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The Trumpet Summit
– Study and Analysis of Five Significant Jazz Trumpet Players in the 20th Century.

A reflection in independent artistic study

The independent, artistic work exists documented in KMH’s digital archive.
Abstract

In this essay I will be exploring the work of five significant jazz trumpet players of the 20th century: Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw. I will be delving deeper into the styles of these five trumpeters to find some characteristics of their improvisation. After that I will implement them into my own jazz improvisation vocabulary. By studying transcriptions of their solos, reading articles and watching videos about these trumpeters and their playing style, I intend to create exercises in order to add these aspects of their playing into my own improvisation. I will also explore the mental aspect of playing specifically jazz trumpet, and how the mindset can help develop my playing by studying how the aforementioned players’ mindset and attitude appears in their playing. The results will be a host of exercises which I created on my own, or acquired from other musicians, and different ways of approaching jazz improvisation on the trumpet.

Keywords: jazz trumpet, improvisation, characteristics, artistic development, exercises, mindset.
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Foreword

When I was around twelve years old, I bought my first jazz CD. I remember looking at the cover and seeing Lee Morgan and not really knowing anything about him other than that he was a trumpet player. As a young trumpet player myself I wanted to listen to how he played. More than ten years later and Search for the New Land is still one of my favorite albums of all time. That album started my journey into the world of jazz and jazz trumpet players and would eventually lead me to explore more music and other trumpet players. Later I got some Miles Davis albums and started listening to him as well. When I was sixteen years old, I started at the Icelandic Musician's Union School of Music, FlÍH, and started studying jazz trumpet. I got introduced to even more amazing jazz trumpet players, Clifford Brown, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw. I was immediately inspired by all these five trumpet players. I simply loved their playing. Their skills also inspired me to develop as a musician and a trumpet player. I have always preferred big band music, funk, and soul, but these five improvisers have always been a big part of my life. They are to this day some of my favorite musicians and trumpeters and most likely always will be.

1. Introduction

In this essay I will write about some of the most significant and recognizable jazz trumpet players of the 20th century and delve deeper into their playing in order to study some of the aspects that characterizes them. The players who will be featured here are Miles Davis, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw. They are all universally accepted as some of the greatest jazz musicians in the 20th century. In addition to being great trumpet players, they have a unique and recognizable style. In the jazz tradition, in order to develop, one has to study the significant players first.

1.1 My Musical Background

As a trumpet player who has mostly played in big bands or other brass sections, I often do not feel very comfortable in a smaller jazz setting. As the trumpet player I usually had to lead the band and play all the melodies and solos, often memorized, and as I had very little experience in that, I would get nervous and sometimes forget some of the music as a result. Playing in a section in the background where the focus is not always on me felt more comfortable.
Throughout my studies at KMH I have focused more on playing funk, acid-jazz and neo-soul music, rather than standard jazz. With this project I wanted to take the opportunity to delve deeper into jazz improvisation on the trumpet and study some of the historically most significant jazz trumpet players who I also happen to enjoy the most. By studying these particular trumpet players, I aim to gain a deeper understanding of jazz improvisation as a trumpet player. I demonstrated the results in a concert in February 2022 where I played one song by each of the trumpet players and used some of their characteristics that I intend to work with here.

### 1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this essay is to find some aspects that make the styles of these trumpet players personal and find ways to incorporate them into my own playing in order to develop as a jazz trumpet player. I do not intend to create a ubiquitous analysis on each trumpet player, but rather extract some isolated characteristics which I find important.

The questions I will try to answer are:

- What are some characteristic features that these trumpet players have individually?
- How can I analyze their playing and use certain aspects in order to improve myself as a musician?
- Can I create exercises to help implement some of these aspects into my own playing or is it more a question of mindset and how one should approach improvisation?
- How important is the physical versus mental aspect of playing the trumpet?
- In what way can studying others help me find my own sound?

