you wish to ensure a place in the main convention hotel we would advise you to book immediately. As is customary with NOVACONS, we will be allocating rooms in the main hotel on a first come, first served basis (apart from certain obvious exceptions, such as single women, families with young children and the disabled). Enclosed with this Progress Report you will find a Hotel Booking Form - USE IT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE and either return it to Bernie Evans (by post or at Mexican 3) or hand it in at the Critical Wave table in the Book Room at Mexican 3.

Martin Tudor

Below is a list of the Committee and Staff working on NOVACON 19:

#### The Committee

|               |                          |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| Martin Tudor  | Chairman & Hotel Liaison |
| Tony Berry    | Treasurer                |
| Helena Bowles | Programme                |
| Bernie Evans  | Memberships              |
| Nick Mills    | Operations               |
| Pam Wells     | Publications             |

#### The Staff (so far)

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| Vicky Evans      | Creche                  |
| Nic Farey        | Technical Operations    |
| David Hardy      | Art Show                |
| Rog Peyton       | Advertising & Book Room |
| Elinor Predota   | Art Show Assistant      |
| Richard Standage | Book Room Assistant     |
| Stephen Tudor    | Snooker Tournament      |



## The Programme

OK, listen up you lot out there, and listen GOOD, because this year's NOVACON programme is gonna be GREAT!

For kick off, let me thank all of you who got your act together and sent in your suggestions after my request for ideas last time. The response has been gratifying, so thanks - you know who you are - and do remember that your ideas are always welcome.

For those of you who moan that 'Isn't this supposed to be a Science Fiction Convention' and 'Where's the science fer chrissakes' (and you know who you are, too) we think you'll be pleased to see at least two science-orientated talks on the programme. PATRICK COLLINS has agreed to give a talk on ROCKETRY and its development for us. With that to satisfy the technophiles among you, we go to the other end of the scientific spectrum with JACK COHEN doing...well I think 'his usual' is the only way to describe it. If you've never heard Jack talk, you have a real treat waiting for you. Don't miss it; REPRODUCTIVE BIOLOGY will never be the same again!

On the other hand, there are as many of you who see SF as primarily literature, with scientific gizmos as a mere sideline. I hope you like Philip K Dick, as we have a programme item entitled 'LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DICK' - the initial letters should give away the main thrust of the panel.

On the commercial side of things, we hope to have a panel on the implications of 1992 for the book buying/selling public and on the SF market in particular.

Of course we're all fans, and NOVACON is a fannish convention, so where are the fan items? Well, the theme of the convention is the 60s - what were you doing then? Among others, fannish historian ROB HANSEN will be telling us in a panel on sixties fandom. There'll also be a panel called 'BORN IN THE SIXTIES, BRED IN THE SIXTIES AND BIG IN THE SIXTIES'. Self explanatory really.

JIMMY ROBERTSON will be arranging a 60s POP QUIZ for us, to be fronted by none other than FAM WELLS - so watch out...we'll be looking for teams. On a similar light-hearted theme JIM BARKER will be running a game panel entitled 'WHOSE LINE IS IT ANYWAY?' which promises to be one of the funniest panel items yet to be seen at a NOVACON.

The film programme is yet to be announced, but believe me it'll be just as varied and interesting as the rest of the programme. We also plan to have a video programme showing various episodes of 60s TV shows and similar material. Your ideas and suggestions are especially welcome here.

The more alert amongst you will have realised that I haven't mentioned the Guest of Honour yet. All I can say at this point is that GEOFF RYMAN is planning something very special for us; watch this space for further news.

There you are - something for everybody, we hope, but if we've missed out your particular pet subject...just let us know...

Helena Bowles



### The Art Show

Artwork - I think you'll all agree that this was something rather thin on the ground at NOVACON 18. We want that to change for NOVACON 19, so to help you along with ideas, this year we're having a theme. In keeping with the sixties theme of the whole con, we'd be delighted to see work along the lines of the two major art movements of the sixties - pop art and surrealism. Of course you don't have to stick to this theme (all art is welcome, and if you've been enthusiastic enough to have ideas of your own already, don't let this put you off!) but anything weird or wild (or both!) would be especially welcome and help to create a sixties feel.

If you by any chance feel inspired, please fill in the form that should have come with this PR. Even if you've already filled one in, you might like to think whether there's any relevant information that you forgot to put down last time. We need to have all the information from all of you wanting to show artwork by 30th September. We will contact you with further details after we receive your form.

