KEITH STIRLING:
AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS LIFE AND EXAMINATION OF HIS MUSIC

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I Brook Ayrton declare that the research presented here is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the award of a degree.

Signed: ........................................................................................................................................

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Abstract

This study introduces the life and examines the music of Australian jazz trumpeter Keith Stirling (1938-2003). The paper discusses the importance and position of Stirling in the jazz culture of Australian music, introducing key concepts that were influential not only to the development of Australian jazz but also in his life. Subsequently, a discussion of Stirling’s metaphoric tendencies provides an understanding of his philosophical perspectives toward improvisation as an art form.

Thereafter, a discourse of the research methodology that was used and the resources that were collected throughout the study introduce a control group of transcriptions. These transcriptions provide an origin of phrases with which to discuss aspects of Stirling’s improvisational style. Instrumental approaches and harmonic concepts are then discussed and exemplified through the analysis of the transcribed phrases. Stirling’s instrumental techniques and harmonic concepts are examined by means of his own and student’s handwritten notes and quotes from lesson recordings that took place in the early 1980s.
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Introduction

The thesis begins by discussing the significance of studying the life and music of Keith Stirling. Stirling’s importance in the Australian jazz movement is supported through reviews of his performances. Through the esteem with which his peers held him in, an insight to his character is revealed in addition to comments on his improvisational style.

A brief chapter on Australian jazz during the 1950s-1980s then positions Stirling in its development, enabling a critical genealogy of Stirling’s style. Resources on the Australian jazz movement support the importance of his presence in this development.

Many other important resources were collected for use in the thesis creating a unique research methodology. As a result of this study, previously unavailable recordings that were collected are now accessible to the public and government archival storages. This will ensure their future existence in the Australian music archives.

A biographical chapter then describes Stirling’s musical development through his early years, expanding into his heavy involvement in four major jazz scenes during the developmental period of modern jazz in Australia. This chapter also introduces concepts that influenced Stirling’s life and music. The biographical chapter is followed by a discussion of eastern philosophies that influenced Stirling’s life.

The thesis then continues to look at the metaphorical language that Stirling used in his jazz pedagogy. These metaphors are in existence today and have become a part of the Australian jazz movement’s folklore, their survival ensured by Stirling’s students and peers.

Through the assimilation of all collected resources, a unique analytical methodology has been created. This analytical methodology is used to ascertain the connections between
Stirling’s influences, metaphoric language, practice habits and improvisational style. These connections will be discussed and validated with transcribed examples, displaying a classification of forms within his style.

From aural and visual analysis of a selection of transcribed resources, musical examples are chosen to exemplify concepts that are discussed in the thesis. Links between lesson notes explaining these concepts and Stirling’s improvisations are then drawn. From the creative combination of these important resources, an insight into Stirling’s improvisational style is obtained.

Significance

Only brief anecdotal mentions and biographical details on Stirling have been available in Australian jazz movement resources. This important in-depth study of Stirling’s life, influences and improvisational style reveal his position and importance in the Australian jazz movement.

Of the archival recordings of Australian jazz, there has not been any substantial collection or release of Stirling’s improvisations. It has been the most significant part of this study that has uncovered and collected the many recordings that are now available.

In “Keith Stirling: An Enigma,” which featured in the periodical Jazz: The Australasian Contemporary Music Magazine in September/October issue of 1983 Eric Myers conducted a very important interview on the life and music of Stirling. This has been the primary resource for Stirling’s biographical data in addition to other works on the Australian jazz movement.

The importance of Stirling in the Australian jazz community is exemplified by the following quotes:
Stirling’s peripatetic career placed him at the centre of the energetic modern jazz movement in the early 60s in four major centers, and helped to establish his reputation nationally. Always a highly respected exponent of bop and modal trumpet and flugelhorn jazz styles, in the 80s his work developed a depth and poised intensity which Stirling attributes to his being introduced to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism by Ernestine Anderson during her tour in the mid 80s. (Johnson 261)

For some time Keith Stirling has been an enigma in Australian jazz. Over many years he was regarded as an outstanding musician-perhaps the leading trumpeter in the country at his best, comparable to the great Keith Hounslow. But somehow there was an aura of unfulfilled promise about him. (Myers)

Further remarks about Stirling’s performances and stylistic improvisations are illustrated in the following reviews that are held in Stirling’s Australia Council for the Arts archive, 78/460/008 Stirling Keith Study of Jazz at the Berklee School of Music USA Box/002478 AAZ5226:

Reviews

Stirling is timeless like Basie; most things to most men, meet him and you know why. 'My music is still spontaneous, I’m still trying hard to play something that hasn’t been heard before. I lean on no one. Jazz is a difficult enough art form without trying to use somebody else’s tools. Once you begin imitating you choke and the band chokes with you.' [Said Stirling] (Australia Council for the Arts)

Everybody was up. But a special mention must be made of Stirling who produced an exhilarating yet exquisite version of Gil Evans’ Las Vegas Tango. (Australia Council for the Arts)

The Keith Stirling Quintet opened with 50 minutes of almost introspective jazz: indeed, much of his lead trumpet playing was quite low-key, such as the delicate opening and closing solos in “Someday My Prince Will Come,” where the guitar, bass and drum backing was equally delicate. Yet it was so pleasant to be able to quietly savor the improvisations of the group and not be assailed by the “sound and fury” signifying very little which some jazz groups indulge in. (Australia Council for the Arts)
When in Australia earlier this year, the New York saxophonist David Liebman described Keith Stirling’s group as the ‘hottest band in the country.’ (Australia Council for the Arts)

Keith Stirling’s solos were consistently stunning and beautiful, confirming his status as the trumpet player to hear in Sydney at the moment. (Australia Council for the Arts)

Further reviews of Stirling’s performances are taken from articles in the Sydney Morning Herald:

They have developed their own way of playing a form in which they once, no doubt, copied American models . . . Keith Stirling used Pochée’s controlled turmoils and thudding accents to propel trumpet phrases that rocketed brilliantly. The tone was glorious, ringing, piercing yet very round. (Brennan, "A Reunion that Covers New Ground" 16)

Near dawn ‘Cosmic Keith’ Stirling explained the spiritual implications of my meeting Miles Davis. ‘You met Mozart, man,’ he said, mixing his genders at that weird hour. (Brennan, "Ghosts Abound as the Basement Bows Out" 18)

Trumpeter Keith Stirling is at the top of his form. (Brennan, "Lake George Puzzle has a Musical Echo" 12)

Musicians and Friends Remember Stirling

The following material was taken from David Martin’s archives. They were read aloud by Martin as part of the eulogy at Stirling’s funeral:
Life is a road we travel, a commonplace image but true. The way may be clover or gravel, the horizon cloudy or blue. I recall the one who gave us his earnings, what he scarce could afford to lend. Of his time, his music, his learning, my teacher, my brother, my friend. (Hill)

