SF: You're probably best known for your current work with Billy Taylor. What else are you doing to keep busy?

KC: I work regularly with two or three different groups. One of them is with Phil Markowitz on , Eddie Gomez on bass and John Locke on babes. We did a recording in the Rochester Theater that's just been released.

I also work with a band led by guitarist Rory Stewart. We did a live recording at Seventh Avenue South which is now out on the Cadence label. That group includes Armand Donelian on piano and Calvin Hill on bass. Now that Rory has this record out, maybe there will be some more chances for us to play.

I also work with Len Welsh and his tentette with two trumpets and trombones; three reeds and three rhythm. A unique band with straight-ahead jazz arrangements and a few fusion-type arrangements. Len has done most of the writing. A large percentage of the horn players are studio musicians like Lew Soloff, Joe Shepley, Gerry Niewood, Pete Yellin, Lou Hoss, Jim Pugh and Dave Taylor. The rhythm section is Albert Dailey, Calvin Hill and myself. [redacted]

I do some big band playing with Frank Foster's Loud Minority and his smaller big band Living Color. Billy Hart is the first call player for that band. When he's not around Frank usually calls me.

SF: How extensive is your teaching practice?

KC: I've been going to Eastman every summer to be part of an intensive Jazz Performance Workshop. It usually runs about six days. This was my fifth year there. I was very lucky to get the teaching position. I was third on the list of people they asked. Bill Goodwin was contracted to do it. He couldn't and asked Joe LaBarbara to do it. A week before Joe was supposed to arrive, Bill Evans came up with something and Chuck Israels recommended me. The next year they asked me to come back and they've been asking me ever since.

I had extensive teaching experience from teaching eight full-time semesters at Berklee College before I moved back to New York City. I was teaching 20 to 30 hours a week. It started off part time. Towards the end it got to be too much. When I accepted the job I wanted to teach part time drumset, specializing in Latin percussion techniques for drumset. I also taught classical snare drumming. I wanted to give the students a perspective besides ~~other than~~ rudimental training and how to apply that in a classical manner. I had to get into some classical literature with them. That's what my teachers used to do.

My first teacher at Berklee was Fred Buda. I didn't study with Alan Dawson until I left Berklee. It was on Alan's recommendation that I was asked to join the Berklee faculty. Alan decided to leave after 18 years of teaching there from 1957 to 1975.

SF: I was under the impression that you had an extensive teaching practice in New York City.

KC: No. I'm never around long enough. I see about ten students once every six to eight weeks. If they're at the level I like them to be at I give them a two-hour lesson. They have time to really work on the material. I tell them not to call me until they have it together. I have a limited amount of time to practice and I'm not

in the business of teaching. I'm in the business of trying to play as well as I can. If I was in the business of teaching, I'd encourage my students to come every week. If you didn't get it together last week, ~~then~~ I'd charge you for getting it together this week! ~~I charge~~ $25.00 an hour. You have as much time as you need to work on the material. I tape the lesson at a couple of tempos. The tempo they need to start working on and the tempo I expect them to have it at when they come back. If they have any questions they can call me. I'll analyze it so that they can get it together without having to come back.

SF: Can you spot a winner in a student?

KC: Yes. But, when you're dealing with most university situations it doesn't matter what you spot. Mainly because of financial reasons, a university is going to advise you that it would be better not to tell the person that they should take up another instrument. Especially if the kid is a freshman. That's going to mean that the university might not get the four years tuition.

But, I don't like to do that. The kid is giving up his money, fantasizing about being the greatest person he's ever heard. I've had kids say to me " I just got these drums six months ago. I'd like to play like Billy Cobham next year." And they usually come in with 18-piece drumsets. I tell them "We'll see. But, first we're going to deal with the snare, one cymbal, the bass drum and the hi-hat. Billy Cobham can play all that he plays on 18 or 25 drums on four pieces of equipment." Billy and I went to junior high school together. I know where he acme from. I tell students "I'm sure Billy is still working very hard to get even better than he is now. I'll put you through a few things and see how you feel six months from now."

I'll try to wipe them out so badly that they'll want to stop playing voluntarily, rather than tell them that they have unrealistic goals. They're fantasizing about playing like Cobham in one year. Put a little more perspective on it. That will take about 20 years if it's possible in 20 years.

You can't teach feeling. You can teach anybody technique. If they still want to study to learn technique, I can teach them. They might turn out to be very good teachers. But, if they aspire to be performers of the calibre of their idols, then I tell them them this. "I'm 37 and I've been playing professionally for 23 years. If you want to come out here and compete, let me tell you what the competition's like. You might become very proficient in playing locally; making club dates and becoming a very great teacher. You might be able to recognize talent in another person and give them things that I'm giving you. But, as difficult as it is out here to play mainly mainstream jazz, and because there's such a small vailability of those kind of full-time jobs, you have to be very good to lock in to one. If you're talking about being in a straight-ahead rock or fusion situatiion, there might be more jobs available. I can teach you the techniques, but I'm not going to tell you that you're going to be able to play like your idol if you study with me for two years or 20 years. I know what that takes. It has to be from the heart. If you don't have heart, it's going to be very hard for me to teach it to you. I can explain what it's about, how it's supposed to happen, but I can't just transmit that into your body. It has to be there."

SF: What about that famous story of Papa Jo Jones throwing a cymbal at Charlie Parker because he felt he was playing so bad? Doesn't that contradict the theory of either you've got it or you don't?
KC: I can't say what was going through Papa Jo's mind, but I think he did that because he recognized some talent in Charlie Parker and, that would scare him enough to really make him get it together. That's what happened to me when I was coming up.

