



SHEILA E.

teaches
DRUMMING AND PERCUSSION

MASTERCLASS

MEET SHEILA

IN HINDSIGHT, Sheila E. seems fated to have become the Queen of Percussion, but as grateful as she is for the incredible career she's had thus far, none of this was handed to her. Yes, she was born into a legendary music family—her father, Pete Escovedo, and his brother Coke were in Santana before launching Azteca, their own groovy Latin rock orchestra—but money was scarce growing up in Oakland, California, in the '60s. Music, however, was abundant.

Sheila Cecelia Escovedo's love for complex rhythms and diverse sounds developed naturally at a young age. Her godfather, Tito Puente, was one of the many music celebrities who'd come over to the house for living room jams—as soon as the sessions cleared out, she'd head right for the drums. And beyond her front door, the Bay Area was teeming

with thrilling young acts: everyone from the Grateful Dead to the Pointer Sisters to Sly & the Family Stone.

Though her dad hoped she'd pursue a more stable path, he couldn't deny Sheila's talent or her will—by age 15,

she'd worn him down and got her first live gig filling in on congas for an under-the-weather Azteca member. From that point on, there was no stopping her. By her early 20s, Sheila had played with Marvin Gaye, Lionel Richie, Herbie Hancock, and Diana Ross, plus she'd become a percussionist and singer (live and studio) in George Duke's band.

In 1984, Sheila became a megastar after joining Prince for his *Purple Rain* sessions. She not only sang on the hook for "Erotic City" but also dropped her own Grammy-nominated hit, "The Glamorous Life," from her debut album of the same name. More solo albums and singles followed—including her 1985 signature song, "A Love Bizarre"—even as Sheila held down the roles of music director, drummer, and songwriter in Prince's touring band and recording family.

That multidisciplinary approach is a Sheila staple. As beloved as she would become for her incredible onstage verve, funky genre-blurring jams, playful persona, and wild fashion sense, Sheila never stopped



“KNOW WHAT YOUR PASSION IS AND WHAT WHEN YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS AND YOU AND NOTHING CAN STAND IN YOUR WAY”

CONNECT WITH YOUR FELLOW RHYTHM MAKERS

> Looking for a place where you can keep talking percussion? Then follow the beat to **COMMUNITY.MASTERCLASS.COM** to chat drum setups, funky grooves, and more with Sheila's other students.

YOUR PURPOSE IS.
YOU GO FOR IT, NO ONE

collaborating, never stopped working, and never stopped learning. Her body of work has grown to include eight solo albums, a couple of side groups (C.O.E.D. and the E Family), a few film scores, a 2014 autobiography titled *The Beat of My Own Drum*, special performances at virtually every major awards show, and studio collaborations with everyone

from Beyoncé to Phil Collins. Oh, and she's thrice been a member of Ringo Starr's All-Starr Band.

In truth, that list only scratches the surface—for instance, Sheila has a steamy new single out with Snoop Dogg called “No Line”—but it'd be impossible to fit her career into a tidy narrative. Sheila fought the roadblock of industry misogyny, the wages of fame, and the physical limits of her own body to carve out a unique path through art, life, and pop culture. One constant, in the form of a simple phrase, has driven Sheila every step of the way: Follow the beat. And her impeccable inner rhythm is the pulse behind a trailblazing career that still knows no bounds.

WELCOME TO SHEILA E.'S MASTERCLASS.