Oh, how we loved you, you were the best. Sad hearts farewell you and lay you to rest. We’re sure going to miss you can’t help but cry. And hope one day we’ll meet again in the great bye n bye. And hope that one day we’ll meet again. Oh how we loved you. (N. Martin)

For something like 17 years Keith was the senior member of the Aussie Blue Flames providing a steadying hand of experience along with encouragement of a favorite uncle. He would have us in stitches more times than I can remember and the warmth of his friendship will be greatly missed by all of us who loved and adored him. His trumpet playing was his own and sense of humor second to none except maybe for his brother Al who pre-deceased him. May they be reunited in heaven, goodbye dear friend? (Fame)

Sad... I did feel very sad when I heard Keith was no longer with us. I remember that skinny little cat with a trumpet case, when he turned up in the mid fifties at Jazz Centre 44 with jazz on his brains. Melbourne at that time produced a lot of honest jazz players and Keith was one of them. Of course needless to say that he passed away much too early. Keith was a good cat and I will always remember him for a long time to come. (Liepolt)
Sad to hear about Keith, it is rare in this business to come across a musician who not only never failed to be imaginative all his life (musically) but also had the chops and the soul to back him up. He will be missed, probably my favorite trumpet player to have interacted with. (Geyer)

Modern Jazz in Australia

Both traditional and modern jazz styles were developing in Australia, particularly Melbourne, during the same time. One of the most important early modernists in Australia, Don Banks (1923-1980) was experimenting with bebop and modern jazz styles during the 1940s. In 1949, Don Banks’ ‘Boptet’ recorded with Duke Ellington’s trumpet star Rex Stewart on the ‘Jazzart Sessions.’ According to Australian record label Cumquat Records’ website, this important recording resulted in “introducing post WWII jazz to our radio and concert audiences.” (Clarke)

In Beyond El Rocco, a film documentary on Australian jazz, Zoot the narrator puts the development of Australian jazz into perspective:

Zoot: They told me I was the man for the job, they said ‘Zoot, you’re an ageing hipster, you knew all those jazz joints in the 50s’, but the 40s is where it began. That’s when they first called it modern jazz. Jazz had always been modern, but that was when our first wave of modernists hung out for the rare Dizzy Gillespie record. Don Banks, Splinter Reeves, Charlie Blott. ‘Hey Zoot’ they said, ‘film’s not elastic man, we gotta start from the second wave’, ‘ok’ I said. 1957. (Lucas 3'09")

Don Banks had already been experimenting with modern jazz in the 1940s and the resurgence of modern jazz in the late 1950s was its second coming. At age twenty and in
Melbourne in 1957, Stirling was in the right place at the right time to be a part of the ‘second wave’ of modern jazz in Australia.

Meanwhile in Sydney, the upsurge of modern jazz was happening in a club called the El Rocco:

Zoot: Australia was, what you might say, a little isolated in the fifties, and modern jazz, well that was something very different, sort of subterranean, hidden away from the sideshows, dance halls and flourished in a little back street cellar in the heart of Kings Cross, the El Rocco, probably the first club in Australia to present modern jazz. (Lucas 5’45")

Stirling was unknowingly a leading figure in the development of modern jazz in Australia. Being young and inspired in his early twenties, “Stirling epitomised a certain group of modernists who drove or hitchhiked between Sydney and Melbourne in the late 1950s and early 60s.” (Clare, "A muso's musician, friend and scorching player").

The Australian jazz trumpet generation immediately preceding Stirling includes Fred Thomas (b1919), Ron Falson (1928-2008), Bob Barnard (b1933), Ken Brentnall (1925-?) and Roger Bell (1919-2008) who were predominantly influenced by international jazz trumpeters including Louis Armstrong, Nat Gonella, Harry James, Bunny Berigan and Bix Biederbecke. (Autenzio)

. . . by 1949 there were five regular jazz programs on the air in Melbourne. Commercial radio played an active part while there was a surge of popular interest, but since then their record has been lamentable. The ABC provided the lion’s share of quality jazz broadcasting by securing the services of dedicated and knowledgeable commentators such as Ellis Blain who recorded the first convention, Alan Saunders, Clem Semmler, Eric Child, Arch McKirdy, Ian Neil and Jim McLeod. Their low-key programs were for people who actively listened and between them they covered the whole range of jazz. (Bisset 131)
The exposure of jazz radio broadcasts on younger Australian musicians such as David Martin and Stirling was “it really brought us alive, we would listen to the radio program and then go down to the surf club to hear Graeme Bell’s band.” The distinction between the styles of music was immediately evident to the younger generation and they wanted to play the newer style. (D. Martin)

“This was the mid 1950s and there was a new wave of black music, which was sort of underground, and I felt drawn to it. I heard Miles [Davis] and the tenor saxophone player Sonny Rollins,” said Brian Brown in The Australian Jazz Explosion (Williams 108). The combination of live influences, radio broadcasts of quality new jazz music and imported jazz records created a wealth of influences for Stirling to build from during his early years of development.

Melbourne’s traditional and modern players were distinguished more by their geographical separation rather than a social one as

most of the traditionalists came from the suburbs to the south and east of the city whereas the men who went into the palais bands or became modern jazz players, came from the industrial suburbs to the north. (Bisset 129)

Growing up in Melbourne’s northern suburbs (Coburg) can be seen as another factor that pushed Stirling in the direction of modern Australian jazz.

Early in 1955, Brian Brown and three friends went to the UK, where the jazz climate was healthier with many American artists visiting and there was a greater diversity of recordings available. Brown returned
in March 1956 and immediately found like-minded musicians that were receptive to the black way. (Bisset 110)

These musicians included Stewie Speer and Keith Hounslow, who describes the contrast between the Melbourne and Sydney jazz scenes of the 1950s-early 1960s in an interview in the documentary Beyond El Rocco:

Hounslow: We were really into the Miles [Davis], the black thing, and where, you know, Sydney was really playing cool, you know, the west coast cool, and there were guys in Melbourne that were playing it, but we sort of went the other way, we felt that that music was a bit passé, we wanted to play the harder, the harder music, the hard bop music, that meant something. (Lucas 25'00")

During the 1950s it was clear that there were two types of music developing within the Australian jazz movement. The co-development of these styles resulted in many musicians gaining experience in both the modern style and more traditional ones. The varying styles of Melbourne’s jazz trumpeters such as Roger Bell, Keith Hounslow, Bob Barnard, Ken Brentnall and Fred Thomas created a fusion that eventually was reflected in the development of Stirling’s musical concepts.

Research Methodology

Collecting Resources

Field recordings form a substantial amount of the collected resources. Almost all of the recordings have never been commercially released. The acquirement of these recordings has come mostly from private collections through social investigation of Stirling’s peers
and other music industry individuals. The recordings were mostly held on magnetic cassette tape medium and were transferred to digital CD for future archival purposes.

