

Radio Macon Makes a Big Hit with Shipboard Talent

Some radio listeners like their music hot, some like it cool. Certain listeners go for an exciting report of world happenings, while others like an action packed sport-cast—but regardless of where your taste lies, *Radio Macon* aboard the heavy cruiser of the same name, provides all this and more too.

Continuous background music is piped through the ship on one of the two RBO channels assigned to the shipboard radio station while the other channel carries live broadcasts from the Armed Forces Radio Service plus programs originating in the broadcast studio on the ship's mess deck.

Radio Macon is set up in much the same manner as many civilian radio stations. It has a conventional type outlet (RBO Channel 4) for news and sports programs, and for disc jockey and special shows. Channel 3 of the RBO system is operated much like Stateside FM stations. It supplies various parts of the ship with continuous background music. In port the melodies, designed to make the daily routine easier, are usually received on FM and rebroadcast throughout the ship. At sea, long-play records are the source of the musical selections.

A visit to the nerve center of Radio Macon will usually find Stephen D. Lapin, SA, USN, on duty either at the console controls or repairing equipment. Lapin had technical radio training in civilian life and was a natural for the full time job of station manager because of his ability to double as a circuit trouble shooter.

Another *Maconite* who devotes a great deal of his off-duty hours to the studio is LTJG George H. Overstreet, USN, who was designated officer-in-charge of Radio Macon at its beginning. In this capacity he monitors the programs, buys supplies and trains announcers who volunteer for programs on Radio Macon. At present eight volunteers handle the announcing chores.

The broadcast studio is set up in a professional manner in a space once devoted to the electronic equipment of a 3-inch 50 cal. mount which was displaced by the *Regulus* missile installation. This port-side compartment is divided in half by the console panel. An impressive

array of instruments and switches is used by the operators to control the output on both channels and turn microphones and turntables on and off. When the station is on the air a panel-mounted loud-speaker lets the "engineer" who may be doubling as the announcer, monitor the programs originating from the two turntables used for record shows on Channel 4.

On the bulkhead beside the engineer-announcer is a powerful



shortwave set used to pull in AFRS stations when the ship is deployed or standard broadcast stations when in port. Like the FM receiver used to receive the programs of FM stations in the Boston area (*Macon's* homeport), or other East Coast cities the ship might be visiting, this receiver is wired into the station circuits so that the programs can be carried on the RBO system. Also wired into the system is the record-changer which provides the continuous Channel 3 music programs.

In the other half of the space is the desk where the live news and sports programs are written and broadcast. Also located there are the storage racks where the library of more than 80 popular records, 20 long-play albums, and 300 AFRS program discs are filed. Every couple of months this library is brought up to date by purchasing

records selected from the top 40 tunes in Boston plus selected new albums. "High Society," "South Pacific" and "The King and I" are examples of the albums on hand.

Except for the commercial receivers and record player, the station was built by ship's company. The panel was installed by the ship's carpenters and the wiring done by those familiar with the necessary procedures. The money for records and equipment was supplied by the ship's recreation fund and in its first months of operation Radio Macon has returned the investment by becoming one of the most important recreational items on the ship.

A normal day of operation will find both channels coming on the air at reveille. Channel 3 carries its background music throughout the day while Channel 4 leaves the air at 0745. The Channel 4 program schedule resumes once again at 1100 but the station shuts down at 1300 when ship's work resumes. The RBO channel remains silent until 1600 when it is air time again for Radio Macon. The programs continue until 2200 when *Macon* is at sea, but in port the station shuts down when the evening movie begins.

During broadcast hours it is not unusual to find a group of sailors sitting around outside the studio listening to the music and urging the announcer to play this or that record. In the past, the area of the mess deck around the studio has been crowded with quiz show participants or those eager to name a tune during request time programs. Music programs of all types and the AFRS shows ranging from the *Lone Ranger* to variety shows round out the Radio Macon schedule.

The programming future of the station is bright, with plans being made for several new shows including a series of programs on current events.

Equipment-wise the station is also growing.

Since many ships have radio stations and one even has a TV-station on board, you could not call Radio Macon unique. It is typical of what a Navy ship can do with a little enthusiasm and a lot of initiative.