



Lambda Sci-fi

DC Area Gaylaxians

(202) 232-3141 – Issue # 438 – September 2026

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To all our ConFABulous Friends!

We are 8 weeks out from ConFABulous 2026 at the Crowne Plaza Suites MSP Airport-Mall of America, 3 Appletree Square in Bloomington, MN on **October 2-4, 2026**. Register now at: <https://confabulous.org/wordpress/registration/>

Once again our programming space is all on the hotel's second floor, which is on the same level as the top floor of the parking garage and accessible via stairs and elevators from the main floor. We're dedicating three rooms to role-playing games so the anguished screams of the vanquished and the joyous shouts of the victors will be less disturbing to the concentration of other dedicated gamers.

Hotel – If you want to stay late gaming or start early, our room rates are still only \$129, and you can book your room now:

<https://confabulous.org/wordpress/hotel/>

Getting there & Parking – As a reminder, you can park for free whether you have a room at the hotel or not and can also get to the hotel via light rail (and a very short walk).

You'll be close to the Mall of America and the MSP airport.

Food – Once again we will provide a selection of hot and cold foods catered by the hotel throughout the convention along with breakfasts, snacks and soda offerings from our ConSuite, including the Saturday Chocolate Symposium.

Games – You'll have access to a large selection of board and card games, and players that are willing to take you on whether you're a beginner or an expert. We also have a video gaming area, and three rooms for role-playing games. If you would like to request a game or would like to run a role-playing game contact us at:

gaming@ConFABulous.org

Panels – We will offer a selection of panels of general interest to the speculative fiction and LGTBQA community. Volunteer to be on panels and send us your panel ideas at:

programming@ConFABulous.org

COVID & Masking – We are changing our mask policy for this year. Masks are NOT required, but are encouraged.

Website – Check out our website <https://confabulous.org> for the latest information on the convention.



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 LGBTQ 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 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. The next book discussion will be held on September 24, 2026.

Here are the details for the next three discussions:

Sept. 24 – *The Mercy of Gods*, by James S. A. Corey; moderator: Greg.

Oct. 22 – *The Starving Saints*, by Caitlin Starling; moderator: Rob.

Dec. 3 (combined Nov/Dec on the *first* Thursday in December) – *1632*, by Eric Flint; moderator: Jeff.

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***** September 13, 2026 Meeting *****

The next LSF meeting will be held on **Sunday, September 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 PM. Hope to see you there!



What's Inside?

Page 2: *The Last American* (book review); Minutes of the August LSF Mtg.

Page 3: Sam Neill (obituary).

Page 4: Info About LSF: DC Area Gaylaxians and Con Calendar; Humanoid Robots.

The Last American

by J.A. Mitchell

(Frederick A. Stokes & Brother,
1889)

reviewed by Carl



I don't remember where or when I picked up this little book – undoubtedly at a used bookstore somewhere. It's a tiny, palm-sized hardback published in 1889; and the title page states it is the fourth edition. I probably picked it up on a whim; and it's waited patiently in one of my numerous "to read" piles until now. As it turns out, *The Last American* is a delightful little science fiction (alternate history? future history?) story, apparently an example of the "anti-utopian disaster literature published in the late 19th century."

As stated in this very short novel's subtitle, *The Last American* purports to be "a fragment from the journal of Khan-li, Prince of Dimph-yoo-chur and Admiral of the Persian navy." The narrative is set in the year 2951, when a Persian sailing ship (whimsically named the *Zlōtuhb*) crosses the Atlantic and rediscovers the remains of the lost nation known as Merhika. The Persians explore sections of the massive abandoned ruins of Nhū-Yok and (using a map they discover) later sail down the coast to explore the ruins of Washington. In Washington, they discover a man (the titular character), his wife, and an old man.

Throughout their explorations, the Persians are regaled by legends about what is known or supposed about Merhikan culture and domestic life by Nōfūhl and Nōz-yt-ahl (historians and linguists from the Imperial College at Ispahan). They are all duly impressed by the grandeur of Merhikan architecture and monuments; but they definitely don't approve of what they hear

about the vanished Merhikan culture. They are contemptuous of the Merhikan obsession with pleasure and money, with their chief passion being to buy and sell. When they encounter "the last American" in Washington, the encounter ends tragically – coincidentally on the Fourth of July.



The Last American was written in 1889 by James Ames Mitchell, the founder and editor of *Life* magazine. The narrative includes numerous satirical and unflattering views of late 19th-century American society, particularly of the social developments Mitchell did not approve of, such as equality of the sexes and the presence of the Irish in America. And consider his sly dedication: "To the American who is more than satisfied with himself and his country, this volume is affectionately dedicated." It's interesting to note that Mitchell's story has Merhika coming to an end sometime in the 1990s, following widespread societal disruptions and frightful climatic changes that devastated the continent. Yikes! Kind'a troubling when you realize *The Last American* was written over a century ago.

