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RELEASED
22.05.06

CDSML 8421

Maynard Ferguson on **vocalion**

M.F. HORN 2 & THE BALLAD STYLE OF MAYNARD FERGUSON

In 1968 American jazz giant and trumpet-playing phenomenon Maynard Ferguson came to live in Britain. His stay in the UK lasted four years before returning to the US in 1972, and the four albums he recorded for the CBS label's British division during that time are regarded by critics and fans alike as being among the best in his extensive discography. The two albums compiled by Vocalion on CDSML 8421 – the first time they have been issued in CD format – come from this period of Maynard's career and showcase the trumpeter in two very different settings.

M.F. Horn 2, recorded at London's Lansdowne Studios in January 1972, was Maynard's last album for British CBS and cast him in his best-known role as the extrovert leader of a powerhouse big band – a particularly modern one in this instance. It featured the production and arranging talents of Keith Mansfield, who was Maynard's producer and musical associate during the trumpeter's British exile. As well as recording for the company with his own orchestra, Keith - one of the most gifted and versatile arrangers/composers of his generation - was a CBS staff arranger and producer during the late '60s and early '70s. This period saw him work with several other artistes signed to the company including Georgie Fame, Alan Haven and Salena Jones (on Vocalion CDSML 8422). To accompany Maynard on M.F. Horn 2, Keith assembled a big band made-up of some of Britain's leading jazz and session musicians including Pete King (alto sax), Derek Wadsworth and Adrian Drover (trombones), Randy Jones (drums) and Stan Robinson (tenor sax). They combine forces with Maynard – who is clearly at the peak of his powers – to interpret with gusto and brilliance the arrangements by Keith, Kenny Wheeler, Adrian Drover and Alan Downey of famous numbers such as Spinning Wheel, Mother, Country Road and The Summer Knows. Maynard also makes a rare appearance as composer with the exhilarating big band jazz-rock workout of Give it One, co-composed with fellow trumpeter Alan Downey.

In complete contrast is The Ballad Style of Maynard Ferguson. Recorded in London in 1969, it is the trumpeter's first CBS album and features the lush, sweeping accompaniment of the Keith Mansfield Orchestra. It makes clear Maynard's ability as a first-class interpreter of evergreens such as Somewhere and Maria; also made clear is his remarkable gift for incorporating – with sensitivity and taste – his renowned upper register playing into such material. On this occasion Keith Mansfield arranged and produced each of the album's eleven titles, but delegated conducting duties to friend and fellow arranger-composer Alan Moorhouse. Opening with an epic rendition of John Barry's theme from the film Born Free (1966), where Maynard announces his presence at the outset with impassioned, stratospheric trumpet calls, the pace is slowed for Keith's gorgeous arrangement of Neal Hefti's Girl Talk from the film 'Harlow' (1965). Maynard's tender, muted solo – played slightly behind the beat for an added sense of space – is cushioned beautifully by Keith's warm and detailed yet uncluttered writing for strings, brass and reeds. This empathy between soloist and arranger is apparent throughout each piece on the album, and indicates how well Keith and Maynard worked together.

Here are two superb albums featuring a bona fide jazz legend working in tandem with one of the UK's finest arrangers and the cream of Britain's jazz and session musicians. The results speak for themselves. Vocalion proudly present the very first re-issues of M.F. Horn 2 and The Ballad Style of Maynard Ferguson in May 2006.

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