



LAMBDA SCI-FI



DC Area Gaylaxians

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044 - (202) 232-3141 - Issue #114 - September 1999

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

Network Speaker Says: "Thanks, y'all!"

by Carl Cipra

As Speaker for the Gaylactic Network, I'd like to personally thank the members of Lambda Sci-Fi for the concern and dedication they've shown over the past couple of months to the cause of Network reform. I'd particularly like to thank them for all the hard work they put in during their "marathon" session at the August 8th LSF meeting, in which they brainstormed possible solutions to perceived Network problems and formulated some viable alternatives for the Network Board to consider. My thanks (in no particular order) to the following "die-hards," who let neither heat, rainstorm, hunger, headaches, nor the approach of nightfall deter them: Rob, Julian, Nan, Kendall, Chris F., Jack, Kay, Peter, James C., Scott, Charles B., and Robert F. Believe it or not, it was actually a pleasure working through and intelligently discussing these issues with all of you - no matter the length of time it took! As always, you're a great bunch 'a folks!

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



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

Gaylaxicon 1999 Fundraiser Movie Night

reported by Carl Cipra

A couple of months ago, 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!

If you missed out on the fun-filled July 17th and August 14th sessions, you've

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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 September meeting will be held at the home of Rob & Peter, 1425 S Street, 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

September LSF Meeting

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, September 12th, 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!

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

Thursday, Sept. 23rd - *The Fe-male Man*, by Joanna Russ; facilitator: Denise. (available at Lammas)

Thursday, Oct. 28th - *The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse*, by Keith Hartman; facilitator to be determined. (available through LSF, contact Rob)

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The Rearranged Minutes of the August LSF Meeting

Well, we had much business to accomplish and a major brainstorming session regarding the Gaylactic Network to attend to, so we got under way quickly. Like the July meeting, we split the meeting into three sections - business, social, and Network brainstorming.

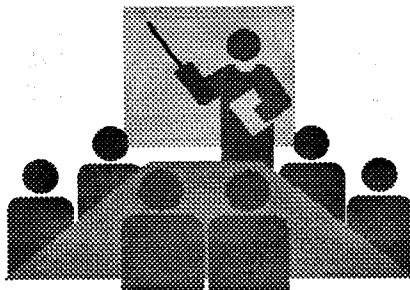
In business, Peter reminded everyone that ads can be purchased for the Gaylaxicon: 1999 Program Book by individuals or businesses and passed around prices. Rob briefly mentioned an impending project by the American Booksellers Association called Booksense, where an online presence and store will be shared by many independent booksellers. He'll keep us posted when it goes online and we'll determine then whether and how to alter our online booksales links. Rob also passed around special book purchase offers from Circlot Press and Meisha Merlin Press. Both publishers are long time friends of the Gaylaxians, and people were highly encouraged to take advantage of the special offers. The bill for our next year of service with our webhost has come due, and we discussed whether to continue and how to finance the website. Two volunteers stepped



forward to cover this year's costs, and Charlie volunteered to organize special fundraising events to raise money in preparation for next year's bill. Kay reminded everyone about the upcoming LSF Fundraiser Movie Nights for Gaylaxicon on August 14th and September 18th. While Carl reported on his efforts to bring our scrapbooks up to date. He's now up to Bucconeer in

August 1998. He also put together a brief outline history of Gaylaxicons.

In social stuff, we did our usual name circle. Michael then followed up with a report on his visit to The Monster Rally. It was mostly people 30's and over and women between 40 and 60, with a few families tossed in. They had a great guest list, and an apparently growing gay presence. Carl reported that there *will* be a gay fandom party at NASFIC - the Rainbow Party. He also



recommended a Star Trek novel (what? Carl recommending a Star Trek novel?) titled *Far Beyond the Stars*, by Steven Barnes. It's from the episode where Sisko experiences life as a black pulp sci-fi writer in the 50's. Kay brought us up to date on TV news - mentioning that *Farscape* had been renewed. A few people also talked about the polarized responses to *The Blair Witch Project*, and Michael jokingly suggested the *Roddy McDowell Diary Project* as a spoof. Rob passed around various flyers and advertisements from the PO Box and pointed out the club and convention materials in the center of the floor. He also reminded everyone to get a hotel room for Gaylaxicon, and to do it soon because our hotel cutoff date is September 8th. Peter passed around and gave out a Star Trek novel timeline poster, and showed off his new talking Lost in Space robot holiday tree ornament. Someone talked briefly about a new gay high tech group called GLITCH, which has fascinating meetings and cool people with many sub-interest groups. Those who had seen the remake of *The Haunting* gave it a thumbs down, while Charlie gave the book *Lady Lord* by Sasha Miller a thumbs up. Finally, Michael reminded

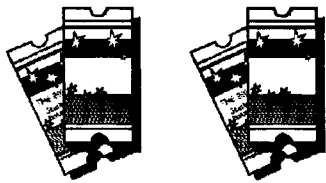
everyone that the MST3K finale was that night.