### 2. Reporting of My Artistic Work

#### 2.1 What I Will Do and How

The methods I will use are studying transcriptions of solos played by the five trumpeters, either transcribed by me or by using preexisting transcriptions. I will analyze what they are playing and try to identify certain traits that they seem to use in order to create exercises that I
can use to practice those traits, and ultimately have them internalized so I can use them in my own improvisation. I will also be studying articles and videos that other people have made about the playing styles of these trumpeters. I will use that information to gain a deeper understanding of how they play and use exercises to implement the selected topic into my own jazz improvisation vocabulary.

2.2 Introducing the Players

**Miles Davis** was born in 1926, and grew up in East St. Louis, Illinois. He started to play the trumpet in his early teens and started playing with jazz bands in St. Louis. In 1944 he moved to New York City to study at the Institute of Musical Art, now known as the Juilliard School. He first gained recognition when he started to record albums with saxophonist Charlie Parker. Later he would start leading his own groups in different settings and ultimately have great success as a band leader. Miles Davis had many different chapters in his musical career, however, I will be focusing on Mr. Davis’ playing with smaller groups from the 1950s and early 1960s. Miles Davis may have been best known for his musicality in his improvisation. He was a lyrical player with a great feel for swing and judgement for space, when to let the music breathe, giving his phrases more meaning.¹

**Woody Shaw** was born in 1944 in North Carolina but grew up in New Jersey. He started playing the bugle at an early age and when he was 11 years old, he began studying classical trumpet while listening to a lot of jazz trumpet players such as Dizzy Gillespie and Clifford Brown. He began playing professionally at age 14 and in the 1960s he would play with well known jazz musicians, such as Art Blakey and McCoy Tyner. In the 1970s and 80s he would start releasing his own albums including several recordings with fellow trumpet legend, Freddie Hubbard. Today he is considered to be the last major jazz trumpet innovator of the 20th century.²

Woody Shaw had a unique sound and way of playing the trumpet. He would utilize more leaps while soloing, as well as having his own harmonic and melodic language.³

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¹ Britannica, 2021
² Woodyshaw.com, no date
³ Michael J. West, 2013
**Freddie Hubbard** was born in 1938 in Indianapolis. He started playing trumpet in high school and when he was 20 years old, he moved to New York where he quickly established himself as one of the best young trumpet players. In his 20s he started to get gigs with veteran jazz artists such as Sonny Rollins and Art Blakey, as well as recording his own albums, signing with Blue Note after a recommendation from Miles Davis.\(^4\) He has been called the most powerful and prolific trumpeter in jazz and was one of the key figures in the hard bop and post-bop era.\(^5\)

**Clifford Brown** was born in 1930, in Wilmington, Delaware.\(^6\) He started playing trumpet when he was 15 years old and by the time he was 18 he was regularly playing in Philadelphia. He started playing with established bands, led by Tadd Dameron, Lionel Hampton and Art Blakey. In 1954 he would form one of the greatest hard bop bands with the drummer Max Roach, the Brown-Roach quintet. The quintet did not last long, as Clifford Brown tragically died in a car accident in 1956, having yet to reach his prime as a jazz trumpeter.\(^7\) Although his career was short, Clifford Brown is still, more than 65 years after his passing, one of the most influential trumpet players of his generation and was a principal figure in the hard bop era.\(^8\)

**Lee Morgan** was born in 1938 in Philadelphia and was 14 years old when he got his first trumpet. He progressed rapidly and already at the age of 15 he was playing professionally. After Clifford Brown’s death in 1956 many people found Morgan to be the heir apparent and he was in great demand as a trumpet player. He would play with many great musicians in his late teens and early 20s, including John Coltrane and Art Blakey. He would also release many records as a leader.\(^9\) Lee Morgan was a very technically gifted trumpet player and was able to play fast and long phrases with a great tone throughout the entire register of the instrument. He was also one of the most expressive trumpet players of his era. His blues licks, aggressive

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\(^{4}\) Freddie Hubbard Music, no date  
\(^{5}\) Freddie Hubbard Music, no date  
\(^{6}\) Britannica, 2021  
\(^{7}\) Blue Note, no date  
\(^{8}\) Britannica, 2021  
\(^{9}\) Steve Huey, no date
attacks and various trumpet techniques, such as half-valving\textsuperscript{10}, accentuates the expressiveness in his playing.\textsuperscript{11}

2.3 The Characteristics

For this project I will focus on one improvisational aspect from each player that I find characteristic for their playing. All of them use each of these aspects to some degree, but these characteristics are the ones I relate to each player and that I felt would be beneficial for my development as a jazz improviser.