Wrap your minds around the Weird and Wild theme, and let's see some energy in this year's art show!

Elinor Predota

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### The Book Room

Book Room tables cost £15 each for the whole of the NOVACON 19 weekend, and all book dealers must also be members of the convention. To reserve tables, please complete the NOVACON 19 Membership Form enclosed with this Progress Report. Don't worry if you've already sent in a membership form; we don't mind getting more than one per person, just as long as we are made aware of all your requirements before the convention!

Rog Peyton and Richard Standage will be organising the Book Room on the day, and you should pay either of them when setting up your tables. (Cheques should be made payable to NOVACON 19.)

The Book Room at NOVACON 19 is located right in the hub of the convention - just across the hallway from the Main Programme Room, and directly in front of the Art Show. (The bar's only just around the corner, too!) These rooms are all on the ground floor of the hotel, and there is direct access to the Book Room from the car park. The room itself is spacious; it is also fully lockable, and will be properly secured when closed.

Please let us know how many tables you would like by 30th September. There may be some additional space left after that date, but we cannot make any guarantee of this, so please book as soon as you can.

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For this, our second Progress Report, I asked author Colin Greenland to write an article about the works of our Guest of Honour, Geoff Ryman. I hope you agree that this thought-provoking piece is an excellent introduction to the work of Geoff Ryman; I also hope that you will be inspired to read Geoff's novels and short stories before the convention, if you are not already familiar with his work.



Geoff Ryman: Telling the Truth  
by Colin Greenland

The bad news is, Geoff Ryman loathes writing. The good news is, he can't stop doing it.

For Ryman, writing is the real thing, or nothing at all. 'It would be just as much work, if not more,' he reflects, 'to write badly as to write well.' What he means by writing well is telling the truth, an obligation of all writers, if they're not just wasting time and trees.

It's all there in his first published story, 'The Diary of the Translator' It appeared in 1976, in Hilary Bailey's NEW WORLDS TEN, and tells of a far future, post-verbal world where everything is immediately available and nothing is authentic. The narrator, whose job it is to make glib, superficial thought-tape transcriptions of approved ancient novels, gets too involved with Jane Austen's SENSE AND SENSIBILITY and incurs the disapproval of the authorities for reinventing the obsolete practice of literary creation.

If on one level 'The Diary of the Translator' was a young writer's plea for autonomy from publishers and other benevolent dictators, it was not a callow one. Ryman is one of the minority of established authors that have day jobs. He works for the Central Office of Information: 'copywriting for the state, which is not to say the government. I have doubts about the profession of being an author. It creates all those expectations, this thing that gets milked. People expect something new every eighteen months, and so your work gets all caught up in these anxieties and considerations of the ego, while the real self that really writes the book goes on taking its own sweet time. So there was an eight-year gap before Ryman's fiction next saw print. In that time he produced two pieces of work as powerful and moving as they are different and distinctive.

A manuscript copy of Ryman's first novel, THE WARRIOR WHO CARRIED LIFE, was circulating in fandom in 1982, if not before, but it wasn't published until 1985, in Allen & Unwin's Unicorn line. The nearest Ryman has ever, or, one suspects, could ever come to a generic commercial fantasy, WARRIOR is the story of a young woman who acquires magical powers and goes on an arduous quest into the underworld, initially for vengeance against the evil overlords who have disfigured her and maimed her family, but eventually to redeem their souls and the world.

THE WARRIOR is radiant proof of something Michael Moorcock's always saying, that there is no virtue (or lack of it) in any particular fictional form; every form is only as good as the writer using it. Even the poor old cosmic quest novel can be reinvigorated, and Ryman does it here: firstly by rejecting the usual third-hand pseudo-medievalism in favour of elements from other cultures, other myths; and secondly by a resolute and compassionate attention to the truth of human pain, so often glamourised or simply, squeamishly, avoided by fantasy writers.

THE WARRIOR also introduces us to Ryman's admirable calm, objective style, which has the ease and authority of the fireside teller of tales, rehearsing everyday wisdom for the village, the tribe, the family. Characteristically, Ryman disclaims any technique. 'I believe,' he says, 'that when you write a sentence that is true, it will automatically be a very simple, obvious sentence. It just happens to be very difficult to write a sentence that is true.'

