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E-MAIL: info@lambdasf.org WEBSITE: <http://www.lambdasf.org/>

And Now For Something Completely Different!

reported by Carl Cipra



Never let it be said that LSF doesn't like to try out anything new! On Saturday night, July 17th, LSF hosted its first "Gaylaxicon 1999 Fund-raiser Movie Night." It was a rousing success!

Last month, Nan & Kay came back from Otakon 1999 with a spiffy new idea for raising funds and having fun, all at the same time! They found out that "The Game Edge," a videogame store out in Rockville, contains an "intimate, 20-seat, large-screen theater" that they rent out for local clubs, etc. (Yes, "Game Edge" has apparently got all the legal angles covered.) The place has even got honest-to-goodness comfy theater-style seats with drink holders, etc. "So, OK," Nan & Kay figured, "let's try out hosting an event there to raise funds for Gaylaxicon!" Sentiments at the July LSF meeting seemed to be in favor of the idea; and - hey, presto! - the event was born!

The program at the July 17th session consisted of a couple of short "Babylon Park" episodes and *Princess Mononoke*. "Babylon Park" is, of course, the "tribute"/parody mixture of elements of *Babylon 5* and *South Park* (along with *Star Trek*, H.P. Lovecraft,

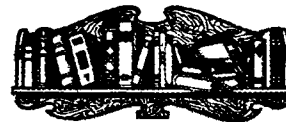
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Upcoming Sessions of the LSF Book Discussion Group

If you're interested in lively discussions on F&SF books, with an emphasis on elements of interest to our les/bi/gay/transgendered community, then drop in on one of Lambda Sci-Fi's monthly book discussions. Every month we conduct fascinating round-table discussions of another work by a significant F&SF author. Attendees also decide on the novels and discussion facilitators for succeeding months.

The LSF Book Discussion Group meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM. The August meeting will be held at the home of Dave Pichette, 1447 Florida Ave., NW, Washington, DC (within walking distance of the "U" St./Cardozo [Green Line] or the Dupont Circle [Red Line] Metro Stations).

For detailed directions, contact



Rob at: Klaatu01@aol.com

Here are the books to be discussed at the next few meetings:

Thursday, August 26th - *Ethan of Athos*, by Lois McMaster Bujold; facilitator: Jen.

Thursday, Sept. 23rd - *The Female Man*, by Joanna Russ; facilitator: Denise.

Thursday, Oct. 28th - *The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse*, by Keith Hartman; facilitator to be determined.

Note: The August & Sept. books are available at Lammas Women's Books & More (on 17th St., in the Dupont Circle area). The October book can be ordered through LSF's special arrangement with Meisha Merlin Publishers (contact Rob for order forms).

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August LSF Meeting

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, August 8th, at James Crutchfield's apartment: 1414 17th St., NW, Apt. 413 (near Dupont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting; 2:00 PM for social meeting. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks if you can. During the business portion of the meeting, we'll be continuing the discussion of the Network reorganization proposal. Hope to see you there!

**GAYLAXICON 1999:
THE 10TH GAYLAXICON
OCT. 8-11, 1999**



It's almost here!
Sign up now!
Don't miss out on all the fun!



For details, see back page; or go to www.lambdasf.org/gaylaxicon1999

WHAT'S INSIDE?

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Just How Old Is Cyberspace?

by Carl Cipra



There certainly seems to have been a slew of VR/cyberspace films released lately. First out, in the “blockbuster” category, was *The Matrix* - featuring high-end special effects and Keanu Reeves. Then came *eXistenZ* - a definite candidate for some kind of “visceral” film award. (*Don't order “the special” - trust me!*) And, finally, there's *The 13th Floor* - cyberspace with a touch of *film noir*.

It's this last one was caught my particular attention. You see, *The 13th Floor*'s opening credits mention that the screenplay is based on a novel by Daniel F. Galouye, *Simulacron-3*. Galouye's name seemed to ring a bell with me from somewhere; and, out of curiosity, I decided to look him up in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*. Bingo! Daniel F. Galouye (1920-1976) began writing science fiction in the early 1950s; and I'd once owned one of his novels, *A Scourge of Screammers*. The article mentions that Galouye had an interest in writing about worlds where reality is controlled and restricted, worlds which are in fact arbitrary constructs. Hmmmm. Then came the clincher - *Simulacron-3* was published in 1964. 1964?!