The worst, most traumatic experiences I had was when I was trying to play with people I love and revere today. They literally scared me to death to make me practice. When I was 17, I sat in with a group that pianist Barry Harris was leading at Minton's Playhouse. It was George Coleman on tenor, Charles McPherson on alto, Peck Morrison on bass and Barry. Lenny McBrowne was the regular drummer. I thought I was playing pretty good, but I wasn't playing any bass drum or bottom. I wasn't playing four-to-the-bar lightly like Lenny. I was just using my bass drum to drop bombs and answer what my left hand was doing, in the style of Philly Joe Jones with Miles. But, Barry wanted to hear some bottom! We were playing all the Charlie Parker tunes. When those tunes were recorded, Max Roach was playing some bottom too. While I was playing behind the horn soloists, Barry kept looking at me real strange and I was feeling real bad. When Barry started soloing he started having a conversation with me about my inadequacies in using my bass drum. He was soloing and talking to me at the same time! I'd never seen anybody do that before. So, I went home and worked on it. The next time I had it more together. At least Barry didn't talk to me during his solo. The way he looked at me and the way he was talking is still alive in my mind.

SF: Have you noticed problems that reoccur frequently in people who are studying drumset?

KC: (At Eastman I've noticed that) Classical players have a different kind of regiment to deal with; a different repertoire of learning how to deal with conductors and how to play music exactly as it's written. Drumset players have to learn how to interpret charts and not play everything on the paper. See what's written and interpret the best parts and make it work.

The biggest problem is coordination. They have to learn how to think four or five different ways about the drumset at one time, and still pay attention to all the other things going on around them while they're playing. They have to develop ears. They have to know how to play something that's going to fit the moment and still keep thinking about meter. A guy might go to play something he hears and the time will fall apart. He's concentrating more on what he wants to react to than the time .

On top of that, if it's a reading situation, they have to think about interpreting the chart the right way. Nine times out of ten, unless the chart's written by Quincy Jones, Manny Albam or another one of the great writers, the writer is not going to write what he wants the drummer to play. He's going to write something, but the drummer is going to have to figure out what's written and play what the composer really wants to hear. That's splitting your head up in alot of places! That's what I really stress in my teaching more than anything else.

After they get that together, then we talk about building chops to develop the ability to play musical drum solos and how to listen

to and phrase around the melody. But, first let's deal with how to keep good time and how to make the band feel good. That's most important. If you do that well, you don't even have to solo and you'll still be very much recognized for your ability.

SF: Do you know the lyrics to many songs?

KC: About three or four. But, I know the melodies. That's all I need to know. I've heard alot of horn players from the swing school say that they like to know the lyrics of songs, especially ballads, so they can really get the emotional feel from their instruments that corresponds to the song lyrics.

I had a chance to listen to alot of music when I was growing up. My father is a professional jazz trumpeter. I heard alot of jazz standards in the '50s when Hard Bop was at it's height. I heard those tunes in the best possible way. Standard tunes played with jazz execution.

When I studied with Alan, one of the things he stressed was how to develop musical drum solos by singing the melody. He makes you sing the melody, play time and play fours. He's the first teacher I'd been with that made students do that. I've tried to continue that tradition. When I solo, almost 99% of the time I'm trying to play off the song form and in some way relate to the melody. My goal is to make the audience hear the melody when I'm soloing; to make the band members feel my solo as opposed to counting measures through my solo. I want them to know where I am in the tune so we'll come out together. When that happens it's a beautiful thing to hear.

With Billy Taylor we don't always play for the most knowledgeable

jazz audiences. We play for people who've never heard jazz before in their lives. If we're playing in Paduka, Kentucky, where I know they don't get alot of jazz, and someone after the concert says "Wow, I heard the melody in your solo," then I know I'm getting close. If I can get to those people I'm not worried about playing in New York. People in New York have heard everything! As long as I do what I do well, whether I do it in the form of the solo or outside of it, they're going to appreciate it.

SF: Do you recommend attending a college or university for someone who wants to become a professional musician?

KC: Definitely. You should get some formal musical training either in the classical area or, at some of the special schools like Miami, Berklee, New England Conservatory, the University of Indiana or Eastman, which is probably the highest example of everything I've seen. Study as much classical and jazz as the schools offer.

If possible, go where there's alot of music going on professionally outside of the school. The bandstand is where you get the chance to find out if you've learned anything. You can get the college degree, but if you can't cut it up on the bandstand then you have to spend alot of time on the bandstand studying. College gives you a piece of paper. The piece of paper you get from the bandstand is the admiration of your peers. If you're thinking about playing mainstream jazz in all it's various forms, then you have to get your final degree from the New York bandstands; the most intense bandstands you'll have to deal with anywhere in the world. If you can sound good on a New York bandstand, you can sound good on anybody's bandstand. If you're not playing good in New York, the guys won't stay too long. They'll

go down the street to the next club to see who's sounding good, ~~down there.~~ If it's not happening after a chorus, they take off. If you can keep the room happening and full, then something's happening. If it gets empty real fast, then you know you're not ready to recieve your final degree.

SF: I remember Ron Spagnardi observing that there's no standard notation for drumset. Do you have any remedies or thoughts on that?

KC: No remedies. I look at alot of different types of notation. The easiest to deal with is alot of time slashes in the arrangements. Time slashes tell you to just keep time. Then I like to see some kicks written so I know where the kicks are and what the brass and reeds are doing. That's much better than having every single ride cymbal beat and kick written out. It's very difficult to look at that. More drummers should be bandleaders or arrangers. They would know how to write for drummers better than people who play other instruments.

I analyze alot of drum books. I like the ones that are written clearly. If the book is dealing with four limbs, I like it written on two staves. It's easier to see it that way. One of the best books I've seen for rock notation is by John Guerin. I think it's called Jazz & Rock Drums. It's an intense book and there's alot in there, but his notation is so clear. I'm almost sure he wrote it in double stave. It looked like it would play itself. I don't see that many books with that kind of clear notation. Charles Dowd has put out some very good books. If you're going to learn rock, he makes it very clear. Some of the Mel Bay books look very good. There was a book

by Charlie Perry called Rockin' Bass Drum that I liked.

