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*Images available on request*

**PARTY LIKE A MARTIAN AT  
CHABOT SPACE & SCIENCE CENTER'S  
*MARS MANIA COSTUME PARTY***

**Tuesday, August 26, 2003, 9 pm – 1 am**

*OAKLAND, CA (August 1, 2003)* — How would you look as a Martian? **Chabot Space & Science Center** invites you to stretch your imagination and dress yourself up as a Martian for a ***Mars Mania Costume Party*** on Tuesday, August 26, 2003, from 9 pm to 1 am. Chabot hopes to draw all manner of ET's and Martian wannabes to celebrate in style as the Red Planet reaches its *closest approach to Earth in 100,000 years*. Chabot's ***Mars Mania Costume Party*** will include special "Summer of Mars" programs such as *Return to the Red Planet* planetarium show, the new *Mars Encounter* exhibit, movie previews in the Tien MegaDome Theater, special Mars-related hands-on activities, and close-up viewing of Mars through Chabot's telescopes. A door prize will be given to every partygoer who arrives in Martian costume. Tickets for the ***Mars Mania Costume Party*** are \$11.00 Adult / \$8.00 Youth and Senior, and are available at [ticketweb.com](http://ticketweb.com) or by calling the Chabot Box Office at 510-336-7373.

On the night of August 26th and morning of August 27th, Mars will be closer to our planet than it has been in approximately 100,000 years, with its orbit reaching Opposition on August 28. Barring summer dust storms on Mars, observers can take a close look at the Red Planet with Chabot's large telescopes, including the new 36" reflector, and examine surface features such as the bright white polar ice cap and the darker "V" -shaped Syrtis Major.

The space explorers Spirit and Opportunity were recently launched by NASA and are expected to reach Mars in December and January, and begin transmitting new information about the mysteries of the Martian climate, geological history, presence of water and life forms. Data from the Mars Global Surveyor and 2001 Mars Odyssey spacecraft, currently orbiting Mars, give strong indications of possible liquid water in Mars' past.

## ***Mars Mania Costume Party at Chabot — 2***

The latest missions to Mars — NASA's twin Mars Exploration Rovers and the European Space Agency's Mars Express orbiter and Beagle 2 lander — are looking for water and life, and may shed new light on these tantalizing mysteries as soon as next winter, when this new batch of robot explorers reaches the Red Planet.

Special features of Chabot's "Summer of Mars" celebration include the *Mars Encounter* exhibit in the galleries, and *Return to the Red Planet* on view in the Ask Jeeves Planetarium, as well as lectures, family workshops, viewing parties, and other programs. *Mars Encounter* invites visitors to explore Mars' place in our culture, investigate discoveries of past missions to Mars, follow the progress of current missions, and visualize future Mars exploration when human astronauts will experience the Red Planet first-hand. The exhibit, developed by Chabot and West Office Exhibition Design, features a four-foot tactile Mars globe complete with craters and volcanoes; a Martian meteorite; a Martian Sci-fi theater; a Mars Mission Control where visitors can obtain data on current and past missions; videos of Rover missions; a wall-size mural embedded with quiz games; a vacation to Mars planning station, and a play area for the younger crowd.

*Return to the Red Planet* show in Chabot's Ask Jeeves Planetarium takes viewers through a journey in time to consider how human understanding of Mars has changed throughout history. The show includes a live presentation that teaches visitors how to locate Mars in the night sky; the latest images from telescopes, orbiters, and rovers; breaking news from the NASA missions, and presents a timeline for Mars exploration. From Percival Lowell's Martian-built canals and the Carl Sagan Memorial station of Pathfinder to the future MER and Mars Express missions, the spectacular show probes questions such as "Why explore Mars?" "Could life exist there?" and "What would such life look like?" You might stumble on an answer to this last question as you prepare to express your inner alien at Chabot's August 26th ***Mars Mania Costume Party***.

**For more information, call (510) 336-7300, or visit [www.chabotspace.org](http://www.chabotspace.org)**

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