The improvisational aspects are the following:

- Miles Davis - Chromatic seconds
- Woody Shaw - Larger intervals in trumpet improvisation
- Freddie Hubbard - Patterns
- Clifford Brown - Chromatic approach notes
- Lee Morgan - His attitude and mindset to jazz improvisation on the trumpet

Note that all examples shown are transposed to B flat.

2.4 Chromatic Seconds

As shown in the examples below, chromatic seconds are a variant of the chromatic scale where the motion is down a whole step, then up a half step. They can be utilized in jazz improvisation to add more notes outside of the scales related to each chord and are quite apparent in some of Miles Davis’ solos. Once I recognized the sound of chromatic seconds, I started hearing them more frequently in Miles Davis’ playing and they are a good tool to play more chromatically without directly using the chromatic scale.

\textsuperscript{10}Half-valving: When one or more valves of the trumpet are only pressed halfway down, creating a muffled sound effect where you can easily bend the pitch of the note.

\textsuperscript{11}Britannica, 2021
In these examples we see that Miles Davis uses chromatic seconds in shorter and longer runs. Both are effective but do not have the same result, and they sound different. While using them in a shorter context one gets more of a chromatic sound but as the pattern is extended further it is easier to hear the distinguishable sound of the chromatic seconds. Chromatic seconds blur the harmonic clarity and sound like you are playing outside of the given chords, especially when playing the longer runs.

### 2.5 Using Larger Intervals

By using larger intervals in his playing, Woody Shaw opened his sound and became distinguishable from other trumpeters in his era. Trumpet players generally opt for a more linear way of playing while improvising, shorter intervals between notes, especially in longer and faster phrases. The way Woody Shaw used larger intervals, particularly fourths, gave him a unique sound which was, and still is, admired by many.
In Fig 5 you see a good example of Woody Shaw’s use of larger intervals. These three bars are from his solo on the song Jean-Marie. His playing here uses these larger intervals; it almost sounds ‘alienlike’ coming from the trumpet, especially at the tempo this is played at, around 145 bpm.

Figure 6 is a bit more realistic example than the previous example in Fig 5. The use of larger intervals opens up his playing and is a sound that I like and want to have more of in my playing.
The same can be said about the start of his solo in the song *Tomorrow’s Destiny* (Fig 7). It starts off relatively calm, but his use of larger intervals changes the sound and helps creating a mysterious atmosphere, as using these larger leaps is not a very common sound in jazz trumpet in general.

### 2.6 Patterns

Using patterns can be a useful tool in jazz improvisation. It can help the melody and creates an opportunity for interplay with the rhythm section. Freddie Hubbard uses patterns a lot in his playing and often utilizes his great technique to execute them.

![Fig 8: Freddie Hubbard solo on Stolen Moments](image)

In Fig 8, Freddie Hubbard creates a rhythmic line which continues for a few more bars where he is playing an arpeggio over D minor seven. He even continues with this pattern a few bars later when the chord changes to G minor seven. He keeps a similar rhythmic pattern but plays another chord. This kind of rhythmic playing is a welcomed variation, as opposed to focusing purely on melodic playing. This adds another dimension to the solo.

![Fig 9: Freddie Hubbard solo on Up Jumped Spring](image)

Here we have a similar situation in Fig 9, in the song *Up Jumped Spring*, where Freddie Hubbard plays the arpeggio of the chord as a pattern, although here he omits the seventh of the chord. This example is more accessible than the previous one and is a perfect opportunity to initiate some interplay between the soloist and the rhythm section.

