

NOVACON 28

Progress Report 3



Special Offer

**Tell your friends they can
join TWO Conventions for
the price of ONE!**

(Novacon 28 & 29 for just £55.00!*)

**Meanwhile, why don't
YOU join Novacon 29 for
just £23.00!**

**Novacon 28, 13-15 November 1998, featuring
award-winning author Paul J McAuley as Guest of
Honour. Novacon 29, 5-7 November 1999, with
noted mathematician Ian Stewart as Guest of
Honour. Both will be at the Britannia Hotel in the
centre of Birmingham.**

(£55.00 being the price of attending either Fantasycon XXII or
the Festival of Fantastic Films in 1998. This offer applies until
1/11/98. If you are already a member of Novacon 28 you can join
Novacon 29 for just £23.00 until 15/11/98. Check out our web site
at <http://www.cooky.demon.co.uk/novacon/n28/n28.html> or the
membership form in this Progress Report for further details.)*

For a limited period only!

NOVACON 28

Date: 13-15 November 1998.

Venue: The Britannia Hotel, New Street, Birmingham.

Guest of Honour: Paul J McAuley.

Membership & Enquiries: Attending membership costs £32.00 until 1st November, after this time please join on the door - where the price of admittance will be £35.00. Supporting membership, which is only available until 1st November, costs £15.00. Cheques/Postal Orders should be made payable to "Novacon 28" and sent with your completed form(s) to: Carol Morton, 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS.

Room Rates: £35.00 per person per night for people sharing twin/double rooms, £30.00 pppn for those sharing a triple room and £40.00 pppn for single rooms (inclusive of full English breakfast). NB: Hotel booking forms, and deposits of £20.00 per person, must be received by Carol Morton no later than 15th October 1998. Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Britannia Hotel". Enquires regarding hotel bookings should be sent to Carol at the address above or you can call her on 01384 825386 (before 9pm).

Advertising Rates: Advertising is welcome for the final Progress Report of Novacon 28, the first Progress Report of Novacon 29 and for the Programme Book. The rates are as follows (fan rates in brackets):

Progress Report: 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 martin@empties.demon.co.uk). Deadlines for camera-ready advertising copy are detailed below.

Deadlines: Novacon 28's Progress Report #4: 10th October 1998, to be mailed late October 1998. Novacon 28 Programme Book: 10th October 1998, distributed at Novacon 28. Novacon 29's Progress Report #1: 17th October 1998, distributed at Novacon 28.

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 the booking section on the membership form enclosed with this Progress Report and mail it to Carol Morton at the address below.

Committee: Martin Tudor (Chair & Publications), 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarke's Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX (e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk); Steve Lawson, 379 Myrtle Road, Sheffield, S2 3HQ (tel: 0114 281 1572, e-mail dream@netcomuk.co.uk); Carol Morton (Hotel Liaison) and Tony Morton (Treasurer), 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS (tel: 01384-825386 - before 9pm or e-mail morton@cablenet.co.uk); Pat McMurray (Programme), 28 Plaistow Grove, Bromley, Kent, BR1 3PB e-mail pat@cooky.demon.co.uk; Chris Murphy (Operations), 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail CSHM@compuserve.com).

Acknowledgements: Tony Berry, Helena Bowles, Steve Lawson, Pat McMurray, Carol & Tony Morton for their articles and Dave Mooring for his splendid cover and interior artwork. All uncredited contributions have been written by Martin Tudor. This Progress Report was printed on the CRITICAL WAVE photocopier, contact Martin Tudor at the above address for details of WAVE's competitive prices.

CHAIRMAN'S BIT by Martin Tudor

They said it couldn't be done, but it has! Yes, in this Progress Report we publish two further book reviews by members of the Novacon 28 committee, thus completing the set! Yes, every committee member has now reviewed at least one book by Paul J McAuley, our Guest of Honour, and with a Progress Report still to go, phew. Our final Progress Report, next issue, will hopefully feature reviews of the only two of Paul's books not covered so far: FAIRYLAND and his latest novel, ANCIENT OF DAYS (Gollancz; £16.99).

Meanwhile, plans for the convention's programme and publications are coming to fruition. I'm delighted to announce that our Souvenir Booklet this year will feature not one, but two new stories by our Guest of Honour! Paul has surpassed himself with two connected stories entitled "Alien TV" and "Before the Flood" - I'm sure you will enjoy them both.

On the programme front we've got at least twice as much fun with not one but two live bands: To Hell With Burgundy, the folk rock band from Intuition, on Friday night (followed by the 2kon Ceilidh) and the welcome return of Novacon favourite Bad Influence on Saturday (followed by a disco).