SF: You've just written your own drum book. Why does the world need another drum book?

KC: Most of the drum books I see deal with beats. But they don't tell you the thought process that went into devising these beats. And if they're beats transcribed from records, they don't tell you how those drummers achieved the sounds on the records. I want to get to the root of the problem by telling a student how to create a certain beat to fit a certain situation on the moment, and how to use imporvisation no matter what kind of music he's playing.

All of the great players I've heard on records in mainstream jazz or any style of rock drumming, have created something on the spur of the moment. They didn't look in a book and memorize a beat when they made those records. But, you still see alot of books coming out with beats. Especially in the rock idiom. What about the creative process?

My book stresses building a foundation in coordination and how to use it creatively to fit any and all situations that you'll run into as a pro drummer/performer. I've been working these things out and getting results since 1970. It's a culmination of alot of my professional experience. Then I drew from my analyzation of all my favorite drummers, their work and how they solved creative situations. My book is a compilation of all those records, amplified through teaching at Berklee for eight semesters.

I had to be able to teach in a rather limited time span of a half hour, and get a maximum amount of information to the students .

It was difficult, but I learned how to do it. Half the problem with teaching is trying to figure out what psychological handicap each person has to overcome to be a good drummer, if he has an inherent good, natural time feel. You have to have time to know the person before you can figure out the problem.

My book saves me ~~the time of~~ always having to write out these "secrets" I have for getting over problems fast. And I think the book will help people to think more creatively. I cover all aspects of music, even Latin/American, and the notation is very simple. The descriptions for the coordination and technical exercises are brief but very clear. You can execute the exercises and (are) then ~~be~~ able to listen to other drummers and understand what you're hearing them play. Then you can understand what creative process was used. That's the real benefit of my book. Some of the more important books that have covered that idea are Jim Chapin's books one and two, and the Marvin Dahlgren/Eliot Fine coordination book. Some of the books that Joe Cusatis has done have been very helpful. And some of the things that Alan Dawson has utilized from books like Stick Control and Syncopation are excellent.

My book will fill a void, but I still recommend these other books and also studying with someone with the expertise of Alan Dawson. That will open you up so that you can open any book and find something more creative to do with it than just learning the beats.

SF: Let's consider somebody who wants to study the great jazz drummers, but so far his only listening/playing experience has been in rock. He walks into the local record shop, ~~and~~ sees aisles of jazz records and has no idea where to begin. Can you name some key drummers you'd recommend and also some key ~~particular~~ albums?

KC: I can name some artists who haven't, to the best of my knowledge, made any bad records. If a person purchases these records he'll get a good education. But, we have to talk about time periods.

If a person is interested in the tradition I've been most associated with, Bebop, Post-Bebop, Hard Bop, Mainstream -- all those titles having to do with the swing idiom -- he'd have to listen to people like Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers. All those records are good records. There's some special ones like the early records with Clifford Brown on trumpet. The first Jazz Messengers record I heard was a two-record set recorded in 1955 called Live At The Cafe Bohemia. That's good for starters. There were a couple of Blakey records recorded live at Birdland. Later on in the '60s came an ~~a good~~ album called Moanin' that's excellent. And one recorded with Curtis Fuller, Freddie Hubbard and Wayne Shorter called Mosaic. There were two other live records in a series by Art. At The Jazz Corner of the World and Meet You at the Jazz Corner of the World. Very, very fine records that sound fresh to this day. Even the albums that Art's recorded recently with Wynton Marsalis are great, like Live at the Keystone Korner.

SF: What about the Art Blakey/Thelonious Monk collaborations?

KC: That's ~~probably~~ some of the most incredible stuff in the world. I probably grew up more on that than anything else. The interaction between Art and Monk is so special. That reaches, almost, the level of Coltrane and Elvin. I always fantasized about playing with Monk. My father did. I think Art Blakey did the best with Monk out of all the drummers. But, I really enjoy listening to Monk with Frankie Dunlop. Frankie did as great as anybody after Art. I really enjoyed the way Ben Riley played with Monk. Billy Higgins sounded wonderful with Monk on a record called Thelonious Monk Live at the Jazz Workshop. A serious listener should purchase some Monk records to get into some depth. He should listen to all of Duke Ellington's records. Horace Silver has never made a bad record. And Cannonball Adderley has made some really fine records. He made a record called Somethin' Else which is a classic!

Any of the records that Max Roach made with Clifford Brown are unbelieveable. All of the Miles Davis records from the '60s are priceless. I would definitely recommend a series Miles recorded for Prestige that were originally issued as Cookin', Workin', Relaxin' and Steamin' with his quimtet.

In a later quintet with Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams and Wayne Shorter, Miles made a record called Four And More. That's some of the best work that I've ever heard Tony Williams do.

These are records that wouldn't do anybody any harm if they really wanted to quickly get into what was happening at that time period. From there they'd have to do some research. If you get to that music then you can understand what came after that. Don't just start listening to music that was recorded after 1970. Listen to all the

Charlie Parker and Lester Young music. That's very important. That music comes before the music we were just talking about. Then you can get a better grasp of what John Coltrane did. And if you study all of Coltrane's recorded work, then you're getting quite a history of the evolvement of the music.

SF: Who would you recommend for somebody who wanted to study the history of big band drumming?

KC: You can't go wrong with Count Basie. One record I really liked was Live at the Sands with Count Basie and Frank Sinatra. Sonny Payne is the drummer and the arrangements are by Quincy Jones. That's one of the greatest records of a combined big band/vocalist performance.

