



LAMBDA SCI-FI

DC Area Gaylaxians

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Saturday Afternoon at the Movies

(Aug. 5th Fundraiser for
Gaylaxicon 2000)

Think back to 1999. Remember when LSF ran some nifty fund-raiser video events out in Gaithersburg at The Game Edge? Well, they were so successful that we've decided to do another one - this time as a fund-raiser for Gaylaxicon 2000. What a deal! You'll be able to have some fun AND, at the same time, help raise funds for this year's Gaylaxicon!

As a reminder, The Game Edge is a videogame store with a large-screen theater which they rent out to local clubs. (Yes, the folks at The Game Edge have got all the legal angles covered.) Unlike their old store, the NEW place (see directions below) does *not* have comfy theater-style seats with drink-holders - but we should still be able to enjoy ourselves!

Here are the details:

When: Saturday, August 5th (2 - 6 PM).

Theme: "Enter the Barbarians!" We'll be showing: *The Whole Wide World* (a feature film on the life and tragic death of Robert E. Howard, Conan's creator - starring Vincent D'Onofrio); *Conan the Barbarian* (yes, the one with AH-nold!); and some cyberpunk clips.

Cost: \$10. For that paltry sum, you'll get (besides the movies) a
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LSF Museum Outings Aug. 12 & 26

For more information on either of the following outings, please contact Michael C. at 301-589-7725.

August 12: THE WIZARD OF OZ: AN AMERICAN FAIRY TALE at the Library of Congress. This exhibit displays memorabilia of the novel's publication, its sequels, and the films it inspired. After seeing that, we can have lunch and/or see the VIKINGS exhibit at the Natural History Museum. Admission for both exhibits is free. When/where: Meet at 10:00 AM at the entrance to the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress (First St. SE, between Independence Ave. and Capitol St. South). Metro is recommended - use either the Red Line to Union Station, or the Blue/Orange Lines to Capitol South Station.

August 26: ANGELS AND OTHER ALIENS at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore. This museum features work by self-taught and "outsider" artists. This particular exhibit features artists' visions of creatures like mermaids, angels, and other magical creatures, as well as aliens and UFOs. Included is a series of paintings by a UFO abductee, illustrating her experiences. Admission is \$6. Lunch after; then we are free to explore Baltimore further. When/where: Meet at 10:00 AM at the museum's entrance.



Those interested in car-pooling can meet at the Greenbelt Metro Station at 9:00 AM. NOTE: If you're planning on carpooling, you'll definitely need to arrange for someone to pick you up at the Metro Station and ferry you to the museum.

Directions: The museum is located at 800 Key Highway, on Baltimore's Inner Harbor. From Washington, take I-95 North to Exit 55. Make a left at the bottom of the exit ramp onto Key Highway. The museum is 1½ miles ahead, at the corner of Key and Covington.

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Next LSF Meeting: August 13th

The next Lambda Sci-Fi meeting will be held on Sunday, July 9th, at James Crutchfield's apartment: 1414 17th St., NW (near Dupont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting. **Remember:** There are two proposals that will be voted on at the meeting. (For details, see the article on the "July LSF Minutes" -- starting on page 2 of this issue.)

The social meeting will begin at 2:00 PM. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks if you can.

See you there!

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Grave Passions

**(Badboy Press \$6.50;
various authors)**

**"Give us a bloody kiss!"
a book review
by Joseph Parra**

"Hey, babe, take a walk on the wild side," crooned Lou Reed several years ago. Now, gay-rotica meets the supernatural in *Grave Passions*, a collection of 18 stories about life on the *really* wild side.

In Simon Shepherd's "My Possession", an S&M enthusiast is paid what might be called the highest compliment by some. Told in the first person, this story becomes obvious and redundant in no time. It is severely padded and would have made its point at about half the length. Insanity rears its ugly head in M. Christian's "Echoes". In Noel Ambery II's "Why I Killed Him", insanity rises once again, but with tongue-in-cheek; and Bryce J. Tache's "Refrain" tries to mask its condition none too well. However, just plain nuts is Jon-Carl Lewis' "Trio by Moonlight", telling of passions and sacrifices.

