



LAMBDA SCI-FI



DC Area Gaylaxians

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

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 October meeting will be held at the

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MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY 1930 - 1999



MZB began her writing career in 1954 and has made significant contributions to both science fiction and gay/lesbian literature. Her works include such best-selling novels as *The Catch Trap*, *The Mists of Avalon*, and *The Firebrand*; and she will, of course, always be remembered for the novels and short stories comprising her popular "Darkover" series. Marion died on Sept. 25th, following a heart attack.

October Surprise!!! Party Instead of Meeting!



This month, our regular "second Sunday" schedule would conflict with Gaylaxicon 1999, so we've decided to cancel the October LSF meeting. Instead, we're going to hold a celebratory post-Gaylaxicon **video party on Saturday, October 16** (the weekend *after* Gaylaxicon). After all the hard work we put into Gaylaxicon, it'll be time for a little R&R! So, come one, come all, and join in the celebration! Here are the details:

Where and When

Our host will be Julian (cheers, cheers, bravo!); and the party will be held at his home in **Georgetown**, the venue for quite a number of previous LSF video parties. It's located at **1928 37th St., NW**, several blocks west of Wisconsin Ave. The party will begin at **3:00 PM** and last until... well, until it's over.

What to Bring

As with previous Lambda Sci-Fi video parties, bring along your favorite genre videos (science fiction, fantasy, horror). Attendees will vote on which videos to watch; and there'll be different "tracks" of programming shown on each of several screens throughout the house.

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FINAL WARNING!!! IT'S ALMOST HERE!!!

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



www.lambdasf.orggaylaxicon1999

Sign up now! Don't miss out on all the fun! For details, see back page; or go to:

October LSF Meeting?

The October Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be pre-empted by a video/potluck party, scheduled for Saturday, October 16th, at Julian's home in Georgetown. (For details, see article beginning on this page.) Hope to see you there!

WHAT'S INSIDE?

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October Party

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The party will include the traditional pot-luck pig-out, so bring along something scrumptious to eat. We're not pre-assigning categories of what food to bring, so everyone should just bring something from one (or more) of the following "basic food groups": appetizers (veggies, chips, etc.); a main course (enough to serve at least 4-5 people); dessert (of course!); non-alcoholic drinks (both diet and regular).

How to Get There

By Metrorail/Metrobus: Take the Red line to Dupont Circle. Exit at either side of the station; then head for the part of "P" Street west of the Circle. (That's the part with all the bars, restaurants, etc.) Go to the 2nd Metrobus shelter from the Circle (across the street from Oasis Deli and Pan Asian Restaurant) - NOT the first one, which is in front of the old public restrooms. Take the D2 Metrobus, which will stop just up the street from Julian's house. Or, you can take the D4 and get off at R & 37th streets (about 5 blocks from Julian's). For the bus schedule, call Metro information at (202) 637-7000.

Driving, from the North: Going south on Wisconsin (from the direction of National Cathedral), you'll pass Mass. Ave. Just after Calvert St., 37th St. splits off to the right from Wisconsin (as Wisconsin swerves to the left). In about a half mile, 37th St. passes through Whitehaven Park and intersects White Haven Parkway. Julian's place is just beyond White Haven Parkway, on your right.

Driving, from the South: Going north on Wisconsin (from the direction of "M" St.), you'll need to take a left on some street to get to 37th St. If you turn left on Reservoir Rd. or on "R" St., you'll need to turn right on 37th St., and Julian's place will be a ways on your left. If you go further up Wisconsin to White Haven Parkway (near the "social Safeway"), you'll turn left on White Haven Pkwy. and then left again on 37th St. Julian's home will be on your right.

Where to Park: Your best bet for parking is either along White Haven Parkway or along "T" St. ΛΨΦ

"Tunnel Under the World"

(a short story by Frederik Pohl)

a few words by Carl Cipra



As you may (or may not) remember, in the August LSF newsletter, I reviewed/compared the recent cyberspace film *The 13th Floor* and the novel it was based on, *Simulacron-3* by Daniel F. Galouye. In the article ("Just How Old Is Cyberspace?"), I marveled at the fact that *Simulacron-3* is a fully-realized cyberspace novel, vintage 1964 (!!)-almost 20 years *before* the development of the cyberspace terminology we're now familiar with! And, in closing, I quoted a passage from *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, which states that *Simulacron-3* is "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."

