

# Clothes Minded

BY ANDREW LEMAN



The very first game of CTHULHU LIVES to be played in period costume was *Halloween I: The Seance*, in October of 1984. Ever since that evening, the players of CTHULHU LIVES have attempted at least to approximate period dress. Of course we've had vastly differing degrees of success, and occasionally a Keeper has opted to forego costume altogether. But, in general, we play this insane game wearing insane period clothes.

I very much enjoy playing in costume, and I've devoted a considerable amount of time and research, and a little money, to finding out about and procuring period clothing. I'm somewhat heavily involved in stage costuming at school, and so I've been lucky to be exposed to some of the "tricks of the trade." As someone with a strong background in costume, I'd like to see period costuming in CTHULHU LIVES, which is at present somewhat haphazard, become more complete.

I think period costuming is important for two main reasons. The first has to do with the very nature of CTHULHU LIVES. It's a live-action role-playing game, and as such it might have certain dangers that I think we all need to be aware of. We've all heard of the people who have played live-action *D&D* and not realized it was just a game. Rona Jaffe's book *Mazes and Monsters* is a fictionalized account of things that have actually happened: people can get so confused about what's real and what's not that they hurt themselves or other people. CTHULHU LIVES, being in the same class of games as *D&D*, is potentially liable to the same kind of dangers. I'm not personally too worried about it, because games are not the root of such desperate confusions; only a place where such confusions can be dramatically expressed. Even so, anything we can do to prevent something like the Michigan steam tunnel deaths from occurring here is worth doing. I believe that playing in costume is a step of this kind. Every time I look in the mirror and see myself wearing a bow tie or fedora, I remind myself that the adventure I'm about to embark upon is not real. Its reality, and its success, lie strictly within my imagination. Every time I look and see Ken in his flight jacket or Judy in a cloche, or Sean and Phil in Ninja outfits, I'm reminded that the threat of death and destruction is not real. Whatever else CTHULHU LIVES is, it is a game. I would like to try to keep that in mind.

The other reason for playing in costume comes directly from the fact that fact that CTHULHU LIVES *IS* a game. Playing the game in costume is simply more fun, as anyone who has played both ways will agree. On that fateful night in October of '84, as we were all gathered in period costume for the first time, Darrell Tutchton was waiting in the trees outside Sean Branney's Englewood home, preparing to make his grand entrance. After the game Darrell told me that watching us all through the window, as we sat around the dining room table listening to a ghost story, was like looking back through time. Unable to hear us, and seeing only what was contained within the bright frame of the window surrounded by the darkness outside, it must have been like watching an old movie. And the sheer conspicuousness of it can be a blast. A group of people going into Denny's is an everyday occurrence. A group of people going to Denny's dressed like flappers and bootleggers excites a bit more attention. How many people would give us a second look if we came into the library or any public place in our street clothes? But how many people stare in horrified fascination at us when we wear knickers or Yezdeth war paint?

I'd like to see period costuming in CTHULHU LIVES become more complete and accurate if possible. A minimum amount of costuming for everyone who plays is, I believe, a very realizable goal. It's not particularly difficult, and it doesn't have to be expensive. It's harder to find women's clothing than it is to find mens, because women's fashions change more radically and more quickly than men's do, and because women, in general, get rid of old clothes sooner than men. But the women's clothing is out there. Judy Ruha will be concentrating on women's costuming in an article of her own. Men's costuming can be relatively simple, and plenty of clothes are cheaply available.

The HPLHS library has a number of books on period costume, especially on the designs of Erté, who in my opinion drew some of the sharpest clothing ever dreamed up. ...Please take advantage of these resources. It's what the Society maintains a library for. Dressing in period is not too hard, and not too expensive, but it is important, and it is immensely fun.