I have to mention Duke Ellington again. Then the bands led by Maynard Ferguson in the late '50s. Some of Stan Kenton's things were very, very unique. Also the records by Johnny Richards who did alot of arrangements for Kenton. Woody Herman has consistently had many good groups of musicians. Later on we get to the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis big band. They have quite a collection of records that are very important. I heard a fantastic big band in Europe. The Kenny Clarke/Francy Boland big band. They had two drummers. Kenny Clarke and Kenny Clare. The big bands I like today are Frank Foster's Loud Minority and Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin is another fine big band.

But, I'll tell you the greatest music I've ever heard live. And it was also recorded. When I was 17 I saw the John Coltrane Quartet at Birdland. I caught two sets. To this day I've never experienced anything any more intense or spiritual than that. I base everything on that. Everything comes after that. I've never seen the type of communication between musicians and the way the au-

dience recieved that music. I've never seen anything equal to it and I don't know if I ever will. I saw people almost passing out from the intensity of that music. People had to go outside to revive. # They needed to have oxygen tanks in Birdland to give to people to keep everybody in the club. Otherwise people were going to have to walk outside. That's how intense the music was.

SF: You spent some time playing with Stevie Wonder. That's a long way from what you're doing today. How did you get that gig and why did you decide to leave?

KC: There's a couple of important reasons. When I was attending Berklee I was still very much involved in trying to play jazz. But, the jobs I was getting called for to supplement my income were mostly rock or Top 40. That's when I met Mel Brown and George Moreland. They used to come through quite a bit with Glady's Knight and The Pips and The Temptations. They helped me immensely. I was trying to get that style together by listening to Sly and The Family Stone, Kool and The Gang and all the Motown records I could find. I was trying to duplicate the rhythms. Mel and George gave me some tips on how to get more projection out of my feet.

In 1970 I left Berklee to continue freelancing around the Boston area. I had a chance to check out the whole R&B and soul scene in Boston, and started getting a pretty decent reputation as a funk drummer. Then I had an opportunity to go out on the road with a group from Boston called The Lords. My first traveling gig was in 1971. I went out to Detroit with The Lords on a show with Kim Weston who used to record for Motown. Her husband was a former Motown producer. We were doing this gig in Detroit and some of Stevie Wonder's people heard me play. They taped me at the club and played

~~the tape~~

the tape on the phone to Stevie in New York.

Stevie was working at Electric Lady Studios, in a transition period from "Little" Stevie Wonder to "Big" Stevie Wonder. He was recording, by himself, all the tracks to Music of My Mind. They were teaching him how to use a synthesizer. He was also trying to put together a band that could promote that music once it was released.

I got the gig more or less on a fluke. Stevie flew me into New York after he heard the tape. I was still working with Kim, so I auditioned for Stevie and flew back the same night to do my gig in Detroit. From what I understand, he chose Gregory Brown, a very fine young drummer. Gregg made two gigs and something happened. I think the management put some weight on Stevie to get me because they thought maybe I'd be more reliable. I got the call about three weeks later in D.C. to join the band.

I stayed with Stevie for seven months. I loved the band. One of the main reasons I had never wanted to play any more of that kind of music was because I never found a band as creative as that band. The first Wonderlove band was amazing. There were people in that band like Ronnie Groves, Deniece Williams, Steve Madeio, Trevor Lawrence, Dave Sanborn, Scotty Edwards, Jim Gilstrap ... just some marvelous people.

The second reason I left the band was because I didn't find myself able to really get along with the management people and their

attitude towards musicians. After seven months I wasn't getting treated the way I wanted to be treated. Stevie really loved us. I don't think he had enough control, at that time, to be able to hold that kind of band. I was about the fourth person to leave because of general discontent with the way alot of things were run. Scheduling, transportation, hotel accomodations. Playing with a band with that intensity, we needed to be treated in a way that we could get the maximum amount of rest, so that we could perform fully rested. But, there just didn't seem to be enough money to really be able to take care of us in that way.

It was the third time I quit. Each time I wanted to leave there was something crucial coming up that would have benefitted the band alot through exposure. Our first tour was in England. We came back and did the David Frost Show. That's when I first met Billy Taylor. The next time I quit was right after we'd done some one nighters with Joe Cocker and we were doing The Bitter End. Then we got on The Rolling Stones' tour. I quit after it was half over because of further disagreements with Stevie's management, Stevie and with the Stones about something they wanted me to do. But, it had nothing to do with Charlie Watts. I love him. He's marvelous.

SF: So many drummers would love to be in Stevie Wonder's band on tour with The Rolling Stones!

KC: Well, that's fine. I didn't want to deal with it anymore. I would love to play with him anytime. But, if I'm going to be on the road traveling, I want to get treated like I am now working for Billy Taylor. If I can't, then I'd rather not travel. It's too much of a drain on you to travel and have to perform at your peak when you're tired because of scheduling. If you can't have a comfortable place

to lay your head and get yourself together so ~~that~~ you can give an inspired performance everytime, then I don't need it. That's why I left.

SF: How would you define good technique? How much of it do you need and when does it start to get in the way?

KC: It starts to get in the way when the music stops swinging or grooving. If technique is the reason why, then it's too much technique. It's never too much technique as long as all the technique is utilized in a way that doesn't kill the groove.

SF: Could you chronologically trace the jazz drummers who've influenced you and explain what it was about them and/or their playing that influenced you?

KC: I can't say I was too influenced by Sonny Greer, but I still have alot of respect for him. The most senior person who influenced me would be a toss-up between Kenny Clarke and Art Blakey. People within four to six years of that age bracket who were influences would be Max Roach, Philly Joe Jones, Roy Haynes, Shelly Manne, Alan Dawson, Jimmy Cobb and Elvin Jones. They all sort of came through at the same period. I wasn't really around when Papa Jo Jones was at his peak performance. But as I did my research historically I found out how important he was. I was influenced by people who were influenced by Papa Jo. And in my research I've heard bits and pieces of Big Sid Catlett and Chick Webb, but I wasn't directly influenced by them.

