

Vanguard cleanly sweeps Rome, NY, show

by Bryan H. Jenner

August 1, 1989—Rome, New York . . . A jam-packed crowd saw the Santa Clara Vanguard blow out the full slate of corps at this traditional upstate New York show known as *Drums Along the Mohawk*. The Vanguard won with a 92.40 and captured high horns and best color guard as well. Madison Scouts were second, 85.20; Velvet Knights, third, 81.30; Freelancers, fourth, 77.10; Sky Ryders, fifth, 76.70; Boston Crusaders, sixth, 71.20; L'Insolite, seventh, 61.80 and Ventures, eighth, 59.20.

The Santa Clara Vanguard demonstrated they are tired of being the bridesmaid come August. This year's production of *Phantom of the Opera* is much like last year only without males in the guard and with minor musical changes. It was surprising to hear that Vanguard took high horns as their soloists were not good tonight. Cracks were quite evident and stability within parts was a little weak, but, oh can they MARCH! Tempos are at breakneck speed, and Vanguard is marching better than ever. A GE visual score of 18.60 and a visual performance score of 13.80 is just a small indication of what Vanguard has to offer. SCV has a good one.

The defending DCI World Champion Madison Scouts are wonderful, or should I say Glorious! *Make His Praise Glorious* is Scouts' opener, and is it great. Found within the gospel-rock genre, the Scouts just WOW the crowd. *Slaughter on Tenth Avenue* contains great weaving. I thought Madison had the top brass line tonight, but it wasn't meant to be. Of considerable note are the Batman stickers on the bass drums (Neat, guys!) and a wonderful baritone soloist in

Slaughter. You'll love these guys again.

Matthew Savage must be proud of his line. The Velvet Knights from Anaheim, CA, captured high percussion and rightfully so. VK has new hats and a dynamite drum line, and, hey, the rest of the corps ain't bad either. The corps captures the crowd's hearts with *Yo Mambo* and *VK in Tunisia*. This is probably the finest corps VK has ever put out, and we can expect big things from them in Kansas City. Love those Chiquita bananas.

SURPRISE! Freelancers of Sacramento, CA, are back and back to stay. After missing the 1986 season, they are a serious threat to break back into the top 12. Fielding the largest horn line of the night (68 horns), Freelancers are sweeping up new fans with their John Williams music. Tight boxy forms and interweaving follow-throughs make up Freelancers' drill (much like Phantom Regiment). Of particular note is the fantastic arrangement of *Empire of the Sun*. A wonderful production by the Freelancers.

New uniforms and a contemporary 20th century classical book is what one can expect from the Sky Ryders of Hutchinson, KS. The Sky Ryders are clean and are portraying *Carmina Burana* like no other corps could. This piece could easily bore one to tears, but the Sky Ryders have given it a new exuberance. Unfortunately, Sky Ryders are going to have to address GE percussion and percussion performance to continue to be successful. The horn line is much improved from last year, but a low brass performance score is also hurting. I'm convinced that Sky Ryders have the product, now let's just let them perform it!

Massachusetts's own Boston Crusaders continually get the crowd's blood boiling with the wonderful *Conquest*. Everyone loves it, but the rest of the show just seemed to lack clarity. With definitely a dynamic drum major and a nice guard, Boston is another corps that just needs to get out and sell the show. Of considerable note is *Man of La Mancha*. Consistently a top-25 corps, Boston will be up there again.

L'Insolite, which loosely translates to "something good and unexpected," is definitely what you get from this French-speaking corps from St. Jerome, QUE. The defending DCI class A World Champions are showing everyone that they are now a hard-driving jazzy open class corps. *Take the 'A' Train* is nice, and of considerable note is L'Insolite's beautiful closer from last year, *Comme Au Premier Jour*. The mannequins used by the guard and a powerful horn line are worthy of note. Also a potential top-25 corps, a new star is shining from Canada.

The other Canadian representative this evening were the Ventures from Kitchener-Waterloo, ONT. This corps showed amazing improvement from just a week before in Glens Falls, NY. New mirrored walls are interspersed in back, and a particularly favorite feature is the color guard dance with the dummies. Are those girls tough! The most successful all-girl corps in history is continuing to make a great impression on everyone. A definite contender as always for that class A crown is the Ventures.

The Eagles of Central New York, from Verona, presented a pre-show exhibition. This young corps is a fine organization performing *Rocky*, *New York, New York* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy*. Eighteen horns had a big sound the large crowd thoroughly enjoyed. Corps like the Eagles used to exist everywhere, and unfortunately, they have since died away. Let's keep corps like the

Eagles going strong. I loved them tonight.

Congratulations to Claudette Wire and her staff at *Drums Along the Mohawk*. Also, thank you to the Madison Scouts for a band clinic during the afternoon. This DCI-sanctioned show always turns out to be one of the most well-run shows every year.