Ghosts have their way with people, too! Poppy Z. Brite's "Entertaining Mr. Orton" tells the amusing tale of "semi-possession" of an obscure playwright by the famed titular entity. Felice Picano's "Hunter" warns of the dangers of obsessive love re: ghosts and short story writing. Thomas S. Roche's "Have I Sinned Against You?" weaves a similar tale in the art world, albeit a bit more sadistically. Gary Bowen's "Hungry Ghost" is actually an upbeat tale in a similar vein; but Scott O'Hara's jack-off story "Spirits" never comes. M. Christian's "Matches" cautions about all kinds of fires.

Monsters get to have their say, also. Geoff Huntington's "The Spark" tells of one scared queen fighting a childhood demon for his husband and his life. "The Black Dog" by Perry Brass is a violent tale of retribution and revenge via accidental lycanthropy. (Note that I didn't say werewolfry.) It is well-told and tight. Kenneth Harrison's "A Night in the Life" tells of vampiric cross-and-double-cross. Laurence Schimmel's "The Farrier and the Elves" is an

The Unseasonably Cool Minutes of the July LSF Meeting

by Rob

As always, we started with our seemingly constant avalanche of business.

Michael reminded everyone of the "Coffee Can o' Event Ideas," where anyone can suggest an event for future consideration without the pressure of being expected to spearhead it if the group gives a thumbs-up. There are no guarantees; and idea-suggestors should keep in mind our no-alcohol policy and should avoid ideas that are overtly sexual in nature. Anyone with an LSF Event idea can pass it along to Michael Cornett (email: stenbock@aol.com).

Jack gave an update on planning for Gaylaxicon 2000: plans are going well, and there are new Con-Comm members. He's still looking for someone to run the gaming aspects of the convention. Please contact him (email: jackfrost@his.com) if you're interested. In addition, anyone with Programming ideas of any sort for Gaylaxicon should contact Rob (my email: rgates@wavelengthsonline.com).

Nan and Kay reminded everyone about the anime' fest on July 15th,

interesting take on the Grimm's fairy tale.

Humor rounds things off in Geoff Huntington's "Digging Up Graves", which includes grave robbing and coming out of the closet with a spiritual sounding board. Jim Merritt's "Curse of the Queerwolf" is a funny tale of gay-canthropy -- *not* related to the infamous film of the same name.

Finally, the editor's own hilarious shorty, "The Disappearance of Hugo", could easily work in an "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" mystery magazine.

Needless to say, each of these stories tells its tale as erotically as possible — some to great effect; others clearly as an afterthought. In summation, *Grave Passions* proves that, no matter what, love to lust to dust, the inevitable end will lead to (or into) the inevitable end. For the most part, enjoy!

Rating: 2½ out of a possible 4

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which would include an X-Men movie outing.

Peter handed out the new/updated LSF Membership Directories to those members in attendance; and Rob gave a Treasurer's report. We have over \$3200 in the bank now, having finally received our portion of Gaylaxicon 1999 profits (about \$2100).

Nan brought up an issue to consider for the future - a *Rocky Horror Picture Show* fan group in Atlanta is apparently using the name Lambda Psi-Phi, with the same Greek letter symbols we use. She suggested we may want to consider tablemarking/trademarking our name/logo - and we decided to discuss it some more at a future meeting.

In Network news, Kay asked LSF to vote on whether it was OK for her to approve grammar changes on some recently-passed proposals. She was given a green light. The Network Treasurer has offered to resign; and anyone interested in the position is asked to talk to Kay (her email: alison.plays@zzapp.org). We also voted to approve the Golden Gate Gaylaxian request to be returned to Full Affiliate Status in the Network. (The proposal had been made last month and posted in our newsletter, so we were able to vote.)

Finally, Jack raised the issue of defining what authority LSF's Network Rep has. He suggested that we should allow Kay to vote on Network issues without coming to the club first, and he made the following formal proposal (to be voted on at the August meeting):

"I would like us to give the LSF Network Rep free rein to negotiate and vote on the Network Charter Business, as long as the Rep stays within guidelines we (LSF) give her."