I quite enjoyed reading *The Last American*, a fascinating sci-fi story that I'd never heard of before. I particularly liked the beautiful (but uncredited) illustrations throughout this little book. It was kind'a fun to parse out the various cutesy made-up "Persian" names that Mitchell uses, although I think I'd have enjoyed it more if he'd used actual Persian names. If you'd like to read *The Last American*, too, you can read it for free on the Project Gutenberg website: [The last American : a fragment from the journal of Khan-Li : Mitchell, John Ames, 1845-1918 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1845/1845-h/1845-h.htm)

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Minutes of the August LSF Meeting

taken by Scott

Upcoming Events

Rob reminded everyone about the upcoming LSF gaming party (Saturday, August 15th).

Upcoming LSF book discussion titles: James Islington's *Will of the Many* (August); James S.A. Corey's *The Mercy of Gods* (September); Caitlin Starling's *Starving Saints* (October).

A number of LSFers are travelling to Anaheim CA later this month to attend WorldCon (LACon V).



Movie News

Rob is eager to watch Warner Brothers' *End of Oak Street* and Netflix's *The Last House*.

The 10-episode adaptation of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is set to be aired on Apple+ this January.

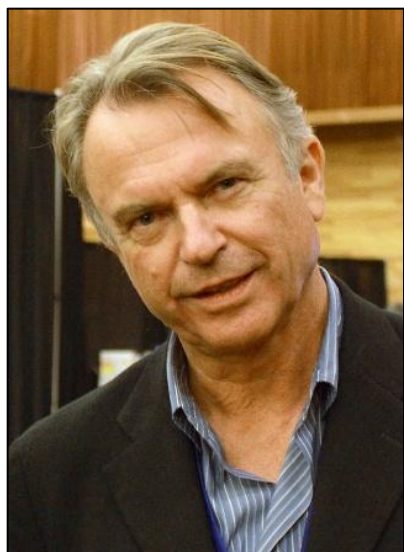
TV News

Rob reported that the first three episodes of the current season of *Star Trek: Strange New Worlds* have been nicknamed as "Princess of Mars," "Event Horizon," and "Dude, Where's My Car" because of their style and content. Note: We don't know what Scotty's tattoo is or where it is located.

Andy is watching SyFy's horror anthology *Channel Zero*. The storylines for the series are based on popular creepypasta (The term *creepypasta* is a catch-all term for any horror content posted onto the Internet.) Andy is also enjoying *Big Bang* spinoff *Stuart Fails to Save the Universe*, about comic bookstore owner Stuart Bloom, who accidentally triggers a multiverse Armageddon.

Genre TV series coming out: HBO Max's *Lanterns*, Disney+'s *Vision Quest*.

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Sam Neill
1947– 2026

Sam Neill came to international prominence with his role as Dr. Alan Grant in *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Jurassic Park III* (2001), and *Jurassic World: Dominion* (2022). There are a number of other things that you probably *don't* know about him.

(1) “Sam” isn’t his real name. He was born as Nigel John Dermot Neill in Omagh, Northern Ireland, child of a New Zealand father and an English mother. When he was 7 years old, the Neill family moved to New Zealand and settled in a Christchurch suburb. He began calling himself “Sam” at school because several other boys were named Nigel and because he felt the name Nigel was “a little effete for ... a New Zealand playground.”

(2) Neill began his acting career in stage productions at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch and the Victoria University at Wellington. His first film was a New Zealand

television film: *The City of No* (1971). His lengthy acting career has included leading roles in such films as *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), the title role in the series *Reilly, Ace of Spies* (1983), portraying Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in the historical drama *The Tudors* (2007), and playing a sadistic, corrupt policeman in the BBC series *Peaky Blinders* (2013–2014).

(3) Neill was one of the leading candidates to succeed Roger Moore in the role of James Bond, but lost out to Timothy Dalton.

(4) The *Jurassic Park* films weren’t the only F&SF films in which Neill had a significant role. In 1981, he won his first big international role, as Damien Thorn, son of the devil, in *The Final Conflict*. He starred in John Carpenter’s Lovecraftian film *In the Mouth of Madness* (1995) and the sci-fi *Event Horizon* (1997). On television, he played the role of Otto Luger in the fantasy adventure film *The Adventurer: The Curse of the Midas Box* (2014). An early American starring role was in the 1987 mini-series *Amerika*, playing a senior KGB officer leading the occupation and division of a defeated United States. He also portrayed Merlin in the mini-series *Merlin* (1998) and *Merlin’s Apprentice* (2006). He made cameo appearances in *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) and *Thor: Love and Thunder* (2022), as an actor playing Odin (alongside Luke Hemsworth and Matt Damon as actors playing Thor and Loki).

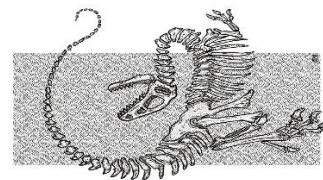
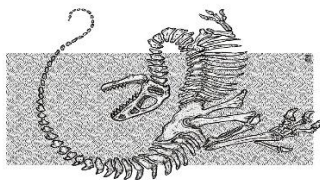
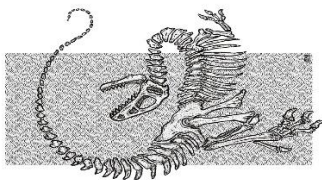
(5) Neill received nominations for three Primetime Emmy Awards and two Golden Globe Awards. He was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the 1991 Queen’s Birthday Honours, for services as an actor: *Sir Nigel John Dermott Neill*.