LISTEN UP

12 GREAT SHEILA E. GROOVES

> Dive into a sampling of original songs from across Sheila's solo career

1. Sheila E., “The Glamorous Life” (1984)
2. Sheila E., “The Belle of St. Mark” (1984)
3. Sheila E., “A Love Bizarre” (feat. Prince) (1985)
 4. Sheila E., “Sister Fate” (1985)
 5. Sheila E., “Koo Koo” (1987)
 6. Sheila E., “Sex Cymbal” (1991)
 7. Sheila E., “Cry Baby” (1991)
8. Sheila E. & the E-Train, “N Perfect Time” (2000)
 9. Sheila E. & the E-Train, “Heaven” (2001)
10. Sheila E., “Nasty Thang” (feat. MC Lyte) (2014)
11. Sheila E., “America” (feat. Candy Dulfer) (2017)
12. Sheila E., “No Line” (feat. Snoop Dogg) (2019)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Sheila's here to teach you all about rhythm, so let's prepare with a little independent study. Pull up the songs in this chapter's playlist. Listen not just with your ears but your body. Dance or tap along to the rhythms you hear. Pay close attention to any patterns you might notice. If you try to count to the beat, what happens? Can you pick out different percussion sounds? How would you describe those sounds to someone who isn't listening to the same song? In a notebook, jot down the ways that different types of rhythm change the feel of the music overall.



FINDING YOUR RHYTHM

RHYTHM IS virtually universal to the human experience. Strictly speaking, according to Merriam-Webster, rhythm is “an ordered recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound and silence.” But rhythm was with us before we had words with which to define it. As Sheila points out, our heartbeat is a rhythm—the *first* rhythm—as is the pace of our walk, the lilt of our sway, and the movement of our dance. As people have evolved, we’ve carried rhythm with us and baked it into our technology. The tick-tock of a clock is an obvious example, but consider the ka-thump of a spinning washing machine, the click-click-click of an as-

ending roller coaster, or, well, whatever that sound is that a Xerox machine makes.

BRING THE BEAT IN

IN MUSIC, RHYTHM BREAKS DOWN INTO FOUR BASIC PARTS:

- There’s **accent**, which is what happens when one note is given more emphasis than the others. For instance, if you drum on your desk or legs as you’re reading this, you can create an accent by regular-

ly bringing one hand down harder than the other.

- Then there's **measure**, also known as a bar, which we'll define as a grouping of beats. The number of beats per measure is determined by the meter (see below).
- **Meter** is the rhythmic pattern determined by the number of beats you hit per measure. This is why you see a time signature, or a meter signature, at the beginning of a piece of Western music. The time signature is typically represented by two stacked numbers, like $\frac{4}{4}$, where the top number is the number of beats in a measure and the bottom number is the note value that represents one beat. (For example, a song written in $\frac{4}{4}$ time will have four quarter-note beats per measure, whereas a song written in $\frac{9}{8}$ time will have nine eighth-note beats per measure.)
- And finally, there's **tempo**, or the speed of the rhythm. The goal in most music is to maintain a consistent tempo over the course of a song, but you can experiment with yours by speeding up and slowing down your hands as you drum in your seat.