Well, TA DA! At this year's NASFiC (Anaheim, Aug. 26-29), I managed to locate a used 1969 edition of *Alternating Currents*, a Ballantine paperback collection of Pohl stories - including "Tunnel Under the World." I just thought I'd let you know what I found out.

"Tunnel" first appeared in a 1954 issue of *Galaxy Science Fiction*; and suffice it to say that the "cyberspace trail" does *not* extend from *Simulacron-*

3 back to the Pohl story. Yes, both the Galouye novel and the Pohl story deal with "constructed worlds designed for market research" - and both of them are typical "concept-stories" (*i.e.* long on clever exploration of SF ideas and short on exploration of character). Unlike *Simulacron-3*, however, the action in "Tunnel Under the World" does not take place inside a computer simulation. It's all done with robots in "Tunnel." That's not to say, however, that Pohl's story is more simplistic or less worthy than Galouye's novel. Pohl employs some very clever SF-based twists and turns in his exploration of the "what is reality?" conundrum. In my opinion, "Tunnel Under the World" comes across like an enjoyable classic *Twilight Zone* episode; and I'm certainly glad I went to the trouble to track it down.

By the by, *Alternating Currents* also includes a number of other wonderful Pohl stories. For instance, there's this wry, witty little story entitled "What to Do Until the Analyst Comes". I couldn't help but wonder if the "Kids in the Hall" comedy troop knew about this one when they wrote *Brain Candy*. (But we won't go into that now...)

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Book Discussion Group

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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

Here are the books to be discussed at the next couple of meetings:

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

Thursday, Dec. 2nd - *Was*, by Geoff Ryman; facilitator to be determined. (Please note date change. This is a combined Nov/Dec session.)

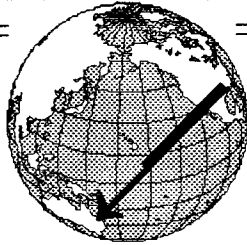
Note: Books are usually available at Lammas Women's Books & More (on 17th St., in the Dupont Circle area). The October book can be ordered through LSF's special arrangement with Meisha Merlin Publishers. (Contact Rob for order forms.)

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Notes from AussieCon 3

by Barrett Brick



Over 1700 people from across the globe came to Melbourne, Australia for AussieCon 3, the 57th World Science Fiction Convention, held September 2-6. Though smaller than the average WorldCon, this was the largest WorldCon ever held in Australia. Of course, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered fandom was well represented at the con.

On the first afternoon (Thursday, September 2), one of the panels addressed questions of "SF and Sexuality." One of the interesting issues brought up was the difficulty translators from certain cultures have in handling stories about other-than-heterosexual characters. A similar point was generally made at a later panel on "SF Around the World": to be successful and fair to an author, a translator must be able to translate culture as well as language.

Away from the convention that evening, at the Hares & Hyenas bookstore – the local Lesbian and Gay bookstore – Lawrence Schimel, one of the convention's guest authors, gave a reading of one of his recent works. Because of this reading, the panel on "Alternative Science Fiction/Alternative Sexuality" – originally scheduled for late Thursday – was moved to Saturday. This worked out well, as it allowed more time to publicize the panel, including talking it around at a Gay Fandom party held on Friday night, which several dozen people attended. Of course, flyers for Gaylaxicon 1999 and Lambda Sci-Fi were available at the party, as were copies of LSF's Recommended Reading List.

The "Alternative SF" panel, scheduled for a room that could hold perhaps 40 people comfortably, attracted over 75; and many more wanted to attend but couldn't get in. The panelists included: Lawrence Schimel and Kerry Greenwood, authors; Geoff Allshorn and Miriam English, from Spaced Out (Melbourne's new Gay & Lesbian SF fan group); Jan Cambell, editor of the magazine *Lesbiana*; and Myrna, a slash fiction writer. Questions of how alternative sexualities are treated in the genre,

whether the genre is inherently comfortable for explorations of alternative sexualities, the impact of changing roles for women on gender roles in general, and many other concepts were discussed with enthusiasm. The Gaylaxicon flyers and the copies of LSF's reading list that I brought with me were very much appreciated and snapped up rather quickly!