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19 Kent Hickey, 2019

20 Barry, M, Carberry, K, 1992, p.92
In Freddie Hubbard’s solo on *On The Que Tee* (Fig 10) we see another way of using patterns. When you compare the notes used to the chord the rhythm section plays, you can see there are some notes that would ordinarily stick out as “wrong notes”, the B natural and A natural. When he plays them in this context it comes out more as a pure rhythmic effect, it is hard to clearly hear each note he plays, as it is an up-tempo song, and it rather turns out to be an effect. One can hear him play a similar effect later in this solo and other songs as well, where he ignores the harmony and focuses more on using the instrument rhythmically.

### 2.7 Approach Notes

Chromatic approach notes are chromatically adjacent to the chord notes. One can approach the chord tone either chromatically from above or below. The key to using them effectively is to put the emphasis on the target note in the chord rather than on the approach note, as it will most likely sound too dissonant if you held it for too long. If the dissonance ends in a resolution to a consonant note it can make the improvising more interesting.

In the beginning of Clifford Brown’s solo in *Daahoud* (Fig 11), we see an elegant use of chromatic approach notes. He plays a simple, melodic line, but by adding the approach notes he creates a more interesting harmonic sound. In this case he approaches the fifth of F minor.

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21 Barry, M, Carberry, K, 1992, p.65
22 Maksym Grynchuk, no date
seven, B flat dominant seven and A flat dominant seven from below and in every case here it is a short note that creates a bit of tension but always resolves. Chromatic approach notes are also often used when playing fast and long 8th note phrases. Using them effectively in that context can create some exciting melodic lines as only using the notes in the scales can become quite monotonous and predictable.

![Chromatic Approach Notes](image)

**Fig 12:** Clifford Brown solo on Flossie Lou

In the beginning of Brown’s solo on *Flossie Lou* (Fig 12) we see him using the approach notes in a longer phrase with lots of 8th notes. This passage is very well constructed by Brown and using the chromatic approach notes makes the melody he creates more interesting. Even though some of the approach notes fit into the appropriate scale of the chord it lands on, one would still classify its function as an approach note, given the circumstance.

In the sixth bar, leading into the F dominant seventh chord, Clifford Brown approaches the F chromatically both from above and below, stating the G flat and E before landing on the F.

### 2.8 Attitude and Mindset in Jazz Trumpet Improvisation

It is important to approach playing the trumpet with the right attitude and mindset. It is a physically arduous instrument to play and being in the right mindset can be very helpful. Lee Morgan was a good example of a musician who had a great attitude and mindset while playing. In his solo on *Moanin’*, we hear a short dialogue between Mr. Morgan and the sound.

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23 Marc Lewis, 1991, p.57
engineer before they play. Morgan says he will stand back when he plays the solo because he is coming in very loud. He then proceeds to play this, in the start of his solo (Fig 13).

![Fig 13: Lee Morgan solo on Moanin](image)

This is an extremely hard phrase to play as cleanly as Lee Morgan does it. It is in the very upper register of the instrument, and in order to play this you really need to have the courage to just go for that high note for it to sound good.

The conversation Lee Morgan had with the sound engineer is a clear indicator that he had no doubt he was going to play this phrase. He knows it is a difficult phrase, but he knows what he must do to execute it perfectly.

Lee Morgan played a lot of difficult phrases in his career, but they always sounded great. I think he was approaching them with the right mindset, hearing what he wanted to play, and having the confidence to play it convincingly with a full sound. Another great opening phrase from Lee Morgan is in the song *Cornbread* (Fig 14).

![Fig 14: Lee Morgan solo on Cornbread](image)

This phrase is also in the upper register of the trumpet. It neither looks nor is very difficult, but the way Lee Morgan plays it, one can hear how he attacks this phrase with confidence, and he makes it sound convincing. If one tries to approach this phrase with the same mindset and confidence that Lee Morgan had, the effort will be successful.

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24 Joe Bentley, 2018
3. Artistic Results

With these selected aspects, I then proceeded to find ways to implement them into my own playing.

3.1 Chromatic Seconds

When I started practicing chromatic seconds, I opted for the longer runs. By practicing the longer runs I get both aspects as I can always choose to make the phrase shorter while improvising and at the same time get used to playing it longer.

One of the first exercises I used to practice chromatic seconds was an exercise by the trumpeter Bobby Shew.