Other recordings that have been uncovered during the study include several commercially released productions where Stirling was a sideman and the remaining recordings were sourced from archival resources such as the ABC, NFSA and the Victorian Jazz Archive. Several of these examples were live radio broadcasts.

In addition to field recordings of performances and commercially released albums, I have been able to recover tape recordings and lesson notes of Stirling’s teaching methods. The lesson notes are hand written by both Stirling and his student Peter Lothian. These resources are held in private collection by Peter Lothian and were offered to me for digital transfer and subsequent assessment and analysis of their content. Fred Hill, another friend and student of Stirling’s offered tape recordings of Stirling teaching an ensemble class.

The success of the acquirement of these important resources is purely attributed to the significant impact Stirling had on the Australian jazz movement. The sentiment that the owners of these resources have toward this study and the sharing of information contained within those resources supports the importance of Stirling’s influence on and involvement with the Australian jazz movement.

The transcription and study of these lesson recordings has enabled an insight into Stirling’s taxonomy that can then be understood in an academic sense. The assessment and assimilation of the collected resources has resulted in a creative use of the transcribed material.
Recordings Used

Four transcriptions are used in the analysis portion of the study; they were chosen to facilitate a control group of phrases. The control group of phrases are taken from Stirling’s improvisations on the Miles Davis composition All Blues. The four recordings used in the analysis are taken from a period of Stirling’s career when he was deemed by Dave Liebman to have the “hottest band in the country.” (Australia Council for the Arts)

All Blues I

The first transcription of All Blues was taken from a live radio broadcast from studio C in 2MBSFM held on October 10, 1982. The presenter, Art, also interviewed Stirling and Bob Gebert (piano) during the performance; Tim Brosnon is on bass and Glenn Walsh on drums. On this recording of All Blues, Stirling performs a seven-chorus solo.

All Blues II

The second transcription of All Blues to appear in the study is taken from a live recording of the Laurie Bennett Jam band at the Musician’s Club in Sydney. The recording date is May 4, 1982. The band on this track features Laurie Bennett on drums, Keith Stirling on trumpet, Col Loughnan on tenor, George Golla on guitar, Jack Thorncraft on bass, and Tony Esterman on piano. Stirling again takes a seven-chorus solo.

All Blues III

The third transcription of All Blues is taken from a reel-to-reel archive recording of the Don Burrows supper club The Trumpet Giants, performed on January 16, 1984. On this recording are musicians Craig Scott on bass, Alan Turnbull on drums and unknown on piano. Stirling performs a seven-chorus solo.
All Blues IV

The last recording to be used in the study is transcribed from a live gig tape that was given to me by John Christian who is an active member of the JAS (Jazz Action Society of NSW) committee. On this recording, Stirling is a sideman with the Laurie Bennett jam band that was recorded on September 13, 1983 in the Musician’s Club. Stirling performs a prodigious nine-chorus solo on this last transcription.

Lesson Tapes

There are four cassette tapes used in the study where Keith Stirling is recorded teaching, one is to an ensemble and the other three are individual lessons with a student (Peter Lothian). These cassette recordings made by Keith Stirling are held in private collections.

Biography

Stirling was born into a musical family in Coburg, a North Melbourne suburb, Victoria, Australia on January 5, 1938. His mother played the piano; his father played a number of stringed instruments, sang and loved opera. Both parents liked jazz and this meant that jazz artists such as Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Jelly Roll Morton were frequently heard in the home. (Myers)

The rich musical family life that Stirling was exposed to in his early years was a superb foundation for his career and further interest in music. Stirling’s father, a frustrated amateur tenor, worked with a lot of Italian immigrants on the railways, he’d hear them singing and bring them home. “These guys could not speak English, but they could sing and sing! We’d be having dinner and listening to these Italian guys, my father would be crying . . . I’m very grateful to my parents for having all that music around.” Said Stirling. (Myers)
Stirling’s older brother Alan was responsible for his introduction to the trumpet. Alan instructed the young Stirling, at the age of 7 that he was not to touch the trumpet and if he did, a beating would be imminent. Alan loved Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and Howard McGhee and bought their records (Myers). The early display of a love for music and exposure to modern jazz and trumpet styles would prove invaluable to Stirling’s development as Australia’s preeminent modern jazz trumpeter.

The young Stirling was fascinated by the trumpet and got it out to practise on whenever his brother was not at home. He quickly taught himself how to get a sound and play simple tunes. One night at a party, his brother attempted to play Blue Moon and played it badly. Stirling took the trumpet from Alan’s mouth and played the tune in superb style. “My brother belted the daylights out of me,” said Stirling (Myers).

Stirling’s earliest, basic trumpet coaching was provided by Freddie Thomas, who also taught legendary trumpeter Eric “Boof” Thompson. Thomas was a commercially recorded Melbourne trumpeter who was referred to as ‘Melbourne’s leading Bop trumpeter’ in the Oxford Companion to Australian Jazz (Johnson 279). Thomas worked in the cinemas and performed with musicians such as Don “Splinter” Reeves and Graham “Smacka” Fitzgibbon. As stated in The Encyclopedia of Australian Jazz, Thomas won an award for ‘best trumpet’ in 1955 (Hayes, et all 100-101).

There were other interests in Stirling’s life, he developed an interest in photography, and Myers suggests, “... music was always there, hovering in the background.” Stirling’s first job after leaving school was as a cadet photographer with the Melbourne Argus and he later worked in advertising, intending to do commercial artwork (Myers).

Stirling was influenced not only by his brother’s recordings and music in the home, but also by his peers. “I was just fooling around, playing jam sessions ... having a lot of fun,
going to dances [and] hearing the bands play. I’d always be sitting listening to the bands. I’d just idolise them.” Said Stirling. Stirling’s early influences were well under way to preparing him for a career in music and modern jazz styles. “I was working for what I wanted to hear; my imagination was getting richer all the time.” Said Stirling. (Myers)

In the late 1950s, Stirling began playing in the Australian Downbeat concerts while “every kid was playing football and cricket, but I’d rather be inside listening to music.” Said Stirling (Myers). The Downbeat concerts led to Stirling meeting the jazz promoter Horst Liepolt, who had opened Club 44 in 1957, a jazz club that existed on Sunday afternoons within the old Katherina Cafè, which enabled the young modernists to perform and develop the Australian modern jazz style. The predominant group performing there was the Brian Brown Quintet of which Stirling performed in the “B” band and deputised for Keith Hounslow.