Some discussion ensued regarding the Network Charter, its legal nature in relation to LSF, and LSF's relationship with the Network. Because of the potentially legally-binding nature of the Network Charter on LSF

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There and Back Again
 by Max Merriwell/Pat Murphy
 (New York: Tor, 1999)
 a review by Colleen R. Cahill



Fans of J.R.R. Tolkien will immediately recognize the title of this work as a bow to *The Hobbit*; and it is very appropriate. This is a retelling of *The Hobbit*, but a new and shiny *Hobbit*.

Instead of a fantasy, with magic, wizards and dragons, *There and Back Again* is a space opera, with rockets, clones, and black holes. In the far future, Bailey Beldon finds a message pod addressed to the Farr, a powerful and wealthy clone family. Bailey is a Norbit, one of a group of humans who reside in the asteroid belt in Earth's solar system, living off water, metals and minerals mined from the surrounding rocks.

The origins of "Norbit" has several explanations, including that the term is a slurred form of "in orbit". Like most Norbits, Bailey lives in an asteroid with a cylindrical hole drilled in it (shades of a Hobbit hole) and, also like most Norbits, he enjoys his home comforts, plenty of food, a steady routine, and occasional visits from comfortable friends. This all ends years after he picked up the message pod, which he dutifully informed the Farr family of and promptly forgot; he receives a visit from Gitana, an adventurer who replaced one eye with a cybernetic interface for her ship, the Jabberwock. The ship name hints to the second literary work Murphy salutes, Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark". Gitana is mysterious, intimidating, and always pops up just at the right moment.

The Farr clones eventually show up (like the dwarves, in pairs); and once the message pod is played, it is learned that a Snark has been found. Snarks are artifacts of a vanished civilization, referred to as the Old Ones. (This makes me think of Lovecraft.) The Farr have made a fortune by mapping wormholes (one-way portals that allow rapid movement through the galaxy), believed to be created by the Old Ones. With the exception of those

charted by the Farr Clone, wormholes lead to unknown destinations; and since the trip might take you hundreds of lightyears away from civilization, few are foolhardy enough to just dive in. The message pod tells of the ultimate Snark, suspected to be a map to all the wormholes.

Gitana, a practitioner of *jen chi*, a sort *feng shui* for group dynamics, chooses Bailey as an addition to the Farr team. After some reluctance and argument on the part of the Farr, Bailey is in and part of the adventure.

Hopefully, even my poor description reminds you of *The Hobbit*. Murphy does not attempt Tolkien's use of language, which works much better with her story line. Part of the fascination of this book is to see Tolkien's work with new ideas and twists. As you read, you begin to wonder how Murphy will handle various story points, such as the ring, Gollum, and Bilbo's weapon, Sting. Will there be giant spiders; and what about the goblins? All are handled in a manner that is gently familiar and yet new. Like the references to Tolkien's and Lewis' works, the humor in this book is subtle; and although the plot and characters are familiar, they are also Murphy's own and unique from those that inspired them.

If you have read *The Hobbit* and enjoyed it, I highly recommend this work; if you have not, read this anyway -- it is great fun.

And to find out more about Max Merriwell, check out:

<http://www.brazenhussies.net/murphy/WhoisMax.html>

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**Saturday Afternoon
 at the Movies**
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soft drink (Coke, Pepsi, Root Beer, diet or regular), M&M's (plain or peanut), and popcorn. (Heck! You've probably spent more than that on one book or on one trip to the movies!)

Where: The "NEW" Game Edge. Yes, they've moved since we were there last. They're still in Gaithersburg - just not in the same place. The Game Edge is now located at 122 Market Street, Gaithersburg (ph # 301-527-0090). The new location (like the old one) is *not* Metro-accessible. The nearest Metro station is Shady Grove; but, if you're planning on getting there by Metro, you'll definitely need to arrange for someone to pick you up at the station and ferry you over to the store.

Directions (driving):

- North on I-270. Take Exit 9 (West), which is Rte. 370 (Sam Eig Highway).
- Sam Eig Highway dead-ends at Great Seneca (Rte. 119). Turn RIGHT.
- Go 4 blocks on Great Seneca (look for a house under construction); and turn LEFT on Kentlands Blvd.
- Go 2 blocks on Kentlands; and make a "3/4-left turn" off the traffic circle, onto Market Street.
- The Game Edge is located at 122 Market St. If you can't find street parking, there are public lots just a block up, on either side of the street.

