

operations. The first few observing runs had been scheduled for classical observing. The first Visiting Astronomer to come back to the NTT after the big bang was Dr. Francesco Ferraro. Figure 1 shows a view of the renovated control room during this first run.

It is too early to draw conclusions from the first observing runs at the NTT after its reopening: this will be left for a next issue of *The Messenger*. It may be sufficient here to mention that if these runs were affected by some minor hiccups, as could be expected after such a long suspension of operations and given the difficulties encountered in the last phase of the big bang, the general behaviour of the system revealed no major flaw. The users so far have generally expressed an overall satisfaction, assorted with a number of constructive suggestions. The latter are extremely valuable to us, especially since the current NTT prefigures the VLT. Thus we are urging our users to tell us what they like and dislike in the current NTT, so as to enable us to shape the VLT more to their taste.

Personnel Movements

The transition of the NTT from a stage of technical development work to regular operations has been accompanied by a change of leadership. Jason Spyromilio, who had been NTT Project Scientist since September 1995, has left the NTT team and his function has been taken over by the author of these lines. The key role played by Jason in the successful completion of the NTT big bang cannot be overstated. His dedication to the project, his indefatigable activity towards its achievement, and his extreme competence have been examples and catalysts for the work of all team members. Jason is now headed towards the VLT, where he is to lead the commissioning team. On behalf of the NTT Team, I wish him the best of success in this new challenge.

At the same time, Anders Wallander has left the NTT Team too. One of the members of the team since its creation in 1993, Anders, as chief engineer of the upgrade project, has been instru-

mental in its technical achievements. He now is back in the VLT software group, where the experience that he has accumulated through his work for the NTT will without doubt prove extremely valuable.

Finally, I am taking this opportunity to welcome Chris Lidman in the NTT Team, where he is taking the position of staff astronomer left vacant by the departure of Roland Gredel to the team in charge of the 3.6-m telescope and of the CAT at the beginning of the NTT big bang. Chris, who was until then a postdoc in the La Silla medium-sized telescope team (aka 2.2 team) where he was in charge of the IRAC instruments, will in the NTT Team assume the responsibility of SOFI instrument scientist. Until the latter comes on line, Chris is sharing the load of astronomical support of EMMI and SUSI with the other astronomers of the team.

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ESO at the Leipzig Fair

Thanks to the hospitality of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, ESO was able to entertain a 60 square metre information stand at the "Forschungsforum '97", held in connection with the INNOVATION Fair at Leipzig's impressive, new Fair grounds from September 16–20.

The stand itself had a circular layout with a diameter of 8.2 metres and featured a model of the VLT, ESO videos, Internet connection and colour panels with text and graphics. An 8-metre panorama photo of the Milky Way formed the background and provided an ample setting for the display.

The first day was dedicated to the youth, and about 5,000 young people passed the counters, eager to learn about the latest results and ideas in the numerous areas of fundamental and applied research that came together at the Research Forum.

Three ESO staff members were busy during the day answering questions from the



many visitors. It was evident that many of the young people were informed about the VLT project and did not want to miss the opportunity to ask very specific questions to the ESO staff present.

Later in the day, the extensive programme of public lectures included talks by ESO astronomers focusing on VLT science and the issue of Astronomy and the Youth.

Also during the following days, the ESO stand was well visited. Among the many visitors were the Mayor of Leipzig, high-ranking officials from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and representatives from industry. Physics teachers spent substantial time on the stand, browsing through the ESO Web pages about the VLT as well as Astronomy On-line.

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