



# Lambda Sci-Fi DC Area Gaylaxians



PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044



(202) 232-3141 - Issue #228 - March 2009

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## The LSF Book Discussion Group

If you're interested in lively discussions of F&SF books (with an emphasis on elements of interest to the LGBT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM, at Peter & Rob's home: 1425 "S" St., NW - for directions or more details, call 202-483-6369. The next meeting will be held on March 26th.

Here are the details on the next several discussion meetings:

**March 26th** - *The Family Trade*, by Charles Stross; moderator: Mike P.

**April 23rd** - *Un Lun Dun*, by China Mieville; moderator: Brian.

**May 28th** - *Farthing*, by Jo Walton; moderator: Carl.

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## Battlestar Galactica Series Finale Viewing Party

announced by Peter

Come join fellow LSF *Battlestar Galactica* aficionados as we watch the last three hours of *Battlestar Galactica*, preceded by a one-hour Finale Special. Bring your own dinner or \$7 to order pizza.

**What:** *Battlestar Galactica* Series Finale Viewing Party

**When:** Friday, March 20, 2009

**Where:** The home of Rob and Peter - 1425 "S" Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009. For directions, see:

<http://lambdasf.org/lsf/club/PeterRob.html>

### Time:

6:30 PM - Doors open

7:00 PM - Finale Special

8:00 PM - *Daybreak*, Part 1

(Note: This is a repeat of the 3/13/09 episode.)

9:00 PM - *Daybreak*, Part 2

10:00 PM - *Daybreak*, Part 3

**What to Bring:** Snacks and drinks. \$7 (exact change please) if you want to order pizza. Or bring your own dinner.

**For more information**, please call Peter and Rob at: 202-483-6369 or send Peter e-mail at: [PeterKnapp@wavelengthsonline.com](mailto:PeterKnapp@wavelengthsonline.com)

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*Happy Birthday to us!*  
*Happy Birthday to us!*  
*Happy Birthday, Lambda Sci-Fi!*  
*Happy Birthday to us!*

Yes, indeed, Lambda Sci-Fi will be celebrating Birthday #19 at the March meeting! As we blow out the candles on whatever cake or pie or cupcakes we use this year, we'll all undoubtedly make a wish for 19 more years of fun and friendship!

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## March LSF Meeting



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The next LSF meeting will be held on the **Sunday, March 8th**. The meeting will be held at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin (as usual) at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. See you there!



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## WHAT'S INSIDE?

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## February LSF Meeting Minutes

taken by Scott

### Business Meeting

Rob reported that the Gaylaxicon 2008 account with the Hyatt Regency Bethesda Hotel has been successfully wrapped up.

LSF received solicitations for both the 2009 Capital Pride festival (Sunday, June 14) and the 2009 Baltimore Pride event (Sunday, June 21). **Carl introduced a motion to purchase a booth at Capital Pride (which will cost of \$195). The motion was seconded. This motion will be voted on at the next (March) LSF meeting.**

There was discussion about LSF pursuing an entry at Facebook.

### Social Meeting

Majel Barrett Roddenberry's death was noted.

*Coraline*, the new stop-action film, has been well-received, although a bit creepy for small children. (Buttons for eyeballs?)

Joss Whedon's new TV series, *Doll House*, premieres this week. Auhor Charlaine Harris had a cameo on a recent episode of *Tru Blood* (based on her vampire novels).

Barrett passed around current newsletters from the sci-fi groups in Israel and South Africa. James passed around an article about a man who recently robbed two Colorado Springs convenience stores wielding a *Star Trek* Klingon bat'leth.

Carl gave the *Inkheart* film a thumbs-down rating. David raved about *Push* (starring Chris Evans and Dakota Fanning). He said that the movie was an obvious set-up for a sequel. Peter enjoyed *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*, but knew which characters would live and die, since it was a prequel.

The *Watchmen* previews are promising. It appears that the movie will be set in the 1980's, true to the source material. Perhaps a candidate for an LSF movie outing?

Peter and Greg will be attending Gallifrey (*Dr. Who* Convention in California). Peter reported that the next *Doctor Who* special will be broadcast at Easter-time.

The next *Stargate* series will be *Stargate Universe*, targeted at a younger audience and starring Robert Carlisle.

It was noted that the American History Museum has a C3PO costume in a display case.