Come join us -- while the Barbarians entertain us -- and pat yourself on the back for helping to support Gaylaxicon 2000!

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Enantiodromia

[Gk *enantios* opposite + *dromos* running]

The process whereby a system ends up
 subverting the very thing
 it first set out to accomplish.

A Cartoon by Chris Browning

"Man - I feel so light-headed!"



Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry,
for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

--- Ecclesiastes 7:9 ---

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 LBGT community), we invite you to join the LSF Book Discussion Group. Each month, for over a year now, we've been conducting fascinating round-table discussions of works by significant F&SF authors.

The LSF Book Discussion Group generally meets on the 4th Thursday of every month, starting at 7:00 PM. The next meeting will be held on July 25th, at Peter & Rob's house, 1425 "S" St., NW. (For directions or more details, call 202-483-6369.)

Here's the Discussion Group's schedule for the next couple of months:

- **Thurs., Aug. 24** - *Far Beyond the Stars*, by Steve Barnes (a *ST:DS9* novel); facilitator: Peter.
- **Thurs., Sept. 25** - *Lions of Al-Rassan*, by Guy Gavriel Kay (a "historical-fantasy"); facilitator: Mike P.

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July Minutes

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activities, Rob offered up the following alternative proposal, also to be voted on at the August meeting. (Please note, these two proposals are somewhat opposed to each other, and it's suggested that people consider whether to support one, or the other, or neither.)

"LSF grants the Network Representative the authority to negotiate and vote on all non-Charter-change issues facing the Network without first receiving formal vote from LSF. LSF also grants the Network Representative the authority to negotiate on all Charter-change issues facing the Network without first receiving formal vote from LSF. The Network Rep is not given the right to cast official and binding votes on Charter-change issues facing the Network without first receiving formal vote

from the club and must cast their vote as directed by the club in these cases. In all cases, the Network Representative must always report votes to the club at the next meeting following any vote cast."

These two proposals will be voted upon at the August LSF meeting. Those members interested in casting votes on these proposals should either attend the meeting or be certain that their absentee ballot is delivered to the meeting.

Finally, business was done and we moved on to Social stuff.

We started with our usual name circle. Nan and Kay reported on their adventures at Dragoncon. Lots of cool stuff: great dealers room, many trailers for upcoming flicks (including the D&D

movie), entertainment from the Girly Freak Show, a Robot Wars exhibition, and lots of media stuff. In SF TV news, the SciFi Channel is doing an Exposure Film Festival with a grant as a prize. They're also picking up *The Others*; and there are rumors they may do some new episodes. They're also picking up *Battlestar Galactica* and the usual array of crappy canceled shows. Nick Park's studio has said there will NOT be a sequel to *Chicken Run*, but that a "Wallace and Gromit" movie is likely. New original shows that have recently premiered on the SciFi Channel include a psychic/medium show featuring John Edward and a documentary series about old genre TV shows called *Sciography*. TNT will also be re-showing the *Babylon 5* movies.

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**The Death of
the Necromancer**
a big novel by Martha Wells
a short review by Carl Cipra

Wowie! Have you read anything by Martha Wells? *The Death of the Necromancer* is the first work of hers I've read - and, I assure you, it won't be the last! It's GOOD!

How to describe this book? Well, it's a fantasy novel; but it's not necessarily the kind of "fantasy" that you might be thinking of. The world Wells has created here isn't your typical pseudo-medieval land of knights, ladies, wizards, castles, Hobbits, trolls, dragons, and flashing swords; and it's not some Arabesque-fantasy full of sultans, djinn, wondrous voyages on warm Eastern seas, and flashing scimitars, either. All the action takes place in and around the fictional city of Vienne, capital of the Kingdom of Ile-Rien. Vienne is an analog of mid-to-late-Nineteenth-Century Paris - complete with gaslights, telegraphs, railroads, a Prefecture of Police, newspapers, refined entertainments, a less-than-refined *demi-monde*, and a definitely unrefined criminal class (both noble and non-noble). Perhaps the best way I can think to describe *The Death of the Necromancer* is as a combination of *Les Miserables*, *The Count of Monte Cristo*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" -- with magic thrown in.

