PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044 - (202) 232-3141 - Issue #58 - Jan. 1995

REMINDER: BOOK EXCHANGE AT JAN. 8TH MEETING

reported by Carl Cipra

Just in case you're getting absent-minded like me, here's a short reminder about Lambda Sci-Fi's fifth annual book exchange, which will occur at the upcoming Jan. 8th meeting! All LSF members are invited to participate in this "blind book exchange" - visitors, too!

Briefly, here's how it works: (1) Go out and purchase a copy of your "favorite" science-fiction, fantasy, or horror book. (2) Insert a piece of paper (or a bookmark) with your name on it. (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. (4) At the meeting, add your wrapped exchange item to the pile with all the others; and you'll be assigned a number. (5) When your number is called, you pick one of the packages from the pile. See how easy?

I can hardly wait to see what shows up in the exchange this year!

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WAVELENGTHS: 2ND ISSUE AVAILABLE

The second (Fall, 1994) issue of Wavelengths is available! It contains fascinating reviews (by various individuals) of 23 recent books and an editorial on "The Small Press Issue." Among the works reviewed are: Amazon Story Bones by Ellen Frye; The Furies by Suzy McKee Charnas: The Fifth Sacred Thing by Starhawk; Stardust Bound by Karen Cadora; Lord of the Two Lands by Judith Tarr; and The Porcelain Dove by Delia Sherman. This issue also contains a new feature -"Trailblazers" - which is intended to "recognize the efforts and accomplishments of those who wrote gay/lesbian/ bisexual sf/fantasy before such a category existed." In the series opener. Don Sakers and Susanna Sturgis discuss the works and career of Marion Zimmer Bradley.

As you may (or may not) remember, Wavelengths is a quarterly review of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and "of interest" science fiction and fantasy; and it's published by the Coastline SF Writers Group (Lisa Barnett, Don Sakers, Melissa Scott, Tom Atkinson). Single copies are available for \$4. (If you missed the distribution at the Darkover Convention in November. just trek on over to Lammas Bookstore for a copy.) Subscriptions are \$13 per year (4 issues) or \$24 for two years (8 issues). To subscribe, make your check payable to "Coastline SF Writers Group" and send it to:

Coastline SF Writers Group PO Box 6554 Portsmouth, NH 03802-6554

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ZAYLAXEONV

* * * * GAYLAXICON VI * * * *

Fun! Frolic! Fans! (Niagara Falls, too!)

May 19 - 21, 1995

Don't miss it!!!

(for details, see Con Calendar on pg. 6 of this newsletter)

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JUST A FEW WORDS FROM YE OLDE EDITOR

First of all, just let me say "Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you!" to everyone who has submitted articles for the newsletter over the past couple of months! Talk about "an embarassment of

riches!" Keep 'em coming, gang!

Secondly, a word of caution to everyone before reading the article on pages 4 - 5 in this newsletter (including any non-LSF Gaylaxians who read it): stay calm! It is the avowed

intention of the writer (as well as of Ye Olde Editor) to spark meaningful, constructive discussion of a number of issues frequently overlooked or ignored at Lambda Sci-Fi. Let's start talking about them at the January meeting....

WHAT'S INSIDE?

The Amazingly Short Minutes of the Dec. 11th Meeting (pg. 2); Metal Angel (book review - pg. 2); Where No Man Has Gone Before? (pg. 2); Mina (book review - pg. 3); View from the Castle (book review - pg. 3); A Word from the Loyal Opposition on "Why" (pg. 4); Treasurer's Report (pg. 5); Information about Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (pg. 6); Con Calendar (pg. 6)

THE AMAZINGLY SHORT MINUTES OF THE DEC. 11TH MEETING

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tersely & concisely jotted down by Carl Cipra

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When people arrived for the meeting, they found an interesting new treat awaiting them: books for sale! Jim, our host, had set out the "first installment" of used F&SF books donated to LSF by Steven Grate. Jim said because there are "just too many to set out all at once," he'll continue to set out another "installment" for the next several meetings. So, be warned, gang the "early birds" at the meetings will get "first dibs" on the books that Jim has set out! (All proceeds from the sale of these books will go into the LSF coffers. Thanks, Steven!)