All the principles that made THE WARRIOR so vivid and penetrating are just as active in the story which preceded it into print, announcing the arrival of Geoff Ryman to the fiction-reading public, or at least to those members of it discerning enough to be reading INTERZONE in 1984. Before WARRIOR was even accepted for publication, Ryman was at work on an outline for a novel set in Cambodia. But never having been there, or anywhere near, and with his dedication to truthfulness above all else, he despaired of his ability, even of his right, to write it.

Eventually, after prolonged conversations with a friend and neighbour who had lived in Canada, and in Thailand 'Researching,' as he puts it, 'the content and delusions of the insane', Ryman realised that he could write his story, of an ordinary courageous oppressed woman who loses her husband, her home and her entire way of life, in the form of a fantasy tale, in which death talks and sings, sharks breathe havoc from the sky, and houses creep into heaps for company. Just because sf and fantasy traffic in the unreal, says Ryman, that doesn't mean they're exempt from the duty to tell the truth. If anything, the opposite: fantasy, he believes, is a way of engaging the logic of dreams. 'Dreams show us reality undisguised, with all our real feelings about things.'

So he wrote his story, bringing to it not just his friend's experience of the Far East, but his own of living in Canada and California and Britain, all places where he has witnessed, in his own lifetime, the destruction and replacement of cultures. When the story (originally called 'The Crow that Warbled') was finished, Ryman recalls, 'I wasn't going to send it out anywhere. I didn't know if it was good or bad, but I assumed it was unsaleable.' Mike Dickinson and Tom Shippey were among those who lent their weight to persuading him he was wrong, and the editors of INTERZONE agreed. They published it as 'The Unconquered Country'; it won the 1985 World Fantasy Award for best novella, and later that year appeared, sensitively and strikingly illustrated by Sacha Ackerman, as a book from Allen & Unwin.

Also published that year was INTERZONE: THE FIRST ANTHOLOGY, for which 'The Unconquered Country' would have been top of the list for inclusion if it hadn't turned out to be just-about-contracted to Unwin. Meanwhile the author had written, directed and performed in an acclaimed dramatisation of THE TRANSMIGRATION OF TIMOTHY ARCHER at the first Mexican, and was now extending 'The Unconquered Country'. Apologetically, he mentioned that he had got something else they might want to look at. This turned out to be 'O Happy Day!', one of the fiercest and most direct stories ever published under the auspices of INTERZONE. Sparked off by the cause of a friend ostracised by her women's group, it's an account of what happens after a successful totalitarian feminist revolution, in an extermination camp staffed by homosexual men.

Sexual politics might have been a new topic for Ryman in 'O Happy Day!', but it was not a new concern. Sex roles and the way we inhabit them are very much a part of THE UNCONQUERED COUNTRY; and the titular character in THE WARRIOR WHO CARRIED LIFE magically assumes a male body to carry out her scheme of vengeance, thus providing the book with a cheering image of male power and female perception working together for once.

Fiction, which Ryman has called 'history's bastard child', must be answerable to the issues of its day. It's a social function; which is why it's so important to have an audience in mind. Ryman, like all responsive sf writers, is grateful for the existence of fandom. 'The marvellous thing about fandom is, it's given me a context,' he says. 'I know who I'm writing for.'



Writing, he argues, is a public act. It's quite independent of the publishing business, of what people are selling and buying at any one time; but it's also independent of the author's individual ego, of the private toil to do the work and do it well. 'A book doesn't care who writes it,' he says. 'When it's time for a book to be written, it'll be written. It's a modern myth that a book needs an author. GILGAMESH didn't have an author, and that's a book that's a real power in the world.' 'History', Ryman's novel based on the Gilgamesh story, is currently shelved, this particular author having found the demands of his ancient, mysterious, sacred, composite source text more than he could meet yet, whatever it said on the contract.

Instead, his next published work, already written and now being revised, will be a science fiction novel. Provisionally titled 'The Child Garden', it's based on 'Love Sickness', his novella about love, art, and advances in medicine, serialised in INTERZONE in 1987. Also in 'Love Sickness' is a motif that echoes all the way back to 'The Diary of the Translator', of people who read books to turn them into an instantly assimilable form for other people who think they're beyond reading. Geoff Ryman thinks these other people are wrong. If I've talked here about the incidentals of Geoff Ryman's career and opinions, and deliberately avoided saying much about what's actually in his wonderful, warm, quizzical, infinitely generous and conscientious stories, it's because I agree with him.