As Clare states in Stirling’s obituary “A muso’s musician, friend and scorching player,”

Sydney Morning Herald 15/8/2003:

Stirling would travel to close friend David Martin’s Ormond house to practice music together, sometimes going on for hours missing the last train home and having to stay overnight to continue playing music the next morning. In the late 1950s, Stirling and Martin also performed together in Brian Brown’s band in Jazz Centre 44. Martin was a member of the quintet at the time and Stirling later joined in 1960. Their friendship lasted until Stirling’s unfortunate death in 2003. (Clare, "A muso's musician, friend and scorching player")

In addition to the local musicians of Sydney and Melbourne, Stirling and musicians such as Allan Turnbull, John Pochée and Joe “BeBop” Lane all played a major role in the upsurge
of musical activity, creativity and the development of the modern Australian jazz style in both of these geographic locations:

While we watch the concert scene dying as a jazz forum, out of the corner of our eye we can see something else beginning. Scarcely noticed at the time, with hindsight it can be said that the opening of Jazz Centre 44 in Melbourne, the instigation of a jazz policy at El Rocco in Sydney, and the formation of the Melbourne Jazz Club in emulation of Sydney’s, in 1959, were foreshadowings of the last period to date when jazz was to enjoy the status of youth pop music . . . Not until the late ’70s has there been such a sudden and significant large-scale transfusion into the stream of our post-swing style jazz. (Johnson 52).

For the next few years, Stirling performed at the El Rocco, where he co-led a group with saxophonist Bob Bertles. (Myers)

In 1960 Stirling also co-led a quintet in Melbourne with Peter Hall on trombone, Allan Turnbull on drums, Charles Bartolo on bass and David Martin on piano. During this time, Stirling was influenced and helped a lot by musicians Len Barnard, Stewie Speer, Keith Hounslow and Brian Brown.

In 1963 Stirling moved to Adelaide where he met his wife Marlene and played the Jazz Cellar with Billy Ross on drums, Ron Carson on bass, Bob Gebert on piano, and Keith Barr on saxophone. The band played the “milk-run” there (midnight till three AM). The repertoire performed by that ensemble included Bobby Timmons compositions and other standards in the style of the Cannonball Adderley Sextet. (Myers) The performance of this repertoire was typical around this era as the current American jazz music was hitting the shores of Australia, as readily as Australian jazz musicians were eager to learn about it.
Stirling was fond of his encounters in Adelaide with Keith Barr who had a marked influence on Stirling both on and off the stage. Stirling recalls his experiences with Keith Barr:

It was a great experience meeting Keith Barr. Whenever I hear Paul Gonsalves now on record, it reminds me of Keith-that spirit. We were young guys then, he was an old cat. He taught us so much, with his approach off the stand, everything about music . . . [Said Stirling] (Myers)

Stirling was always restless and looking to go overseas according to Myers, he went on to Perth in November of 1964 where he “provided that spark of incentive to local musicians to extend themselves, which, because of the isolation, had been so hard to find.” (Bisset 142) In Perth, Stirling performed with musicians Bill Gumbleton on piano, Theo Henderson on saxophones, Tony Ashford on saxophones, Frank Smith on saxophones, Jim Cook on saxophones, Brian Bursey on bass and Bill Tattersall on drums.

The bands performed at a casual nightspot called the Melpomene until it was closed down by a fire and the scene shifted to a club called The Hole in the Wall, which was situated in the old Braille Society Hall, until 1966 (Bisset 143). Stirling then joined the Moscow Circus band and returned with them to Sydney in 1968.

Upon his return to Sydney, Stirling worked commercially in Chequers nightclub with other musicians including John Pochée, Chuck Yates, Andy Brown and backed many international stars including Carmen McRae, Stevie Wonder, Tony Bennett, Lou Rawls, and Frank Sinatra and jammed with Art Blakey. (Myers)
In 1969 the musical Hair opened at the Metro theatre in Kings Cross featuring the rock band Tully led by John Sangster with additional musicians Bob Gebert, Mick Barnes, and of course Keith Stirling.

Stirling had already acquired the nickname of ‘Cosmic Keith’, so he seemed to be in the right place. During the ‘trip’ sequence, the band was able to play as freely as they liked, and one night Stirling took the bit between his teeth and played a trumpet solo that went stabbing through the theatre and spurred the whole ensemble into a rhythmic roller coaster that was talked about for some time. Next week he said, ‘this is giving me the shits,’ and left. (Clare, Bodgie Dada and the cult of Cool 125)

During this era, Stirling’s commercial appearances increased and due to necessity and the preceding years of experience, allowed Stirling to develop his playing in these areas, Stirling tells Myers:

I learnt to play in a section. I had to survive, so I took this sort of work, but it was good. I’ve never regretted it. I’ve been very fortunate. It taught me to play, it taught me discipline, light and shade, it gave me great confidence. A lot of it I didn’t enjoy. A high percentage of it annoyed me, but I had to survive. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

In 1970, Stirling returned to Melbourne and worked commercially in the channel 9-studio band with other musicians such as Ron Rosenberg and Graeme Lyall in the days of Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton. Stirling was also in demand for studio work not only for his improvisational prowess but also his abilities as a fine trumpeter, around that time he recorded several albums with Bruce Clarke. (Myers)
In a conversation with Don Burrows whilst in Melbourne, Stirling said “get me out of here” and Burrows found teaching work for Stirling at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Under the leadership of Howie Smith, Stirling tells Myers about “catching up” on the academia of teaching jazz to young students:

It was fantastic. I was learning all the time. I was having a crash course with Howie, saying ‘what’s the name of this scale?’ I’ve been playing it for years. I knew the basics by ear, but I was starting to learn it all over again in an academic way. There’s nothing wrong with knowledge; it won’t hinder your progress. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

Stirling then found that the academic approach began to inhibit him as a player:

I got to the point where I’d be playing at the Basement, feeling I had to play the absolute correct scale for everything. I became stereotyped, I’m sure no one else noticed it. I just wasn’t happy, whereas before I was freer and would take chances. I’m that kind of person any way, I’ll take a chance. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

The resolution to this dilemma came as Stirling took up his travel cycle again. This time Stirling travelled to New York on a study grant from the Music Board of the Australia Council in 1978. A “jazz menopause”, as Stirling described it. “Going to New York verified that I was on the right track, and gave me more self-confidence and direction.” Said Stirling. (Myers)

While in America with his wife Marlene and son Carlos, Stirling attended classes with David Baker in arranging and composition, at the University of Louisville. Stirling then
went on to New York City, gaining first hand instruction in the art of performing jazz with legends such as Lee Konitz, Tom Harrell, Eddie Henderson and Herbie Hancock.

Stirling began building a deep philosophy of jazz improvisation and wrote in his application for the Music Board of the Australia Council:

Jazz music is above all an act of creating, of communicating one’s feelings directly and immediately, of making something fresh and new which is deeply and thrillingly personal, out of the materials of popular song . . . jazz is a spontaneous music of the here and now, composed on the spot and instantaneously executed. (Myers)

On Stirling’s return from his New York sabbatical, he started his own quintet with members Jay Stewart on piano, Craig Scott on bass, Steve Brien on guitar and Ron Lemke, Allan Turnbull or Matt Dilosa on drums. “This quintet was one of the most exciting and capable modern groups playing in Sydney.” (Myers)

In 1981, Stirling recorded on the number 1 album “Bad Habits” by Billy Field, this album remained number 1 for two weeks. Stirling was also a permanent member of Georgie Fame’s band (The Australian Blue Flames) for 17 years, touring Australia many times and recording the album “No Worries!” with James Greening on trombone and Col Loughnan on saxophone and flute in 1988.