On the surface, Nicholas Valiarde would simply appear to be a moderately successful importer-exporter in Vienne; but he also happens to be "Donatien", the infamous, mysterious Underworld figure who masterminds a lot of Vienne's criminal activity. (And, beyond that, there are other facets of Nicholas' past that virtually no one knows about!) For twenty-some years now, Nicholas has been plotting vengeance. Using his contacts among the *demi-monde* and the criminal class - as well as the proceeds of his criminal enterprises - he has been inexorably perfecting his plans to destroy Count Rive Montesq, the nobleman who

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In book news, the new "Harry Potter" book seems to be getting a little press and selling reasonably well. (OK, so a 5.3-million-plus-copy first-print run might be a bit better than "well".) Bookface.com will have original unfiled scripts from J Michael Straczynski in the *Babylon 5: Crusade* storyline. Recent releases include Melissa Scott's newest, *The Jazz*. An upcoming release is Glen Cook's latest dark fantasy in the "Black Company" series.

In movie news, everyone seemed psyched but a little leery re-

orchestrated the frame-up and execution of his mentor and adoptive father, Doctor Edouard Viller. But dark forces are loose in Vienne! There are missing children, corpses tainted by black sorcery, a mysterious spiritualist with a hidden agenda, and a magically-powered golem -- and, while attempting to rob the subterranean vaults of a ducal mansion, Nicholas and crew run afoul of murderous ghouls searching for something else down there! Suddenly, Nicholas finds he must put aside his plans for revenge and try to locate and (if possible) destroy a powerful black sorcerer who threatens not only Nicholas and his friends, but all of Ile-Rien as well!

It's been quite a few years since I've been so jazzed about a fantasy novel. Perhaps it's because *The Death of the Necromancer* is more than just another of the Tolkien/Conan/Arabian Nights knockoffs flooding the market. It's unique; it's exciting; it's well-written. There's even gay content. (One of the chief figures in Nicholas' gang is the dashing Captain Reynard Morane, an unjustly-cashiered cavalry officer whose sexual preference is unabashedly for other men.)

There are three other fantasy novels by Martha Wells out there: *The Element of Fire*, *The City of Bones*, and (just out in hardback) *Wheel of the Infinite*. With this novel as an example of Wells' skills as a writer, I figure those three are probably well worth searching for, too.

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garding the upcoming *X-Men* flick. There's talk again of a *Modesty Blaise* film - featuring Carrie Anne Moss (of *The Matrix* fame) and possible involvement by Quentin Tarantino. *Scary Movie* is apparently very funny and is worth seeing if you're looking for comedy. *Fight Club*, recently out on video, apparently has some interesting homoerotic undertones and is downright weird. The *Rocky and Bullwinkle* movie is much more entertaining than the promos made it look; and *Blithe Spirit*, recently out on DVD, is a classic humorous ghost tale worth tracking down.

Michael passed around a handful of old books and booklets, including some on the Shadow (which apparently indicate that some of the radio shows of *The Shadow* were written by Alfred Bester). He also mentioned the upcoming Classic Horror Film Convention in Crystal City. Rob passed around miscellanea from the PO Box. Steve reported that in computer gaming news, *Diablo 2* is out, as is the new *Vampire: The Masquerade* computer game. Helgi reported on his adventures at Anthrocon, a "furry" gathering - lots of fun, great furry costumes. Many also commented on the recent *Farscape* episode that had the characters switching bodies - even across gender lines - which made for some wonderful scenes.

Finally, everyone was reminded of upcoming events: the *X-Men* Outing and Animé Festival on July 15th; the Book Discussion (*Trader*, by Charles de Lint) on July 27th; the Library of Congress/Smithsonian outing to see the "100 Years of Oz" and "Vikings" exhibits on August 12th; and a visit to the Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore on August 26th. Of course, we'll also have our usual meetings on Sunday, August 13th: Organization Discussion at Peter & Rob's at 1425 "S" Street at 11AM, and the Regular Meeting (business @ 1:30; social @ 2:00) at James' place at 1414 17th Street, #413. ΛΨΦ



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

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

Annual membership fees are \$20, for which you will receive this monthly newsletter and a membership directory. 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, Aug. 13th, at James Crutchfield's apartment: 1414 17th St., NW, Apt. 413 (near DuPont Circle) - 1:30 PM for business meeting; 2:00 PM for social meeting. Please bring some munchies or soft drinks, if you can. Hope to see you there!