Colin Greenland

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#### The Nova Awards

In 1973, the late Gillon Field created the Nova Award for fanzines produced by Science Fiction Fandom. Until 1981, it was presented annually at NOVACON to the editor of the fanzine voted 'best of the year'. After that date, two additional Nova Awards were awarded - to the Fanwriter and Fanartist voted 'best of the year' - and this trio of awards has been presented annually at NOVACONS ever since.

The Nova Award winners at NOVACON 18 were:

|                |                               |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Best Fanzine   | LIP, edited by HAZEL ASHWORTH |
| Best Fanwriter | MICHAEL ASHLEY                |
| Best Fanartist | D WEST                        |

I contacted each of last year's winners and asked them to submit something for inclusion in this Progress Report. On the next pages I'm delighted to present contributions from Hazel Ashworth and D West. Michael Ashley also sent me a brief article, but unfortunately I did not feel that the piece he chose to send was appropriate for a publication of this nature.

In the next Progress Report I hope to include a brief discussion of some of the fanzines, writers and artists who will be eligible for the NOVACON 19 awards, along with a list of as many eligible fanzines as possible. For a fanzine to qualify, one or more issues must have appeared between 1st October 1988 and 30th September 1989. For fanwriters and fanartists to qualify, a piece of writing or artwork by the person concerned must have been published in a fanzine for the first time between 1st October 1988 and 30th September 1989. If you would like to ensure that your fanzine is listed, please send a copy to me at the address below.

Pam Wells, Nova Awards Administrator  
24A Beech Road, Bowes Park, London, N11 2DA

A Long Time A-Going  
by Hazel Ashworth

Before we begin, let us clear our heads with a Nietzschean definition: pop music is popular music, i.e. everybody likes it. And juvenile everybody at that. Therefore 90% of it is likely to be crap. This is all you need to know.

But anyway...

In the far, far long ago, O Best Beloved, before the Moog and the Dolby and the CD, before AIDS and crack and Mrs Thatcher, there was Be Bop a Lula and Apache and Living Doll. There was guitarist Duane Eddy, who solemnly billed himself as "The Biggest Twang In The West" on an LP cover. Lonely-sounding 'crooners' wailed soulfully through the high-pitched whine of the Radio Luxembourg frequency, and the highest tech they had were things called Echo Chambers. The big-time pop voice would come across ultra staccato, abrupt as if it were being throttled, drenched in multi-repetitive echoes that prefigured the dope-fiend days of the mid-sixties, when hippie ears developed echo-chambers of their own.

I thought it was wonderful, of course, being a kid. Not so my father, who was mightily amused by those innovations, and would refer to them in disrespectful terms whenever the chance arose: "Listen, Hazel, here's one of your songs - the man's singing with his head in a bucket!" The older generation still made its opinions known in a sarcastic manner concerning current teenage obsessions, and young kids still had to run the gauntlet of caustic parental comments on their behaviour. Lonnie Donnegan's "Putting on the Agony" voiced the Mature Attitude perfectly. He was very probably the last singer ever to have a successful hit explaining what Mum and Dad thought:

"And as I look around me, I sometimes have to smile  
Seeing all the you-ng folks, putting on the style"

As the fifties wore out and the sixties came in, the "Generation Gap" yawned wider and wider. (Older folks still refer to this as if it were something akin to Potato Blight, which perhaps it was.) Parents became non-persons, at least to the extent that they dissolved into vague, token figures - the demise of parent power was given its most witheringly graphic portrayal in Anthony Burgess's CLOCKWORK ORANGE, where 'P' and 'M' are useless, helpless and dumb, hapless sparrows fostering the psychopathic cuckoo-hooligan - and when I was old enough to do more than sit sulking in the nest listening to the radio I went out to bop on my own. I went out to hops ('disco' is a twee word that wasn't invented then), concerts, gigs, whatever, just like the rest of the flock. Only a few stand out now: The Family (Roger Chapman), a Sitar Recital by Ravi Shankar, Orff's Carmina Burana and the virtuoso performances of Jimi Hendrix in Woodstock and Mick Jagger in his little white dress at Hyde Park about the time of the first moon landing in 1969.

