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On The Field From Denver, Colorado...The Blue Knights!: One Member's Experience Of The 1994 Summer National Tour



Synopsis

On the field from Denver, Colorado! is one man's view of the inside world of competitive junior drum corps. Whether you've marched 50 years ago, this past year or just yearned to be standing on the field, Gregory M. Kuzma's personal tale will give you a new appreciation for this musical art form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Good morning Blue Knights. Welcome to DCI Finals. The lights are on, stretch is in twelve and three quarter minutes." A couple of chuckles and moans ensue as we rise to face our destiny. It was finally here, three months of hard work, 12-hour practices, too many performances to count and now we are at the day of Finals. Journey along with the young men and women of the 1994 Blue Knights Drum and Bugle Corps. Experience the Drum Corps International Summer Music Games and the intense preparations it took to arrive there. Become a part of the action, stand on the field and learn what this life is really like in a drum & bugle corps on tour. The sacrifices, the joys, the heartbreak, the physical agony, the lifelong friendships, the lessons learned and earned. "This is an essential read for all drum corps enthusiasts!" -Mark Arnold, Blue Knights Director

From Boca Raton, Florida, Gregory M. Kuzma surrounded himself with musical arts since a young age. He's performed with several drum and bugle corps (junior and senior level) as well as instructed at high school bands and several drum corps in the performing arts activity.

As it seems, this is definitely the published copy of a DCI performer's journal. It can get dry at times

with the day in and day out stuff, but when it got into the nitty gritty I absolutely loved reliving my own memories of corps days through Mr. Kuzma's writings. I especially love how he was able to keep it PG, when I know a lot of things happen at corps that are far from that rating. I've got my copy sitting on the shelf at the color guard/dance studio.

As a former member of the Blue Knights drum and bugle corps (1987-1989), I have a fond place in my heart for the drum corps activity in general, and the Blue Knights in particular. When my wife gave me this book for Christmas, I was enthralled by the idea of an insider's account of a summer on the road with the corps, and I read the book from cover to cover within 24 hours. In retrospect, my expectations may have been too high. Gregory Kuzma's book did bring back a lot of old memories, many good, some bad, of the three years I spent marching with the Blue Knights, but I found its "raw" diary format to be tedious and difficult to read at times. That said, the same dodgy grammar and liberal use of drum corps vernacular (e.g., the word "suck" being used in every imaginable form and context) help give this account a certain authenticity that made me feel like I was 19 all over again, standing in the hot sun on a dusty practice field somewhere near the Wonder Bread factory in north Denver. I particularly enjoyed Kuzma's descriptions of Blue Knights staff members and instructors, many of whom I knew personally. He does an effective job of capturing the agony and grit of 12-hour rehearsals (where tempers often flare), the persistent sleep deprivation, and the frustration of realizing that not everyone in the corps shares the same level of maturity, or commitment to excellence and achievement. In the end, in spite of everything, the 1994 Blue Knights pull together and wow the crowds and judges, earning themselves a deserved spot among Drum Corps International's prestigious Top 12 finalists. This book will definitely appeal to young drum corps members and enthusiasts who don't mind wading through grammatical rough spots, and a good deal of corps jargon. Its lack of "big picture" context for those not intimately familiar with the drum corps activity (the Appendixes do provide some after-the-fact), and its general "readability" problems may, however, prevent Kuzma's book from appealing to a wider audience.

I got this book in December wanting to learn more about the drum corps activity, and it exceeded my expectations greatly. It doesn't just tell you what drum corps is, it gives you an insight into what the people that participate in it go through on a day to day basis. It also doesn't just help learn about one activity, it informs us of the day to day challenges of devoting a period of time to something larger than yourself, and the highs and lows you take to achieve something great. A MUST read for any person, but especially a drum corps fan. 5 Stars.

I received my copy from the author in person during a DCI regional show down in San Antonio in 2007. 8 years later I am still reading this book, not because of how I feel about Drum Corps but how the book helps me hold on to the memories I have from the years that I marched. He describes every day to the absolute detail that I can picture myself right there with him. He shares not only the struggles of being on the road away from his friends and family but the feeling of success and disappointment that comes with the activity. He also really hammers in how the corps becomes your family away from family and home away from home over the course of the summer. From All-Days to DCI Finals night, Greg covers it all without skipping a beat. For all of you interested in performing or for all of you who can no longer perform, this is a must read.

GM has constructed a compelling description of life inside the cultural microcosm that is competitive drum and bugle corps. This is a fascinating read for both experienced drum corps "nuts" and those uninitiated to the world of pageantry arts. GM's chronicle of his experiences as a member of the World Class DCI (Drum Corps International) touring corps, the Blue Knights of Denver, CO has something to hold the interest of everyone as he masterfully tells the story of the behind the scenes experiences of himself and his fellow musician athletes as the long, grueling competitive touring season unfolds. From his retelling of anecdotal incidents along the way, to the descriptions of rehearsals in pursuit of perfection, to the recount of competition successes and failures, to the familial bonding of the corps members as they live, work, laugh, and cry together in the course of a months long winter/spring rehearsal season and several weeks of summer competitive touring, covering thousands of miles and dozens of cities across North America leading up to the DCI World Championship in August this book is a "page turner"! These "kids" (aged 14-21) work harder and longer than you can imagine, rehearsing up to 14 hours a day under the blazing sun to learn and perfect an 11-13 minute musical and visual presentation that is then performed every night in competition against 5-10 other touring corps before wildly cheering crowds in football stadiums in a different city every night. Then the groups load the tour buses and equipment trucks to travel overnight to the next contest city, arriving in the wee hours of the next morning, where the corps members, instructional staff, and volunteers wake from a night of cramped sleeping conditions on the buses to begin another day of grueling rehearsal in preparation for that night's competition. The story is awe inspiring and fascinating - especially when one realizes that the participants are "just kids" who are drawn to the drum corps activity by their passion for excellence and love of music and performance. Trust me - this book will make you a "drum corps nut", too!

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