Scott, Dan, and Peter gave out copies of the latest, updated LSF phone directory to all attending members. (Non-attending members will receive their copies in the mail.) There were numerous favorable comments on the nifty Egyptian graphics in the directory. (Somebody was certainly impressed by Stargate!)

Peter advised the members that LSF still had 7 assorted T-shirts left over from Gaylaxicons IV and V; and

he asked for a decision on what to do with them. After a brief discussion, it was decided to donate all 7 T-shirts to SMYAL.

After introductions of everyone in attendance, the meeting turned into its usual swirl of semi-organized chaos, with conversations ranging through such topics as: various recent TV shows (including the "merits" of the acting talents being displayed by certain actors/actresses on Babylon 5); upcoming genre movies (including Jason Scott Lee in the live-action Jungle Book - hubba! hubba!); the vampiric and cross-dressing features in the latest issue of Scarlet Street (Thanks, Michael!); and the location (and genre contents) of several local bookstores. (If you've been to an LSF meeting, you know how it goes! If you haven't been to one, then drop by and find out! We don't bite....well, maybe we do bite: but only if provoked....or invited!)

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WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE?

You know, the degree to which Star Trek has influenced American culture (and even our Community) is absolutely incredible! Case in point: at the December meeting, Wayne #1 passed around the following excerpt from the "personals" ads in *The Blade*:

OUR MISSION is to explore strange new worlds & discover new civilizations. To qualify, you must be emotionally, physically & intellectually prepared to undertake the journey. Ship's sensors should read you as GBM, 30s, & secure. Starfleet records indicate that I am GWM, 31, interested in charting new courses. Let's be Data & Geordi piloting our shuttlecraft to Starbase 69. Make it so.

Outline 8012 (12/22)

The mind boggles! (I hope that "Data" doesn't mind the inclusion of his ad in this newsletter. He should certainly be appreciative of the added exposure his ad is getting from us for free!)

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METAL ANGEL, BY NANCY SPRINGER (ROC Fantasy, 1994) reviewed by Wayne #1

Volos, a lesser angel, is tired of singing "Gloria, Gloria, Gloria" in one of the heavenly choirs and fed up with God's capricious games and punishments of both the heavenly hosts and the earthly masses. He decides to incarnate himself, to experience flesh as a mortal (but immensely rich) rock singer. Thus, he makes for himself a wet dream of a body with an immunity to sleep, drugs, sickness and hunger. One minor problem, however - Volos seemingly forgets to lose the wings. (But, would you believe it, he blames God?)

I say "seemingly forgets" because throughout the book the reader is many, many steps ahead of the plot. Soon enough, you realize Volos "kept" the wings so as to be able to experience the actual "losing" of them (not just ethereally leaving them behind). As in all stories of "otherworldly" beings (be they "toons," "doodles," aliens, etc.), the steps the character must go through to become "human" (from "born yesterday"/"babe in the woods" to "maturity") are pretty much rote. So, as I said, the reader knows Volos is going to get his wings torn off.

The other characters are obviously there because they all called Volos into being in order to assist them with their petty (to me, anyway) concerns. The pretty-boy hustler who becomes Volos' bed partner/stage manager; the runaway West Virginia cowboy looking for self; and the songwriter (daughter of a hellfire preacher and the only one Volos actually listens to) - they all go through the pains and agonies of catharsis, helping and or hindering each the others. The rotten lose, and the good get by.

Colorfully-written, fast-paced (i.e. good TV drama), a nice parable.

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MINA
(A minor!)
a book review
by Joseph Parra

There aren't many people who love our genre(s) who haven't read Bram Stoker's classic vampire tale, Dracula. Unfortunately, the tale has been told and retold so many times by other authors jumping on the "Vlad" bandwagon that what is established as "fact" where Dracula is concerned is nothing so much as a blur at this point. Marie Kiraly has now jumped on this same bandwagon with a new novel, Mina. The premise of Mina is (at first) to retell roughly the last quarter of the Stoker novel from Mina Harker's point of view, then to deal with her life after the death or destruction of Dracula. and (finally) to describe a confrontation with the unknown at Castle Dracula. While this may be an intriguing idea for a short story, it has problems as a full-length novel - or, at the very least, this full-length novel has problems. I shall deal with each section of the novel separately.