One way of assuring oneself a permanent place in the hearts of the audience is to die while still Doing It, an art the great blues singers perfected long ago. It was a smart career move that Jimi Hendrix used with devastating effect, carrying on the tradition; a rash of plane crashes and car & rail accidents had carried off many of the great and not-so-greats (Jim Reeves is remembered with a shudder), and in the sixties they continued to fall like ninepins, though the means of death were often enough transport mishaps of another kind, drug-related: either too much or too much variety. Thus, Keith Richards, Stones guitarist who drowned in a swimming pool in the grounds of a



house that once belonged to A A Milne (there were lots of tasteless jokes about pooch-sticks, which you'd only appreciate if you'd read WINNIE THE POOH) and for that reason is difficult to forget; Hendrix; Janis Joplin soon after, and a whole lot of others stretching out beyond the decade. Bob Dylan was simply deified out of existence, and extremely funny things happened to his head. John Lennon nearly left it too late, and Elvis Presley definitely missed the boat: for someone whose appeal lasted barely two years before becoming fat, shiny and rich, he was a long time a-going.

The seventies were boring by comparison: I stopped being a student in '71, then on the dole for a while before gradually being sucked into full-time employment a few years later. So I feel it's quite natural for me to feel nostalgic about the sixties, if only from the unromantic (but nevertheless central) viewpoint coloured by fond memories of not having to get up in the morning. But it's far from an enduring ennui: like any other era, a large proportion of the music was trite and forgettable - though the props and background of sex, drugs and politics was undeniably dramatic - but what I found most peculiar was the phenomenon of the backward-looking schmaltz machine that started spewing a saccharine mist out over an unsuspecting public, as early as '72. This helped to kill off much of the affection I held for the popstuff: it's all got a limited shelf-life, and was bought and eaten way back in the olden days. To be forced to re-consume it time and time again has only one result - the perfectly reasonable one of wanting to throw up. The persons who invented such cringe-inducing concepts as 'Swinging Sixties Nights' and 'Golden Oldies' should be forced to listen to Digits McPhee or The Berrisford Brothers for a whole day (trouble is, they'd probably like it).

Among the list of casualties killed off by repetition, I would place Dylan's version of 'The House of the Rising Sun', Procol Harum's 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', all versions of 'Amazing Grace', much of the poor Beatles music but in particular 'Yesterday'. The Rolling Stones (praise be to their name) have largely escaped, as have Canned Heat and The Electric Prunes and The Doors and... Pink Floyd. Long may they remain underexposed, playing away inside old Heads rather than on the crude public airwaves, silent music mingling with the 'play it again Sam' memories of hallucinogenic nights filled with tales of draft-dodgers newly escaped from the second front-line, America. And yes, of course they were stashed to the gunwales with Lebanese Gold and brought flowers from California. Every time.

Never mind the quality, feel the nostalgia!

"Oh the way that Hendrix played  
Everyone was getting laid  
Dope was of the highest grade  
Those were the days"

And you'd better believe it man. Er, Best Beloved.

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NOTE Serious students of Tin Pan Alley as it was in the time of the dinosaurs are directed to ARMAGEDDON RAG, by George R R Martin, from which the above verse (by Stephen Terrell, '81) is extracted.

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Hazel Ashworth

# Aliens Stole Their Nova

OR THE IMMINENT TOTAL COLLAPSE OF FANDOM AND THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE UNLESS THINGUMMY AND WHATSISNAME GET AT LEAST ONE ROTTEN AWARD NEXT TIME ROUND YOU HEAR ME THERE BOY?

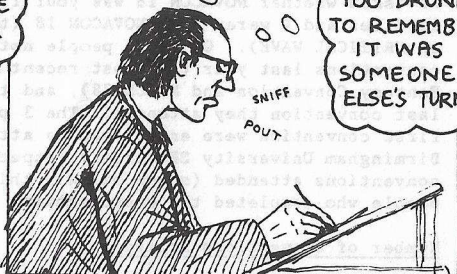
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THESE IDIOTS?



GRUNT  
SNARL

FIRST OF ALL THEY WHINE ABOUT LIP WINNING THE FANZINE NOVA FOR THE SECOND YEAR RUNNING...

BUT THAT WAS JUST AN UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT...



SNIFF  
POUT

OBVIOUSLY ALL THE VOTERS WERE TOO DRUNK TO REMEMBER IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE'S TURN...