Sam Neill as Dr. Alan Grant

(6) When he lived in Alexandra (South Island, New Zealand), he owned a winery called Two Paddocks, consisting of a vineyard at Gibbston and two near Alexandra. He said: “I’d like the vineyard to support me but I’m afraid it is the other way round. It is not a very economic business...It is a ridiculously time-and-money-consuming business. I would not do it if it was not so satisfying and fun, and it gets me pissed once in a while.”

In March 2023, Neill revealed that he had been undergoing chemotherapy since March 2022. He had been diagnosed with stage 3 angioimmunoblastic T-cell lymphoma, a type of blood cancer, following swollen glands that were first noticed during publicity for *Jurassic World: Dominion*. He stated that the cancer was in remission, but he would require monthly chemotherapy for the rest of his life. In April 2026, Neill said that, after his chemotherapy had stopped working, he underwent CAR T-cell therapy as part of an Australian clinical trial. He said a recent scan showed no cancer in his body, and he advocated wider access to the treatment for blood cancer patients in Australia and New Zealand. Neill died in Sydney, Australia, on 13 July 2026, aged 78. He was reportedly cancer-free at the time of his death, which his family described as “sudden and unexpected”.



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

Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (LSF) is an organization for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and trans-gendered (LGBT) 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 LGBT people and their friends;
- provide forums for LGBT people and their friends to share their interest in SF/F/H;
- promote the presence of LGBT elements within SF/F/H and within fandom; and
- promote SF/F/H within the LGBT community.

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, September 13th, at Peter and Rob's home, 1425 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC**. We hope to see you there.

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

* * Con Calendar * * by Carl

October 2-4, 2025 **CONFABULOUS 2026**. Crown Plaza Suites MSP Airport—Mall of America (Bloomington MN). Hosted by North Country Gaylaxians. Gaming, discussion panels & more. Membership: \$60 for the weekend. On-line registration at: <https://confabulous.org/wordpress/registration/>
Website: <https://confabulous.org>

October 2-4, 2026 **CAPCLAVE 2026**. Rockville Hilton & Executive Meeting Center (Rockville MD). Guests of Honor: Rebecca Roanhorse, Nino Cipri. Membership: \$70 for the weekend. Website: <https://capclave.org>

Humanoid Robots

info passed along by Carl

Humanoid ("human-shaped") robots have been a Science Fiction staple for a very long time – from *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* by Karel Capek (who originated the term "robot" in 1920) to Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot* (1950) and many, many more down the decades. Now it appears that they're becoming a scientific reality.

A total of 2,056 humanoid robots from 16 countries are scheduled to compete in the 2026 World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing from August 22 to 26, representing 666 teams. (The event is more than double the size of the first edition of these games, which was held last year.) The games will take place at Beijing's National Speed Skating Oval, which was used for the 2022 Winter Olympics.

The robots will compete in 32 events, including running, football, gymnastics, weightlifting, martial arts, dancing, tug-of-war, and other challenges. The competition will also test the robots in real-world tasks found in factories

hotels, hospitals, retail stores, and emergency response situations. This year, the 100-meter race will be fully autonomous (the robots must run without human control).

The goal is to test how well humanoid robots can move, balance, coordinate, operate independently, and perform practical tasks. The idea is to help advance technology toward real-world use.

Here's a 4-minute YouTube video (from NBC) about the World Robot Conference and the associated Robot Games: [Robots in China gear up for 2nd annual World Humanoid Games](#)

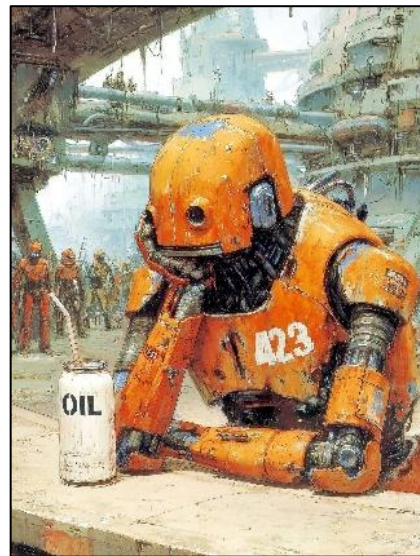
And here's a 25-minute video about the updated Atlas robot from Boston Dynamics: [Why Boston Dynamics' New Atlas is Years Ahead of Tesla](#)

And here are a couple of other YouTube videos about humanoid robots (both of which, unfortunately include short unrelated commercials):

- [9 Humanoid Robots That Are Shaping the Future of Work | Watch](#) (5 minutes)

- [The world isn't ready for what's coming with robots | Watch](#) (24 minutes).

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A humanoid robot is like any other machine. It can fluctuate between being a benefit and a hazard very rapidly.

- Philip K. Dick -
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?
(1968)

quoted in *Science Fiction Quotations*,
edited by Gary Westfahl
(Yale University Press, 2005)