With all the "fun" stuff out of the way, we took a short break before moving on to the continuing discussions of the Gaylactic Network. Rather than continue the discussion the same way we had started last month, Rob and Carl suggested a completely different tactic. Carl, and others, gave an oral history of the politics and administration of the Gaylactic Network. From there, Rob laid out the key problem areas he had identified in his original proposal. We briefly discussed those problems, and added a few more suggested by those in attendance. We then asked people to spend a little time in small groups, brainstorming and writing down ideas that would help solve each individual problem. After a brief time of individual/small group work, we came back together to discuss each problem as a group, review the suggestions made, and add any final positive comments from those who took part. When all was said and done, we spent approximately 4 hours working through the problems in this fashion, but managed to put together a wealth of information and ideas. Fascinatingly, many of the solutions began to show patterns from problem to problem, and some core ideas began to take shape. Rob will be typing up the results of the brainstorming session as they appeared, and this information will be passed along to the rest of the Gaylactic Network as a starting point for our major discussions regarding change at the meetings in October. A very hearty thank you to all involved, as the ideas and suggestions were great! If the rest of the Network is even half as visionary, there'll be a grand rebirth right around the corner!

ΛΨΦ

Editor's Corner

Just your average Guest Guest Editor Rob here. With Carl and Peter both off on vacations, the newsletter duties fell to yours truly. You know, we see the same faces in the newsletter all the time and we'd love to hear from some new voices. So write us a review or something and help us keep the newsletter fresh!



The Yawning, Er...Haunting

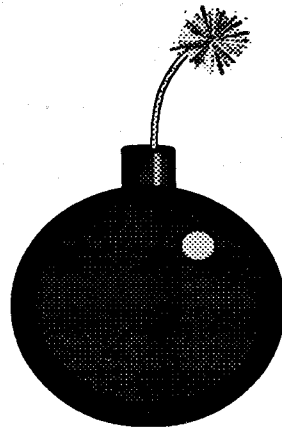
a film review by Joseph Parra

Back in the fabulous '50's, Shirley Jackson penned one of the most famous and horrifying ghost/haunted house tales ever written, THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE. In 1963, MGM adapted the novel into what has become one of the most famous and horrifying ghost/haunted house movies ever filmed, THE HAUNTING directed by Robert Wise. Wise and MGM wisely chose to keep faithful to Jackson's vision of the horrors being left up to the reader/viewer's imagination for the most part, since, according to Ms. Jackson, the events that unfold in the story might be just in the mind of the protagonist.

Now in 1999, Jan De Bont (director of SPEED) and Dreamworks SKG decided that it was time for Shirley Jackson's book to hit the silver screen again. If only they'd kept that thought intact. Instead, they chose to "adapt" (hah!) the novel with "today's sensibilities in mind." Translated into English, that means let's pump this up with mega-effects and modernize the storyline. Really...?

Allow me to elucidate. Ms. Jackson wrote about a serious psychic researcher who brings 2 psychic women to an incredibly large and morose house, along with the current owner of the house, to investigate paranormal activity. I don't want to go into too much plot detail as this is a book not to be missed. Nor should one miss the MGM film version. However, Mr. De Bont and crew decided that instead of psychic research, the researcher would pose as a sleep disorder doctor and bring 3 people to the house to study their sleeping disorders. This is about as interesting as a dull lecture, especially given the horrific look of Hill House. Who would ever believe that their sleep problems

would be cured in a house that looks like Castle Dracula? Add to this the fact that, as mentioned earlier, in the original story the events might be imagined or might be real. De Bont decided that they were real and used CGI effects out the wazoo to show them. Perhaps upon realizing he had tampered with an already intriguing story unnecessarily, he decided that he'd better turn it into a house of horrors that one would expect to find at an



amusement park. Not that the effects aren't impressive, they are — in a cartoonish way. Though surely this was not his intent. He cast Liam Neeson, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Lili Taylor, Owen Wilson in the leads. Lead — do you know the other pronunciation of this arrangement of letters? That's what the performances amount to in this travesty. De Bont must have thought he was still directing an action movie instead of what should have been an atmospheric horror film. The sequences that do not involve being chased by ghosts or monsters or whatever have the allure of an unemployment office waiting room. What's worse, the action sequences seemed to have been coined from the 3 Stooges haunted house shorts, only not as mysterious or effective.