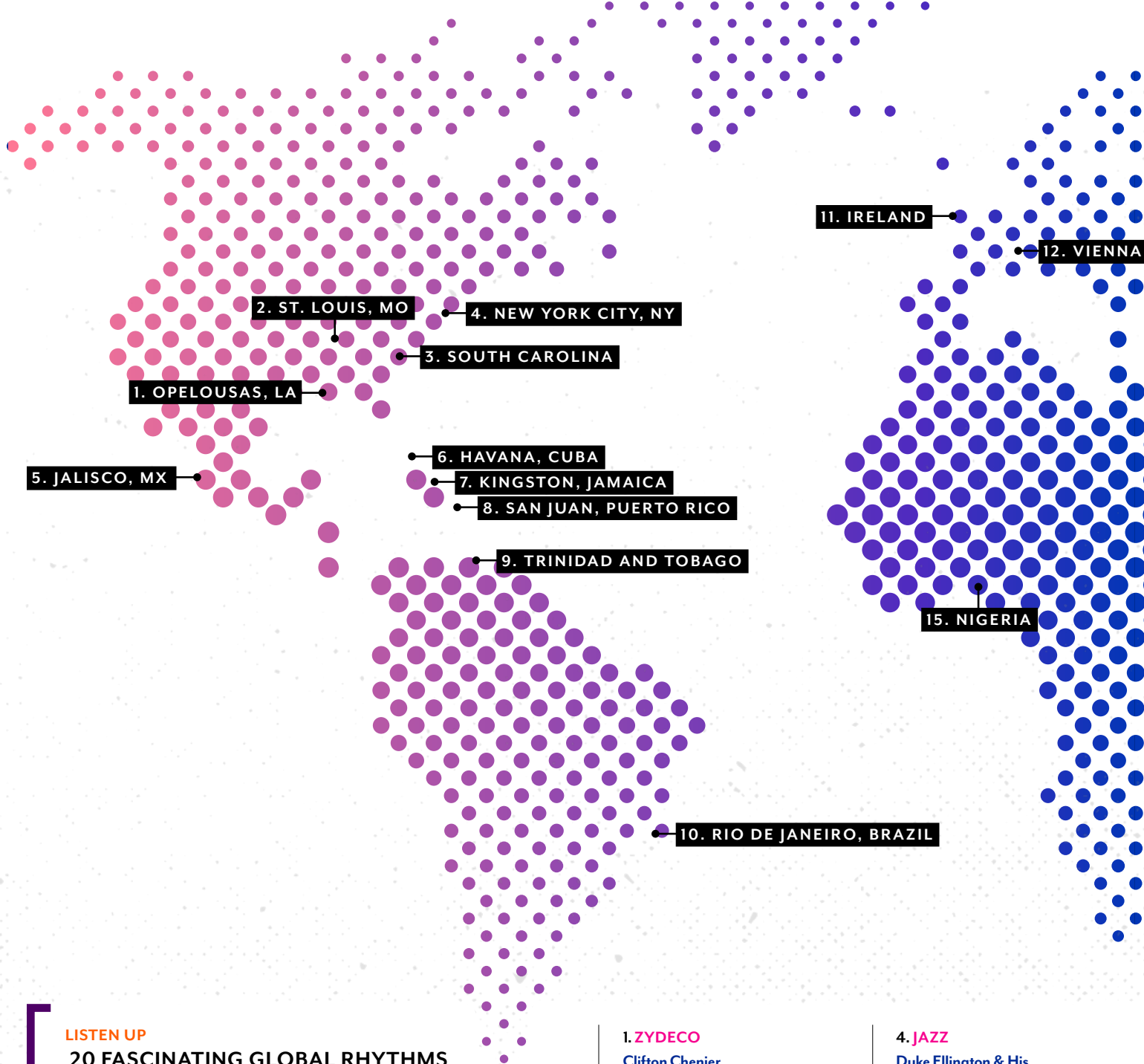
You don't need an instrument to create rhythm. As Sheila puts it, "Rhythm is something everyone has, whether you're aware of it or not." It's literally at your fingertips.

"MUSIC IS IN MY BLOOD BECAUSE OF HOW I GREW UP, BUT ANYONE CAN FIND RHYTHM."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> If you peruse the chapter playlist and accompanying map (see pages 5 and 6), you'll hear a world's worth of rhythms. Let's dial it back to something more simple. As Sheila suggests, get some sort of **METRONOME**—a physical or virtual device that will keep time for you at a tempo of your choosing and often allow you to experience different meters (or time signatures). You can find the simplest version of this by typing "metronome" into Google and using the browser's free tool. There are also apps available for your smartphone, and Amazon sells many analog and digital versions. Start by setting your metronome at a **MID-TEMPO** speed: 80 to 100 bpm, or **BEATS PER MINUTE**. The metronome will play a **CLICKTRACK** at a steady pace.

Paying close attention to that click track, spend at least five minutes drumming along using whatever you have—hands, pens, sticks—on any surface: your legs, a desk, an actual drum. Start by simply mimicking the track beat for beat. Try this with both a **DOWN TEMPO** (below 80 bpm) and **UP TEMPO** (above 120 bpm) speed. When you find a tempo that's comfortable, see what happens when you introduce an accent on every second beat. You can even try hitting a beat between the clicks. Just make sure that you stay **IN TIME**—that you keep with the tempo.