Well, I figured that the screenwriters must have really been playing fast-and-free with Galouye's novel to have converted it into a cyberspace/VR story; Galouye just *couldn't* have written a cyberspace story back in 1964! Based on the 1940s Los Angeles scenes in the film, I figured *Simulacron-3* must have originally been some sort of “mental time travel” story - you know, with the characters actually projecting their consciousnesses back into the minds of people living in the past. After all, the term “cyberspace” (a special type of virtual reality, a machine-generated scenario which is perceived as “real” or actual territory by those humans who have directly interfaced with it) wasn't introduced until 1984, in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*.

The term “virtual reality” itself was probably coined about 1981 by computer guru Jaron Lanier, founder of VPL Research, Inc. (the company that markets DataGloves) - possibly based on the term “virtuality” used by Theodor Nelson in “Interactive Systems and the Design of Virtuality” (1980). (*The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* says that the concept of virtual reality is “broadly defined as any secondary reality alternate to a character's world of real experience in which the character finds him/herself and with which he/she can interact.”) I guessed I'd just have to wait until I could get my hands on a copy of *Simulacron-3* to find out what Galouye had actually written.

Well, I finally located a copy at a used bookstore up in Rockville. And, guess what? Son of a gun, *Simulacron-3* is, in fact, a cyberspace novel - vintage 1964!

The story opens in what appears to be (for us) a near-future U.S. The protagonist, Douglas Hall, works for REIN (Reactions, Inc.), a market research organization. Hall and his associates, Morton Lynch and Hannon Fuller, have just completed building *Simulacron-3*, a breakthrough in the science of simulelectronics and a colossal boon to the field of market research. *Simulacron-3* is a total environment simulator into which they have fed subjective analogs and from which they can extract human reaction results - in less time than real live market research would take, and without all the fuss and bother and expense of having to interview real people. Suddenly (quite suddenly, as it turns out) Lynch disappears and Fuller is murdered - and it looks like Doug Hall will be charged with both crimes. While he's trying to figure out what's going on, Hall stumbles onto an even more shocking discovery - his world is actually just a simulation running inside another computer! And it looks like someone is threatening to pull the plug!

As it turns out, there aren't all that many differences between the book (*Simulacron-3*) and the film (*The 13th Floor*). Both of them feature the same basic concepts: the existence of three levels of “reality” - two of them computerized- and the ability to move between them. Both versions of the story provide the protagonist with a mysterious love interest from the “real” world who may be the only hope for saving both himself and his world. In a couple of instances, the imagery used (in print and on screen) is virtually identical. The major differences are twofold:

(1) In the book, the need for improved market research was the driving force behind all the scientific advances that led to the creation of simulated realities. In the film, there's no mention of market research. The film is kind'a vague on the subject of *why* computerized realities are being created. Is it a game? Is it for kicks? I have no memory of this ever being made clear.

(2) The film clearly differentiates between each of the levels of “reality” by providing each with a particular temporal/technological identity: Los Angeles in the 1940s, Los Angeles in the near future, and some sort of (largely unspecified) slicker, futuristic Los Angeles. In the book, each of the levels seems pretty much like the others, with just a few distortions in how market research is accomplished on a given level.

In and of itself, *Simulacron-3* isn't a particularly earth-shaking book. Frankly, I found it just an “OK read”. The mind-boggling part is the realization that it's a story about cyberspace that was written almost 20 years before the development of the terminology we now use to describe it. It's fascinating to read what is, to all intents and purposes, a fully-realized cyberspace novel that doesn't use the “cyber-vocabulary” we've come to expect AND that doesn't have even the whiff of *cyberpunk* about it. If you're a cyberspace fan, I really think you'll need a copy of *Simulacron-3* for your library.

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Something Completely Different!

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and anything else they wanted to poke fun at). *Princess Mononoke* is a magnificently beautiful, full-length (133 minutes) animé fantasy that has not yet been released in the U.S. (The version we watched is in Japanese, with "Fan-subbed" English subtitles.) There were 14 attendees for this event, mostly LSFers with 3 or 4 guests. The general consensus of opinion was that "Babylon Park" is a hoot and that *Princess Mononoke* is breath-taking! And, besides enjoying the show, we raised \$70 for Gaylaxicon! What a deal!