Teresa commented that a remake of the 1970's BBC three-season series *Survivors* was in the works. "When a deadly plague virus wipes out 90% of the world's population, a motley group of Survivors have to try and carry on."

### Upcoming LSF Events

**February 28(Sat.):** LSF gaming party at Peter & Rob's place, 1425 "S" Street NW. Bring your games (and \$7 for pizza).

**March 20(Fri.):** *Battlestar Galactica* series finale party at Peter & Rob's frakkin' place.

**Book discussions:** February: Chairlaine Harris's *Dead Until Dark*; March: Charles Stross's *Family Trade*; April: China Mieville's *Un Lun Dun*; May: Jo Walton's *Farthing*.

**Upcoming Conventions:** Rob reported that **Boskone** is this coming weekend, with Guest of Honor Jo Walton, author of *Farthing*, *Ha'Penny*, and *Half a Crown*. Rob also promoted **WisCon** over Memorial Day weekend, with guests Ellen Klages and Geoff Ryman. October 2009 will feature local con **CapClave** and **Gaylaxicon 2009** in Minneapolis.

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## Ecumenicon 2009 The Year of Justice: Justice & Mercy - Finding the Balance

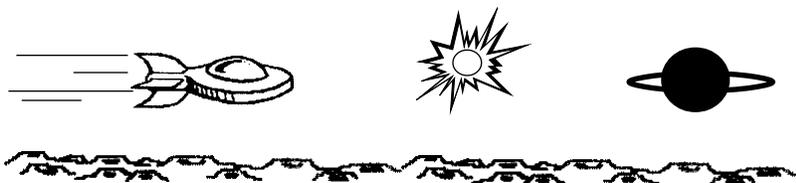


March 26-29, 2009  
Rockwood Manor,  
Potomac, MD  
[www.ecumenicon.org](http://www.ecumenicon.org)

Ecumenicon is a multi-faith conference that is welcoming of GLBT people. This year, among other classes, we will include Anna-Sara Fire's retelling of the story of Ruth and Naomi from the Bible as a lesbian love story. This Midrash shows the benefit of recasting one's own story from one's own experience. All of us at Ecumenicon recognize the power in sharing from one's own heart. For a full schedule and details about the conference, this year held at Rockwood Manor in Potomac MD (local, local, local), go to [www.ecumenicon.org](http://www.ecumenicon.org) or call Charles Butler at 240-764-5748.



Featuring  
Shakmah Winddrum  
of New Seed Sanctuary



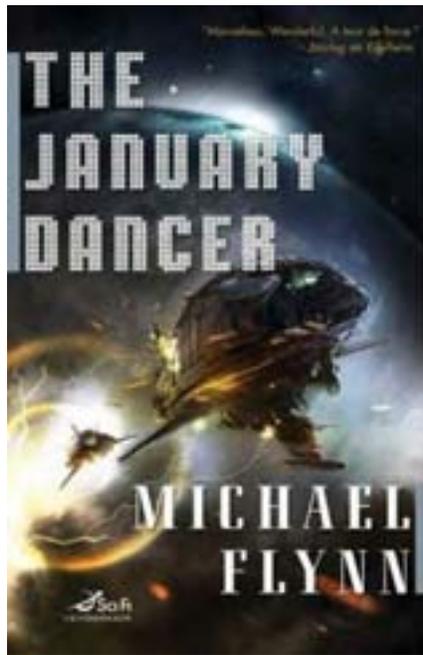
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**The January Dancer**  
**by Michael Flynn**  
 a short review by Carl

I've been a big fan of Michael Flynn for years. He first hooked me with *In the Country of the Blind* (1990), a secret-conspiracy sci-fi novel with significant positive GLBT content. And I became a *really* big fan of his with his series of near-history, humanity-into-space novels: *Firestar* (1996); *Rogue Star* (1998); *Lodestar* (2000); and *Falling Stars* (2001). And if you're ever at a sci-fi convention and you see he's making a presentation on the topic of statistics, I highly recommend you get a front row seat. (Trust me, he's urbanely witty and *very* entertaining!) With *The January Dancer*, Flynn has moved into the world of grand-scale space opera – and he's really good at this, too!

On a forgotten, abandoned Mars-like planet out in the middle or nowhere, the freewheeling crew of a malfunctioning tramp freighter discovers a hidden cache of fantastic pre-human artifacts. The only artifact they manage to escape with is an odd little stone that changes its shape when you're not looking at it – it's eventually named "the January Dancer" after Amos January, captain of the freighter. (Note: This chapter first appeared as a short story in the pages of the July/August 2008 issue of *Analog*, under the title "Sand and Iron.")