LISTEN UP

20 FASCINATING GLOBAL RHYTHMS

> Different rhythms arise in different cultures, defining genres and influencing one another. Take a spin through this playlist to hear just a few of the rhythms used in music around the world. In many cases, the type of rhythm is synonymous with the genre of music associated with that rhythm (cha-cha-chá, for instance) and in some cases it's synonymous with the instrument used to create it (like gamelan). It's worth noting that the presence of rhythm doesn't require a form of percussion (as evidenced in the waltz on this playlist), but the use of percussion helps punctuate and clarify, and it often adds complexity to the rhythm of a song. You may notice similarities in rhythms that are geographically distant—the Afro-Cuban clave pattern pops up frequently—and that's no coincidence. Rhythm is something that all of humanity shares, and it's an integral part of the ongoing conversation that is musical creation.

1. ZYDECO

Clifton Chenier,
 "Zydeco Sont Pas Sale" (1965)
(Opelousas, Louisiana)

2. ROCK 'N' ROLL

Chuck Berry,
 "Johnny B. Goode" (1958)
(St. Louis, Missouri)

3. FUNK

James Brown,
 "Papa's Got a Brand
 New Bag (Pt. 1)" (1965)
(c. South Carolina)

4. JAZZ

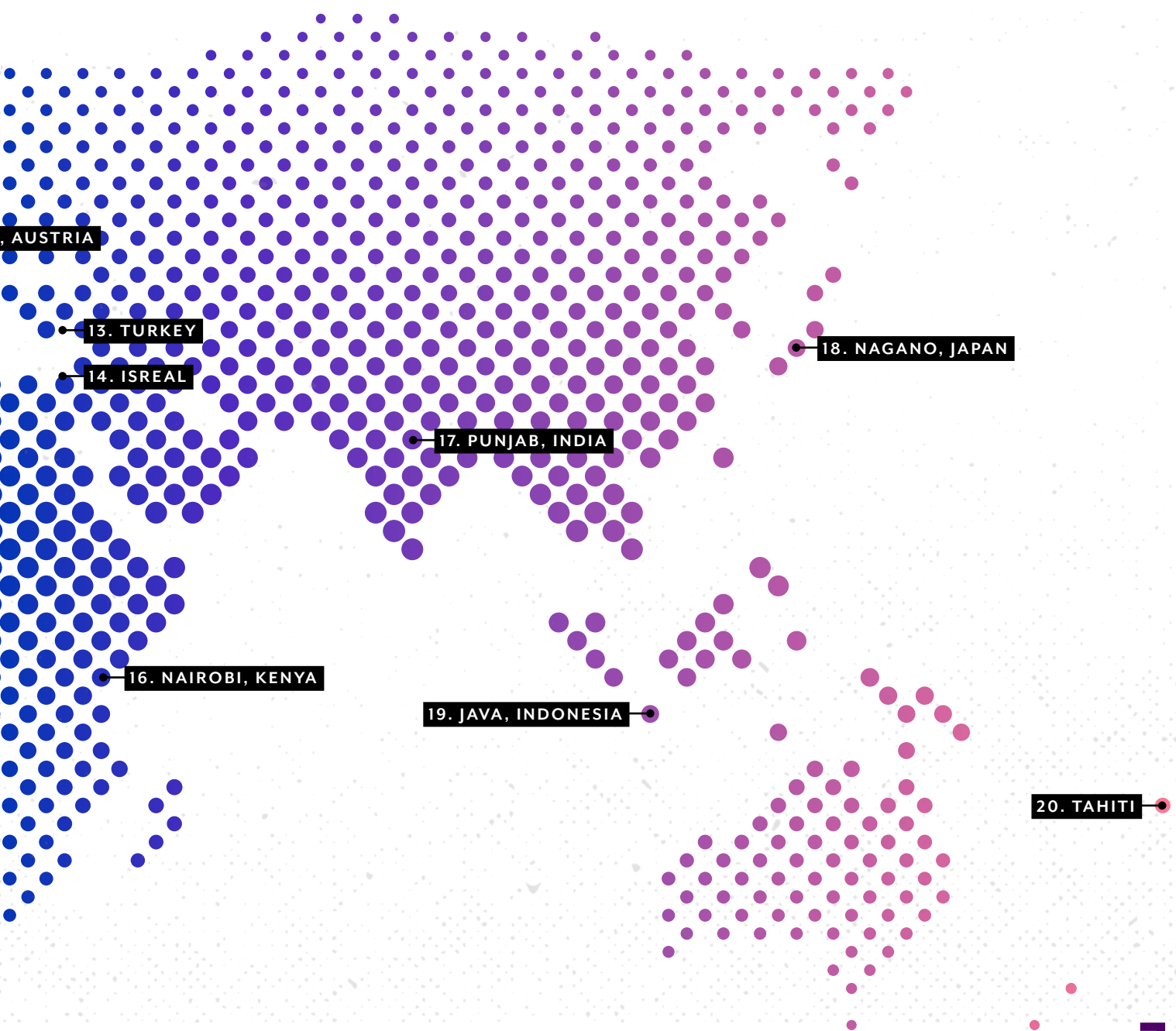
Duke Ellington & His
 Famous Orchestra,
 "Harlem Air-Shaft" (1940)
(New York City, New York)