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



Con Calendar

by Carl, Peter, Rob, Mike, and Helgi



Aug. 31 - Sept. 4, 2000 **CHICON 2000 (the 58th World Science Fiction Convention)**. Hyatt Regency & environs (Chicago). GoH: Ben Bova; Artist GoH: Bob Eggleton; Editor GoH: Jim Baen. Membership (as of 7/15/2000): \$195. Make membership checks payable to "Chicon 2000" and send to: Chicon 2000, PO Box 642057, Chicago, IL 60664.

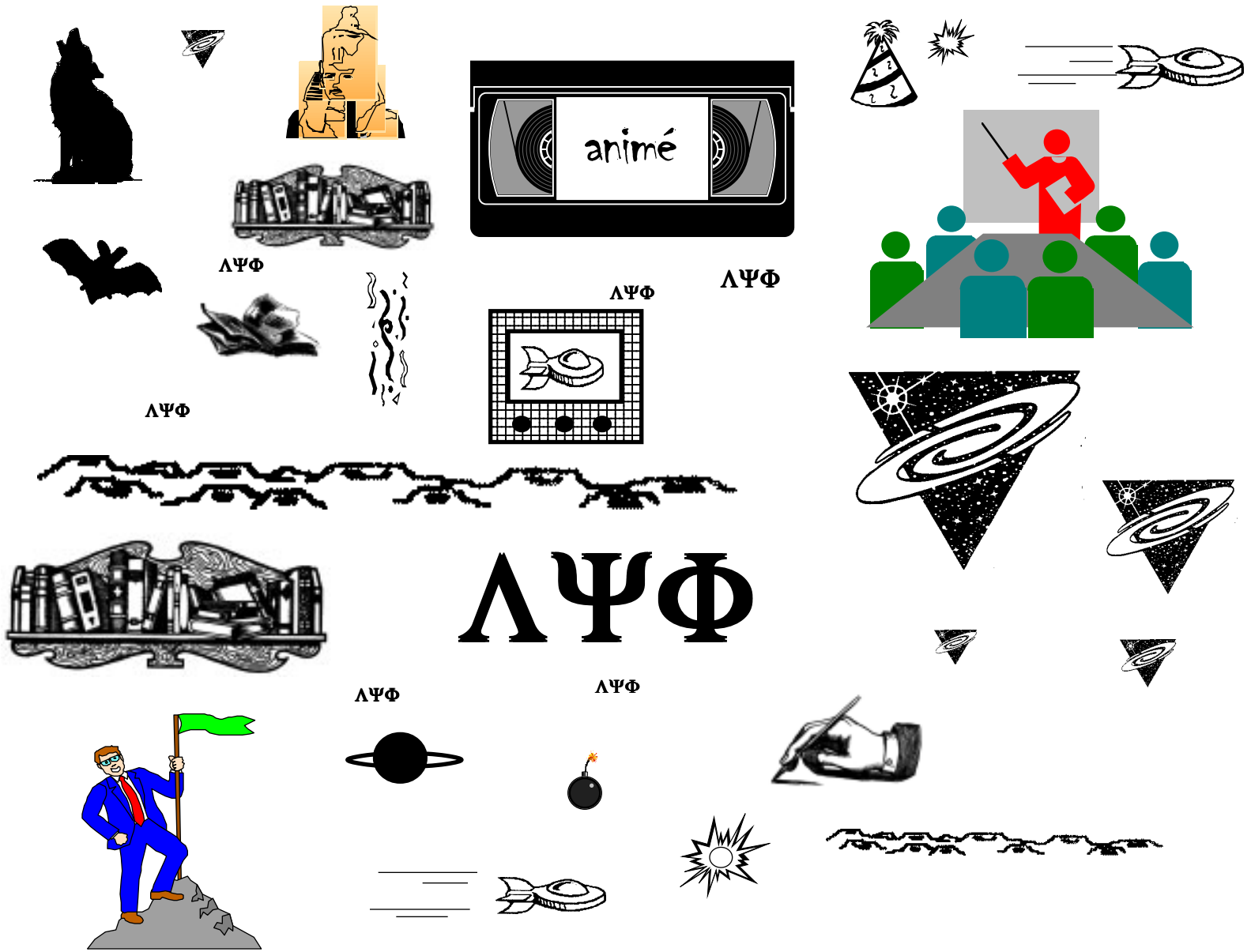
E-mail: chi2000@chicon.org Web site: www.chicon.org

