

Defense Media Network Unveils New Cutting-Edge Website

GI Jams Showcases Music from the Troops

BY [JAN TEGLER](#)



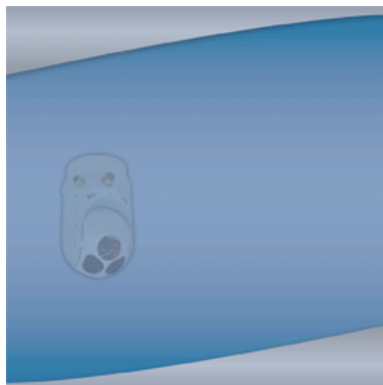
U.S. Marine Lance Cpl. Travis E. Bugar, an aircraft rescue firefighter with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, plays guitar during his free time on Forward Operating Base Delaram, Helmand province, Afghanistan, April 7, 2013. Music as morale booster in the military has existed throughout history, but GI Jams aims to help Marines like Bugar monetize their hobby. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Staff Sgt. Ezekiel R. Kitandwe

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Music has been a feature of military service and warfare for nearly as long as there have been armies. From calls used to signal troops in battle and rhythms indicating marching cadences to cues for routine activities such as meal and bed times, soldiers worldwide have taken for granted the formal role of music in military life. Today, the U.S. military is one

of the largest employers of musicians in the country.

But popular and personal music as distinct from marshal music has also accompanied troops into battle for millennia. As means of self-expression, a diversion, a way to alleviate stress or battle monotony, soldiers have carried instruments with them to play, sing and even compose music with.

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GI Jams was created for them, Denny Randell and Bidy Schippers say. The accomplished songwriting/record producing duo launched the website in late 2009 as a platform for active duty service members and veterans to share, promote and benefit financially from their original material.

“Our troops can join the website not just within the U.S. but from around the world, Denny Randell explains. “It’s for all-original music and when they sign into the site they have their own page. Using their own control panel, they can post their music, bio and pictures. They can also talk and share information with other military artists.”



Lt. Col. Jerard A. Brewer, Marine Corps Installations-East Marine For Life officer in charge, plays

his guitar next to a GI Jams poster featuring eight artists, including himself, aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., July 26, 2013. Brewer, a songwriter, has four albums worth of songs on the GI Jams website. U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Charles Clark

Civilians can join the site as well, but cannot post music. However, anyone can listen to the work of hundreds of military artists streamed via each artist's dedicated page. A multitude of genres can be enjoyed, from alternative, country and hip-hop/rap to jazz, latin and R&B/Soul. Members from all branches of the military are included and many have produced music videos featuring (also on the website) their original compositions.

With song writing credits spanning five decades for artists as diverse as Sarah Vaughan, The Monkees, Frankie Valli and P. Diddy, and for television and film, Randell says the idea behind GI Jams is simply about giving back to the troops by providing them with a venue for their talent.

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“It took us a year to design the site,” she adds. “But when we did, we knew it had to have control panels so that deployed military members would be able to upload their music from wherever they were individually. That’s a great thing and something we hoped would come together with GI Jams.”

“Biddy and I knew there were many ways to reach out but one day we realized that we could give back through the thing we know best, music. There are so many people out there in the military now and who’ve served previously who have great musical talent. We wanted to give them an opportunity to showcase and promote their talent. Most of these people just didn’t have that opportunity because they were defending and protecting us.”

A successful songwriter and producer in her own right, Schippers affirms that GI Jams has caught on as she and Randell had hoped.



U.S. Navy sailors play music on the fo'c'sle aboard the guided-missile cruiser USS Monterey (CG 61), June 28, 2013. GI Jams provides a venue where musically inclined service members can develop and showcase their music. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Billy Ho

“In this modern day of technology where some of these people have a laptop computer, a mic and maybe a couple of guitars with them they can actually be creating and recording their music in war zones. Many of the people who’ve joined GI Jams did so while serving in Iraq, Afghanistan or Korea – from all over the world.”

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Part of our mission is to help them across the board,” says Schippers. “Maybe it’s teaching them a little something about music publishing or the music itself, or even just talking about their current deployment.”

In early 2012 GI Jams released its first album. GI Jams’ Compilation Album, Volume 1 features the work of several of the website’s top artists. Music videos are also included on the CD-ROM format release. Available through [iTunes](#) and at [Marine Corps](#) installation stores nationally, all profits from the album and the downloading of music go directly to the artists, many of whom have built quite a following.

Randell and Schippers are gathering material

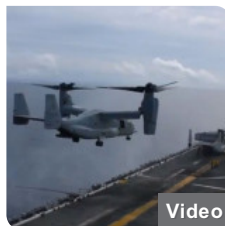
for a second album and have made themselves available to educate and advise GI Jams members about the music business. GI Jams has also been recognized by **EMI Music** (one of the world's leading music publishers) and according to Randell, EMI is promoting the work of some GI Jams song writers globally.



Maj. Pete Reddan, 437th Airlift Wing pilot, writes a song outside of a C-17 Globemaster III on Joint Base Charleston, S.C., June 13, 2012. Reddan's military inspired tune, "Off to War," was recorded by Nashville recording artist Brad Anderson. The song was inspired by Reddan's experiences during deployments, as well as the experiences of the men and women Reddan serves with. GI Jams aims to teach aspiring musicians about all aspects of the music industry. U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Ashlee Galloway

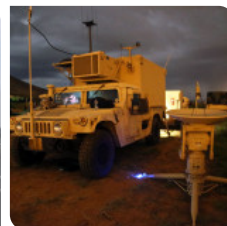
"Part of our mission is to help them across the board," says Schippers. "Maybe it's teaching them a little something about music publishing or the music itself, or even just talking about their current deployment. We feel very honored and this has been a great learning experience for us too. We've learned more about what troops go through."

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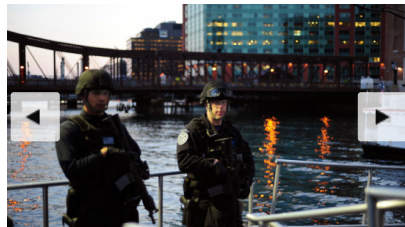


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