5. MARIACHI

Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán,
 "La Negra" (2005)
(Jalisco, Mexico)

6. CHA-CHA-CHÁ

Enrique Jorrin,
 "La Engañadora" (1953)
(Havana, Cuba)



AUSTRIA

13. TURKEY

14. ISREAL

18. NAGANO, JAPAN

17. PUNJAB, INDIA

16. NAIROBI, KENYA

19. JAVA, INDONESIA

20. TAHITI

7. REGGAE

Bob Marley & the Wailers,
“Soul Rebels” (1970)
(Kingston, Jamaica)

8. SALSA

Héctor Lavoe, “Mi Gente” (1974)
(San Juan, Puerto Rico)

9. CALYPSO

Lord Invader,
“Rum & Coca-Cola” (1956)
(Trinidad and Tobago)

10. BOSSA NOVA

Stan Getz & João Gilberto,
“The Girl From Ipanema” (1964)
(Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

11. REEL

The Chieftains,
“The Wind That Shakes
the Barley” (1978)
(Ireland)

12. WALTZ

The New 101 Strings Orchestra,
“The Blue Danube” (2000)
(Vienna, Austria)

13. ÇİFTETELLİ

Mustafa Kandıralı,
“Bahriye Çiftetellisi” (1968)
(Turkey)

14. HORAH

The Barry Sisters,
“Hava Nagila” (1959)
(Israel)

15. HIGHLIFE

Celestine Ukwu, “Igede” (1971)
(Nigeria)

16. BENGA

D.O. Misiani & Shirati Jazz,
“Wang Ni To Iringo” (1975)
(Nairobi, Kenya)

17. BHANGRA

Bhujhangy Group,
“Bhabie Akh Larr Gayee” (1970)
(Punjab, India)

18. TAIKO

Ensemble O-Suwa-Daiko
& Oguchi Daihachi,
“Suwa-Ko-Bayashi” (1978)
(Nagano, Japan)

19. GAMELAN

Gamelan of the
Yogyakarta Royal Palace,
“Ladrang Semingin” (1997)
(Java, Indonesia)

20. ‘ŌTE’A

Tahiti Ora,
“OTEA OMORE ANAPA” (2016)
(Tahiti)

CREATING A KITCHEN SYMPHONY

AS YOU now know, you don't need to rush off to an instrument shop to find rhythm—it's already in your heart and hands. But Sheila takes that one step further: You don't have to buy instruments at all in order to have, well, instruments—they're all around you

if you know where to look (consider the drummers you often see on city streets who play on buckets).

