

Maynard Ferguson hit with 'Gonna Fly Now'

By MARY CAMPBELL
AP Newsfeatures Writer

Maynard Ferguson radiates so much enthusiasm when his band is playing that one wonders if it's all real or partly show business.

So one meets Maynard Ferguson to find that out. And in conversations he has enough additional verve and good cheer to cause his listener to walk around with a brighter spirit all day.

A New York Times review of a Newport Jazz Festival concert this summer began, "The brassy glory of Maynard Ferguson's orchestra shone brilliantly."

And about the leader it continued, "He heightens anything he plays, even when it is not inherently dramatic, by seeming to almost kiss the last note as he leaps back holding his trumpet triumphantly in the air."

"I'm a performer and I openly know that and enjoy it and think that is part of my art," Ferguson says. "I'm a great lover of audiences and I really enjoy what I do."

"When I teach in the schools, I try to teach them to enjoy as they learn. I get some very serious young people, getting too serious. I think of music as mostly hooked into joy and

pleasure."

Ferguson, born in 1928, has silver hair framing a face with muscles kept boyishly plump by blowing his trumpet. In a short talk, one finds out that he's delighted about all sorts of things, small and great.

Frank Sinatra's lawyer has phoned his manager and asked, "How much for the kid?" and Ferguson, nearing 50, is tickled to be called the kid.

Ferguson was on camera two-and-a-half minutes as the flag lowered and flame was extinguished at the Olympics in Montreal. He, a Canadian, played music written by a Canadian and the whole thing was televised and sent by satellite to an enormous audience.

His last two LPs and last two singles have been the biggest hits of his career. "Primal Scream" hit the pop charts and "Conquistador," which followed it, has sold more than 400,000 copies and is the best-selling big album in years. "Gonna Fly Now," the theme from the movie, "Rocky," was a single hit for Ferguson.

In Italy, it was a bigger hit than the version by Bill Conti, the Italian who wrote it, played it on the soundtrack and had the biggest hit



MAYNARD

with the tune in the United States.

Ferguson's new single, "Star Wars," is selling well. So are versions by the London Symphony and Mecca.

About his playing, Ferguson says, "I'm probably stronger than ever before." Asked what is the highest note he can hit on the trumpet — and nobody even asks anymore whether anybody else can play as high — Ferguson says, "It's

limitless, really. It depends on the day, the need and the inspiration. In the last year and a half, trumpeter Don Ellis says I've added another octave."

But Ferguson who also is a family man, does not "live" his trumpet. "There are people, if you take the horn away from them, they'd be lost. For me, that horn stays in the case unless I'm involved in writing."

"I do not practice three hours a day. I do a lot of swimming and keep myself in good physical shape. On the road I drink only good wine, and not too much good wine. I do breathing exercises."

Ferguson and Jay Chattaway wrote "Conquistador," which is longer when done on stage than on the album. "Four trumpet solos by four different guys in the band aren't nearly as effective on an album; it sounds like one trumpet solo. In person, you have the realization of the identities changing and different approaches."

"Conquistador" has a feel of romantic old Spain and it's definitely a showcase for the Ferguson trumpet. Ferguson says he and Chattaway, his record producerwrite well together. He, played a single-note instrument, spins out romantic melodies.

Chattaway's con-

tributions, on piano, are virtually important but hard to define, Ferguson says. They work in one room, playing, trading ideas, with a tape recorder running.

Performing used to be fun but making a record was too much like taking an examination in school, Ferguson says.

But now that he knows more about recording, he enjoys that too. He records with his own band instead of with a studio band, Ferguson says, because they're so good. Everybody has been with him two years and some for five or six.

But the most important thing, he says, is "the fact the band is not married to any one sound. A new sound is a thrill to everybody. Being involved in a today thing is pleasure and fun and creative as opposed to saying we should do the same old things."

"Our band is based on excitement and feeling young and being today. Not all wine that gets old gets better and that's the way I feel about music."

A new album, to be released in October, his ninth for Columbia, something like his 50th total, will include "Airegin," Ferguson says. "That's Nigeria spelled backwards. It's a Sonny Rollins composition."

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