While touring with international artists in early 1982, Stirling was invited by Miroslav Vitous to perform with him and Mike Nock. Stirling performed at the international jazz festival held in Australia with the Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin big band. The album “Clouds” featuring Serge Ermoll and Richie Cole was also recorded in 1982 with Stirling
on trumpet, Maree Montgomery on voice, George Golla on guitar, Ed Gaston on bass and Allan Turnbull on drums.

Stirling’s view of the music scene in Australia in 1983 was . . .

If you want to know about a city, listen to its popular music, if you listen to music on the radio in Australia. AM or FM, I don’t believe it. It’s like wheelchair city; it’s not healthy, it’s not good.” However, Stirling still upheld an optimistic view, as he believed that a new, better era would emerge in Australia. “In my own life, I’ve learned that something good can come out of negativity. Things can be better in Australia. Take Japan-Hiroshima, Nagasaki . . . out of that devastation and ruin came the Japan of today, the economy that’s the best in the world. West Germany too . . . A lotus flower grows in the mud; it doesn’t grow in a swimming pool. It may even get worse in Australia, but in the long-term eventually it will get better. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

In the 1990s, Stirling joined the Jimmy Shaw Gaiety Swing Band, performing dance music in venues such as the Albert Palais ballroom in Petersham and the Bald Faced Stag pub in Leichhardt in addition to private functions and weddings. In 1995, Jimmy Shaw toured the Gaiety Swing Band with Don Lamond (Woody Herman’s drummer), including an appearance on Mornings with Kerri-Anne broadcast on channel-9 Sydney. The tour included shows on the north coast of NSW in addition to shows in Albury, Melbourne and Dubbo.

Stirling also performed regularly for the Jazz Action Society of NSW with the Ken James reunion band and was a regular member of the Billy Fields band throughout the 1990s. Later, Stirling toured in 1997 with rock band You Am I, as a member of the DSS horns which also included Dave Jensen on saxophone and Andy Ford on trombone. You Am I also supported the Seattle rock band Soundgarden at the Big Day Out concert series.
In 1998, Stirling toured with Kenny Rogers and Reba McEntire from April 14, 1998 concluding in May 1998, performing in venues “from Perth to Brisbane.” McEntire said in her interview with Shady Cosgrove from the Illawarra Mercury. (Cosgrove) Also in the 1990s, Stirling became a regular member of a jazz quartet led by Serge Ermoll on piano with Lenny Young on drums and Jimmy Mitchell on bass, performing in pubs around Redfern and Surry Hills.

Until his death, Stirling was still performing with bands such as the Jimmy Shaw Shaw ‘Nuff Big Band, performing at the Bald Faced Stag in Leichhardt in addition to attending jam sessions at the Avillion Hotel in Sydney with musicians such as Dale Barlow, Paul Joseph, Brendan Clarke and Matt McMahon.

Throughout his life, Stirling was a teacher and in the true tradition of jazz musicians always strove to pass on his knowledge and love for jazz music. The following chapters firstly introduce the spiritual forces that influenced Stirling’s philosophies on music and life. Then, continues by specifically examining Stirling’s pedagogical philosophies. These philosophies are a direct result of the vast and varied musical and spiritual influences that took place on Stirling’s life.

NSA Buddhism

This branch of Buddhism was Soka Gakkai’s first overseas chapter, established in America in 1960 by a Japanese immigrant who changed his name to George Williams. The NSA (Nichiren Shoshu of America) initially appealed mostly to Japanese-Americans but this has
changed through the years. It is based on chanting a mantra that brings forth any wishes of
the member.

NSA has been named an “anything goes” style of Buddhism and “name it and claim it”, a
type of consumer Buddhism where the translation of its chanted mantra means “Adoration
to the lotus of the wonderful law”. Pariser’s unfavourable evaluation of the ‘cult’ seems
somewhat echoed by Stirling’s peers, and hence helped justify his nickname “Cosmic
Keith.”

Like Scientology and other high tech neo-esoteric philosophies, Soka Gakkai has attracted its share of
luminaries: locally, certain members of some prominent world beat bands chant, and members of the
national organization include pop superstar Tina Turner, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and fusion musician
Herbie Hancock. Judging by the hordes of smiling faces, black and white, the glowing reports of
improvement in financial karma, and swarms of American flags in the literature, it all seems great: a pure
pop Buddhism for today’s pure pop people. (Pariser)

Stirling’s first introduction to NSA was by the American singer Ernestine Anderson in
1981 when she was faced with adversity at the rehearsal for her concert in Melbourne.
Stirling noticed that she was a strikingly attractive woman, looking years younger than her
actual age. She was chanting “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” over and over. At this point,
Stirling’s life had reached a low point after a tour with Georgie Fame and was stranded in
Melbourne when he was invited to lunch with Ernestine and she soon had Stirling chanting
too. (Myers)

You just chant for what you want, it really works, it gave me tremendous energy. Once I started, things
started to happen; all these things started to work out. I was thinking ‘how much is this going to cost,
what do I have to do? Shave my head?’ But I only had to chant. It’s that simple. Ernestine told me ‘in 12
months you won’t know yourself; you’ll be driving your own bus.’ And that’s how it has worked out. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

You get incredible wisdom through this, and courage. The knowledge that comes to you is unreal. That’s what I’m playing on now. My life condition is in a much higher state, and that’s why I’m playing and feeling better. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

Stirling’s study of this branch of eastern philosophy was influential in his approach to instrumental technique, control of performance anxiety, awareness of inner thoughts (he called the sub-conscious mind “George”) and spiritualism.

Stirling was an early adopter of these types of techniques to develop sensitivity and ways to focus and clarify the mind in order to attain a relaxed state. In example one taken from Peter Lothian’s lesson notes in 1983, Stirling suggests to slow the mind down with the body when playing slow.

Ex.1 (Peter Lothian’s hand written lesson notes from his private collection)
Pedagogical Aspects of Keith Stirling

The use of metaphor in music teaching is commonplace, enabling extra qualities of performance and communication to be developed by the pupil. These qualities rise beyond musicianship and core skills of instrumental technique. Imagery can be used to address technical instruction, but more commonly, it is used to facilitate aesthetic intention.

The qualities that distinguish competent musicians from excellent ones appear to lie largely beyond cognition and technique, in the intangible realm of expression . . . practising musicians and composers will also extensively use imagery to communicate what they wish to express about music beyond logic and cognition. Metaphor appears to be an integral part of their musical thinking and action. (Schippers 210).