And then it's off to the races – galactically-speaking. It seems that the Dancer has some rather more interesting powers beyond mere artistic shape-shifting; and it quickly becomes the most sought-after prize in the galaxy, with dozens of different sets of assorted interplanetary pirates, thieves, terrorists, spies, would-be tyrants, and Terran freedom-fighters all trying to take possession of the Dancer for their own nefarious purposes. (Think of *The Maltese Falcon* on an interstellar scale.) It's one great big batch of fun. As the Dancer is stolen, re-stolen, and carted around the galaxy, I was inescapably reminded of some of the star-spanning

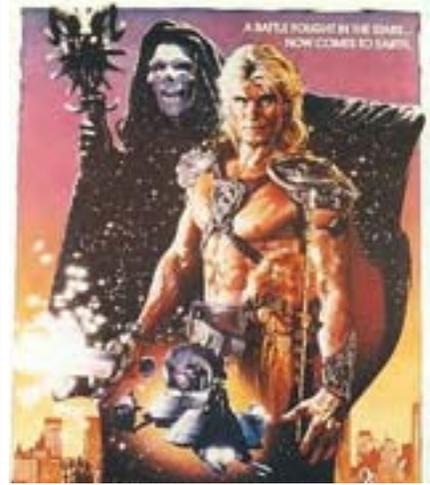


space operas of a couple of my other favorite science fiction authors, particularly Mike Resnick's *Ivory* and Jack McDevitt's *Polaris* and *Seeker*.

But there's another aspect of *The January Dancer* that I also quite enjoyed – the fact that all the disparate episodes and plot twists are framed by and tied together by a "bar story." Yes, I'm a big fan of sci-fi "bar stories" such as Spider Robinson's "Callahan's Crosstime Saloon" stories or Arthur C. Clarke's *Tales of the White Hart* – so I couldn't help but enjoy this aspect of *The January Dancer*. In Flynn's novel, "the scarred man" morosely sits in The Bar on the planet Jehovah; and, one day, in walks a very talented female harper. They inevitably strike up a conversation and "the scarred man" and "the harper" recount various aspects of the Dancer's long, involved saga. (Part of the fun is trying to figure out just *how* the two of them know so much about the Dancer.)

Here's the novel's final sentence, as delivered by the scarred man: "But it is a story for another day." Yes, there's more to come (which was confirmed by Flynn himself at a reading at last year's Philcon). And I can hardly wait! What a joy! *The January Dancer* is another triumph for Michael Flynn: one more reason why he continues to be one of my favorite science fiction authors.

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**Dolph Lundgren as He-Man**  
**(Masters of the Universe)**

### Superstrength

One of the most common powers – and a category that includes everything from being able to hurl whole express trains into orbit right through to being able to remove screw top lids from bottles without having to give up and make lame excuses about your hands being all sweaty and slippery.

The drawback with superstrength is that your intelligence must decrease in direct proportion to your prowess, so that the more muscles you have, the more stupid you become... or what is commonly referred to, in the medical world, as the Dolph Lundgren Syndrome.

In this equation, power levels equate to the following grades of retained intelligence:

- Power Level One:  
Average intelligence
- Power Level Two:  
Government-employee level of intelligence
- Power Level Three:  
Higher primate (e.g. Orang-Utan)
- Power Level Four:  
Sports star (track or field)
- Power Level Five:  
Amoeboid intelligence only
- Power Level Six:  
Brain death; Dan Quayle

excerpted from  
*How to Be a Superhero*  
 by Mark Leigh & Mike Lepine  
 (NBM Publishing, 1992)

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## Regency Fantasy, Part 1

by Carl Cipra

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A new F&SF sub-genre seems to be in the works. Just as the Victorian Era served as the spawning ground for “steam punk” stories, now there seems to be a growing number of fantasies either set during the Regency Period or having definite Regency-esque overtones.

