



Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 346 – January 2019

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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 usually 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 book discussion will be held on January 24.

Here are the details for the next several book discussions:

Jan. 24, 2019 – *Tremontaine, Season 1* by Ellen Kushner *et al* (mod.: Rob G.).

Feb. 28, 2019 – *Mongrels* by Stephen Graham Jones (moderator: Carl).

March 28, 2019 – *Full Fathom Five* by Max Gladstone (moderator: John).

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Annual LSF Book (*et al*) Exchange at Jan. 13th Meeting



That's right, gang, it's Holiday time again; and it's time for Lambda Sci-Fi's *twenty-eighth* annual book (*et al*) exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 13th meeting! All LSF members – and visitors, guests, attendees, etc. – are invited to participate in this "blind exchange."

In case you've never participated in one of these before (or in case you've forgotten), here's how it works:

(1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science-fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (*NOTE*: Over the years, LSF has expanded the concept of "book" to include comics, videotapes, "books on tape," etc. If you want – or if you're feeling particularly wealthy – you can even make it *several* favorite books or whatever.)

(2) Insert a piece of paper (or bookmark) with your name on it. That's so whoever eventually ends up with the item will know who it's from and will get to know

a little about you – at least to know what one of your "favorites" is.

(3) Wrap up the exchange item, but don't put any identifying marks or anything on the wrapped package to say who it's from. That's to make sure it's a "blind" exchange – *i.e.* no one is supposed to know who it's from at first. (And, by the way, all of that leftover Holiday wrapping paper should come in handy here!)

(4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (Only one exchange item – *i.e.* one package – per person, please!)

(5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. And when you open it up, you'll find out who it's from. See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up *this* year!

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<<<<< January 2019 LSF Meeting >>>>>

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 13th**. The meeting will be held at Peter and Rob's home, **1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. The meeting will begin at 1:30, featuring the book/etc. exchange (see article above), and the "group watch" will begin about 3:00 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

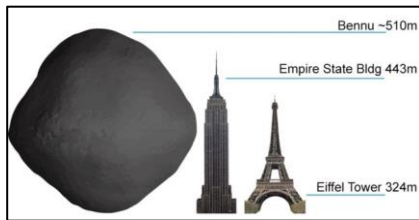
Page 2: OSIRIS-REx Reaches Asteroid Benu; Minutes of the Dec. 2018 LSF Meeting; Shades of Max Headroom!

Page 3: Stan Lee (obituary).

Page 4: Information About LSF: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar.

OSIRIS-Rex Reaches Asteroid Benu

info passed along by Carl



On December 3rd, the NASA probe OSIRIS-Rex reached its goal, approaching with 12 miles of Benu, a diamond-shaped carbonaceous asteroid that's about the size of the Empire State Building and is located about 75 million miles from Earth. The trip took about two years.

Plans are for OSIRIS-Rex to orbit Benu for the next 18 months, surveying the asteroid's landscape and probing its chemical makeup. In 2020, the probe will get closer to Benu, select a piece of the asteroid, use its sample-collecting equipment (TAGSAM – Touch and Go Sample Mechanism) to gather a good-sized rock sample off the asteroid's surface, turn around, and bring the sample back to Earth. A capsule containing the sample is scheduled to land in the Utah desert in September 2023. It will be the largest planetary sample retrieved since Apollo astronauts brought back Moon-rocks.

As a carbonaceous asteroid, Benu is a piece of carbon-rich debris left over from the formation of the Solar System 4.6 billion years ago; and scientists hope to uncover clues about the birth of the planets – maybe even potentially-useful natural resources such as organic molecules and precious metals. Anyone interested in asteroid-mining?

And for you mythology enthusiasts: “Benu” was a self-created Egyptian deity that played a role in the creation of the world. As a symbol of rebirth, Benu was also associated with the god Osiris. And – here comes the kicker – the OSIRIS-Rex (Origins-Spectral Interpretation-Resource Identification-Security-Regolith Explorer), with its TAGSAM arm and solar panel “wings”, looks like a heron: the “Benu bird” depicted in

Minutes of the December 2018 LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

The LSF recording secretary arrived late at today's meeting. Hence, the “truncated” minutes, as it were.

Film News: There will be a PG version of *Deadpool*; the proceeds are going to charity. A PG-version with bondage?) David enjoyed *Ralph Breaks the Internet*. Rob looks forward to *Anna and the Apocalypse* – Scottish teenage musical rom-com, a Christmas zombie musical. There was an extended discussion of *Bohemian Rhapsody*: lots of non-genre banter this afternoon.

TV News: David and Teresa continue to enjoy *The Good Place*. To-day is the season finale of the current season of *Doctor Who*.

Upcoming LSF Events: Don't forget the LSF New Year's Eve gaming party – plus the “blind book exchange” at the January 2019 LSF meeting.