In this chapter, I will include some of the phrases and teachings that Stirling used to pass on his philosophy of music. Transcriptions of lesson recordings of Stirling teaching students and ensembles have enabled insight and explanation of his metaphoric tendencies. The metaphors that are well known in the Australian jazz scene have been identified through folklore and from Stirling’s lesson tapes. The combination of these lesson recordings and lesson notes prove invaluable in attaining an insight into Stirling’s metaphoric language and the principles of his musical philosophy.

Shapes

Stirling: Shapes man shapes. (Stirling, live at studio C 2MBSFM track 4, 2'24")
The source of this phrase was when Stirling used it to reiterate Bob Gebert’s comment about the way they learnt music in the early days. Gebert goes on to comment that, “when we started, we didn’t have schools, we had to learn it all ourselves, street learning.” (Stirling, live at studio C 2MBSFM)

The exemplification of this concept is evident in Stirling’s phrases as he uses chromatic density to extend the life of a phrase and ensure its continuation from one register to another. This results in a snaking line that holds in it many smaller shapes and cells derived from the chromatically dense exposition. Stirling uses this metaphor to encourage one to create shapes with phrases and is somewhat mirrored with the next metaphor.

Psychophysical Visualisation Techniques

According to Australian jazz folklore, during a jazz lecture associated with the summer jazz workshops promoting the Australian International jazz festival of 1980, a high school music teacher asked, “Mr. Stirling, what are you thinking about when you play this jazz music?” Stirling replied, ”I think to project my sound to the back of the hall, imagining there’s a hole up near the ceiling, and I see a rat coming out of the hole. If the rat stays there, I’m playing great, if he leaves then I’m not playing great.” (Loughnan)

This metaphor of Stirling’s uses visualisation to enable the performer to enter a psychophysical state of awareness. The resultant state will aid the performer to be observant of the events that are happening, while they are happening. This concept will develop an alter awareness where the conscious mind will not interfere or judge what the body is doing.

The concept of observing one’s own improvisation as the audience would enable a cohesive improvisation that will effortlessly make musical and structural sense. This
reactionary state enables the performer to be totally relaxed and improve enjoyment of the music making experience. Phil Slater touches on this concept in *Extempore 3*.

The thing about playing your instrument is that it cuts off your conscious brain. So you get addicted to that, to playing and not thinking. You get totally addicted to that because it’s like being invisible, free of all the other crap that goes on in your head. When you’re playing, if you’re playing well and you’re really in the music, you’re not there. [Said Slater] (Webb 56)

In *The Inner Game of Tennis*, Gallwey separates a person into two people, Self 1 (teller) and Self 2 (doer). Gallwey then describes the dilemma between Self 1 and Self 2 with the aim to enable one to quieten the conscious mind Self 1 (teller) and hence allow the music (tennis) to physically happen by Self 2 (doer), without interference from judgemental Self 1 (teller).

It seems as though Self 1 doesn’t think Self 2 hears well, or has a short memory, or is stupid. The truth is, of course, that Self 2, which includes the unconscious mind and nervous system, hears everything, never forgets anything, and is anything but stupid . . . but it seems he doesn’t really trust [Self] 2 to do the job or else he wouldn’t have to do all the work himself. This is the nub of the problem: Self 1 does not trust Self 2, even though the unconscious, automatic self is extremely competent. (Gallwey 19)

Stirling intuitively distracts Self 1 with a psychophysical visualization technique and this allows Self 2 to continue, uninterrupted, with the music making process that it has been trained to do.
Musical Journey Visualisation

Taxi Ride

Stirling: The improvised solo is like a taxi ride, your solo starts when you get in the cab and, you go for a ride and then at the end you hop out. (Brien, Taxi Ride)

This metaphor enables the improviser to conceive that the solo will have a beginning, middle and end. It brings awareness of direction throughout the solo and aids the conception of a musical journey, before the journey has begun. Hopefully preventing meaningless meandering and promoting a journey with a musical purpose. Once again, the visualisation essence of this metaphor has distracted Self 1.

Toast

Stirling: The jazz improvised solo is like toast, when it pops up, you don’t push it back down again. (Brien, Toast)

With this metaphor, Stirling is encouraging the student to understand that there is a natural end point of the solo. If the solo continues past this point, there is risk of unfortunate consequences (the toast being burnt). In example two, Stirling writes down a quote from Dave Liebman of Miles Davis giving a similar lesson.
Dynamics

Stirling: Dynamics are like butterflies and rhinoceros. (Brien, Dynamics)

This metaphor for dynamics easily distinguishes the difference between loud and soft. In the English music language, the terms loud and soft are somewhat translated from the original Italian terms of Forte and Piano, which when literally translated mean strong and soft. The visualisation that Stirling uses goes beyond the technicalities of dynamics that includes a phrase-like musical tint that when playing piano, the lightness of the butterfly is visualised and when playing forte, the heaviness of the rhinoceros is captivated.

How to Improve Your Eyesight Without Glasses

At the other end of the spectrum from Don and George, Cosmic Keith Stirling recommended to all his students that they buy a book called *How To Improve Your Eyesight Without Glasses* - a tome that was at least as philosophical as it was scientific. (Clare, Bodgie Dada and the cult of Cool 155)
In this metaphor, we see an indication that an external source (the glasses) will not help your vision improve, vision meaning insight and wisdom. Stirling is teaching the importance of wisdom and insight, that they will in time encourage growth through fundamentals. Stirling sees the glasses as a ‘trick’ and promotes that wisdom and vision are better off learnt without the ‘trick.’

Stirling: You’ll never grow on a trick, on a fundamental you will, you’ll just grow. (Stirling, Ensemble Class track 1, 1’59")

Hearing

It is evident that Stirling is an artist who is constantly monitoring the phrases he is playing. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Stirling achieves this through psychophysical visualisation techniques. This technique aids to create cohesion within Stirling’s solos. In the following quotes, Stirling talks about this concept:

Stirling: You only play as good as you hear, never as good as you think, but your ears are the final judgment. (Stirling, Ensemble Class track 1, 0’44”)

Stirling: Your hearing is what makes you a good player. (Stirling, Ensemble Class track 1, 1’35”)
Stirling: It’s relative, to my ear. (Stirling, Ensemble Class track 1, 1’26”)

Stirling is restating that the ears (listening) are responsible for creating cohesion within the solo structure, not the mind or predetermined formulaic structures. Warwick Alder comments on Stirling’s abilities in the skill of listening.

Stirling is a player who listens to the last phrase he played, and then plays off that. (Alder)

Jerry Coker discusses the importance of the ear in jazz music in his text, The Jazz Idiom.

Because so much of our success as improvisers depends upon a ‘musical ear,’ . . . the special musical ‘sense’ that good musicians develop is vital to understanding, improvisation, and composition. (Coker 15-16)

It is the mark of a fine and well-trained musician to be able to quickly identify [by ear] and use all such devices. Perhaps it is this ability that distinguishes the best from the merely good jazz artist. (Coker 21)
Concept Before Technique

While teaching a musical concept, Stirling applies this principle by stating

Stirling: Don’t try and play them pretty, they will come pretty, when they, you know, you chip the rock away and then it’s a diamond, you gotta have a rock first. (Stirling, lesson tape #1 track 8, 0'04")

Stirling does not place any importance on the instrumental techniques required to obtain the concept.