Part One: Mina has been infected with the blood of Dracula. She not only feels herself going over to the undead, but she feels a great sorrow for Dracula. She knows he must be destroyed, yet he has aroused an incredible passion in her. She also is beginning to loathe her companions. though she understands why they must end the vampire's existence. Marie Kiraly feels that a possible reason for Stoker not continuing with Mina's firsthand account was: "Perhaps Stoker was uncomfortable with the musings of the damned." On the other hand, perhaps Stoker felt that to continue with Mina's journal account was anticlimactic to the story. Kiraly's story here is not bad at all, as this "end" of a classic novel is used as a basis for the beginning of her new one. Her novel is, however, derivative of another person's work (albeit from a different perspective) - not bad, but not hers.

Part Two: Now we are no longer in constant narrative. Mina and Jonathan Harker have returned to Lon-

VIEW FROM THE CASTLE

by Michael Cornett



Shirley Jackson is most famous for works like the short story "The Lottery" or the novel *The Haunting of Hill House* (and the superior film version thereof); but the apex of her writing career is the highly-disturbing novel *We Have Always Lived in the Castle*.

Castle tells the tale of Merricat (short for Mary Katherine) Blackwell, her sister Constance, and their senile uncle. They all live in a crumbling mansion above a small New England village, where they are treated as pariahs. You see, it seems several years ago most of the Blackwell family died when someone put arsenic in the sugar bowl at a family dinner. Constance was accused of the crime but was acquitted; and she has secluded herself in the family mansion ever since.

But the story is really Merricat's, as she wanders around the estate and into the village, accompanied by her faithful cat and her fanciful imagination. Merricat is, to put it mildly, a greatly-disturbed creature; and her

imaginings are what make the book so eerie. She sees a world where the villagers are demons, cats talk, and she lives in a little cottage on the moon, with winged horses and dresses made of leaves that have acorns for buttons. She practices various kinds of magic in order to protest her home from outsiders, magic which proves ineffective when a greedy cousin comes to visit. (Remember: Melody, Pegasus, and Gloucester are the magic words!) Merricat's homicidal fantasies are given full reign, with images of pins in dolls and poison mushrooms assailing the reader.

The reader continues to romp through the bizarre landscape, through several conflicts and a death. At the end, Merricat looks out over her lunar landscape and declares herself happy - the only Jackson heroine who can say that and have us believe her.

As an author, Jackson is noted for her ability to portray mental illness; but We Have Always Lived in the Castle is not so much a view of insanity as it is a glorious participation in it - a gothic stream-of-consciousness narrative which evokes images of (perhaps) the Bronte sisters practicing witchcraft.

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don, as has Jack Seward. Dr. Van Helsing has chosen to remain behind to make sure the vampires are destroyed once and for all. Now Mina must deal with her new-found passions and with the passionless Jonathan. She is able to find solace in the companionship of a new friend, Winnie Beason, who interests Mina in helping at the hospital for the poor. Mina finds romantic (or at least erotic) interest in a hedonist by the name of Lord Gance, who is a distant relative of Lord Byron. She also possesses a diary that was kept by one of Dracula's brides... This section of Kiraly's novel reads like a Harlequin romance novel - sensationalistic, bombastic, and (above all) boring.

Part Three (entitled "Karina"): Mina and Lord Gance go to Transylvania to confront the evil headon. They encounter not only the undead, but also madmen who hunt both the undead and Mina (who they

believe will become undead)... This section of the book, the denouement and the ultimate end, should zip along at a trotter's pace. Instead, it sort of jogs along as though there should be commercials interjected. The ending, though fairly predictable, at least tries for some true suspense, with the living meeting the undead with non-traditional weapons. This section also borrows heavily from Hammer Films, in particular from Taste the Blood of Dracula, be it intentionally or otherwise.

