

PO Box 656, Washington, DC 20044 - (202) 232-3141 - Issue #59 - Feb. 1995

### "VIDEO MADNESS" PARTY IN HONOR OF ST. VALENTINE'S DAY



Jeff and Philip have decided to host *another* "Video Madness" Party at their home in Silver Spring -- on Saturday, February 18th (the weekend after the LSF meeting). This time, the theme of the party will be "St. Valentine's Day." The address is:

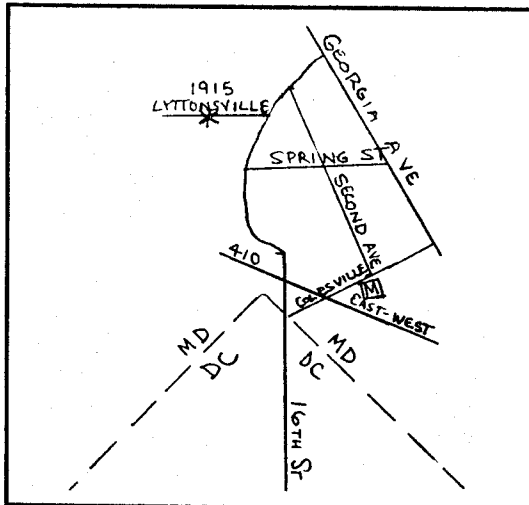
1915 Lyttonsville Rd.  
Silver Spring

Lyttonsville Road is just above the border between DC and Maryland, off 16th Street; and it's only about a 15-minute walk from the Silver Spring Metro Station (Red Line). (See map below.)

The fun begins at 6 PM. As with any "Video Madness" party, bring your favorite films and videos - but please make sure they have some connection (however tenuous) with the "St. Valentine's Day" theme. For example, one of the first films shown will be *My Bloody Valentine*. This is also, of course, a potluck dinner affair, so bring a contribution of some sort (main course, salad, munchies, dessert, soft drinks, etc.).

For additional information, call Philip & Jeff at (301) 495-7765. See you there!

ΛΨΦ



God gave [people] buttocks because sooner or later they have to walk away from us, and at least this way there's some consolation. --- Joe

(excerpted [slightly altered] from *Off the Wall at Callahan's*, by Spider Robinson)

**IN MEMORIAM  
STAN LEVENTHAL  
1952 - 1995**

Stan was a man of many talents. He was the author of *Mountain Climbing in Sheridan Square*, *The Black Marble Pool*, *A Herd of Tiny Elephants* (short stories) and *Candy Holidays* (short stories). He was the founder of Amethyst Press and a judge for the Bill Whitehead Memorial Award; and he worked as editor-in-chief of MMG Services, Inc. His short stories, articles, and reviews have appeared in such publications as *The Advocate*, *Torso*, *Outweek*, *Playguy*, *Mandate*, and *The Lambda Book Report* (to name a few).

Stan was also a frequent guest at Gaylaxicons. He brought wit and intelligence to any discussion panel (and, indeed, to any conversation) in which he participated. I truly regret that I didn't get to know him better. I had hoped to have the leisure and pleasure to do so at Gaylaxicon VI this year.

Stan was hospitalized due to a resurgent lymphoma condition around New Year's and died in the early hours of January 15th.

### WHAT'S INSIDE?

Hastily-Scribbled & Heavily-Condensed Minutes of the January Meeting (pg. 2); *Stargate* (film review - pg. 3); *In the Country of the Blind* (book review - pg. 3); Two Book Reviews by Wayne #1 (pg. 4); Report on the LSF Annual Book Exchange (pg. 4); *Star Trek: Generations* (film review - pg. 5); Information about Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians (pg. 6); Con Calendar (pg. 6)

# HASTILY-SCRIBBLED AND HEAVILY-CONDENSED MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING

by Rob

# ΛΨΦ

The first item of business was a plea from the treasurer (me) that all checks to the club should be made out to my name ("Rob Gates") until such time as the new club account is opened.

\* \* \*

Then, it was on to the regular whirlwind of articles, commentaries, and various other show-and-tell items. Highlights included: The "Worlds of Wonder" film and lecture series is presently going on at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum; each Friday evening, a different F&SF film is shown on the huge IMAX screen (admission: \$2). One of the lectures in February will be by SF author Octavia Butler. (Call the Air & Space Museum for details and to purchase tickets.) The latest information on Gaylaxicon VI was passed around (May 19-21, 1995, in Niagara Falls); and the dates for Gaylaxicon VII were announced (July 5-7, 1996, just outside Boston). Among other items discussed were: articles on Robin the Boy Wonder, Batman, Nichelle Nichols, and George Lucas; comments on recent gay-positive Marvel Comics storylines (including Northstar joining the X-Men); an SF discussion group which meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at the Borders Bookstore in Bailey's Crossroads. Book news: a new ST:DS9 novel by Melissa Scott is out in paperback (title: *Proud Helios*); and Arthur C. Clarke's last(?) "Rama" book has just been published.

