



Reporter at large

Virtuoso in person

By DREXEL R. BRADLEY

It was about 8:30 the other night when the stocky man walked in front of the bandstand, planted his feet firmly, arched his back, pointed his trumpet skyward, and the first notes ripped out, shattering hard and clean in the crowded room.

And from that moment on through the next four hours — through standing ovations, cheers and yelling — Maynard Ferguson had the crowd in Phil Hoeffler's Stokesay Castle eating out of his horn.

FERGUSON, a Canadian now living in England, and who rocketed to fame as a trumpeter with Stan Kenton's Orchestra in the early '50s, and whose orchestrations show the Kenton influence, especially in the chord structures, made Hoeffler's mountaintop castle a stop on his latest American tour.

A couple of times during the show, I thought maybe Ferguson backed off a bit as he was rocketing into the stratosphere, but it was almost indiscernible. One fan, however, said he understood the band was going to take a month's break, and theorized that maybe Maynard was taking it a little easy in anticipation of that.

BUT LOCAL JAZZ buff Nelson Nagle, a U.S. Treasury agent I've known

for years, said he chatted with Ferguson and was told that Maynard had injured his lip a while back and although it was healing, was sort of favoring it — which is like a piano player soloing with a broken hand. And considering the sounds that tumbled flawlessly from Maynard's horn as he moved effortlessly up through the middle register into the really high stuff, then just as easily flowed back down again, it was unbelievable that he was doing it with a tender lip.

In the climactic "Hey Jude," which Ferguson described as his band's "moment of insanity," musicians split off and walked out among the audience playing wildly until the whole thing came apart in deliberate discords cascading over the crowd.

Then, brought back by a standing, cheering ovation, Ferguson joined the trumpet section, intoned "It's one, and two, and one — then everybody's on his own . . ." And the section ripped into a dazzling display of trumpet fireworks.

THERE'S ONLY ONE way to describe Maynard Ferguson's playing — his is a virtuoso performance. He makes other technical, nonjazz-oriented trumpet experts sound like schoolchildren tooting kazoos.

But you gotta hear it to believe it.