

Cadets, Star test Vanguard

by J. P. Hooten

August 10, 1989—Dayton, Ohio . . . The showdown continued at the *Soaring Sounds* show as the Santa Clara Vanguard, scoring 95.00, held off a strong challenge by the Cadets of Bergen County and the Star of Indiana. The Cadets took second (94.00) followed by Star (93.00), the Freelancers (87.90), Suncoast Sound (87.00), the Glassmen (68.10), Limited Edition (65.80) and the Quad City Knights (62.60).

The Vanguard dubiously has become DCI's bridesmaid, but they attempt to rectify that in 1989. Every step they take is sheer class; every chord explodes with deep resonance. Although some spectators reacted adversely to a second year of *The Phantom of the Opera*, it remains the hottest ticket in drum corps. Not many corps boast SCV's overwhelming acceptance and perennial success, and the corps thrives on its entertainment value. The show breathes wonder and keeps audiences busy during most of the 11-1/2 minutes.

Can SCV hold the lead through the championship proceedings? Right now, it looks more than realistic, but after the last two years, nothing is guaranteed. One thing is for sure—look for a big surprise in Kansas City.

Gaining ground and closing the gap, the Cadets of Bergen county continue to refine their production and thrilled this respective crowd. Scoring extremely closely to SCV in all areas, the Cadets have their cleaning and perfecting plans well formulated, and you can bet they will challenge furiously the raw emotion of the show, and the brass line simply gets better and better. The hypnotic melodies flow and weave throughout the exquisite voicings, and the drum line, scoring a surprising third, executes with an almost scary precision. The Cadets' new style meets with thunderous applause at each outing, and *Les Miserables* is certainly the most appealing and emotional show since *West Side Story*.

Star of Indiana absolutely wowed the fans with their stupendous sound. Celebrating their fifth season, this corps pulls out all the stops to create a beautiful, cohesive production. The obviously educated crowd recognized the British melodies, and *Fantasia*

evoked clapping and toe-tapping. The drum line sounded great, scoring 14.4 to Vanguard's 14.5 and the Cadets' 14.3. GE numbers were down, finishing well more than a point behind SCV and 0.9 behind the Cadets. If those numbers improve to match the performance scores, Star could easily find themselves fighting for this championship. The uniform met with mixed reactions, but it perfectly compliments their style. The amazing, consistent growth of this relatively young group is staggering.

Not surprisingly, the Freelancers' driving show was a favorite tonight. The fabulous drill brought screams of delight as the audience tried to absorb it all. The outstanding musical substance of *Empire of the Sun* may vault the corps firmly into a finals slot, and their treatment of *E.T.* adds originality and personality to the show. A strong visual performance rewarded them a 13.2, only 0.3 behind Star, and the musical captions fared well also. Their field presence alone speaks for itself. There is no stopping this giant.

After a late start, Suncoast Sound earns the "Comeback Corps" award. In one week, they have improved drastically with a powerful sound, hip soloists and more intense visuals. Visual performance needs finishing as they trailed the Freelancers by 0.6. GE scores climbed higher, and the crowd loved their 11-1/2 minute Florida vacation. In fact, the audience roared its disapproval when Suncoast's fifth place was revealed. The auxiliary shines in sleek black as they creatively interpret the score.

Suncoast can now breathe a sigh of relief as their show has magically melded into an entertaining art form. It's enjoyable to see them rewarded by both the judges and the many fans who appreciate their production.

The Glassmen also have worked hard to entertain, and the payoff will almost certainly be another top-25 finish. The show moves quickly with bombastic brass and drums, a competitive drill and a wonderful auxiliary. According to the numbers, marching needs improvement, but they will take the necessary steps to master the execution. Humor prevails with a locker door and the "bubble machine" in the pit. The drum major communicates well the essence of excitement and involves the audience in warm-up antics. The corps' Midwest following will certainly move west to Kansas City for a happy conclusion to a successful season.

Changes in drill make Limited Edition's show even more thrilling. Brass endurance strengthens each night, and more intricate

musicality offers listeners a pleasing performance. The usual comment continues to be that for a second-year corps, they perform a fantastic show. They work diligently, and their popularity will certainly grow drastically next season. The artistry, devotion and entertainment value have earned them a positive reputation.

Tonight's most pleasant surprise came when the Quad City Knights began their show. Earlier low-scoring shows prepared none for this rousing Yes concert. The brass plays with a nice sound, and the visual program moves quickly with professional polish. The annual thematic rock material

gives the Knights their own flavor, and they must be congratulated for staying with it. With so many corps continually changing styles, we can count on Quad City for holding strong their entertainment philosophy ... "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

The organization of my first *Soaring Sounds* contest was impressive. The sellout (many fans bought tickets for the opposite stands), extreme professionalism of the judging staff and a perfect stadium make this one of the Midwest's finest shows.

Recognition goes to the fine tabulators, runners and to Mr. Fred Court for overseeing a fantastic DCI contest.



The Freelancers' driving show of *Empire of the Sun* and *E.T.* brings the field to life with originality. (Photo by Adrian Loeffelholz)