As Novacon this year is to be held not only on the second Friday of the month, the date of the monthly Birmingham Science Fiction Group meeting, but also at the BSFG's regular venue, we felt it only appropriate that the BSFG should hold a special meeting at the con. So, on Friday night, we are pleased to welcome one of the BSFG's honorary presidents, Brian W Aldiss. Brian will be talking about and signing copies of the second volume of his autobiography, THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE: MY LIFE AS AN ENGLISHMAN (released that week in hardcover from Little, Brown).

Of course there will be lots more going on, see Pat McMurray's article below, and (hopefully) the draft programme in our fourth and final Progress Report!

HOTEL by Carol Morton

All I really need to say is that by the time you receive this Progress Report any hotel booking forms that have been sent to me will have been passed on to the hotel. The hotel have been sending out acknowledgements of the bookings for a few weeks now - if you believe you've booked and haven't received an

acknowledgement please contact me (see below for details).

If you have not yet sent a booking form in to me you will find a booking form with this Progress Report. Please send the form in to me as soon as possible so that I can pass your requirements on to the hotel. I would also appreciate it if you would tell me of any special requirements that you may have regarding diet, room near a lift, quiet area, no-smoking etc., again so that I can pass these on to the hotel.

However, congratulations are in order to the sixty percent of you who got their hotel bookings in before the original deadline of the 30th September! Unfortunately, of course, this means that forty percent of you didn't and now all the singles in the Britannia are gone, most (but not all) of the doubles and all of the family rooms - but we still have plenty of twins! So get those booking forms in now!

The deadline for hotel bookings has been extended - forms, and deposits of £20.00 per person, must be received no later than 15th October 1998. (After this time the Hotel may start allocating rooms to the general public.) Cheques for room deposits should be made payable to "The Britannia Hotel" and sent to me, Carol Morton, at 14 Park Street, Lye, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY9 8SS, (telephone enquiries, before 9pm, on 01384-825386, or e-mail morton@-cableinet.co.uk).

Well that's all I need to say, I will be reporting back to you in the final Progress Report on how well the hotel are responding to our requests for food, drink and other such essentials. Please send in those forms.

See you soon.

THE PROGRAMME by Pat McMurray

We're delighted to be able to say that designing the programme is proceeding apace. During the day there will be the usual combination of auctions, light entertainment and sercon programming, in the evening we've lined up two bands, a ceilidh, a disco and yet more programming.

We don't wish to give hostages to fortune by giving too much detail now, but there will be something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. Actually we're not so sure about the something blue!

We're building time into the programme to get a drink or a snack, freshen up, take part in the on-going fannish conversation, without missing any of what we really hope will be an interesting, engrossing and amusing programme.

We're still interested in your ideas and suggestions, but you must be quick. E-mail us with suggestions at <pat@cooky.demon.co.uk> or contact me at the address below. Also, we hope to have our programme on the website before the convention. We're aiming to have a draft on the web by the 1st October, but no guarantees....

Finally, we have two workshops arranged: a Writer's Workshop by Graham Joyce on the Saturday, and a Presentation Workshop by John D Rickett. If you'd like to sign up, please contact us at <pat@cooky.demon.co.uk> or the convention address. If you have a workshop you'd like to run, please contact us with your suggestion

[Please feel free to contact our programme organiser, Pat McMurray at pat@cooky.demon.co.uk or 28, Plaistow Grove, Bromley, KENT BR1 3PB.

[Pat McMurray is also responsible for The Memory Hole Annex an Archive and Repository of Convention Materials which can be viewed at <http://www.cooky.demon.co.uk/index.html>]

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 complete the relevant section of the form enclosed with this Progress Report, or contact our Ops Manager, Chris Murphy, directly at 126 McKean Road, Oldbury, B69 4BA, (e-mail CSHM@compuserve.com).

WRITERS WORKSHOP by Graham Joyce

The writers' workshop will be conducted on Saturday afternoon. Rather than bringing along previously written manuscripts, the participants will be invited to produce new material in the workshop.

The workshop will comprise:

- 1) An input on Narrative Structure from Graham
- 2) Writing exercises designed to refresh approaches to writing
- 3) The production of a short, tightly edited piece of writing for exhibition at the convention

The convention will make available PC/wordprocessing facility so that participants can type up and print short, complete pieces of writing.

Please try to read the short story *Flowers For Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, which will be referred to in the talk on Narrative Structure, along with the film *BLADERUNNER*.