\* \* \*

And, speaking of books, we then stopped everything, so that the *real* business of the meeting could begin - **THE BOOK EXCHANGE!** Carl somehow managed to pick his own number first without any major outcries of "Fix!" [Ed. note: Purely accidental, I assure you.] Everyone felt it was oh-so-appropriate that Michael C's card was "the Red Queen."

For a complete list of "who got what from whom," see Carl's article elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

\* \* \*

After a brief "snack" break, we started in on the final order of business for the meeting - a **discussion regarding the Gaylactic Network and LSF's relationship with it.** Background: In a recent article in the newsletter, Wayne III and I had proposed beginning some discussion about what the Network does and what LSF's role in those activities is; and in a follow-up article, Philip expressed some concerns regarding how difficult it seemed to be for the Network to complete tasks and about how little information he felt LSF had been given about the Network's current projects.

Carl opened the discussion by explaining the origins and history of both the Gaylactic Network and Lambda Sci-Fi: DC Area Gaylaxians, including a discussion of how LSF became part of the Network. Rob added a short bit about what the Network *is* and what LSF's financial ties/obligations to the Network are (annual dues of \$1 per member, plus a \$5 "club fee").

Then the discussion began. Wayne III, the LSF Representative to the Network Board, offered some answers to questions raised by Philip's article regarding the Network's goals and purposes and how the Network is accomplishing those goals. According to Wayne, almost all of the actual Network goals are accomplished through the actions of the individual clubs or of individual members. He also explained that the Network has been in the process of incorporating, so that it would become a legal entity and thus able to protect its "intellectual property rights" (such as the Network "triangle-and-galaxy" logo).

Discussion followed from there. Some members expressed concerns over what seemed to be a disorganized central organization in the Network; incidents such as a lack of any Network information at the most recent Worldcon ("Conadian") were mentioned. The discussion eventually turned to the way the Network Board communicates: currently all Network business is conducted through a monthly collection (*The GNAPA*) of written comments from the various chapter Representatives. This means that any official Network business can take several months (often, six months) to be discussed and acted upon. Some LSFers raised questions about this mode of communication and felt that it was highly outdated and extremely inefficient/slow. Wayne responded that the Network Board has, in the past, contemplated other modes of communication (E-mail, etc.) but has been unable to get all Representatives to agree to anything that would work faster.

Wayne also mentioned that Network Officer positions will be up for re-election at Gaylaxicon VI in Niagara Falls this year; he encouraged people to think about holding Network office. He suggested that the best way to instigate change would be "from the inside."

In the end, the attendees agreed that this discussion should continue over the next few months, so that people would have time to think about what Lambda Sci-Fi wants from the Network and what LSF can do to help the Network carry out its mission.



**IN THE COUNTRY OF  
THE BLIND**

A Novel by Michael Flynn  
(BAEN Books)  
reviewed by Carl Cipra

OK, I'm a "steam-punk junkie;" I admit it. So, when Dave Bongard told me about this novel with a storyline that deals with Babbage engines -- and includes gay characters! -- I had to track down a copy! Granted, only a few scattered chapters are actually set in Victorian times, but the plot exposition is replete with Victorian references and discussions. Suits me!

The plot itself is fairly simple: Back in the 1830s, a small group of American visionaries actually built working models of Babbage's "difference engines" (sort of proto-computers) and used them to calculate the flow of society and history - a science they termed "cliology." (Shades of Hari Seldon's "psychohistory" from the *Foundation* novels of Isaac Asimov!) Based on their calculations, the members of this secret "Babbage Society" profit from well-placed investments and carefully "influence" the course of events at pivotal points in history. In "the present day," a black real estate developer and her gay architect partner accidentally stumble upon evidence of the Society's existence and casually start looking things up in the DataNet. Now someone is trying to kill them - and anyone they've talked to! Will the Babbage Society murder them all to protect the secret of its existence?