![Fig 15: Bobby Shew exercise](image)

Mr. Shew calls this exercise: *Miles Davis’ “Bouncing”*, which also indicates that other people have associated this particular use of chromaticism with Miles Davis. This exercise helped me hear this pattern more clearly, which in turn made it easier for me to spot it in other solos, as my ear got more familiar with it. In his book, he takes this pattern through different keys as well.

Although this exercise and the examples from Miles Davis all consist of the descending pattern, I thought it would also be beneficial to practice them ascending, after a lesson I had with my teacher, Nils Janson, where he talked about chromatic seconds and had me practice them both ascending and descending.

The exercise I most often used was a variant I came up with where I play the scale ascending up an octave, turning around at the top and play it descending back to the starting note, working my way up chromatically. This exercise would be played throughout the entire range of the instrument, starting at low G (sounding F3) and going as far up as possible.

I played this exercise with a metronome, working up to faster tempos where the sound of the scale is still clearly heard.

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25 Bobby Shew, 1995, p.19
This exercise helped me get more used to the sound of the ascending pattern. It adds another option for me in the use of chromaticism while improvising. I think that this is a useful pattern to learn as it can be initiated at any time on any note while improvising. The main thing I had to be mindful of was how I ended it. While doing longer runs I felt it was important to end on a consonant note to resolve the dissonance created by the use of the chromatic notes outside of the scales related to the chords.

3.2 Using Larger Intervals

I wanted to specifically focus on using more fourths as I think that is an enjoyable and particular sound, especially when played on the trumpet. Richie Vitale is a jazz trumpeter who learned from Woody Shaw. He has shared some of the exercises that Woody showed him and that was my starting point in practicing using larger intervals.

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26 Richie Vitale, 2009, p.99
As Mr. Vitale mentions in a video of his, it is important to have this exercise symmetrical and practicing it in that way to better hear the intervals. Apart from the technical difficulty of the exercise, which spans the entire range of the instrument, hearing the intervals has been the biggest challenge for me. I feel that hearing them well is the key to ultimately having them completely in my vocabulary as a jazz improviser, as opposed to having prepared licks that include fourths and fifths. This exercise helped me get the muscle memory in my fingers, getting more used to switching between these notes, and hear the intervals better. I believe that playing the pattern above in a solo would sound too forced and awkward, but the long-term effects of the exercise can enable me to use parts of it, as I get more comfortable with the fingerings and hearing the intervals.

In the next exercise I used to get a more open sound in particular chords and actually play in a solo. I was studying *The Moontrane*, a song by Woody Shaw, and there are two bars in it with the chord progression (in B flat) D-7/E-7/F-7/G-7. In a lesson with Nils Janson, we played over those two bars like this:

Fig 18: The Moontrane pattern

This pattern has a very open sound as it omits the third of the chord and includes the fourth creating a fourth interval between the first and second note.

I consequently used another exercise in order to play this pattern over any minor chord.

Fig 19: The Moontrane pattern exercise

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27 Richie Vitale, 2015
This one can be easily used over any minor chord, but when I started to incorporate it into my own improvising, I struggled a bit. Building a natural phrase that leads into that pattern was challenging but when it worked successfully, I thought it sounded nice.

I also used this song as inspiration for the next exercise that would help me feel more comfortable using fourths and fifths, and that was breaking down the pentatonic scale into larger intervals, where I skip every second note of the pentatonic scale.

![Pentatonic exercise diagram](image)

Fig 20: Pentatonic exercise

By playing the pentatonic scale in this way one can see that the interval between the notes is always a fourth or a fifth, with the exception of one major third. I noticed it for the first time while practicing playing the minor pentatonic scale over a part of The Moontrane. The pentatonic scale is a very common and a familiar sound. By playing it in leaps (see fig 20), it opens up the pentatonic sound and it sounds even better.

I found myself searching more for the pentatonic sound when improvising, after discovering and practicing this. This has been an effective tool for me when playing modal or even when playing over different chords where the same pentatonic scale will work, as I did in The Moontrane.