Put all three parts together and one has a long-winded, sometimes quite imaginative, mostly dull-padded book, a book which has the audacity to alter established information, to go over new ground with an eye for detail that is (at best) undiscerning, and to finalize with what could have been quite good if it were not so overwritten. Not much to really enjoy! (Rating: 2 out of 4)

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A WORD FROM THE LOYAL OPPOSITION ON "WHY" — by Philip Wright

In a recent issue of the Lambda Sci-Fi newsletter (Nov. '94), there appeared an article on the purpose of the Gaylactic Network, advocating our participation in it. The title of that article asked the question: "Why?" And although the authors presented compelling reasons for our participation in the Gaylactic Network, they were not entirely convincing.

Since joining Lambda Sci-Fi two years ago, I have heard the name of the *mysterious* Gaylactic Network bandied about many times. However, I have never fully understood its function or its effect either on this club in particular or on Gay fandom as a whole. While working on Gaylaxicon V, I received a closer view of the Network; and I have been compelled to question even more its beneficial nature both for our group and for the rest of Gay fandom.

First of all, the November newsletter article said that the Gaylactic Network has been preoccupied with organizing itself. This disturbed me greatly, as one would think that organizing itself would be something done at its inception, not several years down the road. What is taking so long? The Network is a relatively small organization; and taking so long to "get its house in order" doesn't speak well of the process or of the group effecting it. We deserve to know more about the process and what is taking so long.

I have also found the process somewhat cryptic and, in some cases, controversial. For example, it was announced last year that there is a movement afoot to incorporate the Network as a non-profit organization. Since then, there seems to have been little or no movement in the process. There is also some question as to who is paying for this process. This issue has never been made clear. I understood that one chapter provided the Network with some funds potentially earmarked for this incorporation; but rumor has it that the individual chapters will be assessed for

this money. I realize that rumors are often unreliable; but one such as this should be cleared up immediately.

What I have seen from the Network so far is an entity that holds title to "Gaylaxicon" and spends exorbitant amounts of time "getting its house in order." If we are to be a chapter of a parent organization, when will that organization take on the role of doing what parent organizations are expected to do: lead? It is unacceptable that we pay dues to the Network and receive little more than updates on the efforts to stave off chaos.

It has been said that one of the primary benefits of participating in the Gaylactic Network is a limited protection from liability during our functions (as provided by the Network's insurance). But how extensive is that liability; and how necessary is that protection? I find it amazing to think that anyone would try to sue us for anything. Where would the money come from? We have no real officers; and so no one person could effectively be held responsible. Therefore, a need for a parent organization's "protection" seems a little exaggerated. However, in the event that we did need protection, what would be the form of that protection? What are the conditions under which any insurance would provide us with protection; and how much protection would be provided? No insurance policy is either universal or totally comprehensive. For example, from my numerous years of experience with a variety of non-profit organizations, I know that many policies for such groups do not provide coverage if meetings are held in private residences. This would negate much of the protection the Network's insurance supposedly provides, as almost all of our meetings are held in private homes or apartments. We do not know definitively either the degree to which we are covered or whether we are excluded by any possible restrictions placed upon us by the insurer.

While reading the article in the November newsletter, I was also quite disturbed by the idea that we are somehow to be the "movers and shakers" of the organization. The statement was made that "the Network can't do everything." I agree. However, it is the implied responsibility of any parent organization to effect three things: (1) Articulate and organize the general and specific goals of the organization as a whole. (2) Implement these goals in a specific manner. (3) Define and police the organization in such a way as to prevent a dangerous dissention from its ideals, while not stifling the open and honest expression of ideas.

From my first time at an LSF meeting, I have heard that the overall goal of the Network is to "promote Gay fandom." This oversimplified view is insufficient to accurately define any group. To what extent are we trying to promote Gay fandom? Why should anyone care? Why can't Gay fans just join other fans and be happy? I realize that there is an attempt to answer these questions by means of "Gaylaxicon;" however, in order to legitimize the need for a parent organization, the Network needs to convince more people than its members: otherwise, why bother having a Network at all? It would seem to me that if we have a national parent organization, then its purpose would be as "a protection and qualifier" in the outside world, with goals that meet the challenges of being Gay and of being a fan of traditional science-fiction, fantasy, and horror. The Gaylactic Network must make clear, concise and reasonable promotions of its position, in order to define us to everyone (not just Gay fandom). The Network cannot be an insular group without losing credibility and effectiveness. Either the Network must seek to integrate its members with the rest of the community of fandom or it wastes its time "preaching to the choir."