Other panels of particular interest at AussieCon 3 included one on "Slash! Fiction" (which followed the "Alternative SF" panel) and one on "SF & Social Issues: The Law and Difference" (held on Sunday afternoon). In addition, the cover art for the program book was designed by Nick Stathopoulos, an Australian Gay artist who participated in a number of panels and who was one of the artists nominated for a Hugo this year. (Alas, he did not win; nor did Ellen Klages' story "Time Gypsy" from the anthology *Bending the Landscape: Science Fiction*.) Many panels and presentations, of course, focused on Australia's and New Zealand's contributions to the genre in books, magazines, television, and film; and I picked up lots of good local reading for the long flight home.

The group Spaced Out was having its monthly meeting after the con (Wednesday, September 8) at a restaurant near Hares & Hyenas; and they invited me to attend. Somewhat over a dozen people showed up. A visitor from South Africa and I were the only non-locals. A good general discussion of the con took place over dinner; and I spoke to the group about Gaylaxicon 1999, the Gaylactic Network, Lambda Sci-Fi, and Gay fandom in general. The members of Spaced Out are eager to keep in touch with us and with the Network; and their enthusiasm will be a great addition to our global community.

Melbourne and its environs are fascinating in general. I explored a number of local bookstores (many of which were in the Dealer's Room at the

The "No Big Business" Minutes of the September LSF Meeting

by Rob Gates

Unlike our last few meetings, there were no earth-shattering issues to discuss at the September LSF meeting. Our biggest order of business was to make plans for our October meeting – which was cancelled due to Gaylaxicon and replaced with a "Post-Gaylaxicon/Unwind/Video Madness" Party at Julian's (Saturday, October 16th beginning at 3PM). We also started the ball rolling for our now-annual New Year's Eve "Video Madness" Party, which will take place this year at the home of Peter and Rob (with Julian as a special co-host). More details on that later! Rob also delivered books that people had ordered through us from Meisha Merlin Publishing.

It was then on to the more social part of our meeting. We did our usual name circle; then Rob led off by passing around some miscellanea from the PO Box and reading a letter from a lesbian Xena fan looking for the secret Xena fandom underground. Rob also mentioned a couple of events happening at museums around town, including an animé film series and a writing seminar taking place in October at the Smithsonian.

In TV news, season premieres are upon us, with many new and returning series. Some special news included: word on a "Dragonriders of Pern" animated series premiering in 2001; Gene Roddenberry's *Andromeda* premiering in 2000 (with Kevin Sorbo);

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con), visited Phillip Island and its Fairy Penguins, took in an Australian Football League finals match at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, went to Melbourne's new planetarium (opened only a couple of weeks previously), and attended some very good local theatre. Seeing the southern stars again was a treat as well! Given the timing of the con, I stayed on for a few days for Rosh Hashana before flying home, wishing only for the opportunity to return to Australia soon!

ΛΨΦ



Cube, I Still Know What You Did Last Summer in That Wonderful Ice Cream Suit from Dusk to Dawn 2!! (Part 1)

video reviews by Joseph Parra



[Ed. Note: This article turned out to be so long that I've been forced to "serialize" it between this month's issue and next month's. Frankly, I think it makes the article's title all the funnier!]

Yes, I know - what awful puns, but not too shabby for short notice!

Video has become a vast source of the esoteric within the mainstream. Not too long ago, one had to go to art cinemas and grind houses to find films that were too "way out" for the average film-goer. Today, with the advent of the various video varieties (tape, disc, DVD), one need not be concerned if one does not live near a major metropolis in order to get one's fill of such offbeat fare, be it good or bad (though, most often, it is unfortunately the latter). Let us see what's in the video machine today...

* * *



Canada has, for the last 10 or more years, been home to a number of US productions. The reasons for this are primarily financial. It is considerably cheaper to do a film or TV production in Canada than in America. Unfortunately for motion pictures, the TV output has always been classier. The most unfortunate of all, however, is the made-for-video movie. Ofttimes, these are co-productions between an American production company and either a Canadian production company or a bank. Such is the case with *Cube*. This film has the best of intentions, truly. Low-budget, social-conscious science fiction has the awkward habit of coming off preachy and artsy-fartsy; and this film is no exception. Seven people (sometimes eight) find themselves trapped in a very bizarre structure which seems to be a series of interlocking cubical rooms, some of which contain lethal devices, others benign or simply nothing. The object of the characters in the film is to try to reach the

