

HOME ENTERTAINMENT FINBATT

Staying one year away from your home country is a long period, which, of course, causes some stresses and home sickness for a peacekeeper. When your familiar environment shrinks to a small position only 100m wide and surrounded by walls it demands a strong mentality and character to keep constantly in good mood and the will to do your duties well. Knowing this all of the UNIFIL battalions arrange entertainment and recreational activities for their peacekeepers. Every year FINBATT invites at least one entertainment group from Finland to give concerts to the battalion and to its neighbours. Last autumn a military band visited UNIFIL area. Now it was time for a pop group.

The preparations began early last autumn. Several

Below: The audience at Tyre Barracks enjoying the concert. From left to right Capt Khou Khalil (LLO), Col. Dagher (CLO), Capt. P. Mononen (SO MAINT) Lt. Col. P. Inkilainen (CHO), Col. Doha Co 5th Brigade.

popular bands in Finland were eager to visit Lebanon even though FINBATT doesn't normally pay for the concerts. Only the transportation and accommodation is arranged.

The Booger Harp-Band from the northern-most town in Finland, Sodankyla, and an artist, «Marjorie», were lucky to get the invitation. On 12 April, the entertainment group arrived with a supply flight at the warm Beirut airport and was transported with the leave convoy to 9-1, the FINBATT HQ.

After some lessons concerning the safety regulations and rules of UNIFIL the group got uniforms, flakjackets, cap and everything normally needed when moving in the AO. Next day the entertainment group started working.

1st Coy/FINBATT, «Vala» introduced its area and positions and in the afternoon the band climbed onto the «stage» built on two trucks at 9-34 to have a concert for a very enthusiastic audience of peacekeepers. By the way, most of the music of the



Booger Harp is composed by a UNIFIL peacekeeper Sgt Risto Hamalainen, who serves in the signal platoon in FINBATT.

Next day the 2nd Coy/FINBATT, «Panu», had its turn. As the concert was arranged to benefit all UNIFIL, FMR had its share on Friday 15 April. The main concert on Saturday at 9-1, the HQ/FINBATT, was a tremendous success and several guests from the neighbouring Tom Kjelmann school, supported and built by FINBATT, attended to enjoy the

Above: The Booger Harp Band at Tyre Barracks. The composer of the music Sgt. Risto Hamalainen second from right in action.

Finnish pop music, which might perhaps be a little strange to their ears. In the evening the band had an encore at «Alamessi», one of the messes in 9-1.

After these five concert shows the group needed some rest and were taken for a tour to Beirut and its surroundings.

On Monday 18 April and Tuesday 19 April, the band had its greatest challenge. It had a concert at GHANBATT, whose excellent band had visited FINBATT several times. It performed also at 5th Brigade of Lebarmy at Tyre Barracks. Throughout their performance it was noticed that music is an international language which can easily cross linguistic and cultural barriers.!

The last day of the tour was devoted to recreation and sun bathing (as it was still winter in Sodankyla). Next day the group returned with a rotation flight of FINBATT back to Finland.

The band wishes to thank FINBATT and all audience at the concerts, especially the GHANBATT and 5th Brigade, which had again excellent arrangements for the visitors.

Capt Kari Lammassaari
PIO/ FINBATT

