

TWENTY-FIFTH ANNUAL READERS' AWARDS' RESULTS

The Twenty-Fifth Annual Readers' Awards ballots were overflowing with comments from readers. As always, I had a great deal of fun going through them—I love the diverse feedback that I get from all of you.

Naturally, there was a wide range of favorites and a wide range of thoughts about those favorites. Alan K. Lipton certainly made my day when he wrote: "Different writers have different strengths. SF is the literature of ideas, and while some of your authors have strong ideas, as a reader and writer, I respond better to the power of storytelling style (Allen M. Steele and Robert Reed come to mind) and occasionally graceful language (Kate Wilhelm). I'm not a big fan of bleak, but there's no arguing with certain masterworks (Barry B. Longyear's "Alten Kamaraden"). Choosing my favorites once a year is hard enough. You have to do this every day. Sometimes I'd want your job, other times not. But you do it so well." Nathaniel Williams wrote to tell us, "Preston's 'Helping Them Take the Old Man Down' was this year's stand-out story for me. I loved its deft blend of nostalgia and contemporary politics, it's ability to find metaphors for the complexities of post-9/11 American life within SF's pulp traditions. Stories like that keep me coming back to *Asimov's*." And Stephen Antoniewicz simply said, "More Tanith Lee please."

Jeff L. Powell complained, "Please, I beg you, stop printing so many good stories. I pull out half my remaining hair every year at ballot time. Thank you. Now the object of public scorn." His son, Jeffrey David Powell said, "Looking over my list of winners makes me realize how vibrant SF still is, if you consider how the majority of these writers have not been

around for a long time. (That's not to say I don't miss some of the more established writers like Connie Willis and Charles Stross that haven't had a story in *Asimov's* in so long.)" To this last comment, let me add, that I miss them, too. Unfortunately for us, the more experienced authors often move on to writing novels almost exclusively, but Connie assures me she has nearly finished a new tale for us. Let's keep our fingers crossed that she delivers it soon! Connie was a guest at our Readers' Award celebration this year (along with her husband Courtney and daughter Cordelia), which was held over the Nebula Awards Weekend on May 21, 2011, in Washington, D.C.

On his ballot, long-time reader Soon Lee remarked, "One might think that the novella category with fewest candidates would be the easiest to pick, but it didn't turn out that way. Other categories were similarly strong. I have a soft spot for humorous stories so the Tim McDaniel story with the really long title and Kit Reed's 'Monkey Do' were highlights. I also especially enjoyed William Preston's novelette, 'Helping Them Take the Old Man Down.'" Speaking of the novella category, the younger Powell also said, "The developments in the latest novella by Kristine Kathryn Rusch really, really, really makes me want the next story to come out soon. Please make it so!" Kris Rusch's "Becoming One With the Ghosts" won the novella award in a tight struggle for first place. Unfortunately, she couldn't make it out to the East Coast, but with another Diving novella in our wings, perhaps we'll get to see her next year.

With his moving tale of "The Emperor of Mars," Allen M. Steele emerged as the frontrunner in the novelette category. Allen gave an amusing speech at our



Photo by Marianne Porter

L. to R.: Michael Swanwick, Michael Whelan, Allen M. Steele, and Sheila Williams

awards breakfast. Before the ceremony, he had combed through the Locus Index to Science Fiction Awards <www.locus-mag.com/SFAwards/index.html>, and joyfully determined that with this win he would tie Mike Resnick and Kris Rusch for the most Asimov's Readers' Awards for fiction. Alas, with the news that Kris had picked up another award, he wryly remarked that he had instantly slipped back into second place.

The fiercest fiction fight for first place occurred at our shortest length. This led to the first-ever tie in short story. Carol Emshwiller couldn't be there to accept her award for the unsettling "Lovely Ugly," but I hope to present it to her at lunch in New York later this spring. Happily, Michael Swanwick was on hand to collect his certificate for "Libertarian Russia." Later that night, Michael served as the Nebulas Awards' toastmaster. Michael's wonderful wife, Marianne Porter, who was also at our breakfast, took lots of photos of the winners. One of her shots illustrates this editorial.

Kyle Rathbun spoke for many readers when he wrote, "I have to choose 'Welcome Home—the Nebula Song' by Janis Ian first. A lot of musicians write good

lyrics and [this poem is] quite topical (I actually get quite a 'welcome home' feeling when reading your magazine)." Ten years ago, Janis attended a Readers' Award celebration as a guest of Mike Resnick. Scheduling conflicts didn't allow her to make the ceremony this year as the winner of the poetry category, but Janis sent along the following message to our readers: "I have lived on science fiction for as long as I can remember. As a musician, I regard this form as the jazz of prose. To be honored in this manner by *Asimov's* readers is a highlight in my life, right up there with my Grammys and Hall of Fame awards. Thank you!"

Our twenty-fifth annual award turned out to be the first one to have two first-place ties. The battle raged in best cover as well as short story. Although one of the ultimate winners, Tomislav Tikulin, couldn't make the trip from Zagreb to D.C., Michael Whelan was in town to collect a Solstice Award from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America in recognition of the significant impact and positive influence he's had on the speculative fiction field. As the winner of three of our awards for best cover and the creator of many of our other cover images,

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Michael has certainly had a strong and positive influence on *Asimov's* as well.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts about the 2011 stories when we post the ballot for our next set of Readers' Awards. ○