outside world - if it still exists. If this sounds like a variation on a video game, it plays that way, too. The characters are stock figures for this sort of thing, which is rather sad because, if the writers had used a smidgeon more imagination, they might have escaped the what-becomes-obvious traps. There is also the familiarity with this type of subject matter in classic TV shows like *The Twilight Zone*. If we are to be intrigued and entertained by a tale such as this, it must not be hackneyed. The one marvelous feature about the film - and it really is lovely - is the incredible structure of the cube and its sub-cubes. Thanks to some ingenious CGI work and some incredible craftsmanship, the look of the film belies its low-budget origins. Trimark Pictures is to be commended for picking up this film - and apparently part of the tab as well. They really should have looked at it and re-shot some of it though, to give the entire film a polished look. As is, it is a pretty film to look at, but it has the appearance of a work-in-progress rather than that of a professional movie.

* * *

I really should have known better. I have no one to blame for watching Mandalay/Columbia's *I Still Know What You Did Last Summer* but myself. If the original was a "been there, done that" affair, this one is the one where we add the "got the T-shirt" part of the phrase. Jennifer Love Hewitt, Freddie Prinze Jr., and Muse Watson return for this second film, which could be subtitled *Gorton's Gets Revenge 2!* The producers throw in Brandy (of *Mo'Nisha* fame), Mekhi Phifer, and Jeffrey Combs (of umpteen Full Moon productions, such as *The Re-Animator* and *Doctor Mordred*) to make the slicing and dicing a bit more palatable. I really must applaud the performers in this mess, though. How many of them got through these proceedings with a straight face is beyond me. Trey Callaway has scripted



a story in which the Hewitt character from the first film is attending summer school in *another* part of California, having gone there because of her nightmares about the mad fisherman and his grappling hook of horror. Her roommate (Brandy) has just won an all-expenses-paid trip to a remote Caribbean island at the end of the season, when practically no one else is there. They bring along two boyfriends for company and meet a few oddball characters. The slicing and dicing then comes and goes, with in-between scenes of pathos and drama worthy of the Three Stooges. In fact, watching one of the Three Stooges' haunted house mystery shorts (which last about 15 minutes) is decidedly preferable to this long-winded (100 minutes) story. Danny Cannon's direction is very reminiscent of music video imagery. (Any of you music vid junkies out there, is this his background?) I'm sure this made money at the box office, and I know it's doing well in the video stores, as it plays to the youth market; but I checked with the teens who work at Blockbuster and they said something remarkable that I shall pass along: "I wish these movie people would stop thinking we're stupid just because we're young!" 'Nuff said!

Ratings:

Cube - 1 (for the FX) out of a possible 4

I Still Know What You Did Last Summer - 1 out of a possible 4

[Ed. Note: Tune in next month for the continuation of this lengthy article — Joe's reviews of *From Dusk Till Dawn 2: Texas Blood Money* and *The Wonderful Ice-Cream Suit*.] ΛΨΦ

The trouble with most of us
is that we know too much
that ain't so.

-- Mark Twain--

September LSF Meeting

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Showtime's upcoming sci-fi spinoff cable channel called Showtime Beyond; and a new cartoon that's just premiering called *Big Guy & Rusty the Boy Robot*.

In movie news, the new Stephen King big-screener, *The Green Mile*, is opening on December 17th and is getting a lot of buzz. *The Blair Witch Project* will be released on DVD and VHS, and will include "newly discovered footage". *Sleepy Hollow* trailers are producing quite a bit of anticipation, and rumor has it the monster is really being done as a monster. While the slow release of casting news continues to increase the buzz about the upcoming "Lord of the Rings" movies, there may be more websites devoted to this still-not-in-production feature than for almost any movie yet released...

In toy and game news, furby babies are coming - enough said. It was just recently announced that Hasbro has purchased Wizards of the Coast (who recently bought TSR) - fallout is likely pending. *Buffey the Vampire Slayer* figures are out on the shelves, with more figures coming. The same is true of some new *Lord of the Rings* figures (*not* based on the movie, but they look cool). New toys are also out or on their way for Planet of the Apes, Yellow Submarine, and Iron Giant (which look really cool). Tim also passed around a number of toy and anime magazines.