It's hard to define specifically what attracted me to them because each man is totally different. They all had such individual styles. I suppose <u>that's</u> what attracted me to them. Not just in their solo work, but in the way they interpreted the beat.

That's something that's lacking today in alot of young players,

because of the way the tradition of the instrument has changed and, the utilization of the instrument in the pop idiom. It's much more prevalent for younger players to try to sound like whoever is the hottest person in the recording studios. There's not much room left for creativity in that idiom. Not as much as there was in the jazz era of the '40s up until now. That's why I liked the drummers I mentioned. They all had something special to say.

SF: Can you recall the first time you heard each of the drummers you named?

KC: Sure. I saw Art Blakey for the first time when I was about ten years old. He was at the Randall's Island Jazz Festival that they used to hold around the same time of the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island. I saw Philly Joe and Jimmy Cobb playing with Miles. When I was 15 I got a chance to go to Birdland when they had the Peanut Gallery. You could sit in the section of the club where they didn't serve alcohol. That enlightened alot of youth in the late '50s and early '60s who wanted to see topflight jazz.

As I got older in my teens I remember seeing Philly Joe and Art Blakey leading groups opposite each other at Birdland. I didn't see Kenny Clarke until I went into the Air Force and saw him at a festival in Belgium. He was about 55 and sounded tremendous. I didn't get a chance to see Shelly Manne until 1972, even though I'd been listening to him for about 14 years. The first record I heard him on was called I Want To Live, a soundtrack from a Susan Hayward movie. I purchased alot of Shelly Manne records. His groups were similar in instrumentation to Art Blakey.

I got to see Roy Haynes alot because he lived right around the

corner from me in Hollis, Queens. I first met him when he'd just finished working with Monk. I always listened to the drummer with Monk. It was an education to learn how to play with Monk because of his rhythmic dexterity and his beautiful gift of using space and an unorthodox way of interjecting his comping. Harmonically and rhythmically he was beautiful. You really had to know what you were doing to provide the proper essence in that style of accompaniment.

I didn't meet Alan Dawson until I went to Berklee in 1968. He's a very, very strong influence. I'd listened a little bit to Tony Williams when he first came to New York with Miles. But, later I heard a record that Alan did with Dave Brubeck. Then I could really see the influence that Alan had on Tony. As Tony evolved into other styles of playing from his Seven Steps to Heaven, Four And More and My Funny Valentine period, and began to expand on that, I tended to lock more into Alan because, to me, he was playing in the tradition that Tony was playing in in the early part of his career. I was more interested in that style. I really tried to get to that. I'm still trying.

I became aware of Elvin through listening to the evolvement of John Coltrane on record and the different drummers he used. He used Art Taylor on alot of his early Prestige and Atlantic records, and Coltrane made one or two records on Blue Note with, I think, Philly Joe.

Connie Kay was another influence, believe it or not, who I neglected to mention. He was one of those players -- and still is -- who was one of the least busy players I've ever heard, but he has such an identity when you hear him play because of the firm solidness

in his playing. I heard a record with Connie playing with John Coltrane called Bags & Trane that was very interesting.

After John had recorded three albums on Atlantic -- I think they were Giant Steps, Coltrane Jazz and My Favorite Things, that began Elvin's association with John. By the time they started recording for Impulse the group was set. I really started getting into Elvin and started listening to everything I could get that he was on besides his recordings with John. I didn't understand his concept at first. I don't understand it all now! But, I'm closer to it now than I was then.

SF: Why should young people interested in today's pop music study these master jazz drummers?

KC: If they don't want to play traditional mainstream jazz, they shouldn't! What those jazz masters represent is not going to help in the straight-ahead pop/rock idiom. If they tried to utilize some of it in their performances or recordings, I'm sure the producers would tell them that it won't work. That kind of true creativity is not usually compatible with what those producers want. If they're really locked into the hard rock or pop/rock -- I call it formula music -- then there's really no need. That creativity and use of dynamics is not going to be useful to them. Most of the guys playing in that idiom don't even know what brushes are. They never owned a set. It could be frustrating unless they had some outlet to utilize it.

One thing I like about guys in the mainstream jazz tradition. For some strange reason they have unbelieveable longetivity. They've been here a long time. They seem to keep getting better. And if

they're really good they get a chance to play through their whole life-span. That's one of the pitfalls of being in the pop/rock idiom. As soon as you go out of style -- that's it. Either you go on to the next thing or you're left out. There's not many groups like The Stones who have that magic to remain popular through a couple of generations. There's not that many Charlie Watts around. They're definitely the exception.

But, if they're wise and they invest that superstar money properly, they can be comfortable and go into other things later on. If they choose to study the more creative aspects of the instrument, whether it be fusion/jazz or straight-ahead jazz, then it might be helpful to listen to those jazz masters. If they're doing that and not getting the chance to practice or perform it, then it's going to be a negative influence on what they're doing. If their bread and butter depends on dealing with hard rock or pop/rock, then they should just concentrate on that and listen to the people who do that well.

SF: Let's say you formed the Keith Copeland Management and Promotion Agency. Is there anything you would or could do to turn around the economic situation for most jazz musicians?

KC: It all has to do with the media and how much music is disseminated on a wide basis on radio and TV. A case in point: What do they play on MTV?

SF: Rock music.

KC: That answers your question. We have to have an MTV playing jazz if it's going to be accepted and loved by the forthcoming generation. If the powers that control the media want this music exposed, it will be exposed. If they don't, it won't.

