

EMMI is now working smoothly and reliably. Through a well-deserved recognition of his merits, Pierre has now been hired as staff astronomer at the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope.

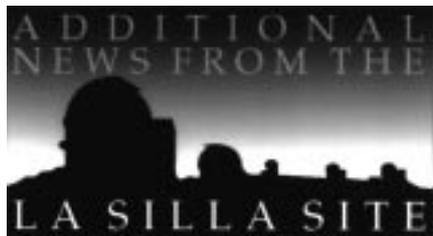
I take advantage of this occasion to welcome the newcomers, and to wish success in their new activities to those who have left us.

Erratum

In the NTT News page that has appeared in The Messenger No. 89, at the bottom of the rightmost column of page 12, reference has been made erroneously to Period 60, instead of Period 59. One should read: “. . . the already described delays . . . have prevented the

NTT Team from executing many of the service observing programmes that had been approved by the OPC for the first half of Period 59 . . .”.

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The La Silla News Page

The editors of the La Silla News Page would like to welcome readers of the eighth edition of a page devoted to reporting on technical updates and observational achievements at La Silla. We would like this page to inform the astronomical community of changes made to telescopes, instruments, operations, and of instrumental performances that cannot be reported conveniently elsewhere. Contributions and inquiries to this page from the community are most welcome.

(R. Gredel, C. Lidman)

SOFI – Current Status

C. LIDMAN

SOFI (Son of ISAAC) is the new IR imaging spectrograph on the NTT. It replaces both IRSPEC, which was decommissioned last year, and IRAC2b which will be decommissioned in 1998. SOFI recently underwent system tests in Garching. Both the spectroscopic and imaging modes were successfully tested. The efficiency of the instrument is

almost double that of IRAC2b. The performance of the Rockwell HgCdTe 1024×1024 array and the IRACE controller is excellent. In non-destructive read-out, the read-out noise of the array is a few electrons. This is comparable to the read-out noise of optical CCDs. During November, the instrument will be shipped to Chile. It will be installed on

the NTT during December, where it will undergo further system tests. The instrument will be commissioned during March next year and offered as an ESO common user instrument during Period 61.

Further details can be found at the NTT web page: <http://www.ls.eso.org/lasilla/Telescopes/NEWNTT/NTT-MAIN.html>

Image Quality of the 3.6-m Telescope (Part VI) Now Diffraction Limited at 10 Microns at the f/35 Focus

S. GUISSARD, U. WEILENMANN, A. VAN DIJSSELDONK, H.U. KÄUFL, J. ROUCHER, ESO

The images at the f/35 Cassegrain focus of the 3.6-m telescope have never been excellent. As the system (c.f. [1]) was initially installed and used to do only aperture photometry, this was never an issue of major concern. In fact, it could not even be measured directly. Only with the advent of mid-infrared cameras (here TIMMI [2],[3]) the image quality could be measured easily and systematically. Several reports state that the av-

erage Image Quality (IQ) over the last years was of the order of 1.5" FWHM with exceptionally some good images below 1.0". These images were made with TIMMI at 10 microns, the only instrument and wavelength used presently at the f/35 focus. As a consequence of the less than perfect image quality, the Strehl ratio and hence the sensitivity for point sources was degraded, typically by a factor of two. The IQ was poor com-

pared to the diffraction limit at 10 microns on this telescope (0.7") and the average seeing at La Silla at the same wavelength (between 0.5" and 0.7"). This comparison leads to the evidence that the "man-made" degradation of the image is important.

This article summarises investigations, corrective actions and the results finally obtained after several periods of technical time (Work Component