

General Release

HEALY

An Eastern Canadian Port – Anything can happen in a jam-packed navy town, but sailors here were astounded the other day when out of a clear blue sky renditions of sweet and hot jazz began pouring from a jetty berthing groups of silent war-grey navy destroyers.

It was all the result of a suggestion by a naval official that “music soothes the soul”, and the work of an enthusiastic navy bandmaster who has been in the business so long he knows how to supply the right kind of music for the right kind of people – at the right time.

Almost any day now you can stroll down among the ships during the men’s noon-hour “stand easy” and get *hep* with the latest form of jive supplied by a group of former professional musicians, now bandsmen in the Royal Canadian Navy. And the sailors can't get enough of their music.

Under the guidance of Warrant Bandmaster Jimmy Downie, R.C.N.V.R., of Toronto, the group started the idea as an experiment to help build the men’s morale. It went over with a bang and now the navy brass hats – fully behind the venture – are convinced that even as “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”, so does a little play make him smarter.

The band, selected as the best “kings of swing”, pile their instruments on a truck, along with a piano, and head for one of the jettys just before noon. They set themselves up alongside one of the ships. As the sailors pour from the ships, they circle the band and take on gleaming smiles of contentment. Many others line the railing.

“The boys really go for good swing,” Downie says, “and that’s what we give them. We were told to go ahead with the plan so long as it didn’t interfere with work. And so far it hasn’t.

“A ship’s captain listened to us one day and then told me it was one of the finest ideas the navy ever thought of, Downie added. “And the navy in general is all for it. After all, why shouldn't they be? It’s a great morale builder. There’s nothing like good jive to cheer up the men.”

And it’s all “in the groove” with the bandsmen themselves who like to “jive on the jetty” as much as their enthusiastic audience likes to hear it. They come from all parts of Canada and played with well-known bands in civilian life.

The sax and clarinet section is made up of Leading Bandsman Al Smaltz, R.C.N.V.R., and Bandsman Ken Hunt, R.C.N.V.R. both of Saskatoon; L/Bandsman Eddy Gelinis, R.C.N.V.R., and L/Bandsman George Gresham, R.C.N.V.R., both of Toronto.

Bandsman Tony Cryan, R.C.N.V.R., Hamilton, and Bandsman Robert Singleton, R.C.N.V.R., Glen Cove, hold down the brass section, while the trombone is handled in Tommy Dorsey fashion by Bandsman Banks Kearns, R.C.N.V.R., Vancouver.

L/Bandsman Sam Capter, R.C.N.V.R., Toronto, sways the sailors with his drums and the pianist is Petty Officer Bandsman Mickey Nold, R.C.N., of Saskatoon. Win Phillip, R.C.N.V.R., of Thorold, Ont., slaps the bass fiddle and is probably the best-known musician of the lot.