THEN THEY GET HYSTERICAL BECAUSE MICHAEL ASHLEY IS VOTED BEST FAN WRITER...



SCOFF  
SNEER

THIS MAN IS AN EVIL SADISTIC MONSTER, THEY SAY, AND VOTING FOR HIM IS AS MORALLY REPREHENSIBLE AS CONDONING RAPE AND MURDER...

DAMN RIGHT, ANYWAY...

MICHAEL ASHLEY IS **BAD**



SCOWL  
MUTTER

NOT TO MENTION THAT HE MAKES RUDE REMARKS ABOUT THEIR FANZINES...

I KEEP HAVING TO WAIT FOR THE SNIVELLING LITTLE TURD TO FINISH HIS DRINK SO HE CAN BUY ME ANOTHER ROUND...

BUT WHAT DO THEY SAY WHEN I WIN AGAIN AS BEST FAN ARTIST?



GRIT  
GRIND

NOT ONE SINGLE BLOODY WORD!

NOBODY AT ALL MAKES A SOLITARY SODDING COMPLAINT!

I SWEAR, UNLESS I GET SOME SERIOUS BITCHING AND MOANING FROM YOU PEOPLE REAL SOON, SOMEONE IS GOING TO SUFFER...



RUMBLE  
BURP

I'LL HAVE TO DRAW MORE PICTURES

THEN YOU'LL ALL BE SORRY



## The NOVACON Questionnaire

You may remember seeing huge piles of pale blue questionnaires at the last NOVACON; you may even have filled one in - 69 of you did, after all. I was very pleased with the level of response, and would like to thank you all for taking the time to let us know what you think. Here are the results:

### Convention Experience

We asked whether NOVACON 18 was your first convention. 62 people said No, 3 said Yes and 4 weren't at NOVACON 18 (the questionnaire was also distributed in CRITICAL WAVE). Of the 4 people not at NOVACON 18, 3 had attended other conventions last year (the most recent being, respectively, Conine, World Fantasy Convention and NICON 88), and the other person didn't mention the last convention they attended. The 3 people for whom NOVACON 18 was their first convention were encouraged to attend by friends, Andromeda Bookshop and Birmingham University SF Society respectively. With the figures on total conventions attended (shown below), this indicates that a high proportion of people who completed the questionnaire have a good knowledge of conventions.

#### Number of Conventions Attended:

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| 1              | 3  |
| 2-5            | 11 |
| 6-10           | 12 |
| 11-20          | 9  |
| 21-35          | 12 |
| 36-50          | 6  |
| More than 50   | 5  |
| Can't remember | 5  |
| Lots           | 6  |

#### Number of NOVACONS attended:

|              |    |
|--------------|----|
| 0-1          | 22 |
| 2-3          | 9  |
| 4-5          | 9  |
| 6            | 6  |
| 7-8          | 4  |
| 9-10         | 5  |
| 11-12        | 6  |
| More than 13 | 5  |
| Most         | 3  |

We also asked 'What was your favourite convention?' The response to this question was varied, with a total of 31 conventions mentioned. The results (for conventions mentioned more than once) were:

|            |   |                        |   |
|------------|---|------------------------|---|
| Conspiracy | 6 | Connote8               | 3 |
| Follycon   | 5 | Tynecon 2: The Mexican | 3 |
| Novacon 18 | 5 | Conine                 | 2 |
| Beccon 85  | 4 | Novacon 14             | 2 |
| Novacon 17 | 4 | Novacon 13             | 2 |

### General Interest

We also wanted to get a picture of what other interests our respondents had. These are shown below:

|                               |    |
|-------------------------------|----|
| Local SF Group Member         | 39 |
| Apa/Fanzine Writer            | 26 |
| British SF Association Member | 21 |
| Fanzine Publisher             | 19 |
| Fiction Writer's Workshop/Apa | 16 |
| Birmingham SF Group Member    | 11 |

32 people also stated that they were members of 'any other club or activity related to SF or fandom'. Areas mentioned more than once were:

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Related to convention running       | 4 |
| Related to writing                  | 3 |
| Role playing                        | 2 |
| ZZ9 Plural Z Alpha (Hitch Hikers)   | 2 |
| Six of One (The Prisoner)           | 2 |
| MisFiTs (Informal Birmingham group) | 2 |
| Davedom (Don't ask!)                | 2 |

Thus a high proportion of respondents are active in fandom generally.