### 3.3 Patterns

As is shown in Fig 8 and Fig 9, Freddie Hubbard uses a lot of chords while playing these patterns, to create rhythmic effects. I therefore decided to practice just that, focusing on playing arpeggiated chords up and down, working on the finger dexterity and air flow so it sounds as clean as possible.
These can also be played in other inversions but for now I mainly focused on starting on the roots as Mr. Hubbard does in Fig 9, or the seventh as he does in Fig 8.

I did not have a particular exercise for the example in Fig 10. I feel that one can use any pitches to get that rhythmic effect as long as it is articulated well with clear fingerings and good air flow. The hardest part about playing these patterns is playing them clean. I would focus most on pressing the valves down firmly and having a focused air stream, that way I got closer to the desired effect.

Apart from the technical difficulties of playing patterns like these, it was quite a challenge for me to naturally place rhythmic patterns in a solo. While practicing Up Jumped Spring, I would aim for a spot in the song where I would play the arpeggiated chords, but I often noticed that what I was playing before would not lead naturally into it. Instead, that lead me either not playing the pattern or I had to force it in the situation where it did not fit at all. I think it is important for me to construct my solos in order to make it blend more naturally to
not make it sound too forced, or at least think more quickly when I see the opportunity to play these types of patterns.

3.4 Approach Notes

In a video by trumpeter Chase Sanborn, he talks about Clifford Brown’s use of chromaticism. He calls the process of adding approach notes to the notes of a chord: “Cliffordizing”. His video inspired one of the exercises I used to practice approach tones. He played the notes of a C dominant seven chord but preceded each note with its chromatic approach tone.²⁸

Fig 22: Approach note exercise

These exercises are played in different keys as well, and throughout the range of the instrument. I decided to only work with these three chord types for this exercise, as they are the most common ones used in jazz. These exercises helped me get more used to the sound of

²⁸ Chase Sanborn, 2019
the approach notes as well as helping with the finger dexterity needed for playing them at a faster tempo.

It was important to also know every chord very well to be able to effectively use this exercise and approach notes in general, as it can be easier to just think of it as a chord and add a chromatic step before each chord tone, rather than thinking of it as a scale, which it looks like in Fig 22.

The next step in getting more familiar with approach notes was to play them in a more improvisational situation. I got this exercise from Nils Janson where he suggested taking the jazz standard *Cherokee* and playing through it slowly, only using chord tones and approaching them with a chromatic step, i.e., an approach note. An example of that looks like this:

![Fig 23: Cherokee exercise](image)

This is an improvised exercise, so it is a good theory exercise as well, where the player has a backing track, and needs to keep playing and think fast of what notes are in the chord and then approach them from a chromatic step. The player can take any song and break it down like this to practice with different chords and play it as fast as possible. I started with Cherokee and started very slowly while I was starting to get more familiar with approach tones. The ultimate goal is to be able to play an up-tempo bebop solo where I utilize approach notes, but I feel like limiting myself this way was a good exercise to get better at using approach notes.

As I started to use approach notes more in my improvising, I noticed that I leaned more toward using an approach note on the fifth and the root of the chord, as I most enjoyed the sound it created. The interval created from the root of the chord with the approach note to the fifth, is a tritone, and with the approach note to the root it creates a major seventh, or minor second. These intervals create the most dissonance, and therefore it makes the resolution even more satisfying when landing on the chord tone.
3.5 Attitude and Mindset in Jazz Trumpet Improvisation

The trumpet can be an incredibly challenging instrument to play, both physically and mentally. While the physical struggle of playing tends to be more conspicuous to the audience, the mental aspect of playing the trumpet is arguably more important. Being aware of the way one approaches playing something, can be the difference between a good player and a great player.

Confidence, or lack thereof, is something that many younger musicians struggle with while playing live, as being nervous for whatever reason can affect the playing. I believe that the trumpet players mentioned above all had great confidence in their playing and also had a certain attitude while playing.

When hearing these five trumpeters play, they often attack their solos “head on”. From the very start I can feel their confidence and presence through the way they play and sound, as was demonstrated before, in Fig 13 and Fig 14. This is something that I worked on, starting with confidence in my playing from the very beginning. One does not have to play anything extremely difficult, as Lee Morgan does in some of his solos, but just starting my solo with a different attitude changes my sound, for the better, and gives me new ideas.