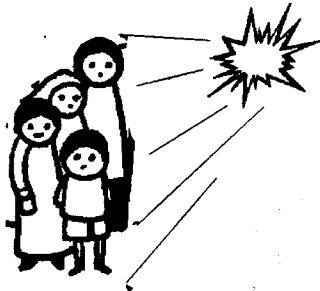
In "reality and beyond" news - Samuel Delany has moved to Niagara Falls for an academic year. The Gay Nielsen's are coming... There was lukewarm (at best) interest in the Maryland Renfest this year. Two exhibits are open in local museums that should be checked out - Microbes and an IMAX film, *Mysteries of Ancient Egypt*.

Finally, Carl passed around a few items that had everyone in attendance in stitches. What you may ask could initiate gut wrenching laughter from a room full of LSFers? Why, it was "Mormon Action Figures"! Yes, indeed, great heroes of Mormon and Biblical lore, ready to slay the demons of paganism and heresy! See what you missed?!

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The Children Star by Joan Slonczewski

a short review by Rob Gates



Joan Slonczewski has been on my "to read" list for many years. With her upcoming attendance at Gaylaxicon, I thought it was time to move her up to the top of the list - and, boy, was I glad I did. Slonczewski, a scientist and academician by day, proves that thought-provoking science can indeed result in thought-provoking social science fiction.

The book takes place on and around the planet Prokaryon, where all life forms exhibit a fascinating triplex DNA structure and exist in round/toroid forms. The laws of Slonczewski's society prohibit terraforming due to its destruction of local species. But time may be running out for Prokaryon. The cost to adapt humans and others to life on Prokaryon is high, and overpopulation and a devastating plague are increasing the need for living space. Prokaryon, despite its beautiful and mysteriously ordered landscapes does not appear to be home to any intelligent life. A number of small colonies exist on the planet, including one run as an orphanage by a benign religious order. When a greedy and immortal entrepreneur begins machinations to own Prokaryon,

all hell breaks loose. The sudden outbreak of illness among those attempting to leave Prokaryon space (and, indeed, the illness of two members of a powerful immortal race) set in motion a race between those attempting to save Prokaryon and those who wish to terraform it by wiping it clean. The only hope to save the planet is to discover the intelligent life that must clearly exist there and to learn to communicate with it.

The existence and nature of the intelligent life on Prokaryon is a powerful mystery, so I can't say much more than that. However, Slonczewski's handling of this life form is remarkably potent and a damned fine piece of "alien thinking". Yet, even these aliens are people, with morals and ethics, myths and legends, and a drive to understand their universe. It's here, in the cross section of human and alien, that Slonczewski shines. The characters and relationships she develops are real; there's nothing two-dimensional about them. Despite it being a first contact story of sorts, it really explores what it means to be (for lack of a better word) human.

As with all of her books, relationships of all sorts are a part of her society - same sex, inter-species, you name it. All in all, an excellent read with intriguing science, thought-provoking implications, and heartfelt emotion. Though the early parts of the book may seem slow, they balance out the frenetic pace of the later parts of the book quite well.

Rating:

9.5 out of 10

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Since the start of her writing career in 1954, Bradley has consistently included substantial homosexual elements in her work, and all her writings deserve close examination. Her strong belief in freedom and tolerance is evidenced throughout her work. Bradley was an early contributor to the *Ladder*, and under various pseudonyms she wrote several lesbian paperback novels during the 1960s... Bradley has also contributed to the *Mattachine Review*, the *International Journal of Greek Love*, *WomanSpirit, Ms.*, and *Sinister Wisdom*. Her non-science-fiction novel *The Catch Trap* is of major gay male interest.

excerpted from

*Uranian Worlds: A Guide to Alternative Sexuality
in Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror*, 2nd edition
by Eric Garber and Lyn Paley
(G.K. Hall & Co., Boston, Mass., 1990)

**** 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. **However, for the month of October, the regular Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be pre-empted by a special video/potluck party to be held on Saturday, October 16th, at Julian's Georgetown home.** (For details, see article beginning on page 1 of this issue.) 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: The official Gaylaxicon room block closed on Sept. 8th. **IF there are any rooms available, you'll end up paying full price.** Membership: \$60 at the door. (No mail-in registrations after Sept. 1, 1999.) 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: \$40 through Oct. 24 (no mail-in registrations after Oct. 24th.); \$45 at the door. 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.