### Preferences at NOVACON

We asked you to rank-order your preferences for items at NOVACONS, and the results grouped together into three clear areas (the lower the score, the more important the item):

#### Group 1: Essential

Bars 214 ( 4%)  
Book Room 229 ( 4%)  
Lounge Space 258 ( 5%)

#### Group 3: Unimportant

Fan Room 582 (10%)  
Video Room 635 (11%)  
Other\* 641 (12%)  
Games Room 727 (13%)

#### Group 2: Nice to have

Snack Food 399 ( 7%)  
Fan Programme 456 ( 8%)  
Hot Meals 461 ( 8%)  
Art Show 482 ( 9%)  
'Open' Room 484 ( 9%)

\* most mentioned items here were:  
Programme (7 mentions)  
People/Friends (4 mentions)  
Q - all in first place  
Info Desk/Updates (2 mentions)  
Filking (2 mentions)

We also asked you to rank-order your preferences for programme items. Again, the results can be grouped into three areas:

#### Group 1: Essential

Guest Speeches 363 ( 4%)  
Talks 370 ( 4%)  
Panel Discussions 386 ( 4%)  
Book Auction 424 ( 4%)

#### Group 3: Unimportant

Convention Disco 730 ( 8%)  
Sercon Items\* 745 ( 8%)  
Live Music 786 ( 8%)  
Fanzine Workshop 807 ( 8%)  
Fanzine Auction 856 ( 9%)  
Other 915 ( 9%)

#### Group 2: Nice to Have

Films 470 ( 5%)  
Quiz Games 514 ( 5%)  
Art Auction 555 ( 6%)  
'Official' Parties 576 ( 6%)  
Authors' Readings 594 ( 6%)  
Fannish Items 601 ( 6%)

\* I've got a feeling that Sercon Items would have scored much more if people had known what it meant! So, for the uninitiated, it is short for 'Serious and Constructive', and is often used as the opposite of 'Fannish'.

The single most popular item is the Book Auction and the single least popular item is the Convention Disco.

### Food and Drink

We thought it would be useful to find out your eating and drinking habits at conventions. These are as follows:

#### Food

Snacks/Rolls/Sandwiches 22  
The Cheapest 21  
Breakfast 15  
Hot Food/Restaurant 14  
Anything 6  
Vegetarian 1  
Sweet/Sticky 1  
Nouvelle Cuisine 1

#### Drink

Beer 19  
Spirits 18  
Real Ale 16  
Lager/Cider/Guinness 14  
Soft Drinks 13  
Fruit Juice 9  
Tea/Coffee/Milk 5  
Wine/Port 2

#### Other

We also asked how long you spend away from the convention.

None 4  
0-3 hours total 20  
3-6 hours total 28  
More than 6 hours 12  
Varies/Depends 4

Finally, we wanted to know if you'll be coming to NOVACON 1989. 49 respondents said Yes, and only 2 said No. Of these and the 'Don't Know's, by far the most common reason for likely non-attendance was lack of money.



### The NOVACON Quiz 1989

At each of the last two NOVACONS there has been a 'Do it yourself' Quiz, the first run more or less as a Programme Book filler and the second by request. Given this show of interest, the second Quiz also asked whether the item should become a regular event (NOVACON chairmen willing) and, the response being favourable and Martin Tudor agreeing, the third one will occur at this year's NOVACON. I am therefore taking this opportunity to clarify a few points as well as to inform you of the 'Set Book', but more of that later.

The Quiz is intended as a fun item to let you exercise your grey matter on a subject that you enjoy (no! not that - science fiction) without anyone else knowing how good you are, with the added incentive that all entrants are entered into a prize draw. On the other hand, a fair amount of work goes into the questions, their presentation and marking to try to ensure that how well you do reflects your knowledge of SF and that you get something more from the exercise than you would from general magazine 'How much do you know?' quizzes.

Another point to be considered is that SF is a very large field, both in length of existence and breadth of writing, let alone volume of output, which means that everyone attempting the Quiz will have read their own cross-section of the genre, making it very difficult to set questions on areas that everyone will have in common. So a fair proportion of questions are set on classic and Golden Age SF, with the rest based on the works of well-known authors, films, etc. Generally speaking fantasy, sword and sorcery, comics and 'non-central' SF is not touched. But questions do range from easy to fairly hard and you can choose, within limits, which ones to answer. And each question is multiple choice, i.e. has several answers given with it and you choose the correct one.