Then we watched the *Avengers: Endgame* trailer, the *Rocketman* trailer, and the latest *Star Trek: Discovery* short (featuring Saru's early life). And we then watched the first episode of the animated *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* (which put a number of people to sleep).

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OSIRIS-Rex Probe

Egyptian murals. Neat, huh?

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Benu Bird

Shades of Max Headroom!

info passed along by Wayne #1 & Carl



Back in 1984, the world was introduced to Max Headroom, “the world's first computer-generated TV host”. Except he wasn't... technology hadn't yet advanced far enough to have the character actually be computer-generated, so actor Matt Frewer wore prosthetic make-up and was filmed against hand-drawn backgrounds, using a “harmonizer” to achieve Max's quirky voice modulations.

Now comes Xinhua News Agency (China's state-run news agency) with actual CG news anchors. They were developed jointly by Xinhua News and Sogou.com (a Chinese search-engine company) and are modeled on real Xinhua journalists Qiu Hao and Zhang Zhao.

In its debut video, the English-speaking version said: “I will work tirelessly to keep you informed as texts will be typed into my system uninterrupted.” And in its first sign-off, it said: “As an AI news anchor under development, I know there is a lot for me to improve.” No kidding, especially since it's not actually an AI. The “AI”-anchors are devoid of decision-making and processing skills and cannot offer independent opinions. Xinhua News delivers government news releases and only provides the government's and party's perspective on issues. That's why Isaac Stone Fish (journalist and veteran China-observer) noted that getting news from robots is “not that different”.



Chinese AI News Anchor

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Stan Lee 1922 – 2018

Stan Lee, writer and editor at Marvel Comics, died on November 12th. He was 95 years old.

His most famous catch-phrase – almost a battle cry – was “Excelsior!” When asked about its meaning, he usually explained it as: “Onward and upward to greater glory!” (Based on “excel”, I guess. The Latin does, in fact, mean “higher”.) But when you look it up in the dictionary, you find it defined as something like “fine curled wood shavings used especially for packing fragile items”. This is an example of how Stan Lee’s creative mind worked: he wasn’t about to let “accepted” definitions constrain his showmanship.

Stanley Martin Lieber was born in NYC in 1922, the eldest son of Romanian Jewish immigrants. He came by his pen name as a teenager, claiming he wanted to preserve his real name for when he wrote a “real book”. After graduating high school, he took a job with Timely Publications (the company that published Marvel), which was owned by his cousin-in-law Martin Goodman. He was hired by Timely editor Joe Simon, who (with Jack Kirby) co-created Captain America.

During WWII, Stan Lee served in the Army and spent 3 years in New Jersey writing scripts for training films. After his discharge, he turned out science-fiction and monster comics for Timely (renamed as Atlas). He credited his wife Joan with pushing him to create the Fantastic Four in 1961 (in partnership with artist and frequent co-creator Jack Kirby), instead of leaving Marvel during a period of mid-career frustration. In 1962, Lee co-created Spider-Man with

artist Steve Ditko. Between them, Lee-Kirby-Ditko-Simon revitalized the nature and popularity of comic books; they developed superheroes with feet of clay and personal problems. Lee’s often rocky relationships with Kirby and Ditko have since become the stuff of legend.

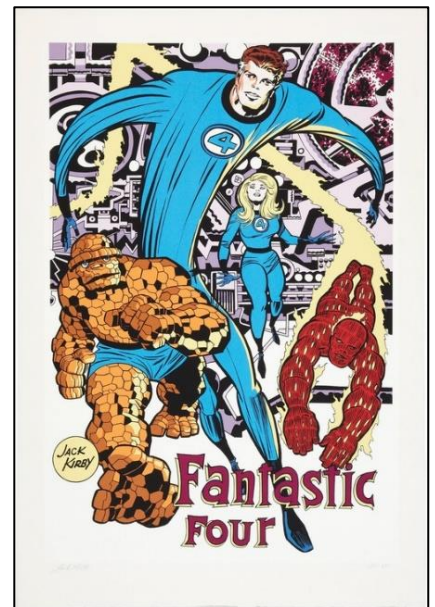
Lee introduced a number of other innovations to revitalize the comics industry. He fostered a different kind of collaborative process with his artists, aka “the bullpen”. It came to be known as “the Marvel Method”. He traveled around the country speaking at various colleges and visiting campus chapters of the official fan clubs he founds (the Merry Marvel Marching Society, the Friends of Ol’ Marvel). In 1964, he initiated the “Marvel No-Prize” as an award to fans for various reasons (finding continuity errors, responding creatively to contests (such as defining “the Marvel Age of Comics”, etc.) – eventually expanding it as an award for “meritorious service to the cause of Marvelism”. Ever the showman, the cheerleader, the promoter!