This book is a delight for paranoids, "conspiracy theory" and "spy thriller" buffs, and devotees of Victorian social thought. It's an action/adventure story that includes a lot of fascinating discussion about socio-historical theory, free will, and the morality of manipulation. And the gay characters are handled intelligently and well. (It's interesting to note, however, that the word "homosexual" isn't even mentioned until several hundred pages into the novel.) This book is a treat; and I definitely recommend you give it a try. (It's kind'a hard to find, though. Many thanks to Dave and to Rob Gates for helping me track it down!) **ΛΨΦ**



**STARGATE**

**A Glittery Pass-Through**

a film review by Joseph Parra



Since the discovery of the pyramids in Egypt, science has speculated on the possible origins of the fascinating gods of that ancient civilization. Ever since Erich Von Daniken came forward with his book *Chariots of the Gods* several years ago, there has also been speculation that they might have been "ancient astronauts." If there were some type of porthole through time and space, it might be possible (maybe even probable) to solve this ages-old mystery. Take this theory, along with a dash of science fiction, and there (lo and behold!) - the plot of *Stargate* is made evident.

We begin in 1928 Egypt, the Gaza Strip to be exact. A Norwegian expedition there discovers an incredibly huge sort of "watchface" which dates back to before the great Pharaoh Kufu (a.k.a. Cheops, for all you Egyptian history buffs). We then come forward to the present time. A poor nebish (yet genius) professor, who happens to be the premiere authority on ancient Egypt, is recruited by a wealthy elderly woman whose father discovered the aforementioned artifact. She hopes that the young professor will be able to provide the missing answer to an incredible puzzle - so does the Federal government, especially since they are funding this strange project, whereby they hope to make contact with an ancient or alien civilization. Their hopes that there might be aliens (as in another world) are validated by the professor, when he properly deciphers some ancient symbols long thought to be hieroglyphics. Once deciphered, the "watchface" is interlocked with the symbols; and a dimensional warp opens up, linking our world to another. The military has a squad ready to go through the warp along with the professor, to make sure this new world is not a threat

to our old one. The squad's leader is prepared to take steps to ensure our world's safety...

To go any further into plot developments would spoil many of the surprises of this film - and there are a couple of doozies! The film is not hard to follow, as it is basically a sort of "Indiana Jones-meets-Star Wars" type of story, with more than a passing nod to *Lawrence of Arabia*. Writer and co-producer Dean Devlin has fashioned a movie that has all too often, type-wise, been forgotten: the sci-fi epic. While the tale is on a grand scale, not all of his writing is up to it, there being too many clichéd situations that arise. Roland Emmerich is the director of this opus; and he is not a stranger to our genre, having directed a few German sci-fi tales, among them *Moon 44* (quite slow, but visually impressive). With *Stargate*, Emmerich has kept his eye for grandness and spectacle and has handled small close scenes with dexterity. The special effects are stunning, with Jeff Okun and Frank Zitz's flying ships and the fantastic Stargate itself, along with Patrick Tatopoulos's Mastadge (no, I won't tell you what that is), being standouts.

Kurt Russell gives a creditable performance as the guilt-ridden, angst-laden Col. O'Neil, leader of the military squad. James Spader, who was last seen as an evil werewolf in *Wolf*, is marvelous as the nerd-turned-hero Prof. Daniel Jackson. Jaye Davidson (*The Crying Game*) portrays Ra, the master of this Egypt-like otherworld. His androgyny is used well, and his performance is quite lovely. All in all, *Stargate* is definitely worth seeing and, on the big screen, one gate indeed worth the price of admission. Enjoy!!

(Rating: 3 out of 4)

**ΛΨΦ**

## TWO BOOK REVIEWS BY WAYNE #1

[Ed. note: Both of the following books have been reviewed in previous issues of this newsletter: Loree Cook-Daniels reviewed *Steel Beach* in the Nov. '92 issue; and I reviewed *Burning Bright* in the Aug. '93 issue. However, Wayne #1 has his own unique "take" on each of these novels; and I thought you'd enjoy reading *his* reviews.]

*Steel Beach*, by John Varley  
(Ace Books, 1992)

From the author of *Titan*, *Wizard*, *Demon*, *Millenium*, *The Ophiuchi Hotline*, and more comes John Varley's first novel in nearly a decade. To quote from the book jacket: "skillful/beautifully told/shocking/surprising/socked with humor and wit/sheer entertainment/exuberant/colorful and convincing." Truly a non-put-downable book.