As for the Network implementing its goals, I have not seen any of this, other than ensuring that Gaylaxicon comes off every year. This is a fine goal; but do we need a Gaylactic

(continued on page 5)

LOYAL OPPOSITION

continued from page 4

Network in order to ensure this? I think not. The Network has spent too much time organizing itself. It must get on with the business at hand; or it will become a helpless and ineffectual toy for politics and senseless debates. While the Network is setting up housekeeping, it has to do something more. True, the Network is not responsible for coming up with all the ideas (or even responsible for directly implementing these ideas either), but it must coordinate any potential plans and guide members in an organized manner. For example, if someone from LSF wanted to implement a letter-writing campaign, the Gaylactic Network would not have to take the project over and run it. The Network should, however, take the idea, help establish guidelines, and develop the idea so that it best reflects the goals of the organization as a whole, promoting the letter-writing campaign among all the chapters and the outside world. So far, the only project to have

been implemented by the Network (that I know of) was a letter-writing campaign to Paramount Studios to encourage them to put Gay characters on Star Trek: The Next Generation. This campaign really exemplifies exactly what I am suggesting. As far as I can determine, there were no guidelines established; and thus at LSF meetings the radicals seemed to dominate the implementation of the project. If it is the goal of the Gaylactic Network to promote extremist views, then I would be in favor of dissolving our ties to the Network. It is the implied duty of the Gaylactic Network to promote an activity such as this, coordinate it, and suggest guidelines that best reflect the views of the Network as a whole.

Finally, the Network needs to keep a watchful eye over its projects and organization. I would never suggest a "Big Brother" approach for the Network; but there is a difference between a little supervision and none at all. In the example of the ST:TNG letter-writing campaign above, there

were no suggested guidelines, no official position, and no attempt to police activities - which might actually have done more to harm our cause than to help it. People sent vitriolic messages to employees at Paramount, suggesting that they represent the Network, which caused a lot of needless furor. Officials of the Network did ask the persons responsible to cease and desist; but in a project like this, there could have been a closer scrutiny of activities, in order to prevent unacceptable behavior - in the same way a good parent monitors the activities of his/her children.

All in all, I am not suggesting we leave the Gaylactic Network, nor do I feel that the Network should lord it over us like a tyrannical parent. I would like to challenge the Network to do more of what we have engaged it to do: lead. Too often, no one has asked enough questions of the Network and our Representative, which has led to apathy and disillusionment about the Gaylactic Network.

TREASURER'S REPORT

by Peter Knapp

At the end of this month, I will be stepping down as LSF's first treasurer. I thought it would be a good idea, before I turned over the reigns to Rob, to show you a breakdown of the club's finances.

* * *

LSF Annual Accounting (Fiscal Year: March - February)

-		1990	1991	1992	1993	1994 (YTD)
Income	Memberships	\$440.00	\$500.00	\$640.00	\$550.00	\$615.00
	Other	4.49	115.63	620.75	30.98	134.21
Expenses	Postage	(44.51)	(235.50)	(230.04)	(224.54)	(261.00)
	Newsletters	(363.09)	(4.48)	(499.08)	(534.39)	(382.33)
	Other	(35.10)	(151.23)	(176.16)	(129.50)	(44.25)
Net		1.79	224.42	355.47	(307.45)	61.63

Balance

\$335.86

As you can see from the above chart, the club is doing fine. Last year I determined that the club was spending more money on the production of the newsletters than it was taking in on memberships. This was compensated for by the profit we made from Gaylaxicon IV in 1992. As we couldn't rely on taking in any profit for Gaylaxicon V (or any future Gaylaxicon, for that matter), the club decided to scale back the newsletter from eight pages to six pages and to increase annual membership dues from \$10 to \$15. This strategy seems to be paying

off, as we have spent less on newsletters this year and have taken in more in membership revenue in the last ten months.