And I'll bet right now you're sayin': "Aw, shucks! I missed out!" Well, not really - there are a couple more "Gaylaxicon 1999 Fundraiser Movie Nights" already planned - and YOU can join in the fun, too! Here's the schedule:

Saturday, August 14 (6-9 PM):

The feature will be *The Eternal: Kiss of the Mummy*, a quirky direct-to-video film directed by Michael Almercyda. It will be preceded by various to-be-announced "shorts" (possibly *Babylon 5* bloopers, animé shorts, etc.).

Saturday, September 18 (6-9 PM): The feature will be *The Faculty*, the recent sci-fi/horror B-grade film about teens in high school with evil aliens. (As somebody said, it's *The Breakfast Club* meets *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.) Once again, this feature will be preceded by various "short subjects."

If you're interested in signing up for either of these upcoming fun-filled fund-raiser events (and for further details), contact Nan & Kay either by e-mail (alison.plays@zzapp.org) or by phone (301-762-7704) - or see them in person at the August or September LSF meetings. (And, rest assured, that you'll have the thanks of the Gaylaxicon 1999 con-committee!)

ΛΨΦ

Laughter is
the shortest distance
between two people.

----- Victor Borge -----

The Mixed-Up Minutes of the July LSF Meeting

by Rob

ΛΨΦ

With a ton of business on the agenda, we popped our usual schedule in the blender and ran things a bit differently. We had some business discussions, followed by some social fun, followed by more business. It seemed to work well - and may happen again for future lots-of-business meetings.

In the social/fun portion of the meeting, many newsletters and magazines were passed around, including a recent *MAD*, an animé magazine, a flyer for an Edgar Rice Burroughs convention in August, Progress Report 4 from Aussiecon, a book from a new swashbuckling roleplaying game called *7-Sea*, and a flyer about the Newseum's special exhibit on "The Media and The Space Race." Various people chimed in with reports on upcoming or recent movies and TV - including, *G vs E* (premiering on USA on July 18th), *Mercy Point* (on the Sci-Fi channel), *Buffy's* season finale (on WB on July 13th), and the other unaired episode perhaps showing later this month (and at one of our upcoming movie fundraiser nights). There's an upcoming movie called *Lust Lizard of Melancholy Cove*....really, it's true...and Edy's is making *Wild Wild West* ice cream. *The Matrix* won't be released in priced-to-sell VHS - only priced-to-rent VHS and DVD; and a *South Park* Trivia computer game is on its way. Hallmark is making a 6-hour miniseries of *Dinotopia* for May 2001 showing. Excitement is growing surrounding the upcoming trilogy of *Lord of the Rings* movies; and a *Battlestar Galactica* movie trailer for the new film got much applause at Dragoncon. In recent events, Otakon (a big animé convention) was a lot of fun, according to the LSFers who attended. *South Park* movie watchers reported that it was both stunningly clever and stunningly vulgar, with jaws dropping at the non-stop barrage of crudity but

brains whirling with the clever script and sharp, right-on social satire. *The Wild Wild West* movie, on the other hand, got thumbs up for visuals and thumbs at half-mast (at best) for the movie beyond that....standard popcorn movie fare. Sci-fi is also prevalent in two non-genre films right now: In the movie *Notting Hill*, Julia Roberts plays a famous Hollywood actress starring in a big-budget sci-fi movie; and the gay coming-of-age movie *Get Real* includes an endless supply of visual *Dr. Who* references (because the main character's father is a *Dr. Who* fanatic). Jen reported that Dragoncon was a lot of fun, especially babysitting the *B5* folks (including Claudia Christian) -- while Helgi reported that Anthrocon had lots of good programming and great furry costumes.

Finally, Rob gave a quick update on plans for Gaylaxicon and pushed for memberships. In order to raise money to help support Gaylaxicon, an auction and book sale was held during the meeting and raised \$135.80!

In the business portion of the meeting, we quickly voted "yea" on the issue of Boston's request for Provisional status in the Gaylactic Network. We also quickly gave a big thumbs up to Nan & Kay's proposal to do movie-night-fundraisers at a local game store with a special 20-person theatre setup; all proceeds from the fundraisers are to be donated to support Gaylaxicon. [Ed. note: For more info on this topic, see the article on starting on page 1 of this newsletter.]