When I first started playing jazz, I was transcribing some Freddie Hubbard or Woody Shaw lines and struggling with playing them. My teacher then told me: “If you are going to play this Woody Shaw lick, you have to play like Woody Shaw…” Implying that I had to attack the phrase the same way he did. It might be fast, complicated and in the upper register, but if I am afraid of it, I will always fail that phrase. “You must believe in yourself and sometimes just go for it, and more often than not, you will achieve the desired result,” so to speak.

I believe that this is one of the keys to mastering the trumpet as an improviser. One has to take risks and play the phrases that frighten, otherwise the solos will suffer.

There is no doubt in my mind that these players had that attitude while playing. They approach their solos thinking: “I am here, I am going to play a solo, I am going to try to contribute to the music as well as I can, and I am going to play that trumpet!” That is a good attitude to have. You might be playing all the right notes but if you hesitate and play them too timidly, they will not sound as well as playing them with great confidence. Being in the right state of mind can improve your sound and help with the upper register and faster phrases. If you want to make a statement in your solo with a loud phrase in the upper register, you have to attack it with confidence.
Becoming more confident is easier said than done, it is something that comes with age and experience, but I found that by concentrating in the practice room and just taking risks was useful. I played more difficult phrases, I played higher notes than I usually do while improvising, I played them louder with a better sound and I took more risks. It gave me more confidence and it was easier to start in a pressure free environment, like in the practice room. I would eventually carry this over to when I played with other people and finally while playing at a concert.

4. Reflection

4.1 My Development as a Jazz Musician and Improviser

I feel that after having studied these trumpet players more in-depth that I have developed as a musician and improviser. I am also more aware of how I approach playing and I have found more confidence in playing jazz improvisation and leading a jazz combo.

4.2 The Concert

My concert took place in Lilla Salen in KMH on 25. February 2022. The songs which I performed were: Up Jumped Spring by Freddie Hubbard, Seven Steps to Heaven by Miles Davis and Victor Feldman, The Moontrane by Woody Shaw, Mr. Kenyatta by Lee Morgan and Daahoud by Clifford Brown. I played in a traditional jazz quintet setting with Emil Kjellqvist on tenor saxophone, David Stener on piano, Hampus Westin on bass, Filip Öhman on drums and myself on trumpet. By going through this process, I feel I have gained valuable experience in leading a jazz combo where I play the melody and improvise on every song. As the concert was quite early in the spring semester, I had not practiced these characteristics enough to have them fully internalized, but I did focus on trying to play them in certain spots when portraying each trumpet player.

In Up Jumped Spring I focused on playing the pattern shown in Fig 9. I feel that I managed to lead into it in a better way in the concert than I usually had done during rehearsals. I had practiced the chromatic seconds quite a bit and felt comfortable with playing it in a solo and I had a specific II-V cadence in Seven Steps to Heaven where I tried to play it in rehearsals and in the concert, but I also felt comfortable with placing it in other situations as it was the most comfortable characteristic which I had learned by then.
On The Moontrane I focused on playing the line shown in Fig 18. I had practiced that line a lot and tried to play it in the rehearsals as well. Again, I ran into some problems trying to lead into that phrase naturally, so I had to be more aware of what I was playing before and not rush into the phrase at the first opportunity but rather when it fit the best. I was also generally more aware of playing in larger leaps while improvising, trying to play more vertically as opposed to the linear way of playing.

Mr. Kenyatta offered many opportunities where I was able to play expressively and play phrases I was not used to. In this song, and generally in this concert, I played phrases that I usually did not play. Playing fast phrases and in the upper register. After having focused on being more confident in the practice room and then transferring it to the rehearsals I felt comfortable taking risks in this concert.

Using chromatic approach notes effectively was a challenge in this process. I tried in certain parts of Daahoud to utilize them and especially in the first eight bars of the song where I had focused in rehearsals on using the approach note to the root and the fifth of the chord, and I feel I managed to use approach notes to some degree. Playing chromatic approach notes in an up-tempo song like Daahoud was a challenge and needed thorough preparation.

