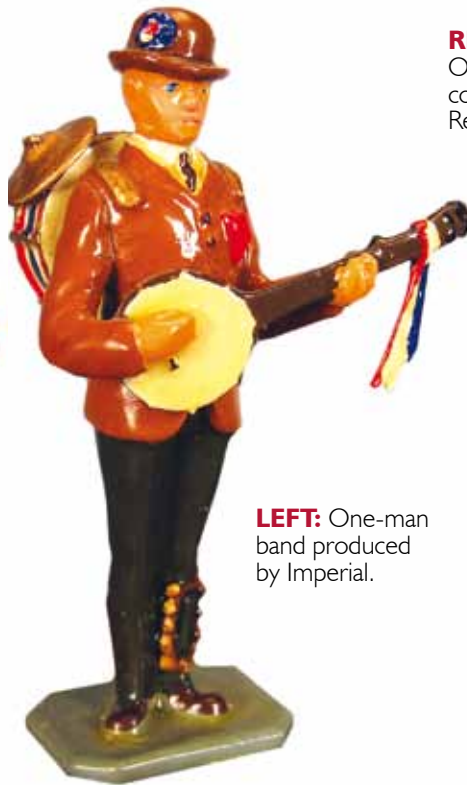


RIGHT: Figure of a one-man band made by Trophy.



LEFT: One-man band produced by Imperial.



RIGHT: One-man band composed by Red Box.



Amazing One-Man Bands

James H. Hillestad drums up miniature versions of a very unique musical tradition

Text and Photos: James H. Hillestad

When my wife Carol and I visited Québec City, Canada, in August 2011, we attended the annual International Festival of Military Bands (see TS&MF issue 163). Amidst all the splendor and pageantry, I chanced upon a one-man band performing on the terrace of the massive Chateau Frontenac, Old Québec's historic hotel overlooking the St. Lawrence River.

What a treat! He was extremely talented, and the one-man band's audience responded with gusto and wild applause.

Inspired, when I returned home I searched about and discovered that I have three 1:32-scale representations of amazing one-man bands in my Toy Soldier Museum collection. The spirit they evoke and their colorful characterizations are delightful.

PIPE & DRUM ORIGINS

What is a one-man band? Wikipedia says a one-man band is a musician who plays a number of musical instruments using his hands, feet, limbs and various mechanical contraptions.

The earliest-known records of multiple musical instruments being played at the same time by one person date from the 13th century. They were a pipe and tabor. The pipe was a simple three-holed, flute-

like instrument that could be played with one hand. The tabor is more commonly known as a snare drum.

The term "one-man band" is also colloquially used to describe a performer who plays every instrument on a recorded song, one at a time, and then mixes them together in a multitrack studio. Rock performers such as Stevie Wonder, Prince, Paul McCartney and Roy Wood have made records in which they played every instrument.

Since the advent of Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) technology in the 1980s, some practitioners have incorporated electronic devices in their performances. For example, a one-man band might use chest-mounted MIDI drum pads, foot-mounted electronic drum triggers, synthesizers or organ-style pedal keyboards.

HEAR THE MUSIC!

A one-man band is an ensemble limited only by the mechanical capabilities and imaginative abilities of its creator. Any one-man band is a true phenomenon.

Performers like these have inspired the creativity of painted metal figure makers of days gone by. Examples of one-man bands in my collection were produced by Trophy Miniatures of Wales, Imperial Productions



ABOVE: A one-man band performs for tourists in Québec City.

of New Zealand and Red Box of England.

Close your eyes, turn on your imagination and hear the music! ■

about the writer

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum and shop in Cresco, Pa., USA.