Also, one of the great things I learnt from the Americans is this: *concept before technique*. Not the other way around. In other words, your technique must come up to your concept. You can’t allow technique to rule you. That’s a tendency of a lot of players. [Said Stirling] (Myers)

This hypothesis is one of the fundamental principles of the development of jazz. Each jazz performer has his concept and consequently his technique is required to transcend that concept.

Early jazz cornetists [such] as Louis Armstrong, Bunny Berigan, Muggsy Spanier, and others who, unschooled in the European tradition, imitated blues singers with their instruments. (Fromme 330)
This concept remains an integral part of the jazz movement and conforming to these traditions, current Norwegian trumpeter Arve Henriksen applies this principle to his trumpet sound.

Of course, before this and all the way along I have been and I am influenced by Jon Hassell, Per Jørgensen, Don Cherry, Palle Mikkelborg, Nils Petter Molvær, Miles Davis, Chet Baker and many more. I have for many years been searching for sounds and moods in different corners . . . the Armenian instrument duduk, Indian flutes, Balinese sounds, Mongolian overtone singing, Sidsel Endresen's vocal sounds, [and] electronic sounds. Over the last 10 or 12 years I've been into many different styles and worked with many inspiring musicians and artists. Anyway: the trumpet sound has gradually moved along in the spirit of the shakuhachi. (Henriksen)

Playing Outside

Stirling: Be out to be in, but be in to be out. (Colton)

This phrase is referring to being hip and in the latest movement of jazz improvisers by following the trends and playing “out” (outside the key). Stirling understands that by playing outside the key, it is hip and up with the latest trends. He then qualifies that to play outside the key, one must achieve this through playing inside the key. This means that playing a shape or structure from another key and superimposing it over the inside key will achieve the desired effect.

Later in the study, we find out ways that Stirling achieves “outside the key” improvisation through means of the naturally occurring harmonic series.
Stirling exemplifies this concept in example three with phrases that begin with chromatic density “getting outside” and resolve back to the diatonic key by means of pentatonic sounds.

Ex.3

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 3'46")

The pedagogical chapter has concluded that Stirling’s life and teaching ways were influenced by eastern philosophies (NSA Buddhism). This caused an increasing creativity in his musical philosophies. Stirling applied these philosophies to both his music and instrumental techniques in the cases of “psychophysical visualisation techniques” and “how to improve your eyesight without glasses.” The creativeness of Stirling’s metaphoric teaching techniques is reminiscent of the Chinese poem, a Koin.

Stirling: . . . Oh they’re poems, there’s no answer to them, [but they can,] you can reach enlightenment. (Stirling, lesson tape #3 track 2, 0'03")

Analytical Methodology

In order to study the taxonomy of Stirling’s style it is necessary to categorise its main features. Through the comprehension of all of the resources, I have invented a methodology for the analysis of these features.
The analysis will continue to reveal some of the concepts that Stirling used to obtain two different types of phrases and other instrumental and harmonic devices that play an important role in the identification of his style. Firstly, these concepts are introduced through the analysis of lesson notes and tapes; secondly, the concepts are exemplified through transcribed phrases taken from the control group of recordings.

Combining Instrumental Technique with Improvisation

Stirling’s approach to practicing is derived from a creative mixture of instrumental technique with improvisation material. The instrumental aspects of Stirling’s practice are achieved through Carmine Caruso’s *Musical Calisthenics for Brass*. This method begins with semitones and gradually expands through larger intervals, until the harmonic series is introduced. Remaining exercises continue expanding until octaves are reached, introducing breath control exercises along the way. (Caruso)

Stirling condenses the Caruso method and plays minor seconds, tones up to minor thirds on the harmonic series. Example Four shows Stirling creating minor thirds on the harmonic series, he calls the harmonic series “bugles” as this is the series that a bugle plays and is the fundamental principle behind all brass instruments.
Ex. 4 (Stirling’s hand written notes taken from Peter Lothian’s private collection)
In example five, firstly the harmonic series is played as it naturally sits on the instrument. Next, descending semitones are played on each member of the harmonic series, then ascending semitones. Then the combination of descending and ascending semitones are played on each step of the harmonic series. Finally, ascending tones are played on the harmonic series.

From these examples, it is clear that Stirling’s concept of practicing jazz improvisation skills is heavily based on intervals. In the next examples, Stirling recommends intervallic practice beginning with semitones and gradually expanding using tones, thirds both major and minor, fourths and finally fifths following the sequence from Caruso’s text. In the case
of example six, Stirling reverses the order of intervals. In the following two examples, Stirling is consistent with this approach to practicing.

Ex.6 (Stirling’s hand written notes taken from Peter Lothian’s private collection)
In example seven Stirling is also introducing what he calls “The George Duke,” a way to create tension by going up a scale and coming down a scale a semitone higher. Stirling recommends practising the scales and intervals in this zig-zag manner of ascending in one key and descending in the next key a semitone higher, so on and so forth.
Natural Law of the Harmonic Series

According to George T. Endrey’s article “Theoretical Foundation of the Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization:”

There is a very strong justification in the overtone system for the Lydian scale, rather than the major scale being the true representative of the tonality of its tonic major chord. (Endrey ii)

In the Pythagorean system, which maintained its predominance over theory to the time of Zarlino in the sixteenth century, the tuning proceeded by ascending fifths, C G D A E B F# C# G# D# A# E# B# (Endrey xv)
The principle behind the ascending fifth example is that within the first seven notes there is a C major scale, with the introduction of the F♯ instead of an F♮, only spelt in ascending fifths. This of course creates the Lydian scale.

The basis of these facts sparked George Russell’s Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organisation for Improvisation; Lee Konitz taught the harmonic concepts from Russell’s book to Stirling during his sabbatical in New York City in 1979. Stirling continued to use the concepts taught to him by Konitz to develop his own methods for jazz improvisation:

Stirling: My impression of nature’s law then, is you first come across minor sevenths in a vertical structure, after that you get a diminished seventh, so this is a natural way of practicing and learning naturally. (Stirling, lesson tape #2 track 1, 0'10")

Playing Outside Using the Natural Law of the Harmonic Series

The harmonic approach that Stirling was using for his improvisations has been uncovered through assessment of his lesson tapes and notes. Stirling refers to creating vertical structures based on the harmonic series of overtones:

Stirling: ...and it’s starting to build vertical structures, chords ... years later in the states they found the value of arpeggiating chords, [a] lot of guys went into the scales and things and that, Jerry Coker and all them suggested that, use the chords, and now it does really, physically it’s not as easy, but it um, you’re outlining chords too, your ear’s getting better, it’s good to outline the chords, especially if you’re playing outside the scale. (Stirling, lesson tape #1 track 3, 2’43")
Ex. 9 (Stirling’s hand written notes taken from Peter Lothian’s private collection)

