

# Maynard Ferguson-- 'Music thing of joy'

By DAVID STERRITT  
—The Christian Science Monitor Service

NEW YORK, N.Y. — "The first thing is to keep loving music! Then keep your head wide open, and listen to everything — and play everything — in a creative way. . . The two severest critics I know are on the two sides of my own head. But don't worry; they know how to applaud too! . . ."

Maynard Ferguson started listening to those "critics," and studying music, at four years of age. At nine he was a conservatory student in his native Canada. At 15 he formed a big band with sideman averaging twice his age. At 20 he played the United States with Jimmy Dorsey, Charlie Barnet, and Stan Kenton — whose band made him a star.

**HITTING THE top** is a good trick, but staying there is a better one. Ferguson's latest Columbia album — "Primal Scream" — sold more copies in five weeks than any of his previous hits sold in a year. Why does a huge young audience dig Maynard so much?

"We're into today's music a lot," muses the musician. "Kids identify with the rhythms we get into. Yet our approach is a mixture. My daughter is my manager, and she once said, 'It isn't jazz, it isn't rock, it isn't pop — it's just Maynard Ferguson, the band, and what they're doing today.'"

"That sounds pompous, but it's the seed of what we're all about. Still, you could turn that negative into a positive and say, 'It is jazz, it is rock, and it is what pop represents: Popularity!'"

**ONE KEY IS** listening for new ideas wherever you can find them. "If you hear something new that happens to be electronic, don't say, 'What do we need that for?' Say instead, 'I wonder if there's a way we could use that so it would turn me on.'" This attitude helps explain an electric mix like "Primal Scream," which moves from disco to Latin, from Chick Corea's "Cheshire Cat Walk" to a jazzed-up "Pagliacci." It's all Maynard, and Maynard loves it all.

Despite his current broad popularity, Ferguson is aware of critics who snipe at eclectic styles, calling them "impure" and commercially motivated. "Some people like purists," responds the trumpeter, "but who is pure? Louis Armstrong started doing something different when he left King Oliver's band, so was he 'impure' forever after that? The only real purist is some African drummer somewhere."

"These people want to see me walking around with a beatup old cornet under my arm in a paper bag," Ferguson smiles, "looking to borrow five bucks from someone like in all those old movies. But most people are away from that image of jazz musicians now. . ."

A continuing challenge for any big-band leader is finding fresh talent for his ensemble. Ferguson has his own method of keeping his ears open for reports and recommendations, and asking prospective musicians to



MAYNARD FERGUSON

send tapes of themselves playing "in a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere."

**HE HAS "NEVER** been a fan of the audition, which often leads to a case of nerves. I could give you a very famous list called Maynard's Mistakes of talents I missed when I did audition. So the in-person audition has been depleted from my repertoire. I've struck out too many times with it."

One reason for this approach is Ferguson's dislike of unnecessary competitiveness. "Often a sensitive, creative musician enters into music without wanting to keep score," he says. "I dislike that competition in an art form. Especially when you're trying to educate children. It's destructive to tell one 13-year-old that he came in last while

another is the best."

This implies no disrespect for music educators in general, however, whom Ferguson calls "those great friends of ours, along with the school systems and the 20,000 stage bands that are in America today. The upgrading of music education in the schools has been the greatest improvement in the last 15 years." He grins as he thinks of "all those kids getting into a wider form of music. . ."

For Ferguson, some of those emerging youngsters might be future sidemen. He admits to getting attached to members of his band, and mourning when they leave for other pursuits. "It reminds you of running a ball club. You always think you'll never get another Mickey Mantle, but before that you thought you'd never get another DiMaggio:

and the truth is you don't get another one, you get something different that you hadn't even thought of."

**THE MAIN PROBLEM**, he says, is not finding talent, but selecting from the profusion of good players who are available. He recalls the "wild" jazzman Charlie Barnet saying he didn't care about a man's fine nonmusical qualities, preferring "a dummy who can play." Says Ferguson, "I don't need dummies. There are so many wonderful people coming along today. . ."

Though Ferguson's career has prospered, the road has not always been smooth. "When I was nine I just loved music," he recalls. "And the rate of pleasure I get from playing and performing has been going steadily up."

"But in the late '60s I got disenchanted with the cookie-stamp Maynard Ferguson I was playing. Audiences weren't so adventurous then — they just wanted to hear 'Maria' instead of what I wanted to play." So Maynard took off for India and England, after disbanding his band.

But he never forgot the thrill of leading that band and blowing his own horn — "I approach the instrument very physically" — before an American audience. "Not many people still believe the old stuff about playing only for yourself," he insists. So he returned to the U.S. and found listeners "widening their interests."

