



Maynard Ferguson

May 4, 1928 – August 23, 2006

If there was an artist who could hit just about any register of notes at any scale, it was Maynard Ferguson. A true master of the trumpet, Maynard attacked his art with such force, you thought he was a gladiator in Rome swinging his sword down on an opponent. Maynard was simply a realist. He had the uncanny ability to get a band together and play the music of the times. From [big band swing](#), [bebop](#), [cool jazz](#), [Latin](#), jazz / rock, [fusion](#) with [classical](#) and [operatic](#) influences, Maynard's range seemed unlimited as his music touched the young and old alike.

Rumors put it that he was the only trumpet player that could crack crystal. I remember a Memorex commercial that showed Maynard at least cracking a glass. During his long career he put out some fantastic pieces, Hey Jude,



Conquistador [2008]



M.F. Horn 2 [2007]

Mac Arthur Park, Gonna Fly Now (Theme to Rocky) just to name a few.

Maynard always pushed the big band sound and his solo's were something to witness. He lit up thousands of young horn players, most of them boys, with pride and excitement. In a (high school) world often divided between jocks and band nerds, Ferguson crossed over, because he approached his music almost as an athletic event. On stage, he strained, sweated, heaved and roared. He nailed the upper registers like Shaq nailing a dunk or Lawrence

Taylor nailing a running back – and the audience reaction was exactly the same: the guttural shout, the leap to their feet, with fists in the air.

If there is one thing you can say about Ferguson, was he got around. Living in England and India. Much of his career was overseas as he worked with different people from all walks of life. Maynard was a part of the LSD scene and did not shy from it. His on going search for enlightenment crossed the seas.

One of my favorites is the title cut from his album Chameleon. Even though Maynard had much brass and saxes in his bands, I believe he favored the trombones. I would have hated to have been a trombone player in his band. He really worked them through many hard pieces that he wrote.



The dedicated gladiators like Maynard are mostly gone now. Few could pump out the excitement with a big band sound like Maynard's band could. He recruited mostly the experience and the young (from colleges and music of arts) where he would refine them into a musical force that many felt worth dealing with. I say there may be a tie when it comes to the hardest working on stage. Both Maynard and Louie sweated and growled during their performances. Of course the lights were hot and the air circulation was not the best, but when they heard the roar of the crowd, they felt it was worth it.



Bill Sommerville