In example nine, Stirling has combined intervals (minor thirds) on the harmonic series, which is outlining chords (Bbmin7), creating vertical structures and shifting into other keys. The superimposition of the chords Dmin7, Fmin7, Cmin7 and DØ are outside the initial chord of Bbmin7. NB number four is obviously a combination of one and two creating the D diminished arpeggio, Stirling describes the concept in concert pitch:

Stirling: As you go up the natural law of the overtones, you go naturally out of the key, so if you go back a couple of steps from the last one you did, where you first went out of key on your C [D], if you build that one up, and the last one you did, it’s a diminished. . . there’s the C [D], I’m out of the key now, now next one [E♭ or F] is in the key, and the next one [A♭ or B♭], then the last one [A♯ or B♯] is out of the key. (Stirling, lesson tape #1 track 4, 6′07")
Example ten is a transcription of the demonstration that Stirling plays on lesson tape #1. When we compare that to the Pythagorian system of tuning in ascending fifths, both the seventh and eighth notes are naturally out of key according to chord scale theory but when applied to the Lydian Chromatic Concept, they are placed naturally. (NB that the F and A♭ in the higher octave are simply octave displaced)

Stirling: This is the progression that I follow in my solos, it’s natural law, when you’re going, the guys go out of the key anywhere, and it’s not necessarily the natural law. That’s the way I see it, so I can use that . . (Stirling, lesson tape #1 track 4, 5’05”).

Ex.11 (Stirling’s hand written notes taken from Peter Lothian’s private collection)
In example eleven, Stirling has written the minor thirds on each partial of the harmonic series and included the out-of-key note, D natural, which is the major third on the minor chord.

Stirling: Now as you go up the natural law of the overtones, you go naturally out of the key . . . if you go from the C [D] you create a diminished (Stirling, lesson tape #1 track 4, 6’15")

Stirling arrives at this point by playing an enclosure on each partial of the harmonic series. The enclosure is a Jerry Coker term that describes how a chord tone is surrounded by nearby tones, usually a semitone above and below. In the following transcription of Stirling’s demonstration from the lesson tape, he plays an enclosure yet never resolves it to each partial of the harmonic series. The harmonic series he is using here is based on C.

Ex.12

(Ayrton, lesson tape #1 track 3 2’17")
Chromatic Lexicon

From study of the collected discography and transcriptions, two main facets of Stirling’s style have revealed themselves. They are firstly, a chromatic approach and secondly, a diatonic approach, and in many cases, his phrases are inclusive of both types.

Stirling’s chromatic modus operandi exists from a semitone-orientated lexicon that occurs mainly at the beginnings of phrases. The use of the chromatic phrase is predominantly antecedent in nature and may be rhythmically inter-dispersed. The following examples exemplify Stirling’s chromatic tendencies; some are balanced with diatonic/pentatonic gravitations.

Ex.13

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 3'56")

Ex.14

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 5'19")
Ex. 15

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 6'13")

Ex. 16

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues III" 2'01")

Ex. 17

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues III" 2'46")

Ex. 18

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues IV" 0'48")
Diatonic Lexicon

Stirling’s diatonic methodology is exemplified with the following phrases that display the combination of both note groups that are idiomatic to the trumpet and facets of pentatonic lines.

Ex.19

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 4'01")

Ex.20

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues II" 1'52")
Ex.21

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues III" 2'16")

Ex.22

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues IV" 0'49")

Emerging Patterns

In direct relation to the intervallic system used throughout Stirling’s lesson notes, his improvisations commonly use no intervals larger than a perfect fourth, begin with chromatic density and rapidly expand throughout each phrase. These concepts are a common trait in jazz trumpet players such as Clifford Brown, who was a later influence on Stirling.
In example twenty-three, Clifford Brown displays no intervals larger than a minor third in this small excerpt of his improvisation.

In example twenty-four, the largest interval that Stirling plays is a minor third; his line is within the traits of the be-bop language and suggests that Stirling’s style was embedded within these idiomatic tendencies.

Archetypical Stirling Lexicon

From the four All Blues transcriptions, the epitome of Stirling’s lexicon has been extracted. His inventive use of small cells chromatically infiltrated by larger intervals cause a descending cascade of different keys and inventive shapes that always conclude
with diatonic cadences. Stirling uses minor thirds and in some cases, major thirds on the harmonic series to achieve “outside the key” melodic entities.

Ex.25

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues III" 3'46")

Ex.26

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues I" 2'56")

Ex.27

(Ayrton, Transcription of "All Blues III" 2'37")
Each of these examples utilises the “outside the key” notion yet returns to a diatonic perspective. Jerry Coker defines this concept as “getting outside”- “slang expression for deliberately (usually) moving away from order, consonance, and simplicity.” (Coker 15)

Conclusion

It was the combination of Stirling’s geographical location and early musical experiences that led him toward a career in modern jazz music. The influences of local Melbourne trumpeters Fred Thomas and Keith Hounslow, amongst others, aided Stirling in the direction of becoming Australia’s imminent modern jazz trumpet stylist of the 1960s-1970s.

Due to Stirling’s involvement with both Jazz Centre 44 in Melbourne and the El Rocco in Kings Cross Sydney, he was influential in the development of modern jazz in Australia. It should be noted that Stirling’s influence and involvement with these meeting places of modern Australian jazz occurred before his study trip to New York City in 1979. Stirling’s prolific live performance career in Australian jazz and commercial styles supports his
standing as one of the most substantial and original post-bop trumpet players in Australia in the mid 1980s.

Stirling was an early adopter of eastern philosophies, which many of his peers at the time were not accustomed to. Nowadays these philosophies and ways of life are quite prominent in certain suburbs of Sydney, and widely accepted. Although Stirling was influenced by the ways of the east, his music most certainly was not directly influenced by any eastern cultural musical styles.

Stirling’s pedagogical methods were infiltrated with a metaphoric language for the concepts of music. The folkloric preservation of this characteristic metaphoric language is by virtue of Stirling’s peers and students. The importance of metaphor in music has been proven to aid in the development of musical concepts and bring these concepts to reality.

Lesson tapes and transcriptions have revealed that Stirling’s improvisational methodology was embedded in the bebop language and also derived from George Russell’s Lydian Chromatic Concept. Stirling created a unique fusion of instrumental technique and jazz concept to achieve his improvisational ideology.

As a result of this thesis, there is now a collected discography and filmography that presents a firm example of Stirling’s improvisational style and varied performance types in Australian jazz and commercial realms. A comprehensive examination of the forces and influences that acted upon Stirling’s life have revealed the origins of his improvisational style, and given a glimpse of its development throughout his life.

It would be well worthwhile for a scholar to continue the exploration into Stirling’s improvisational style on a larger scale. Hopefully with the requisition and aid of more recordings that have not yet been recovered.
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