**HE GAVE THEM** the diversity they wanted, and soon found himself back in the swing — and with a growing reputation as a designer of instruments, such as the M.F. Horn Trumpet, M. F. Superbone, and M.F. Firebird that he plays on "Primal Scream."

Today Ferguson enjoys the challenge of longer cuts on albums — "it's more artistic" — while remembering to avoid the pitfalls of "the endless solo." He remembers a remark once made to him by Charlie Parker: "If you can't say it in eight bars, you can't say it at all." Comments Maynard, "I'm not sure I can say it in eight bars, but it's a great quote."

He also remembers that "vintage tunes are fun, and I'll still do two or three in a concert, but the new things are what keep us and the audience alive."

**AND THE VETERAN** jazzman still feels fresh enough to get a case of the jitters now and then — as when he blew out the 1976 Olympic torch with a trumpet solo before 73,000 people in the audience and a billion viewers via satellite TV. "I was nervous," he admits, "until I got into it. Playing in Canada like that showed me that you can go back successfully to the place you came from. It was, as they say, 'an occasion.'"

So Ferguson continues to tour — from Europe to Japan — and to bear out the most important factor of all. "The secret to my whole thing is that music is a thing of joy. As soon as the joy comes out of it, change your music!"

By BOB FREDERICK

Much knowledge of a hobby is gleaned from the literature available about the hobby, so two recent releases promise help to the coin collector.

Best known of the pair is the "Handbook Of United States Coins With Premium List". That name might sound strange, but when the common "Blue-Book" nomenclature is applied, recognition is almost immediate.

So we have a new Blue-Book, all updated to reflect dealers' buying prices that may be experienced for months to come. There is every reason to believe that this thirty-fourth edition for 1977 will be accorded the same importance as was enjoyed by its ancestors. The mass of experience of R. S. Yeoman has again scored in preparing this important piece of numismatic material.

All United States copper, nickel, silver and gold coins from our country's beginning through the current Bicentennial issues are described and illustrated in this handbook. Both the beginning and advanced collector will find the information accompanying these listing practical and helpful.

**THE 128 PAGE** book reflects a tale of increasing prices for most United States coins of earlier years. While this is especially true of coins in the better condition ranges, many price increases are evident in the lower grades.

It would be difficult to present a fair representation of the many price increases. With values moving up on just

## Coin talk

about everything from half cents to half dollars, suffice it to say that the increases are general.

You can buy the Blue Book from your local hobby shop, book store or coin dealer. The suggested retail price is \$2.95. It can be ordered direct from the publisher, Department M, Western Publishing Co., Inc., 1200 Mound Ave., Racine, Wis. 53404, but an extra \$1.00 must be remitted to cover postage and handling.

Another book recently released by the same company is the third edition of Whitman's "Coins of the World 1750-1850".

**THE COLLECTING** of world coins has grown by leaps and bounds over the last decade. Thus catalogues covering the nations beyond our boundaries have taken on new importance. This book is no exception, with its chronological listing of all issues, their inclusive dates, metals, denominations and a catalogue number. All denominations, from the smallest copper pieces to those of gold and platinum are included, with a valuation for each piece.

A multitude of illustrations assists the collector in identification. These are thoroughly supplemented by descriptions. The book's introductory material has been expanded to provide a wide scope of information helpful in the identifica-

tion of its subject, including coats-of-arms, monograms, Arabic mint names and pertinent world symbols.

Even to the non-collector the catalogue is an item of interest: an armchair journey through the world of a by-gone period. It is a path through an age of empires and wars, and of the rulers who guided and led in the making of history.

**THE BOOK** is available from your local supplier for \$12.95. It is edited by W. D. Craig.

And — to bring you right up-to-date, a third book from the same publishing house has been released in a new edition. This is R. S. Yeoman's "Current Coins of the World. . ."

This book is not confined to collectors' coins; those made primarily to cater to the numismatic market. In fact, those coins are identified by being bracketed to distinguish them from the predominant coins of everyday circulation, those coins that form the collections of most collectors.

This seventh edition has grown from its elder's 288 pages to 384 pages to include, as well as all coins worldwide from 1955 to the present a multitude of pertinent facts, supplemented by a generous amount of clear illustrations.

The book features the Yeoman catalogue number for easy identification. Most up-to-date values are given throughout; values determined by the collective input of numerous experts in the coin market. Coins are listed by country, date, metal and denomination in an easy to follow manner.

This catalogue is really number three of a set, with "Coins of the World 1750-1850" forming the first volume, and the approximately one hundred years after that covered by "Modern World Coins". This volume is available from your local supplier for \$5.50