Rob then brought up the issue of the slowly declining Lambda Sci-Fi treasury. Over the last year, his detailed analysis showed that services offered were costing us more than the money we were bringing in. Although it's not a crisis yet, he suggested that we discuss options. After much discussion, we

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Happy Mummy Day!!

a video/film/book review

by Joseph Parra

As Sophia Petrillo would say: "Picture it! Hollywood – 1932...." Boris Karloff is the newest jewel in the Universal Studios crown. They are planning a film for him called *Cagliostro*, a supernatural thriller about the famed 17th century magician. About this time, however, another member of the famed Tutankhamun expedition has died unexpectedly – another victim of "The Curse of King Tut." Carl Laemmle Jr., head of production at Universal, decides to cash in on this incident by having the screenplay of *Cagliostro* altered so that a mummy comes to life in modern times and wreaks havoc with his evil powers. They hire John Balderston (the man who adapted *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* for them a year earlier) to fashion a screenplay based ever-so-loosely on this peculiar King Tut curse. He fashions a marvelous horror story, with slight echoes of *Dracula*, about Prince Imhotep, a High Priest who dares defy the ancient gods of Egypt by resurrecting (or attempting to) his late love, the Royal Princess Ankhsumamen. For his trouble, he is condemned by Pharaoh to "the nameless death" – he shall be mummified and buried while still alive. Some three thousand years later, an expedition uncovers him and, to their dismay, revive him by uttering the ancient spell by which, according to legend, Isis raised Osiris from the dead. He is more than unhappy with these infidels who dared to desecrate not only his tomb but that of his beloved princess. They shall not live...

This film was one of two directed by legendary cameraman Karl Freund. (The other was also a horror classic – 1935's MGM Peter Lorre film, *Mad Love*). It proved to be one of Universal's great hits of that year. Boris gave one of his most memorable performances as the withered menace who does not wish to be touched – "an Eastern prejudice". To hedge the bet (and to acknowledge the slight resem-



blance to *Dracula*), Universal cast two of the Count's nemeses as the hero and the monster-fighter, David Manners and Edward Van Sloan, who perform admirably. Freund directed wonderfully, capturing the pathos and terror of the story and, thanks to his expertise with the camera, lending more than an eerie look with the somber cinematography, along with John P. Fulton's special effects. (Watch Imhotep's eyes!!). This is one of the "golden age"-of-horror classics produced by Universal and is not to be missed – and it's one you'll especially want to own.

About 1992, Universal sent out a press release stating that they planned to remake *The Mummy*, with Joe Dante (*The Howling*, *Gremlins*, etc.) directing. After several years and several directors, they finally hit upon someone who wrote a new screenplay (based loosely on Balderston's original) and who would direct the film as well. Stephen Sommers, fresh from Disney's *Deep Rising*, convinced the brass at Universal to let him go ahead with his reworking of the story. Rethinking would actually be a better word, for he takes the basic idea of the original and then runs wild with it – thanks to his \$80 million budget!! Whereas, in the original, Imhotep is a somewhat sedentary fellow, this new incarnation is quite animated – sometimes literally. Sommers threw out the original's special expedition of 1932 and threw in a 1925 rag-tag group who seek Hamanaptra, the famed City of the Dead. What they find should have remained just that; for, as in the original, someone unknowingly utters the ancient prayer which revives Imhotep (who is

quite disgusting-looking, having rotted for 3,000 years). In this new version, Imhotep is able to regain his human appearance by ingesting the life essences and organs of the desecrators. He persuades a slimier member of the group, played by Kevin J. O'Connor (who could be the offspring of Peter Lorre and Klaus Kinski) to be his helper. The two of them pursue the good guys to Cairo where, one by one, Imhotep makes believers and/or corpses of a great many in this huge city. Sommers goes for the mustard here. He was smart enough to realize that, in order to appeal to the masses for commercial purposes, this story had to be told with a slight (ever so slight) tongue in the cheek, coming up with a sort of "Indiana Jones Meets the Mummy" tale. The devil-may-care hero versus the supernatural ancient evil is very well handled in a super-serial spirit. Don't think, however, that there is no horror anymore – no, no, my friends. Thanks to CGI, this Mummy is very creepy-crawley, with little nasty bugs to do some of his dirty work. The CGI effects in this film are incredible; in fact, the only noticeable lapse is in a close-up of some rot on Imhotep's face after he is almost completely reincarnated – and that's not bad! Brendan Fraser (as the devil-may-care hero, O'Connell) is as hot as ever. Arnold Vosloo (*Darkman 2* and *3*) shines as Imhotep – what he lacks in Karloff-type eeriness, he makes up for with a superbly evil glance and a haughty manner. Rachel Weisz is the not-so-hapless heroine of the proceedings; and John Hannah (the surviving lover in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*) is her mischievous but not nasty brother; they both perform admirably. Kevin J. O'Connor and Jonathan Hyde (*Anaconda*) are (respectively) slimy and smarmy and quite wonderful at it. The finished product is quite an achievement. It is not as horrifying as the original, but it sure moves fast and furious and doesn't let you think too long about the implausibilities of the plot – a fun movie that Sommers is to be congratulated for.