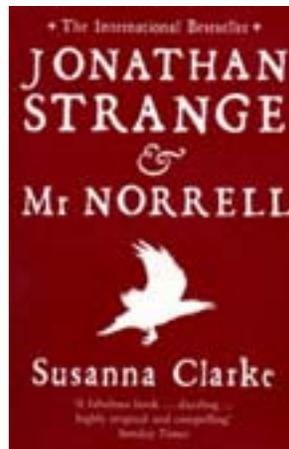
You’re not familiar with the term “Regency Period”? OK, a short history lesson is in order. The Regency Period (1811 - 1820) was the period of British history during which King George III (“Fat George” of the American Revolution) was considered to have been unfit to rule the Empire, and his son (the later George IV) ruled as “Prince Regent” in the king’s stead. Due to considerations of either fashion or politics or culture, the so-called Regency Period is often viewed as the period 1795 - 1837, linking the earlier Georgian Era with the later Victorian Era. It was the era of Beau Brummel (fashion trend-setter), the Duke of Wellington (soldier and statesman), Lord Nelson (admiral), Byron and Keats and Shelley (poets), Lawrence and Turner (artists), and John Nash (architect). On the Continent, it was the time of the French Revolution, “Madame Guillotine,” and the Napoleonic Wars.

Lots of later writers have set their stories during the Regency Period. Some of the more famous “classics” are *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, the “Scarlett Pimpernel” tales by Baroness Orczy, and the “Horatio Hornblower” stories of C.S. Forester. Interest in the Regency Period has also spawned the popular fiction sub-genre known as the “Regency novel.” (Georgette Heyer is one of the Great Names in this genre.) And Regency novels have, in turn, spawned the entire “Romance novel” industry, along with those more sensational examples known as “bodice-rippers” (so named because, somewhere in the story, some young woman’s bodice is invariably ripped from her body during the throes of passion). But I digress...

The Regency Period was also



the heyday of a trio of renowned female novelists: Jane Austen (*Sense and Sensibility*, 1811; *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813; *Persuasion*, 1818), Charlotte Bronte (*Jane Eyre*, 1847; *Emma*, 1860), and Emily Bronte (*Wuthering Heights*, 1847). Hollywood and the BBC have made a fortune bringing their novels to life. And it is the works of these same women that have seemingly inspired the recent spate of “Regency fantasy novels” – not only from the standpoint of taking place during the Regency Period, but also from the standpoint of style, language, and social sensibility.



Susanna Clarke  
*Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*  
(2004)

I suppose it makes sense to start with the first Regency Fantasy that came to my attention: *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*. This is Susanna Clarke’s

*magnum opus*, with the emphasis definitely on “magnum” (somewhat over 800 pages!). This witty and delightful novel – perhaps as much “alternate history” as it is “historical fantasy” – took Ms. Clarke over 10 years to write (1993 - 2004). It won both the Hugo and World Fantasy Awards for Best Novel in 2005.

At some point in the dim medieval past, Northern England was ruled by a powerful magician-king. This “Raven King” ruled for over 300 years before mysteriously disappearing.

In the centuries since the Raven King’s disappearance, Magic has fallen out of practice and become purely a theoretical science – it has become something to be studied (meticulously) and debated (endlessly), not something to be performed. The novel’s story opens in 1808 during desperate times, as Napoleon Bonaparte is steadily battering the English forces by land and sea. Then, out of the Yorkshire countryside comes one Mr. Gilbert Norrell, a brilliant, reclusive, fussy, self-important man who seems to be the first practical magician in a very long time – in other words, Mr. Norrell can actually *perform* Magic! And he soon uses his Magic to change the course of the Napoleonic Wars in England’s favor.

Along with all his other faults, Mr. Norrell is a rather un-trusting man; he believes that he is the only person responsible enough to wield magic. Accordingly, he proceeds to gather up all the known books of magic in England in order to prevent anyone else from learning magical skills. But along comes the impetuous Jonathan Strange, who seems to have an innate skill for magic. Mr. Norrell feels forced to take him on as an apprentice, in hopes of keeping the talented young man under his “patronage” (*i.e.* control). Eventually, the personalities of these two so-very-different men cause a rift between them; and they become bitter rivals, if not outright enemies. Then Jonathan Strange goes off on his own quest for increased magical ability, facing supernatural dangers as he tries to contact Fairies (the apparent source of all Magic) and the Raven King himself.