Oct. 6-9, 2000 **GAYLAXICON 2000**. Arlington Hilton & Towers (Arlington, VA). GoH: Fiona Patton; Artist GoH: Nan Fredman. Membership: \$45 until 9/8/2000; \$55 at the door. Hotel rate: \$99/night (sgl/dbl), +\$20 for each addtl guest. Make membership checks payable to "Gaylaxicon 2000" and send to: Gaylaxicon 2000, PO Box 1862, Annandale, VA 22003-9862. Web: <http://www.lambdasf.org/g2k>

Nov. 17-19, 2000 **PHILCON 2000**. Adam's Mark Hotel (Philadelphia). GoH: Vernor Vinge; Artist GoH: Bob Walters; Special Guest: Poul Anderson. Membership: \$40 until 10/25/00; \$45 after that & at the door. Hotel rate: \$101 (sgl/dbl), \$115 (tpl/quad), until 10/1/00. Make membership checks payable to "Philadelphia Science Fiction Society" and send to: PSFS, PO Box 8303, Philadelphia, PA 19101-8303. E-mail: Info@philcon.org Web site: www.philcon.org

Nov. 24-26, 2000 **DARKOVER GRAND COUNCIL MEETING XXIII**. Holiday Inn Select - Baltimore North (Timonium, MD). GoH: Diane Duane & Peter Morwood; Special Guest: Katherine Kurtz; Musical GoH: Clam Chowder. Membership: \$35 until 11/1/2000; \$40 after that (and at the door). Hotel rates: \$70/night (sgl - quad); res. cut-off date 11/10/00. Make membership checks payable to "Armida Council" and send to: Armida Council, PO Box 7203, Silver Spring, MD 20907. Web site: www.darkovercon.com





Cowboy Bebop
a short rave by Carl Cipra

One of the really great things about attending various LSF functions is that you can learn about wonderful works of F&SF you might never have discovered for yourself. It happens all the time for me in the book discussion group -- Geoff Ryman's *Was* being a case in point. I've also learned about great videos at the "Video Madness" parties -- Norman brought *Late for Dinner* to show at a party several years ago, and it's been a favorite of mine ever since.

Well, it's just happened again! This time, the venue was the "LSF Animé Club" party that Kay and Tim sponsored on July 15th. Kay included a couple of episodes of *Cowboy Bebop* among that evening's entertainments, and I was instantly hooked!

Cowboy Bebop is a successful SF animé series originally made for Japanese TV; and each episode runs about 22 minutes (*sans* commercials, apparently). It all takes place in our Solar System in some future time when some sort of stargate-accelerators make interplanetary and interstellar travel as easy as driving on the Interstate highway system. The androgynously-cute Spike Spiegel and his partners (the bionically-enhanced Jet Black and the sexy-and-reckless Faye Valentine) operate a bounty-hunting business from aboard their ship, the *Bebop*, and wander around the Solar System trying to make a living. That's the whole premise -- beyond that, it seems that anything goes! I've seen six episodes so far, and they've included adventures with drug-runners, space pirates, a bizarre killer called Mad Pierrot, an ageless child prodigy, a

Syndicate killer with ties to Spike's past, and a runaway Welsh corgi. And there are *at least* 14 more episodes I *haven't* seen yet! Each episode is campy space-opera of one sort or another, with really good animation, more than a touch of *film noir*, and a great musical score. (And, needless to say, they're all kind'a -- um -- violent.)

Like I said, I'm hooked! Give 'em a look - you might be, too! *Cowboy Bebop* is available in VHS, with 2-episodes per tape; and there are 2 formats available out there, either Japanese-with-English-subtitles (issued by Anime Village) or English-language (issued by Bandai). As far as I'm concerned, you can't lose either way. Stand aside, *Buckaroo Banzai*; here comes *Cowboy Bebop*!