No, I am not one of those folks who thinks that ghost stories needn't have special effects. POLTERGEIST is one of the best ghost movies ever crafted for the modern screen for example. Nor am I a total purist who believes that movies shouldn't be remade. Hell, half of our

beloved genre's films are remakes or reworkings of previous endeavors. BUT... if one is going to remake a film and infuse mega-effects, one had best make damn sure that the spirit (no pun intended) of the work remains faithful and that the effects enhance rather than detract. One must wonder whether Steven Spielberg, who is the head of Dreamworks, ever peeked in on this debacle as they were filming. Maybe he did and figured, "oh good, Tobe Hooper and I have nothing to worry about POLTERGEIST puts this to shame and besides we made too much money this year and need a tax loss. I hope so. Then at least this garbage would have some value. Enjoy? Nyuk, Nyuk!!

Rating: 0 out of a possible 4

Book Discussion Group - Cont.

Thursday, Dec. 2nd - *Was*, by Geoff Ryman; facilitator: TBD. (please note date change - this is combined Nov/Dec)

Note: Books are usually 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).

Movie Fundraisers - Cont.

still got *one more* chance to find out what all the shoutin's about. The next Gaylaxicon 1999 Fundraiser Movie Night is set for Saturday, September 18 (6-9 PM). The "main event" will be *The Faculty*, the recent grade-B sci-fi/horror film about teens in high school with evil aliens. (As somebody said, it's *The Breakfast Club* meets *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.) This feature-length film will be preceded by various "short subjects."

To sign up for this fun-filled fund-raiser event (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 September LSF meeting. (And rest assured that you'll have earned the heart-felt thanks of the Gaylaxicon 1999 con-committee!)



The Gumshoe, The Witch, and the Virtual Corpse

by Keith Hartman
(Meisha Merlin Press)

a brief review by Carl Cipra

This book is an enjoyable read - I highly recommend that you add it to your reading list. (We've *already* added it to the "LSF Recommends" list.) It's also another triumph for Meisha Merlin Press. (Keep the good stuff coming, gang!)

Atlanta (Georgia) in the early 21st century is a powderkeg just waiting for someone to strike a match nearby. Yes, "the mainstream" (whatever *that* means) *seems* a bit more tolerant of alternate lifestyles and sexualities and ethnicities. But, on the other hand, society has steadily been "balkanizing" itself as much as possible into monocultural enclaves, each group being safe and secure from "those people" within its own gated, walled communities or its own self-promoting social groups. And, face it, it's a very thin (and easily crossed) line between wanting to "keep them away from me" and wanting "them" dead! And someone seems intent on forcing people across that line! In cemeteries around the city, bodies are being exhumed and mutilated in gruesome ways suggestive of Satanic rituals. The Christian Right is up in arms (literally), incited by an ambitious U.S. Senator who's also a well-known televangelist. He's galvanizing the faithful with visions of a vast Conspiracy of Satanists, pagans, gays, abortionists, Liberals, Democrats, Catholics, etc., etc., etc. - and everyone else is, understandably, arming up to resist an anticipated assault by the Reverend-Senator's overly-righteous followers. Can anyone find out what the heck is going on before Atlanta goes up in flames again? Or, more importantly, can anyone *survive* long enough to find out what/who's behind it all? Well,

there's a really mixed bag of "good guys" who are (in one way or another) trying to solve the crimes and keep the lid on things: a gay detective; a family of Wiccans; an overworked black police lieutenant from the Special Investigations Bureau and her blond, hunky, Fundamentalist assistant; a Cheyenne drag queen; a young Christian Music singer working for the Reverend-Senator's TV station; and poor young Benji, a 14-year-old kid who's got strict, Baptist parents and a new girlfriend who's a witch! (Yipe! Maybe it's time to put the Atlanta Fire Department on stand-by alert!)