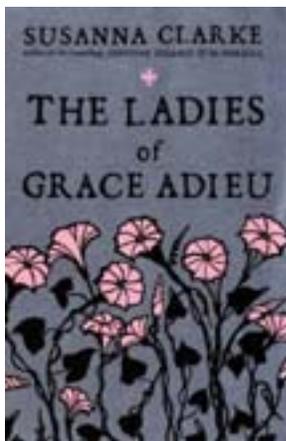
(continued on page 5)

## Regency Fantasy, Part 1

continued from page 4

As I said earlier, I found this book to be a delight. The style in which it is written definitely captures the “voice” and “feel” of Regency novels. Intricate plots and sub-plots abound; and the various characters seem to have stepped directly from the pages of an 18th Century comedy of manners. And the text is peppered with “explanatory” footnotes, quotes excerpted from a whole library of erudite (and completely fictitious) magical and folkloric texts. (Yes, Lovecraft and other authors have created such works as the *Necronomicon* and the *Pnakotic Fragments* for their Mythos tales; but I don’t think they hold a candle to Ms. Clarke’s inventiveness.)

Yes, reading this novel is a massive undertaking (remember: 800+ pages); but I think it’s a rewarding and enjoyable read. However, don’t go into it expecting the action and adventure of a swords-and-sorcery novel or the eldritch horror of a Lovecraftian tale; remember that it’s modeled on the mannerly novels of the Regency period.



Susanna Clarke  
*The Ladies of Grace Adieu,  
and Other Stories* (2006)

OK, so you’re intrigued by what I’ve just said about *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*, but you’re hesitant about taking on such a massive novel. No problem. A collection of Ms. Clarke’s shorter fiction has been issued. *The Ladies of Grace Adieu, and Other Stories* contains 8 of her shorter works (originally published between 1996 and

2004), as well as an “Introduction by Professor James Sutherland, Director of *Sidhe* Studies, University of Aberdeen” (created expressly for this collection). Each of these 8 stories is slightly different in tone or style (although all are consonant with Regency originals); and, start to finish, they’re all a joy to read.

The Introduction by “Professor Sutherland” provides a delightful and witty entry to the collection, as well as providing a good overview of the contents. Here’s the first paragraph from the Introduction:

*I have approached this collection with two very modest aims in mind. The first is to throw some sort of light on the development of magic in the British Isles at different periods; the second is to introduce the reader to some of the ways in which Faerie can impinge upon our own quotidian world, in other words to create a sort of primer to Faerie and fairies.*

Prof. Sutherland describes the title story – “The Ladies of Grace Adieu” – as “a poignant depiction of the difficulties faced by female magicians during the early nineteenth century – a time when their work was simply dismissed by their male counterparts.” Yes, but what starts out as a light-hearted Austen-esque story becomes a grim little tale of magical revenge. At times, it reminded me of *The Witches of Eastwick*. Oh, and Jonathan Strange and his wife make an appearance. (This story expands upon an “explanatory footnote” in Chapter 47 of *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell*.)

Several of the stories are cautionary tales, warning of the dire consequences that can ensue when humans intrude upon Faerie. “On Lickerish Hil” is a variation on the old fairy tale about Rumpelstiltskin. “Mrs. Mabb” tells of the dangers of encountering the Fairy Raid or of accepting the caresses of amorous fairy monarchs. (Think of a darker version of Mercutio’s “Queen Mab” speech in *Romeo and Juliet* or of Bottom’s encounter with Queen Titania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.) “Mr. Simonelli, or the Fairy Widower” is a very

dark tale about what happens to mortal women when they attract the roving eyes of fairy men. (This story was short-listed for the 2001 World Fantasy Award for Best Short Fiction.) On the other hand, “Tom Brightwind, or How the Fairy Bridge Was Built at Thoresby” recounts a merry (and bawdy) tale of one of the many exploits of David Montefiore (Jewish physician) and his friend Tom Brightwind (powerful fairy lord).

Two of the stories are set in pre-Regency times. “Antickes and Frets” deals with the grim relationship between Mary, the imprisoned Queen of Scots, and one of her English jailers, Elizabeth, Countess of Shrewsbury. “John Uskglass and the Cumbrian Charcoal Burner” is another humorous tale. In it, the mighty Raven King himself (John Uskglass) receives his comeuppance at the hands of a simple charcoal burner whom he has thoughtlessly harmed.

Finally, “The Duke of Wellington Misplaces His Horse” is actually set in the world created by Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess for *Stardust*. It tells the story of what happens when the mighty Duke of Wellington spends the night in the village of Wall and his horse Copenhagen is accidentally left to graze in a beautiful pasture on the other side of *the* Wall, the one that stands between Our World and Faerie. Suffice it to say that difficulties – and dangers – ensue.