I was happy with my song choice as I feel that they all offer a good opportunity to showcase the characteristics of the respective players. Up Jumped Spring is in ¾ meter and therefore was well suited for the triplet pattern I focused on for that song. The Moontrane is a song that is medium tempo and therefore gave me more space to focus on larger leaps. Seven Steps to Heaven and Daahoud are up-tempo, bebop-like songs and as chromatic seconds and chromatic approach notes are great tools for bebop and hard bop, I felt they were good choices for those two characteristics. Mr. Kenyatta has a modal feel and there is not a lot going on harmonically which gave me the chance to be more expressive and take more risks by trying different things than what I am used to while not having to focus too much on the harmony.

4.3 Considerations on the Research Questions

What are some characteristic features that these trumpet players have individually?

All of these players have several characteristics that make their style personal, but the ones I picked out are only what I have noticed the most. I wanted to incorporate more of this in my
playing: Miles Davis’ use of chromatic seconds, Woody Shaw’s use of larger intervals, Freddie Hubbard’s rhythmic patterns, Clifford Brown’s approach notes, and Lee Morgan’s attitude towards playing jazz trumpet.

*How can I analyze their playing and use certain aspects in order to improve myself as a musician?*

The method I mainly used was to listen a lot to these players and identifying certain traits of their. I then studied transcriptions of the songs to find out exactly what they were doing. Conversations with teachers and fellow trumpet players and musicians also benefitted me in this process, as well as instructional videos showcasing some of these characteristics, mainly the ones I mentioned, from Chase Sanborn and Richie Vitale. Now that I know what these trumpeters are doing, I can take those aspects and study them further in order to develop as a jazz improviser and musician.

*Can I create exercises to help implement some of these aspects into my own playing or is it more a question of mindset and how one should approach improvisation?*

It is possible to create some exercises for all of these aspects, even one for the attitude and mindset in jazz improvisation.

The exercises I worked on have been useful for me, and I will continue trying to develop those parts of my playing. It was also helpful to have the other resources mentioned above as inspiration for the exercises that I created and as a starting point to work with and with that foundation I can then continue. It is also important to keep in mind the way you are approaching playing these aspects, even in the practice room.

*How important is the physical aspect versus the mental aspect of playing the trumpet?*

My results ended up surprising me, as I was not expecting the mental aspect to be this important. It is hard to put a percentage on it, but I would say that playing the trumpet is at least 50/50 mental and physical, probably even more mental. It can affect so much of my playing and how I sound in front of the audience. One could listen to the same exact notes played with courage and confidence and then again timidly and it would sound nothing alike. The physical struggles of the trumpet are very challenging and take years to master, but approaching them with the right mindset will make them easier.
In what way can studying others help me find my own sound?

By doing this project the way I did; I managed to get some of the aspects from these players without ‘compromising’ my style. By transcribing and playing a lot of solos from a certain musician one could run the risk of sounding just like them. This is in some cases fine, but I personally wanted to have my own sound and at the same time be able to play something that makes the audience think: “That sounded like Woody Shaw!”.

By finding some characteristics from these trumpeters and isolating them, I can add them into my playing in my own way. Making them a little more personal but still recognizable as something someone else might be known for. I feel that this approach has helped me develop my own sound more than it would have if I had done it the other way, where I only play whole transcriptions. The audience hears a little bit of each of those players in my playing and when mixed together with everything else I already have, I may possibly develop my own sound.

5. Conclusion

Having studied these five trumpeters and created exercises to develop my jazz trumpet improvisation, is far from becoming a ‘complete musician’. These are merely a few aspects of jazz trumpet improvisation that I find worthy of discussion and development.

These aspects have developed my playing and I will continue to work on it, but this process also opened my eyes on other aspects of jazz improvisation that I would like to study further and develop, such as how to better construct my solos.

No one ever becomes a ‘complete musician’, there is always something more to learn, and after finishing my studies at KMH I look forward to future challenges where I have the opportunity improve and develop as a trumpet player and a musician.
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