I don't want to go into too much more detail, because *The Gumshoe, the Witch, and the Virtual Corpse* has been chosen for the October session of the LSF book discussion group. As I said, it's a well-written, enjoyable book - an unusual mix of science fiction and fantasy (what with all those totem spirits popping in and out) that offers the reader laughs, chills, and thrills galore - along with some clever surprises. And there are *lots* of very positive gay, lesbian, pagan, etc. images throughout the book. Get yourself a copy - I'm sure you'll enjoy it.



LSF Book Exchange (Re)Visited - Part Three

Protektor
by Charles Platt

(Editor's Note - This is the third entry in Rob's Book Exchange Reviews series)

Well, the whole point of our annual book exchange is to share our favorites with others in the club. This year, following the suggestion that size **does** matter, I managed to garner a collection of three books as my booty from the book exchange. The three books were all cyber-ish in nature, and had been brought by our very own Uber-Geek, Kay. One of the three books was one I

had specifically been looking for for a while, so regardless of how the others turned out, I knew I'd be happy. It turned out that only one of the three was a real disappointment. Boy did I win!



Imagine if you will, a society administered by a completely benign machine government. Nanotechnology and technical advances have given humans care-free and practically immortal lives, the only price they pay is that their worlds are run by the Protektorate. The Protektorate is an electronic government which monitors and serves humanity 24 hours a day. Built around a simple set of rules, the Protektorate is both Big Brother and utopia. On the planet Agorima, the machines running the planet have been infected with a virus that is spreading, causing death and destruction in its wake. Enter our hero, Tom McCray, Protektor, a special human agent of the Protektorate, with tremendous leeway to resolve problems just like this. McCray teams with a local female reporter and begins investigating the four most likely culprits who have the motive and the means to possibly enact such sabotage against the Protektorate. As McCray delves deeper and deeper into the mysteries of these four people, the world around him is collapsing. Fliers crash, life support systems fail, and millions of lives are at stake. The mystery itself is fairly straightforward, though Platt doesn't spend much time providing clues. Instead, we simply latch on to McCray and follow him step by step through his paces as he closes in on the culprits. Our four suspects are rather two-dimensional, and despite being able to solve the riddle, McCray comes off as rather dense. Sadly, Platt seems to care more about his cool ideas than about the people in his story, and this lack of character shows. The story itself may have worked quite well as a short story, as it was intriguing at its core, but as a novel it fails because there's not enough plot and no attention to developing characters you care about.

Rating: 5 out of 10

Evolutionary Distress

Waiting & The Power

by Frank Robinson

Reviewed by Rob Gates

Power, power, who's got the power? According to Frank Robinson, not the upstart species Homo Sapiens. The end of our existence, Robinson postulates, won't necessarily come from "out there", but from the simple slow tide of evolution. In Robinson's hands, these two tales of man vs superman are chilling and seemingly inevitable.

It's been over 40 years since the first publication of *The Power*, and it's easy to see why it's considered one of the most terrifying books of all time. The idea of the superman has long been a staple of science fiction, and in 1956 the wounds were still fresh from Hitler and his Aryan super-race. Even today, long after the era of cold war paranoia and recent war memories, Robinson's new Adam - Adam Hart - is still frighteningly believable. In *The Power*, Robinson presents us with the idea that the next evolutionary stage has begun. A small circle of academicians, running a military project to determine the limits of human endurance and performance, makes a startling discovery. One of their own, a member of the Committee, has talents far beyond normal men. It begins quietly enough, a tense scene discussing an outrageously completed sample



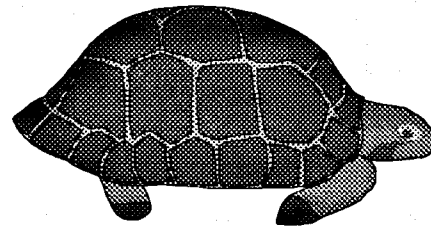
questionnaire, ridiculous accusations that this superman exists by a nearly broken man, a silly psycho-kinetic experiment, and then suddenly the paper spins on the pencil. With this simple act, the terror begins as each member of the Committee is suddenly

face-to-face with the existence of the superman. Who is it? What does this person want? We watch as slowly but surely, the Committee head Dr. Tanner is hunted while he searches for answers. There are few suspects, yet he finds himself always a step behind. One by one the list of suspects narrows as Committee members die, while Tanner's life is slowly pulled out from under him. Robinson's superman can make himself look like whatever the viewer wants to see, can read minds, affect memory and volition, and even pull muscular strings like a puppeteer. As Tanner slowly closes in on this secret enemy of the human race, the enemy slowly closes in on Tanner. Sudden twists and turns occur, suspects become friends, friends become suspects. In the end, Tanner faces the superman, and the reader is left with an ending that sends shivers down your spine.