RED DUST by Paul J McAuley Reviewed by Steve Lawson

We all remember the proliferation of Mars books a few years ago, this is Paul's contribution, and it's a welcome change from the way that the plot concentrates on the high tech terraforming sequences in most of the other books. Terraforming is integral to the plot however, but here the emphasis is on the Mars many years in the future, after the terraforming has begun to fail.

That's not to say that high tech is lacking, it's not, but here the tech is almost taken for granted, virtual reality is a fact of life, many people have moved onto what is seen as a higher level of existence. Following the "Golden Path" to what is perceived to be a better life after death in information space, is becoming more and more common, with people using memory enhancers to "fix" memory and experiences the better to "take" the information with them to "heaven".

Fullerene viruses re-wire people's nervous systems, converting them into improved versions of themselves, or even into totally different versions of themselves, nanotechnology is widespread and used in all levels of society.

Elvis Presley is alive (sort of) and well; on Jupiter and broadcasting rock and roll system wide. It seems that alien abductions were not complete fiction, but it was memories and experiences that were abducted not people.

The Chinese way of life has survived better than any other on Mars and we follow the adventures of Wei Lee through a roller coaster ride of discovery, which propels our unlikely hero through many levels of "reality" and ranging far across a strange new Mars in an attempt to save the world before it reverts to the Mars we know today.

I enjoyed reading this book. I tend to judge a book by how many times I put it down before I finish it. These days I don't have the time to read a book all the way through in one sitting, but this book held my attention and interest all the way through, so it was only put aside three or four times before I finished it, compared to some, which have taken many more sessions, that is very good going.

CHILD OF THE RIVER by Paul J McAuley

Reviewed by Pat McMurray

CHILD OF THE RIVER is the first volume of a trilogy set on a remote artificial world, which has been inhabited by hundreds of different alien races for thousands of years. There's a mixture of technologies, guns and swords, horses and floater discs. Yama is discovered as a child floating on the river, grows up in the care of a minor bureaucrat and begins a journey towards some understanding of himself and his place in this strange world.

Yama's unusual in several ways, his early rescue as a baby from the river, his unidentifiable species, his affinity with the machines which control this world, but ignore the other species.

It's difficult to review the first volume of a trilogy in isolation. We have all read the first volumes of trilogies which turned out to be rubbish as a set, but read well as a first volume. On the other hand we've also read books such as Kim Stanley Robinson's RED MARS or Gene Wolfe's THE SHADOW OF THE TORTURER, which are incomplete in themselves, but turned out to be the first volumes of masterpieces.

Is this novel incomplete? Yes. Is it the first volume of a masterpiece? Maybe, only time will tell. The background is of interest, the story grips, the characters are sympathetic. I shall be reading the next volume.

(Further books by our Guest of Honour, Paul J McAuley, will be reviewed in the final Progress Report.)

NOTTHE CRECHE: A BABY SITTING & CHILD MINDING SERVICE by Helena Bowles

Richard Standage, registered nurse working at the highly prestigious Birmingham Children's Hospital, and Helena Bowles, registered nurse at the totally non-prestigious Birmingham Heartlands hospital, will both be attending Novacon with their four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter.

Whilst government legislation decrees that they cannot provide a creche, both are willing to provide baby sitting/child minding on a privately arranged basis. This requires parents to contact them in advance on 0121-558-7591 (or in writing to 116 Shireland Road, Smethwick, Warley, West Midlands, B66 4QJ). They will be caring for their own, and any other children with whose parents a private arrangement has been reached, in an allocated suite in the hotel which will have a bed, a cot and a kettle. They recommend all children be supplied with a selection of carefully labelled favourite toys/books. Babies will require nappies and changing equipment in a carefully labelled bag. Recently potty trained children will require a change of underclothing and trousers or skirt.

Richard and Helena will be happy to feed babies/young children if milk and baby food is supplied. Baby milk/food must be in pre-packaged bottles, as refrigeration facilities may not be available.

As there is no charge made for this service, extra pairs of hands on a voluntary basis will be greatly appreciated.

[Because this facility was not used last year we should mention that unless it is used this year we will not be offering it again. As ever, feedback is invited to Martin Tudor at 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane,) Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX or via e-mail martin@empties.demon.co.uk.]

THE NOVA AWARDS

by Tony Berry

Fanzines received by myself since last time are:

ANSIBLE #132-134. Dave Langford, 94 London Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5AU.