I found this collection of Ms. Clarke’s stories to be an absolute delight; and I highly recommend it. There’s even an added *visual* treat – it’s liberally illustrated with line-drawings by Charles Vess! A treat not to be missed!

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**\*\*INFORMATION ABOUT LAMBDA SCI-FI: DC AREA GAYLAXIANS\*\***

**Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians** (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered (GLBT) people, and their friends who are interested in science fiction, fantasy, horror and related genres in all forms (SF/F/H). LSF's primary goals are to have fun, to provide a community, and to:

- promote SF/F/H, with particular attention to materials of interest to GLBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for GLBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of GLBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the GLBT community.

Annual membership fees are \$10, for which you will receive an e-mailed this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. (Hard copies of the newsletter cost an additional \$15 per year.) Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are usually held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on the **Sunday, March 8th**, at James Crutchfield's apartment (1414 17th St. NW, #413), near Dupont Circle. The business meeting will begin at 1:30 PM; and the social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians is an affiliate of **the Gaylactic Network**, an international organization for gay people and their friends who are interested in science-fiction and fantasy.



## Con Calendar

by Carl



March 26-29, 2009 **ECUMENICON 2009**. Rockwood Manor (11001 MacArthur Blvd, Potomac, MD 20782). Magic, spiritual traditions, GLBT friendly. Website: [www.ecumenicon.org](http://www.ecumenicon.org) Info also available from Charles Butler ([chazzer3332000@yahoo.com](mailto:chazzer3332000@yahoo.com); 240-764-5748).

April 17-18, 2009 **GAME CON**. The Clarion Hotel (Aberdeen, MD). Board games, card games, dealers, local artists, local bands. Membership: \$20 for the entire weekend. To pre-register or get your questions answered, contact Kat Brannon (443-299-7784) or on-line at: [Kat\\_of\\_sorrow@yahoo.com](mailto:Kat_of_sorrow@yahoo.com)

April 24-26, 2009 **RAVENCON 2009**. Crowne Plaza Richmond West (Richmond, VA). Author Guest of Honor: Jack McDevitt. Membership: \$35 until 4/17/2009; \$40 at the door. Make checks payable to "Ravencon 2009" and send to: RavenCon, 4303 1 Elk Place, Chantilly, VA 20152 Info on-line at: [www.ravencon.com](http://www.ravencon.com)

May 1-4, 2009 **COSTUME-CON 27**. Crowne Plaza Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). Theme: "Vampires, Villains & Vixens." Membership: \$90 until 4/1/2009; \$100 after 4/1/2009 and at the door. Make checks payable to "Costume-Con 27" and send to: Costume-Con 27, PO Box 207, Beallsville, PA 15313. "Open to all who love costume in all its forms." Info on-line at: [castleb@pulsenet.com](mailto:castleb@pulsenet.com) or [www.costume-con.com](http://www.costume-con.com)

May 22-25, 2009 **BALTICON 43**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). GoH: Charles Stross; Artist GoH: Kurt Miller; 2009 Comoton Crook Award Winner TBA. Membership: \$53 until April 30; \$60 as of May 1 and at the door. Make checks payable to: "Balticon 43" and send to: Balticon 43 Registration, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686. E-mail: [balticoninfo@balticon.org](mailto:balticoninfo@balticon.org) or [registration@balticon.org](mailto:registration@balticon.org) Website: [www.balticon.org](http://www.balticon.org)

July 10-12, 2009 **SHORE LEAVE 31**. Marriott's Hunt Valley Inn (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: TBA. Membership: \$70 for the weekend; daily rates available. (Deadline for pre-registration: 6/15/2009.) Make checks payable to "Shore Leave" and send to: Shore Leave 31, PO Box 6809, Towson, MD 21285-6809. E-mail: [information@shore-leave.com](mailto:information@shore-leave.com) Website: <http://www.shore-leave.com>

October 9-11, 2009 **GAYLAXICON 2009**. Doubletree Hotel Minneapolis - Park Place (Minneapolis, MN). GoHs: Margaret Weis, Andy Mangels, Lawrence Schimel. Membership: \$70 until 10/01/2009; \$80 at the door. Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 2009" and send to: Gaylaxicon 2009, P.O. Box 2412, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402 Website: [www.gaylaxicon2009](http://www.gaylaxicon2009) Register on-line at: <http://www.gaylaxicon2009.org/index.php/registration>

