



A sea of fun faces seeking to entertain.



You may or not be familiar with "chindon-ya"—a uniquely Japanese version of professional advertisers akin to sandwich-board advertisers in other countries. "Chindon-ya" refers to a band of traditional Japanese street performers. Dressed in colorful, eye-catching clothes, these bands wind through the streets, beating drums and striking bells loudly to draw attention.

An all-Japan "chindon-ya" contest was held in Toyama, a port city on the Sea of Japan, between April 3 and 5 when cherry blossoms were just beginning to burst into bloom. About 200 professional and amateur performers from across the country assembled there to compete.

"Chindon-ya" performers are useless unless they catch the attention of people on the street.

# ADVERTISING THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY



*A group of noisy chindonya performers marches through the streets of Toyama City.*

Their costumes and makeup are extremely loud. Basically, male performers play the role of a samurai while females dress as geisha. Yet, performers subtly differ in style from each other. Slapping a layer of white powder on their faces, band members sometimes blow a bugle, pluck a banjo or play an accordion.

Under the blue sky in Toyama, more than

200,000 spectators enjoyed watching the "chindon-ya" bands with their humorous performances.

This year's contest marked the 55th was won by a band from Osaka. Its members were all smiles as they received 1 million yen (about \$10,000) in prize money.