In 1971, the U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare asked Lee to produce a Spider-Man story that came down harshly on drug use; and Lee wrote a three-part story that included a portrayal of the dangers of drug use. When the Comics Code Authority refused to approve the story, Goodman and Lee cited HEW approval and ran the story anyway without the CCA Seal of Approval: *The Amazing Spider-Man* #96-98. (As a reminder, the CCA had been formed in 1954 as an alternative to government regulation, allowing publishers to self-regulate the content of comic books in the U.S. – and the code had zero-tolerance for drugs, even in a negative light. After decades of controversy, the CCA is now pretty much defunct.)

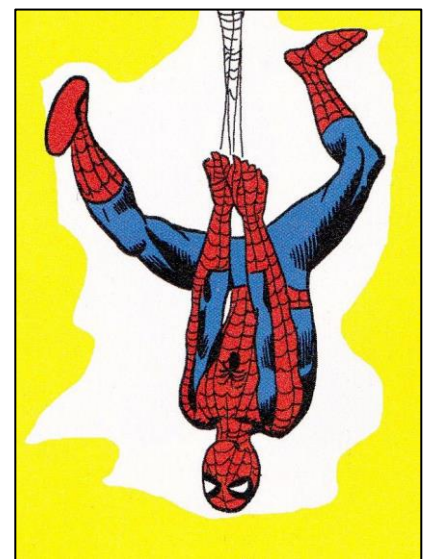
Stan Lee moved from editor to publisher in 1972. He moved to Hollywood about 1980. His initial attempts to get cinematic respectability for his characters – *Howard the Duck* (1986) and *The Punisher* (1989) – were less-than-successful. Then came *Spider-Man* (2002), starring Tobey Maguire and directed by Sam Raimi; and the Marvel Cinematic Uni-

verse was off to the races – now grossing more than \$17.5 billion globally. Stan Lee has cameos in all MCU films; and he became a popular guest at ComiCons and similar conventions.

In 2008, Lee received the National Medal of Arts, the highest honor given to artists by the U.S. government. Says author Neil Gaiman: “He was the last great showman – we haven’t had one since.”



Fantastic Four (by Jack Kirby)



Spider-Man (by Steve Ditko)

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

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (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 copy of 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 Sunday, **January 13th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. 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

Feb. 8-10, 2019 **FARPOINT** ("Your FAN-RUN CONVENTION for 26 YEARS!"). Delta Hotel by Marriott (Hunt Valley, MD). Guests: Wallace Shawn, Peter David, Keith RA DeCandido, Maurice LaMarche & Rob Paulsen. Membership: full weekend (3-day) pre-registration: \$85. Website: www.FarpointCon.com

March 9, 2019 (10 AM to 8 PM) **RETRIEVERCON** ("25 years of celebrating the art of Japanese animation"). UBMC Commons, 3rd floor (1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore). Panels, Vendors, Showings, and More! Admission is free! Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/retrievercon>

March 29-31, 2019 **(RE)GENERATION WHO 5**. Bethesda North Marriott (Rockville MD). Guests: Paul McGann, Yee Jee Tso, Daphne Ashbrook, Frazer Hines. More info available at: www.regenerationwho.com

April 5-7, 2019 **RAVENCON 14** (Virginia's Science Fiction & Fantasy Convention of Opportunity). Doubletree by Hilton Williamsburg (Williamsburg VA). Author GoH: Melinda Snodgrass; Music GoH: Library Bards (more to come). Membership: \$40 until 3/9/2019; \$50 at the door (daily rates available). Membership on-line through the website. Website: <http://www.ravencon.com/>

May 24-27, 2019 **BALTICON 53**. Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel (Baltimore MD). Guests of Honor: Elizabeth Bear, Scott Lynch, Nicky Drayden (2018 Compton Crook Award Winner). Membership: \$66 before March 1, 2019; \$71 from March 1 until April 15; \$74 beginning April 16; \$77 at the door. Website: <https://www.balticon.org/wp53/> E-mail at: balticoninfo@balticon.org

July 4-7, 2019 **NASFiC 2019/WESTERCON 72/1632 MINICON**. Davis Conference Center & Hilton Garden Inn (Layton UT). Guests include: Laurell K. Hamilton, David Weber, John & Bjo Trimble, Jim Butcher, Eric Flint, Vincent Villafranca (artist & designer of the new World Fantasy Award). Membership: \$70 thru 03/31/2019 (will go up after that). On-line registration at: registration@spikecon.org Website: <https://www.spikecon.org/>

October 18-20, 2019 **GAYLAXICON 2019**. Doubletree Hotel by Hilton Minneapolis-Park Place (Minneapolis MN). Membership: \$65 (ends 10/1/2019). On-line registration via EventBrite: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gaylaxicon-2019-registration-51438596226> <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/gaylaxicon-2019-registration-51438596226> Homepage: <https://www.facebook.com/MNGaylaxicon/>