Ray Brown runs a management agency. We need more people who knows music like he does in a position of someone like George Wein, who has also participated in all of those stages of development in the music; someone who has expertise as a performer and now, as a manager/promoter. That will help. But, that won't help if there's no avenue of exposure for jazz on a wide level. Right now the music is exposed more on public radio, PBS and National Public radio than on commercial radio. New York City does not have a full-time 24[hour]/jazz station. And it's probably the jazz headquarters of the world. The closest 24-hour jazz station is in Newark, New Jersey. That's a shame. When I was growing up, New York had two or three jazz stations. WEVD, the predominant station, was the one Symphony Sid was on. WRVR came later. And WLIB was the station that Billy Taylor and Ed Williams used to be on. For reasons of economic stability, the format of those stations changed in the '60s and '70s.

SF: I remember those disc jockeys. There shows were like college courses in jazz.

KC: That's right. They definitely influenced me. Some of the prize records I own were records I first heard played by those people. Mort Seigert, especially, Simphony Sid, Billy Taylor and Ed Williams. They really knew their business.

SF: You told me that you're planning on writing a book on or about a famous jazz musician. I know you don't want to say more than that, but what motivated you to start such an ambitious project?

KC: I believe there's a strong need for the history of jazz to be put into print by someone who lived it from the black perspective. One of the best examples of that so far is Music Is My Mistress by Duke Ellington. And Billy Taylor did a masterful job in his book

called Jazz Piano, tracing the history of jazz from a pianistic perspective. That was an inspiration in itself.

Of all the books I've seen written about jazz, alot of them come from the white perspective. There's alot lacking in those books as far as the real contribution of the black artists. They glorify alot of the white artists who became very famous. There are a few books by white authors that are good. There was a good book on Charlie Parker called Bird: The Legend of Charlie Parker, by George Robert Reisner. But there's still a need for a book by a black person who's experienced this music over four or five generations, as told from his perspective. I'm not trying to put down the other books. They're all factual. But, they don't give enough emphasis to the black contribution.

This is black music. Jazz music came out of a black experience. In slavery or post-slavery, the blacks were emulating the Western European tradition. But, they came out with a different form of music. The jazz or improvised form. The white players found it interesting and emulated it and they became famous for it. There were alot of people who were left out. There's alot that weren't. We have our heroes. But, I still think there's people in between who haven't gotten their proper due.

SF: Is it easier, harder or the same to earn a living as a black jazz musician or a white jazz musician?

KC: That's a tough one. Don't even qualify it by saying jazz musician. Just say black musician as opposed to white musician.

SF: So, you think it's harder for a black musician.

KC: Yes. It's the acceptance factor in all facets of music. I don't

think it's that easy for us to get the exposure we should get, no matter what we do well. Maybe not so much in classical music. If you're really, really good you can get accepted there. There are just not that many fortunate enough to get in or to get to that acceptance level.

But, it seems that when we come out with something really unique and special, we become imitated. Somehow, someway, someone who imitates us gets the chance to get the exposure. It doesn't happen all the time, but it does happen, and that's tough. Still, it doesn't stop us trying to be original and creative. You have to go into it knowing that there's that possibility that no matter how great you play or how creative or individual you are, people are going to try to imitate you. Unfortunately, if they get a good imitation and the right backing, they can be produced and thrown into the media and get all the exposure for what they learned from your tradition. It's fine if the imitator gives credit to his source. But, if they don't acknowledge it, you're still scuffling and the other person or persons winds up being the king of whatever.

The only thing that makes me not give up is when I see people like Max, Art, Elvin and what they've done. It's hard to imitate them. My only salvation is to play something that will fit any musical situation, so personal, that it's very difficult to imitate. A trademark that I play so well, that no matter who tries to imitate it, they're still not going to be as good as me! You have to aspire to a very, very high place to get to that level. Then you can be recognized and not worry about it.

It has to be a very personal thing and, there has to be a degree of chance and luck that, hopefully, you'll be recorded enough so that (your/ special thing is disseminated on a wide level in this country or on a worldwide basis. Even if you don't get recognition here, you can be recognized outside the country. At least you can maintain a livlihood, even if you have to do it across the ocean.

SF: Is the situation getting better?

KC: No. And I don't know why. We have to ask the people who control the music business. We're still imitated. I haven't seen any other black conglomerates that are really successful, like Motown, come out. Maybe it's in the future. R&B was the beginning of rock 'n' roll. And rock 'n' roll doesn't belong to us anymore. The roots of rock 'n' roll belong to us. If we're not careful, jazz won't belong to us in this traditional mainstream form either, unless we have more youngsters coming up -- black or white-- who recognize the importance of this art form, who will try to learn it in the tradition of the old masters.

I see alot of interested white kids all over the country. I don't see enough black kids interested in the art form. They tend to be turned off by it and more interested in disco. I put the respnnsibility of that on the media. If they were programming music more like it was when I was growing up in New York, then black kids would hear the best of their music on the airwaves where they'd have access to it, and they'd know what records to buy. But, if they never hear it, how can they appreciate it?

SF: I can't accept that, Keith. Anybody who wants to find out about jazz in this country has all kinds of access to that information. Especially somebody living in New York City. If we're looking for reasons why more black kids aren't interested in jazz, let's consider a lack of personal motivation and a failure on the part of the parents and school teachers to teach that heritage to the children.

KC: There is a strong lack of a presentation of the musical heritage of jazz, which is, America's classical music. What they emphasize in schools, for the most part, even when I was coming up, is Western European music. They want that to be the music that's relevant and important. If you don't get to the kids when they're pre-schoolers, in kindergarten or the first grade, then they won't know.

The only reason I became involved in jazz was because of the close proximity my father, Ray Copeland, had to jazz. And there were guys I grew up with whose fathers weren't musicians, but there was so much music on the air. True, if you're really interested in jazz you can get to it. When I wanted to listen to Symphony Sid I had to wait until midnight because that's when he came on. I couldn't hear him right after I got home from school. I had to do my homework and then turn on the radio real late at night so my folks wouldn't know I was listening. I listened until two or three in the morning when I'd fall asleep and then wake up in time to go to school. I really wanted to seek it out.