There are two things we should watch out for. First, postage rates are going up in January. While it will only cost an additional 36¢ annually per member to mail out newsletters, this increase may impact our funds over time. Second, the number of paid members seems to be going down. In 1990, 44 people paid dues. By 1992, the number had gone up to 64. So far this year, only 41 people have paid mem-

bership dues. I don't think this is necessarily a problem. It will only become one if the number of paid memberships continues to go down. The club may wish to take action to actively increase our membership.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve in what was once the club's only official position. If you have any questions about how the club finances have worked over the past five years, just ask. I leave the checkbook in Rob's capable hands.

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

Lambda Sci-Fi is a Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror fan club for Gay people and their friends. Annual membership fees are \$15, for which you will receive this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. Newsletter submissions are always welcome.

Meetings are generally held on the second Sunday of each month at a private residence. The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held at 2:00 PM on Sunday, January 8th, at Jim C.'s apartment: 1414 17th St., NW, Apt. 413 (near Dupont Circle). 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, Peter, and Jim C.



January 27-29, 1995 EVECON 12: Holiday Inn, Federick MD (Francis Scott Key Mall, Frederick MD). Gaming and various fanac. Cost: \$25 until 1/7/95 (\$30 at the door). Make checks payable to "FanTek" and send to: FanTek, 1607 Thomas Rd., Friendly, MD 20744.

March 31-April 2, 1995 TECHNICON 12: Virginia Tech Campus (Blacksburg, VA). Guests: Don Sakers, Dave & Sue McCoy. Cost: for info, call 703-382-0288). Make checks payable to "Technicon 12" and send to: Technicon 12, PO Box 256, Blacksburg, VA 24063-0256.

April 14-16, 1995 BALTICON 29: Radisson Lord Baltimore Hotel & Omni Hotel (Baltimore, MD). Guest of Honor: James P. Hogan; Artist GoH: David Cherry; Special Guest: Hal Clement. Cost: \$35 until 3/15/95. For membership, make checks payable to "Balticon 29" and send to: Balticon 29, PO Box 686, Baltimore, MD 21203-0686.

May 19-21, 1995 GAYLAXICON VI: Radisson Hotel Niagara Falls (Niagara Falls, NY). Guest of Honor: Don Sakers; Artist GoH: Heather Bruton. Membership: \$25 until 5/1/95 (\$30 at the door). Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon VI" and send to: Gaylaxicon VI, P.O. Box 160225, St. Louis, MO 63116-8225.

May 27-30, 1995 DISCLAVE '95: Renaissance Hotel Techworld (999 9th St., Washington, DC). Guest of Honor: Charles Sheffield; Artist GoH: Bob Eggleton; Special Guest: David Bischoff. Membership: \$30 until 4/30/95, \$40 at the door. Make checks payable to "Disclave '95" and send to: Disclave '95 Registration, PO Box 368, Gaithersburg, MD 20884.

July 13-16, 1995 NASFIC (North American Science Fiction Convention)/DRAGON*CON 1995: Atlanta Civic Center & Atlanta Hilton and Towers (Atlanta, GA). Honored Guests: Orson Scott Card, George Alec Effinger, Bjo Trimble, Michael Whelan, Timothy Zahn. Cost: \$50 until 3/15/95, then \$55 until 6/15/95 (\$60 at the door). Make checks payable to "NASFiC'95" and send to: NASFiC/Dragon*Con '95, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362-0696. For additional information, call the 24-hour Atlanta Convention Info Line at (404) 925-2813.

Aug. 29 - Sept. 2, 1996 L.A.con III, the 54th World Science Fiction Convention: Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim Hilton and Towers, & Anaheim Marriott (Anaheim, CA). Writer Guest of Honor: James White; Media Guest of Honor: Roger Corman. Cost: \$90 through 6/30/95; \$110 as of 7/1/95. Make checks payable to "L.A.con III" and send to: L.A.con III, c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409.

