

# Maynard Ferguson roared at airwave content rules

By DAVID FREESTON

"When I heard about it, I roared with laughter because I thought it was so great. I thought, hey, here's a form of prejudice that'll finally work for me!"

That's Maynard Ferguson, renowned jazz trumpeter and band leader on a recent visit to Montreal, his birthplace and early home. The subject was the CRTC regulations prescribing 30 per cent Canadian content on Canadian AM airwaves, and he handles the topic with singularly good humor. After all, jazz isn't exactly an AM staple, and besides, he established himself 26 years ago when he left to find fame and fortune abroad.

Fame he found instantly, but fortune proved elusive at times, as for all jazz artists. And having maintained his Canadian citizenship throughout his career, he was exempt from America's way of recognizing, and subsidizing, the jazz artist.

"In all the years and all the successes I've had, we've never done a state department tour. I'm a Canadian, not an American, and sooner or later every other band gets one of these tours."

This year his own country will be honoring him. A few days after his Place des Arts concert July 28, Ferguson will be performing for the athletes at an Olympic Village show, and at the closing ceremonies it will be he who blows out the Olympic flame — with his horn.

These days, he is prosperous and ebullient. His most recent album, *Primal Scream*, has in the course of the three weeks since its release chalked up 60,000 in sales — an astronomical sum for a jazz album — and he's as anxious to talk about the directions being taken by the young jazz and rock musicians and new youthful audiences, as he is about his own new music.

And why not, because they're inextricably linked. Ferguson has kept apace with the times without ever really abandoning his fundamental ideas about music.

It was from him, in fact, that Al Kooper got his charts and ideas about tempo changes for an experiment, *Blood, Sweat, and Tears*, back in 1967. Asked how he had felt about Kooper's note taking, Ferguson replied:

"The first time I ever heard BS&T I thought it was a gas . . . I'm a great believer in change, and how could I not help but love it when I was dissatisfied with the way my older audience was reacting to my own attempts to do something new."

During 1967, Maynard left for Europe to rethink his music, to cut his wildly suc-

cessful M.F. Horn album, and to tour. Then he went to India for a year and a half where he taught and developed a predilection for what he calls East-West music. Things changed in North America in the interim and he was pleased when he returned:

"I think that now American and Canadian audiences have become the very thing that we used to rave about when we talked of European audiences . . ."

Since he's been back in North America, the trumpeter who's played with Jimmy Dorsey and Stan Kenton, won the *Downbeat* poll three times for best trumpeter, and fostered talents such as Chick Corea and Bob James, has been constantly busy with tours and, not unexpectedly, teaching.

"I do an awful lot of teaching now. As a matter of fact we do about three clinics a week — along with our concerts — where we go into the leading universities and high schools in the U.S. I don't even mind sending them my charts since I don't feel compelled to guard them jealously. I hope to do more of this in Canada too, by the way."

Ferguson is anxious to keep in touch with both rock and

jazz, in keeping with his perennially progressive and pliant nature.

"In the big band, you've got to learn from the young, and we learn from the group thing, with my small 14-piece 'big' band . . . I get guys that are coming from 60-40, 70-30 sometimes, meaning maybe he's a 70 per cent rocker before he comes with my band, and a 30 per cent jazz — which means he's played some jazz and is a younger cat and doesn't have that much experience with straightahead fours. Because that hasn't been part of his thing: but as soon as he gets to the rock thing, whoosh, he's away! That's his predominant bag and what he does best, today, so it's for me as leader to switch the solos around and guide them."

"Whenever they say 'Bring back the big bands,' it almost makes me shudder. Especially when I see all the old ghost bands like Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey, filled with some fine young talent constantly calling my manager for a job because they're forced to play the music of the past. If they want to do it, that's a knockout; but if that's the only gig available to them, that's sad."