

## SCV no longer the bridesmaid

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*Gloria* neatly framed the unique and haunting middle portion of the show. *Images Diabolique*. The Cavalier guard reached a new plateau with their unparalleled ability to integrate innovative equipment work and choreography. All elements of the show were blended with exceptional unity and coherence, keeping the "Green Machine" among the DCI elite. Third, 97.20.

In an evening dominated by classically-styled productions, the Blue Devils' driving jazz program delivered a welcome change of pace. This year the Devils successfully returned to the massive, wide open drill patterns for which they are renowned, but still lagged the Vanguard by nearly a full point in the GE visual caption. Concord's soloists were, as usual, at the top of their game with the exception of one disarming breakdown. The Blue Devils' color guard performed with exceptional poise and polished elegance in *If We Were In Love*, during which the brass soared to unprecedented heights. *Joining One Note* provided the other highlight to the Blue Crew's program and closed the production with spectacular intensity. Fourth, 95.90.

Always state of the art, always innovative, always expanding the horizons of the activity, the Cadets of Bergen County brought *Les Miserables* to the field in a dramatic fashion few imagined possible. They kicked off the live television broadcast with a performance filled with electricity and drama. However, many late-season simplifications and revisions to what had been the most challenging brass book of the year seemed to deflate the possibility of the title returning to the four-time champion. Moreover, the season-long search for the right ending to the show hampered *Les Mis* from blossoming into full glory. Despite these handicaps, the Cadets took the audience through an emotional range few of their competitors could equal. Their surreal, slow motion battle/war effect easily stood above all others as the most visually astonishing drill move created this season. Fifth, 95.60.

Star of Indiana achieved their highest competitive finish to date, placing sixth with a score of 95.30. High execution levels in their British-styled product gave the show a uniquely regal flavor. The selections of *Henry V* and *Crown Imperial* brought back memories of the same music performed in past championships by the Guardsmen and the 27th Lancers and acted as a fitting tribute to these once great corps. Star deserves special mention for the unequalled beauty of the silks used by their color guard. Their exceptional radiance added just the right pallet of colors to this memorable all-English repertoire has filled a void left unattended for a half-decade.

During the season's last 48 hours, the Madison Scouts became immersed in a heated controversy over whether or not they would perform last as defending champions. Behind closed doors, the executive leadership of DCI decided that the Scouts would have to perform in their prelims position in order to preserve the television broadcast for the top five corps. Nevertheless, the Scouts performed with all the excitement, class and showmanship we have come to expect from them. Madison maximized every impact in their repertoire and, aside from lower than hoped for execution marks, they delivered a package full of pizzazz and power. Seventh, 93.60.

This year's edition of the Bluecoats featured a full complement of stellar soloists blended into a rich, well-coordinated show. A far more active and proficient color guard teamed up with a wall of sound to create the most satisfying and enjoyable Bluecoats production to date. Ideas and concepts were developed more completely than in the past, helping to generate sustained interest and appeal. Training just behind the seven elite DCI corps with a final score of 90.30, the Bluecoats closed the year firmly entrenched in the eighth-place position for which they had appeared destined since mid-season.

Suncoast Sound completed the longest journey of the competitors to reach the DCI finals. After starting the season late due to financial troubles and enduring sub-par performances at the outset, Suncoast put on a memorable late season surge, emerged from the pack and actually managed to move up one place from 1988. This year's Suncoast Sound represented a textbook lesson in perseverance. They believed in themselves when most had already counted them out. Their show, which initially looked like a shallow retreat of 1985's *Florida Suite*, developed into an exciting reexamination of music they originated. While most corps were endeavoring to adapt music from other idioms to the field, Suncoast again took the road less traveled by reinterpreting music originally written for drum corps. Once more, Suncoast's artistic vision shined brightly at the DCI finals. Ninth, 88.00.

For two corps, 1989 marked a triumphant resurrection. Both the Freelanders and

Crossmen returned to the DCI finals after a rebuilding process which brought both corps back from the brink of near demise. The horror with which the drum corps community witnessed both corps' flirtation with extinction closely paralleled the entire activity's most perilous moments. The reemergence of the Crossmen and Freelanders at the championship finals is in many ways a symbol of the growth and stability the activity has achieved over the last three years. Both corps performed with the style and poise of years gone by.

Placing 10th with 87.30, the Freelanders maximized their slick, California mega-corps approach to the music of John Williams. In 12th place scoring 84.00, the Crossmen performed their trademark jazz repertoire with the confidence and expertise of their most successful corps. If you had missed the last three years, it might have seemed as if the story of these two determined corps was just a bad dream. Welcome back!

Sandwiched in between the Freelanders and Crossmen were the perennial crowd-favorite Velvet Knights. After a season which saw VK undergo continuous staff turmoil, tonight's finals performance allowed the corps to let loose and do what they do best, ENTERTAIN. The requisite sight gags, many of which involved a fun-loving gorilla, combined with a spectacular drum line to keep the VK express on a roll. Though the show tended to run out of fresh ideas late in the game, nothing could contain the Velvet Knights' seemingly limitless reservoir of energy and enthusiasm. 11th, 81.50.

After two successful championships in Kansas City, the DCI extravaganza moves to Buffalo in 1990. All of us wait in eager anticipation to see what delights drum corps in the next decade will bring.