The music's still there, but you've got to listen to it from New Jersey or you have to know that it's on WKCR the college station. With all the stations in New York that play pop music, there's two or three generations of black kids who don't even identify with jazz

as their cultural musical heritage. That's not right. ~~The music education system~~ There's a strong interest now in alot of the young white high school and college kids. Alot of that has to do with exposure from National Public Radio. But, still, alot of black kids coming through the educational system are not going to relate to Western European music. So they lose interest completely. They end up listening to a pop music that's not of a very high level. If they're going to emphasize pop music, why not emphasize Quincy Jones or adaptations of his musical expertise? But, the black kids don't know about jazz. If the parents in my age group weren't fortunate enough to come through what I came through, they're not going to be aware of the music either. How are they going to expose it to their kids?

SF: My exposure to jazz wasn't through my parents. It came first through an uncle for a brief period. But the majority of it was because I was willing to spend thousands of my own dollars and invest thousands of my own hours to learn about it.

KC: You were lucky. I was lucky. I grew up in New York. Even if my father hadn't been a musician I still may have been exposed to jazz through people I grew up with. I had some good music teachers in junior high and high school too. They weren't full-time jazz players, but they were still exposed to jazz. They had a healthy respect for it. So, they encouraged our interest in the music. I don't think there's enough of that.

If the school system is involved and very sincere, they have to bring in people who have actually lived this music and can relate in a sincere, articulate way what this music is about. Just like a classical artist who'll come from an orchestra to do demonstrations in the school.

They have to do the same thing for jazz for the kids to understand. It cannot be accomplished from just a theoretical approach. Someone who has a layman's working knowledge of jazz; who has been exposed to it through jazz education courses -- that's not enough.

SF: You've played drums in trios all the way up in size to symphony orchestras. How does your approach to drumming differ in each situation.

KC: In a trio there's only two other people. I have to really listen to the leader and figure out what style he's coming from and provide the accompaniment/support that's going to make him feel comfortable. In some situations you can play busier than others because the piano player might like a busy drummer. Other pianists might like a less busy accompanist. Then you have to understand the way the bass player is playing. Both of you are supposed to support the piano player. You have to interpret the beat the way the bass player is. Is he right in the middle of the beat? On top of the beat? A little behind the beat? You're supposed to interpret what makes <u>him</u> feel good. Both of you have to agree on that so you can provide the accompaniment to the next person.

As the groups get larger the responsibilities change. In a quartet or a quintet you do all the things you'd do with a trio. Then you have to understand the styles of the horn players and what makes them feel good. Do they like alot of activity from the drummer? Do they play <u>off</u> the drummer? Alot of horn players play off the drummer just like Elvin and Coltrane. Some horn players don't like that. You don't need to play alot behind a horn solo, if that doesn't make him feel comfortable, and you can still play fairly

busy by playing off the way the piano player is comping, and give some support that way. Or you can try to play off the soloist and cause excitement because he likes that exchange, and still be aware of how the piano player is comping and of the rhythmic emphasis the bassist is providing. The bass player may be playing more than four beats to the measure if you're playing a swing feel in 4/4. He may be adding other rhythmic inflections to that. You really have to have yourself together because you're listening to three or four things at one time, trying to acknowledge them all while still concentrating on keeping the time and meter and, making it sound like everything is together.

When you get into big bands, the emphasis changes. You might want to get very busy and communicate alot with the soloists. But your main priority should be to hold the band together. In that situation the most important thing is to lock up with the bass player and provide the dynamic textures that fit. This is where your choice of cymbals is really important. You have to have cymbals that'll make the reed section sound good, the brass section sound good and your soloists sound good. I'm only using three cymbals. I use the same cymbals in all the situations we're discussing. I picked them so they'd be able to fit alot of different situations, depending on the way I played them and the type of stick I use. I get a different sound out of a plastic tip than I do a wood tip. For big band, sometimes I have to use plastic tips so the cymbals will cut through a bit more.

It's important to lock up with the bass player and the lead trumpet player. If you're interpreting the figures with the lead trumpet player and you two agree on the placement of the notes, that

section is really going to make or break a big band. If the brass section is really together and, the drummer and lead trumpeter are really together, the band is going to pop! Then if you have the bass player and drummer really together, giving support to the rest of the rhythm section and reed section, and you're using your ear and you know how to keep that intensity, say, behind a sax soli, and how to give them the support they need, then you start to get to the most important aspects of a big band drummer.

It's not true that the drummer has to play louder because you have more men. Sometimes you have to play softer. Sometimes in the symphony orchestra I have to play as soft or softer than when I play in the trio, because of the acoustic problems of the halls. If I play too loud there'll be too much echo and resonance and it will cut the clarity. The orchestra brass is way in the back and I'm up front. I have to be very intense and precise, but not too overpowering so that all the elements of the orchestra can be heard.

But, to sum up the qualities of a good big band drummer, you have to have really good ears, a good working knowledge of reading figures and interpreting figures -- especially with your left hand -- and not let that effect your time feel. And have a really good sense of dynamics so you can play softly and not lose your intensity. Then, just generally be aware of everything that's happening. One of the soloists might need that excitement so, you can give it to him. But, not to the point that it throws the rest of the band or the lead trumpeter off when it's time to come back in and play a concerted passage. That's one of the hardest places to function.