Earlier I mentioned the 'Set Book'. This is a book on which a range of easy to hard questions will be set, the title of which you are given in advance so that you can read it beforehand. Last year's Set Book was *THE TIME MACHINE* by H G Wells; this year it will be *LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN* aka *GUNPOWDER GOD* by H Beam Piper, who died on 9th November 1964, i.e. 25 years ago this NOVACON. H Beam Piper was one of the Great Authors and this work is a definitive alternative world novel, originally serialised in parts in *ANALOG*. Although complete in itself, a sequel *GREAT KINGS WAR* was written about four years ago by two current authors who recreated H Beam Piper's style very closely. All H Beam Piper's SF writings have been reprinted in recent years, including the original, hitherto unpublished, version of *GUNPOWDER GOD*, which is drastically different from the published one. Even if you don't intend to enter the Quiz, you could do a lot worse than reading the Set Book.

That's all for now; further details will be given in the next Progress Report.

Happy reading!

Vernon Brown

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Just a reminder that Stephen Tudor will be organising a 'six ball sudden death' Snooker Tournament at NOVACON 19, if there is sufficient demand. All entrants will be required to pay £1.00 before their first game. There will be prizes for the overall winner and highest break. If you would like to enter, please complete the enclsd entry form and send it to Stephen Tudor, c/o 121 Cape Hill, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 0SH.

### The Members

|                               |                       |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 128 Sacha Ackerman            | 158 Michael Abbott    |
| 129 Darroll Pardoe            | 159 Brian Davies      |
| 130 Ro Pardoe                 | 160 Lesley Ward       |
| 131 Paul Oldroyd              | 161 Dave Packwood     |
| 132 Chris Donaldson           | 162 Mike Moir         |
| 133 Kev Grayson               | 163 Debby Moir        |
| 134 Brian Grieves             | 164 Brett Cockrell    |
| 135 Bruce Macdonald           | 165 Anne Page         |
| 136 Robert Whitmore           | 166 Peter Day         |
| 137 Louise Hill               | 167 Ken Slater        |
| 138 Jean Maudsley             | 168 Joyce Slater      |
| 139 James White               | 169 John Dallman      |
| 140 Peggy White               | 170 Rafe Culpin       |
| 141 Simon Polley              | 171 Chris Stocks      |
| 142 Debbi Kerr                | 172 Mike Ibeji        |
| 143 Mike Dickinson            | 173 Bridget Wilkinson |
| 144 Jackie Gresham            | 174 Brian Aldiss      |
| 145 Charlotte Bulmer          | 175 David Elworthy    |
| 146 Brian Stovold             | 176 Dave French       |
| 147 Ken Cheslin               | 177 Shirley French    |
| 148 Andrew Stephenson         | 178 Emily Brooks      |
| 149 Anne Hamill               | 179 Michael T Day     |
| 150 Jimmy Robertson           | 180 Gareth Rees       |
| 151 Mal Ashworth              | 181 Humphrey Price    |
| 152 Hazel Ashworth            | 182 Lynn Savage       |
| 153 David Symes               | 183 Mike Scantlebury  |
| 154 Fay Symes                 | 184 Pamela Buckmaster |
| 155 Linda-Claire Toal         | 185 Anthony Smith     |
| 156 Steven Cain               | 186 Susie Cheyne      |
| 157 Wendell Phillip Wagner Jr | 187 Mark Fletcher     |

### Correction to Last Time:

46 Nigel Robson (as stated)                      48 Nick Larter (not Nigel Robson)

### Bits and Pieces:

Chairman's Bit: The Hotel by Martin Tudor  
The Programme by Helena Bowles  
The Art Show by Elinor Predota  
Geoff Ryman: Telling the Truth by Colin Greenland  
A Long Time A-Going by Hazel Ashworth  
Aliens Stole Their Nova by D West  
Novacon Quiz 1989 by Vernon Brown  
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And finally...I'm hanging on to the completed Novacon Questionnaires, in case any other convention committees would find it useful to see the responses we received. If so, just get in touch with me at the convention address.



# n**N**i**O**n**V**e**A**t**C**e**O**e**N**n

*17 - 19 November 1989*

*Excelsior Hotel.*

*Birmingham*

*Guest of Honour*

*GEOFF RYMAN*