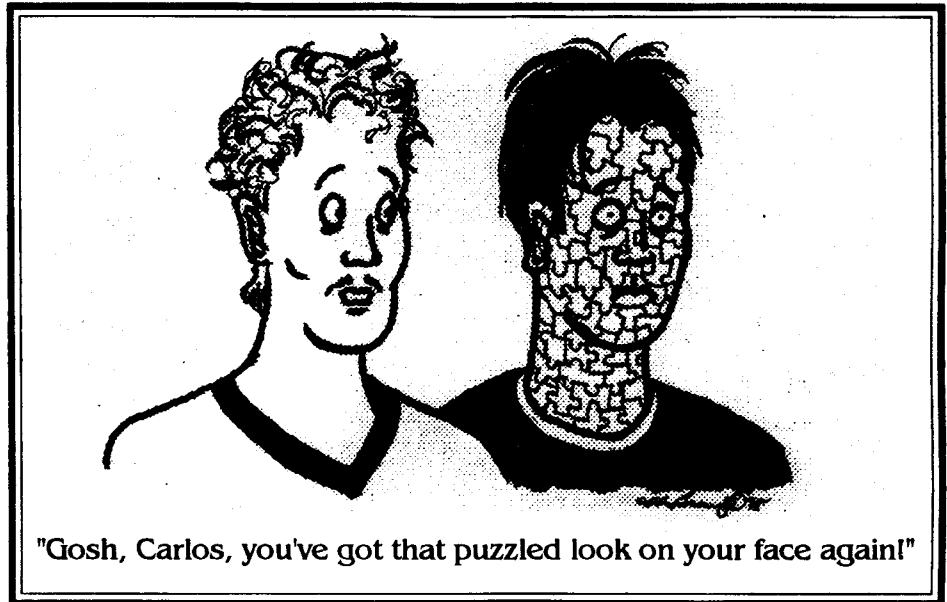
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Minutes

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passed an increase in newsletter subscription costs from \$15 to \$20 (with similar increases for "household" subscriptions and foreign subscriptions). This increase should keep us from dropping further; and the group also decided to look at other options - including electronicizing the newsletter. You can expect to see more on this topic in the future as we closely monitor our income vs. expenses.

Finally, the BIG business discussion was put on the table. Many months ago, Rob approached the group and suggested that we propose a change in structure for the Network, from an "organization of organizations" to an "organization of individuals." At that time, he was sent back to the drawing board and asked to put together an in-depth white paper analyzing the problems the Network was facing and showing why this would be a good option. Rob has since produced and distributed the white paper/proposal to Lambda Sci-Fi and to the rest of the Network to open discussions about making changes calculated to see that the Network survives. LSF had also



decided to use the July and August meetings to discuss the proposal and put together its official response for report to the GNAPA (the Network's communication/business tool). Rob opened the discussion today by going through his proposal. He talked about analyzing the recent Network problems and identified six key problem areas. He then talked about how the move to individual membership would resolve those problems and laid out the bare bones of how the Network would look and operate under the new structure. Much dis-

cussion ensued, both positive and negative. The discussion time was spent almost entirely in analyzing and discussing reasons for or against the proposal as it stands. After long discussion, we called a halt for this month and suggested that everyone go back to the drawing board and come prepared to offer alternative suggestions (small and large), with the discussion to be continued in August. Based on this month's discussion, it's likely that August's will also be a long one, so be prepared!