The prerequisit to all of this is to listen to the drummers who

did it the best. Sonny Payne, Jake Hanna, Mel Lewis, Kenny Clarke, Rufus Jones, Louis Bellson and all the masters who played with big bands. These are all very important people who came out of the big band era. Most of them can play well in any situation, but they happen to be experts at big band drumming. Grady Tate is one of the greatest, most versatile drummers. Besides being able to play small group and big band jazz, he can even fit into today's fusion and pop music. And he knows just what to play. Earl Palmer is another one of the old masters. He has that New Orleans tradition in his playing that fits big band, small group, rock and R&B. There's not many of those guys around. If I ever try to pursue a living in studios, I would want to be that kind of player.

SF: Latin music, judging by reader surveys, seems to be one of the least understood musics by MD readers. You obviously have spent alot of time studying Latin music. Can you tell us about the influence of Latin music in today's musics and, here again, mention some specific Latin drummers you admire?

KC: The reason I put so much emphasis on learning the Latin idiom is because most drummers in the drumset tradition learn how to function by themselves. But, in the Latin tradition, especially from Cuba, you have to learn how to play in a drum section. That can be difficult for most drumset players to learn to do with other drumset players. They tend to get very self-centered and they can't lock into what somebody else is doing.

In Cuban music you have to deal with a variety of different clave rhythms; the basic pulse underlying everything. The drummers are all playing different parts around that clave. Some of them are playing

basic parts and somebody is soloing on top of all the others. You really have to be aware of not letting the meter get faster or slower, and still relate to what's going on around you. This kind of discipline is great. If you can master that and apply it to your drumset playing -- it's wonderful.

When you get into trying to duplicate those rhythms on drumset as one person, you can make it sound like two or three people playing at one time. That's what the Cuban drumset masters are able to do. They can manifest a sound like the timbale player, the conga player and the guy who's playing bongos and bells! If you're going to get into it, again, listen to the finest recorded Cuban music.

I grew up listening to Tito Puente and Machito Rodriguez. I remember when Eddie Palmieri first came on the scene in '63. I had a chance to hear one of the great jazz/Latin/Cuban fusion groups led by Cal Tjader. He'd use alot of the jazz harmonic structures and put a Latin rhythm section with them. Mongo Santamaria and Willie Bobo was Cal's first rhythm section. Then he'd have Al McKibbon play the clave-type figures on bass while still negotiating the harmonic changes of the tunes. That was, and still is, great.

There have been attempts to do the same kind of things with rock groups that evolved out of the late '60s and '70s like Santana, Malo and Azteca. They took some of the earlier tunes that had been done by people like Cal Tjader and incorporated them into a rock feel. That's all very important.

A drummer should listen to the intricacies of the greatest players like Tito Puente, Cal Tjader, Eddie Palmieri and definitely Mach-

ito for his use of jazz improvisors in his band. Drummers should follow this up by going to hear players perform this music live. I recommend a group led by Daniel Ponce called Jazz Bata's. Excellent. Listen to it and experience it. See how these guys do it. Then start experiencing the complexities of playing drumset in the calibre and expertise of players like Steve Berrios and Ignacio Berroa.

Steve Gadd should be mentioned for his use of Cuban feels in his special style of playing rock and fusion. But, when you hear Steve recorded it's in much more of a pop or fusion situation. When you're hearing him play you won't know that alot of these rhythms come from the Cuban tradition unless you listen to the Cuban tradition. Then you can hear how Steve's incorporated that into his special way of coordination. And he can definitely make it sound like three or four drummers playing at one time. But, I still recommend that you check out Steve Berrios and Ignacio Berroa. They don't get the kind of pop exposure that Steve gets.

SF: Was John Rae one of the first people to play drumset in Latin music?

KC: I first heard John playing timbales, but he's a drumset player too. One of the first drumset players I heard in Latin music was Alfredo De Los Reyes, Sr. in the early '60s. He played great drumset, great timbales, he was a great show drummer and knew all the Latin tradition. Also, Willie Rodriguez was one of the early drumset players I heard. Masterful! Not only could he play all the Latin instruments; he could also play all the instruments associated with Western European music like mallets, timpani and the rest of it.

Another person with an immense amount of that knowledge is Don Alias. He's one of those special guys who's an unbelieveable hand drummer from the c Cuban tradition and he also plays tremendous drumset. And he incorporates alot of the hand drum knowledge he has into his drumset playing. Alot of people don't know that Willie Bobo is a very fine drumset player. He had a couple of very fine records. One of the best was Spanish Grease.

The Brazilian influence has had a really strong effect on the rock idiom. I've alluded to that alot in my book; the Brazilian clave rhythms and how they snuck into rock music from the Motown music up to the present day rock music. Drummers need to check out some of the heavy Brazilian drummers like Airto and Dom Um Romao. And all of the famous Cuban conga players like Armando Peraza, Mongo Santamaria, Carlos "Patato" Valdez and Francisco Alfredalia. Even some of the bata players are starting to gain recognition. Bata is one of the most serious aspects of the Cuban tradition. If you're going to study it you have to go all the way into it, with the same determination you'd use if you were a rock drummer trying to imitate aspects of that tradition. It all requires serious study. And you have to get deeper into it than just the more readily available commercial aspects of it.

Music is really my life. When I'm not playing it I like to listen to it, study it and practice it. I'm just starting to get involved in composing. The only other occupation I like is traveling on vacation to broaden my scope of things. And I like the outdoors. I love the sea. My son and I go fishing whenever he's with me.

Except for my belief in the Supreme Being, I don't think I devote any other part of my soul into anything as much as my instrument.

Every time I play I think of putting all my feelings into it, and bringing some happiness, joy and conviction to my playing so #### that my audience can recieve that. My goal is to make my audience physically react when I'm playing and to feel that, somehow, I touched them. Of all the great performances I've seen from all the great performers I love, I've seen that happen. I've seen their ability to evoke emotion from their audience. I don't try to do it in a show business or entertainment fashion. I'm not doing it with any tricks or twirling sticks. I'm doing it because of the sincerity and honesty that I'm putting into it.