Two centuries before, the people of Earth were roused from the planet by an alien invasion, by beings who apparently came to protect Mother Earth and her other children from those same rampaging humans! Now, the people of Luna and the other communes scattered across the solar system have *everything* - the perfect Utopia: all the creature comforts; prolonged lifespans (even some of the original survivors of the invasion are still alive); instant sex changes (and/or changes of other body parts); several "Disneyworlds" for those rustic retros (caverns landscaped to recreate 19th Century Pennsylvania, Texas, and Oregon); and an almost omnipotent Central Computer.

And therein lies the problem: the Central Computer (and an increasing number of humans) are bored, restless, and suicidal.

*Steel Beach* follows Hildy, ace reporter for *The News Nipple* (the pabloid with the largest circulation on Luna), through the Bicentennial (of the Invasion), including (but not limited to) several suicides, a lot of bumming around, and major news plots trying to

## REPORT ON THE LSF ANNUAL BOOK EXCHANGE

by Carl Cipra

One of the stated purposes of the annual LSF book exchange is to allow members to find out about each other by exchanging "favorite" books. The exchange also allows participants to recommend these "favorites" to others. (It's also *fun...* but we won't go into that!) In case you couldn't make it to the exchange at the January meeting, I'd like to take this opportunity to pass along the results. That way, you'll at least get the benefits of seeing *who* likes and recommends *what...*

From Peter [received by Carl]:

*Cold Allies*, by Patricia Anthony

From Jaime [received by Scott S.]:

*Becoming Human*,  
by Valerie Freireich

AND

*Moving Mars*, by Greg Bear

From Scott S. [received by Barrett]:

*Manhattan Transfer*,  
by John E. Stith

From Kendall [received by Mike C.]:

*Year's Best Science Fiction*  
(9th Annual Edition)

From Philip [received by Joe R.]:

script for *Star Trek VI*:  
*The Undiscovered Country*

AND

the first 3rd of his own  
novel-in-progress

From Barrett [received by Kendall]:

*Get Off the Unicorn*,  
by Anne McCaffrey

From Jack [received by Jeff]:

*Another Fine Myth*, by Robert Asprin

From Randy [received by Jim C.]:

*Mostly Harmless*, by Douglas Adams  
AND

*I Sing the Body Electric*,  
by Ray Bradbury

From Joe R. [received by Jaime]:

*Path of the Hero*, by Dave Wolverton  
AND

*Tek Vengeance*, by Wm. Shatner

From Jim C. [received by Philip]:

*Santiago*, by Mike Resnick

From Carl [received by Randy]:

*Russian Spring*, by Norman Spinrad

From Rob [received by Dave B.]:

*The Phoenix Guards*,  
by Steven Brust

From Dave B. [received by Peter]:

*Startide Rising*, by David Brin

From Jeff [received by Jack]:

*The Hound and the Falcon*,  
by Judith Tarr

From Mike C. [received by Rob]:

*Outside the Dog Museum*,  
by Jonathan Carroll

ΛΨΦ

find a purpose. The Central Computer has pretty much chosen Hildy as its own "detective" in order to figure out why it and its flock are falling apart.

At 566 pages, *Steel Beach* is a long read; but every page contains hilarity, double (or more) *entendres*, beautifully detailed descriptions (such as Hildy growing up on a brontosaurus farm and knowing not to stand too close to the hind end of one and being able to describe the spectacle of mating brontos), and poignant assessments of humanity in any era.

Being a manic depressive individual myself, it was interesting to see the "syndrome" brought to such a huge

scale, especially in the poor Central Computer, who?/which?/that? has to exist in a state of nanosecond schizophrenia - *i.e.* every human has a "guardian angel" programme which cannot be used by the "government arm" of the Central Computer to incriminate that person. (And *that*, without giving too much away, seems to be the main problem.)

Suffice it to say that the system eventually crashes; but all turns out for the better.

A very, very enjoyable, hilariously twisted read.

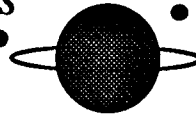
(2nd review on page 5)



## STAR TREK: GENERATIONS

(The Death of Shatner)

by Philip Wright



Here it is, folks! The movie Trekkies have been waiting for - and it crashes like a disabled spaceship. However, it's not all bad. It's a mixed bag, much like the original *Star Trek* film 15 years ago: some good, some bad, some ugly.

The best thing about this film, however, is that *Kirk is dead!* Not even a clever screenwriter could resurrect him believably. He dies at the climax of the film, and Picard buries him on a Class M planet, without any obvious "teasers" to suggest that there is more than meets the eye. All I can say is that it is too bad that they spend so much time getting him to this point, contaminating with the "Kirk dies" subplot what might have been a better film otherwise.