ΛΨΦ

Mummy

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Before seeing the latest version of *The Mummy*, I happened upon the novelization of the Sommers screenplay, adapted by famed mystery writer, Max Allan Collins. I thought this an odd departure for him, but then I recalled that he scripted the surprisingly good low-budget thrillers, *Mommy* and *Mommy 2*. He takes us on a much more detailed odyssey than viewing could afford. Sometimes, however, there is information which we could do without. He also needs to check on his facts a little. For example, he has the hero, O'Connell, stating the Mummy would scare Frankenstein. Since the story takes place in 1925, Franky was not part of popular culture yet - the famous film version was 1931. He also makes a few firearms errors that would be alright for

a regular author; but a mystery writer should be more familiar with his materials. What is especially admirable about this adaptation, though, is Collins' full understanding of what it means to be Imhotep - both the man and the monster. He takes some liberties with the script, but this to be expected. All in all, this novel is a lively adaptation and a nice supplement to the film.

So, beware the sands of Egypt, my dears! Be it 1932 or 1999, Karloff or Vosloo or Max Allan Collins - beware the curse of *The Mummy* - it will definitely entice you! Enjoy!!

Ratings:

1932 film = 4 out of 4

1999 film = 3 out of 4

1999 novelization = 3 out of 4

ΛΨΦ

Cyberspace

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Some final notes from *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*: This novel also appeared in the UK in 1964 under the title *Counterfeit World*; and the story was filmed for German TV in 1973 by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, under the title *Welt am Draht (World on a Wire)*. It also said that *Simulacron-3* was, "in effect, a novel-length reworking of Frederick Pohl's "The Tunnel Under the World" (1954), both being about constructed worlds designed for market research." Uh oh, time to start looking for the Pohl story!

ΛΨΦ



**** 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 \$20, 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 Sunday, August 8th, at James Crutchfield's apartment: 1414 17th St., NW, Apt. 413 (near Dupont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting; 2:00 PM for social meeting. 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 James



August 6-8, 1999 **MONSTER RALLY '99: First Annual World Horror Film Convention**. Crystal City Hyatt (Arlington, VA). Guests: Christopher Lee, Forrest J Ackerman, Zacherley, Elena Verdugo, and more. Hotel rates: \$105/night (sgl or dbl). Membership: \$40. Make checks payable to "FANEX" and send to: FANEX, c/o John Stell, 12118 Little Patuxent Pkwy, Apt. J, Columbia, MD 21044. For more info, call (410) 665-1198 or check out the websites at: FANEX.com or, Chillertheatre.com

August 26-29, 1999 **CONUCOPIA: NASFiC 1999** (since WorldCon is in Australia). Anaheim Marriott (Anaheim, CA). GoH: Jerry Pournelle; Editor GoH: Ellen Datlow. Membership: \$100 until 7/5/99. Make checks payable to "SCIFI" or "Conucopia" and send to: Conucopia, c/o SCIFI, PO Box 8442, Van Nuys, CA 91409. For more info: 99.nasfic.org or, website: www.99.nasfic.org

October 8-11, 1999 **GAYLAXICON 1999: THE 10TH GAYLAXICON**. Washington, DC. Guest of Honor: Diane Duane; Artist GoH: Nancy Janda. Membership: \$50 through Aug. 1, 1999; \$60 at the door. (No mail-in registrations after Sept. 1, 1999.) Make checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 1999" and send to: Gaylaxicon 1999, c/o Lambda Sci-Fi, PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044. For more information, call 202/232-3141.

Send e-mail to: info@lambdasf.org

Also check out: <http://www.lambdasf.org/gaylaxicon1999/>

May 26-29, 2000 **COSTUMECON 18**. Sheraton Hartford (Hartford, Conn.). The 18th annual volunteer-run convention for costumers and all who love costumes. Membership \$60 thru 8/31/99; \$70 thru 4/23/2000; \$80 thereafter & at the door. Make checks payable to "CostumeCon 18" and send to: CostumeCon 18, 11 Winter St., Amesbury, MA 01913-1515. For more information: e-mail: info@cc2000.org website: www.cc2000.org

June 30 - July 2, 2000 **ANTHROCON 2000**. Hilton Valley Forge Hotel (251 DeKalb Pike, King of Prussia, PA). The East Coast's largest Anthropomorphics Convention. Theme: "Furries of Myth & Legend." For hotel reservations: 610-337-1200, or 800-TRY-VFPA. Membership \$30 thru 2/1/00; \$35 thru 6/15/00. Make checks payable to "Anthrocon, Inc." and send to: Anthrocon, Inc., PO Box 270, Devault, PA 19432-0270.