BANANA WINGS #11. Claire Brialey, 26 Northampton Road, Croydon, Surrey, CR0 7HA and Mark Plummer, 14 Northway Road, Croydon, CR0 6JE.

BARMAID #1. Yvonne Rowse, Evergreen, Halls Farm Lane, Trimpey, Worcs., DY12 1NP.

COSMOPOKTA Vol 3 No3. Alison Scott, 42 Tower Hamlets Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4RH, and/or Steve Davies, 52 Westbourne Terrace, Reading, Berks., RG30 2RP.

DID I SAY THAT OUT LOUD TOO? Debbi Kerr, 38 Bankfield Terrace, Burley, Leeds, LS4 2RE.

KERLES #1. Tommy Ferguson, 40 Deramore Avenue, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT7 3ER.

OLAF #1. Ken Cheslin, 29 Kestrel Road, Halesowen, West Midlands, B63 2PH.

SNUFKIN GOES WEST... #1-2. Maureen Kincaid Speller, 60 Bournemouth Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5AZ.

TAFFKIN'S BUM #1. Maureen Kincaid Speller (address as above).

TAFFLON TUDOR #4. Martin Tudor, 24 Ravensbourne Grove, (off Clarkes Lane), Willenhall, West Midlands, WV13 1HX.

THE WRONG LEGGINGS #4. Lilian Edwards, 39 Viewforth Edinburgh.

THE UBIQUITOUS THEY #1. Chris Hill, The Bungalow, Evingar Road, Whitchurch, Hants., RG28 7EY.

All of the above fanzines are available for "The Usual", which means in exchange for other fanzines, contributions, or in response to letters of comment. In the first instance a polite letter of request accompanied by postage or a large stamped, self-addressed envelope, works fine.

[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.]

NOVACON 28 **MEMBERS from** **last Progress** **Report until** **25th September**

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 190 Cat Coast
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 196 Chris Amies
 197 Henry Newton
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 199 Matt Kiessling
 201 Douglas Bell
 202 Sabine Furlong
 203 Brian W Aldiss
 204 Andrew Seaman
 205 Aiden Dixon
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 209 Sheila Lightsey
 210 Victor Gonzalez
 211 Linda Krawecke
 212 Keith Armstrong-Bridges
 213 Jill Armstrong-Bridges
 214 Ewan Armstrong-Bridges
 215 Chris Stocks
 2000 Andrew Adams

Novacon Publications

NOVACON has been publishing limited edition souvenir specials featuring the work of their Guests of Honour since 1979. Already published in this series:

THE MAKING OF THE LESBIAN

HORSE by Christopher Priest

(500 copies published for Novacon 9, November 1979)

A ROMANCE OF THE EQUATOR

by Brian Aldiss

(550 copies published for Novacon 10, November 1980)

COURAGEOUS NEW PLANET

by Bob Shaw

(550 copies published for Novacon 11, November 1981)

THORN

by Robert Holdstock

(500 plus copies published for Novacon 14, November 1984, approximately 450 numbered but the rest unnumbered)

THE INTERPRETERS

by James White and

A NOVACON GARLAND by David

Langford (600 copies published for Novacon

15, November 1985)

PRELUDE TO A WORK IN PROGRESS

by E C Tubb and WHO'S WHO IN THE

UNIVERSE by Chris Evans

(500 copies published for Novacon 16, November 1986)

CLEANING UP

by Iain M Banks

(500 copies published for Novacon 17, November 1987)

TRIVIAL TALES

by Gary Kilworth

(500 copies published for Novacon 18, November 1988)

THE COMING OF ENKIDU

by Geoff Ryman

(450 copies published for Novacon 19, November 1989)

ARE YOU CONTENT IN YOUR

CONTEXT? by Jack Cohen

(450 copies published for Novacon 20, November 1990)

IN THE GARDEN

by Colin Greenland

(500 copies published for Novacon 21, November 1991)

WHEN THE ANGELS CAME

by Storm Constantine

(350 copies published for Novacon 22, November 1992)

CHIRON

by Stephen Baxter

(400 copies published for Novacon 23, November 1993)

HORROGRAPH

by Graham Joyce

(350 copies published for Novacon 24, November 1994)

OVERLOAD

featuring Brian W Aldiss,

Iain M Banks, Harry Harrison, Bob Shaw

(500 copies published for Novacon 25, November 1995)

SOFTLIGHT SINS

by Peter F Hamilton

(350 copies published for Novacon 27, November 1997)

*For further details contact: The
Birmingham Science Fiction Group, c/o
ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP, 2-5 Suffolk
Street, Birmingham, B1 1LT, UK.*