Much of the film deals with a mad scientist who plans to collapse stars in order to send out gravity waves to alter the course of a ribbon of time called "the Nexus." The scientist does this once, destroying an entire solar system, the *Enterprise*, and a primitive (unseen) race on one of the planets. However, Picard is caught in the Nexus and finds Kirk there also. They return to the planet where the scientist is getting ready to launch his solar probe (just moments before he destroyed everything "before"), and the two captains stop him this time.

Much of the film has a lot of the fun and excitement that fans expect from *ST:TNG*. There is fun on the holodeck, battles in space with Klingons (the Duras sisters, no less), and really great celestial effects. The basic plot, although a bit repetitive of many of the *ST:TNG* time plots, is fairly solid and interesting. The characterizations are at their usual best, although Dr. Crusher and Worf are under-used. As a first try, it is pretty good....up to a point.

Aside from Kirk, the film has a couple of really serious flaws. First of all, Picard receives bad news that sends

him into an *angst* attack where they *talk* a lot and *do* very little. Some have said "it deepens Picard's character;" however, I would rather see his character deepened through *doing* something, rather than by spending an interminable amount of time "whining" just to set up a "memory/fantasy" sequence. In fact, there is entirely too much *angst* in this film, from every quarter - the villain *kvetches*, Kirk *kvetches*, Data *kvetches*, Guinan *kvetches*. Enough! Stop *kvetching* and *do* something!

The second problem, though less damaging to the film, made no sense to the story whatsoever. Out of nowhere, Data decides to employ the emotion chip previously installed in his brother Lore; and this chip turns him into an emotional looney-tune. This strange subplot has absolutely *nothing* to do with the story about the mad scientist; *and* it is insufficiently developed to let it stand on its own. It was suggested by someone with whom I saw the film that this sets up a plot element for the next film. Well, then deal with it *then*.

The entire film lacks the quick, sharp pacing that the television show usually has and bogs down with a lot of self-indulgent "let's do it because we can" special effects. For example, the first scene in the *Enterprise D* takes place on the holodeck, where the crew initiates Worf after his recent promotion. The scene (on an 18th-century frigate) seems to go on forever, without a lot to do with the plot or anything else, other than the fact that they had this ship sitting around somewhere and wanted to use it. This scene plods its way to the next...and the next...and the read story (the mad scientist planning to collapse stars) does not get to soar at warp speed until well into the movie. The holodeck is fun, and *angst* scenes are interesting - but *good* writers could employ them in a way where they would actually relate to the plot. The tightness

## TWO BOOK REVIEWS

BY WAYNE #1

continued from page 4

*Burning Bright*, by Melissa Scott  
(TOR Books, 1993)

Georgeous; fabulously colorful; seething with plot, plot, and counterplot; all interlaced along the canal districts of a far-distant city on a free planet stuck between the human Republic and an alien Empire; Jules Verne interspersed with cyber-quick role-playing games and pre-Storm festing. A grand, yet truly blissful, adventure, wonderfully woven by a *Maestra d'Genre*. Many thanks to Gaylaxicon V for the pleasure of the introduction!

ΛΨΦ

of pacing and close relationship of plot and character that characterize the TV stories is not there.

Then there is the most egregious flaw - the sloppy "tacked on" look of Kirk and the other "original" characters (Scotty and Chekov). It's as if they made the *ST:TNG* film and then decided to add the "original" crewfolk to it, only refilming a couple of scenes to mix Kirk more firmly into the movie. The old-timers appear tacked on and flap in the wind like old underwear on a clothesline. If Kirk hadn't appeared in the story, it would not have made a whit of difference. This film *did* manage to kill off Kirk, but at a very high price: the integrity of the plot.

I think that this film has a lot more to offer than *Interview with the Vampire* (which I reviewed in last month's newsletter); however, it's really not worth a two-hour wait in line. Go see it, if for nothing more than to experience the "big" *Enterprise* special effect toward the end. And just hope that now, since Kirk is dead, the rest of the *Star Trek* movies will be a lot better. For the first film voyage out, the *Enterprise D* is good, but far from great.

Overall grade: B-

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 \$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, February 12th, 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.



March 31-April 2, 1995 **TECHNICON 12**: Virginia Tech Campus (Blacksburg, VA). Guests: Melissa Scott, Don Sakers, Tom Atkinson, Christie Golden, Mike Allen, Dave & Sue McCoy. Cost: \$15 until 2/15/95; \$20 at door. 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 Conman. 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.