The similarities between *The Power* and *Waiting* are easy to see. A circle of academicians, beings who can control minds, and a race between the hunter and the hunted. However, instead of an evolutionary leap forward, this time the danger comes from a different strand of genus homo, a genetic strain that has hidden itself from homo sapiens for over 30,000 years. Again we find ourselves wondering if humanity as we know it can survive. The secret race molds and pushes humanity towards self destruction, and perhaps it is a fate we deserve.

Paranoia runs rampant through both books, and Robinson does a remarkable job of drawing the reader along, and showing us just what it is the hero is going through. Atmosphere and pacing were strengths in Robinson's writing in 1956, and to these he has added a deft touch with characterization. The weak characterizations, particularly of secondary characters, were one of the biggest flaws in the earlier book. Robinson has corrected this problem and then some in *Waiting*. Every character who appears for more than a paragraph or two has motive, depth and solidity. Gone are the 2-dimensional bit players, the cardboard stereotypes, of *The Power*. Instead, Robinson has

peppered *Waiting* with rich personas, and the improvement is remarkable. Indeed, in *Waiting* we find a wealth and variety of characters, including women with motive beyond being the hero or



villain's girlfriend. Robinson has also gotten a bit more philosophical over the years. *The Power* was a significantly focused non-stop suspense book. Little time was taken to examine the right or wrong of what occurs, it simply is. While it worked well for *The Power*, *Waiting's* ethical questioning brings a subtle strength to the story. We not only see the questions of what will happen, we begin to understand the why.

Robinson, a Lammy Award winner for his novel *The Dark Beyond the Stars*, also provides a number of positive gay and lesbian characters throughout the book. Indeed, one of the moral differences between the physically peaceful other race and humanity seems to be a common acceptance of sexuality of all sorts. While not a driving force in the core story, the inclusion comes across as natural, and the characters are not merely portrayed as The Gay Character.

In the end, I'd have to say that *Waiting* is a better overall book. It shows significant development on the part of the author, and brings more depth to the man vs superman story than *The Power*. But it was not as ultimately terrifying as *The Power*, which remains as powerful a book as it was in 1956.

Ratings: *The Power*:

10 out of 10 (for pure chill factor)

6.5 out of 10 (for overall writing)

Rating: *Waiting*:

9 out of 10

**** 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, September 12th, 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.

The Gaylactic Network has the following primary goals:

- to promote science-fiction, fantasy, horror and other related genres in all forms, with particular attention to materials of interest to gay males, lesbians, and bisexuals.
- to provide forums for gay males, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends to share their interest in science-fiction, fantasy, horror and other related genres.
- to promote the presence of gay male, lesbian and bisexual elements within science-fiction, fantasy, horror and other related genres and within fandom.
- to promote science-fiction, fantasy, horror and other related genres within the gay male, lesbian and bisexual communities.

Con Calendar

by Carl, Peter, Rob and James



October 8-11, 1999 **GAYLAXICON 1999: THE 10TH GAYLAXICON**. Arlington Hilton & Towers (Arlington, VA). Guest of Honor: Diane Duane; Artist GoH: Nancy Janda; Media GoH: Jean-Pierre Dorleac. Hotel: \$99/sgl&dbl; \$119/tpl; \$139/quad. For hotel reservations, call 1-800-HILTONS (and make sure to mention Gaylaxicon). Membership: \$50 through Sept. 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 info, call 202/232-3141. Send e-mail to: info@lambdasf.org Also check out: <http://www.lambdasf.org/gaylaxicon1999/>

November 12-14, 1999 **PHILCON '99**. Adam's Mark Hotel (Philadelphia, PA). Guest of Honor: Katherine Kurtz; Artist GoH: Jill Bauman. Hotel: \$100-S/D; \$114-T/Q. Membership: \$35 through Sept. 15, 1999; \$40 through Oct. 24. (No mail-in registrations after Oct. 24th.) Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and send to: Philcon '99 Registration, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303. Email: registration@philcon.org Web: <http://www.philcon.org/>

May 26-29, 2000 **COSTUMECON 18**. Sheraton Hartford (Hartford, Conn.). The 18th annual volunteer-run convention for costumers and all who love costumes. Membership \$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.