Sheila suggests that you start in the kitchen. It's common for children to drum on pots and pans. Sheila

did it before she was big enough to get on a drum kit. But it's also quite common for established artists to use such everyday sounds as sources of rhythm within their music. The Beach Boys famously had Paul McCartney crunch on celery for a recording of "Vega-Tables," and Sheila played partially filled glass bottles on Michael Jackson's "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough."

The first drums were made using the household items of their time: animal hides, hollowed-out gourds or pieces of wood, sticks, stones, clay. Today, of course, our

homes are filled with a wide array of sophisticated items, but the same old principles can be applied to these new things to turn them into instruments. You watched Sheila create an entire song on the spot using a handful of common objects, from a jar filled with rice and beans to a power drill.

Recording these experiments isn't much more difficult than creating the instruments. In the past, artists would need to go into a studio or buy special gear in order to **track** their songs, which means recording multiple layers of audio (different instruments, for instance) that are combined to form a single piece of music. Today, there are many

"THERE ARE NO RULES TO SAY THIS IS RIGHT OR WRONG, AND THAT'S WHAT'S FUN ABOUT IT."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> **Make three or more DIY percussion instruments of your own using things around your home that you can shake, hit, play, or easily modify. (Bonus points if you create an instrument that doesn't already appear here.) Once you've done this, access a program that allows you to record multiple tracks and, as outlined above or in the program's instructions, create a loop. We'll get technical later. For now, as Sheila says, "the point is just to have fun!"**

digital audio workstations (DAW) that range from free (like Apple's GarageBand) to quite expensive (like Pro Tools), as well as apps that allow you to capture audio and **loop** it, or play it on repeat, using your smartphone or computer.

The exact method differs from program to program, but this is the general approach:

- Start by playing a click track in your ear using headphones or earbuds—you don't want to record the sound of the metronome.
- Choose an instrument and record your first rhythm track for some length of time—at least 30 seconds so you've got room to find your beat.
- Using the program, isolate a loopable section of that first rhythm (one or more full measures). Some programs will find this automatically.
- Play a loop of your first rhythm track in your ear. When you're ready, hit record and play your next instrument. This will be your second track.
- Play the first and second tracks together at the same time in your ear as you make a third track. Repeat as many times as you'd like.

LISTEN UP

10 SONGS THAT USE EVERYDAY ITEMS TO CREATE PERCUSSION

> Many artists use DIY instruments or record common sounds to create rhythms



1. CELERY

The Beach Boys,
"Vega-Tables"
(1967)

2. CASH REGISTER

Pink Floyd,
"Money" (1973)

3. SPOONS

Soundgarden,
"Spoonman" (1994)

4. WATER

Cornelius,
"Drop" (2001)

5. PLASTIC CUPS

Anna Kendrick,
"Cups" (2013)



6. VARIOUS

The Books,
"Enjoy Your Worries,
You May Never
Have Them Again"
(2002)

7. ELECTRIC FAN

DM Spith,
"Pity Dance" (2009)

8. TYPEWRITER

KOKOKO!,
"Tokoliana" (2017)



9. TABLE TENNIS

Flying Lotus,
"Table Tennis" (2010)

10. VARIOUS PLASTICS

Matmos,
"Breaking Bread" (2019)



ALL ABOUT THAT BASS

Sheila turns a recycling bin into a drum during a quick jam session on Capitol Hill in 2013.

EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK

HOW TO MAKE A HOMEMADE ORCHESTRA

BASS DRUM > LARGE PLASTIC WATER JUG



TAMBOURINE > HANDFUL OF KEYS



SHEKERE > JAR OF RICE AND BEANS



CUÍCA > GLASS BOTTLE WITH WATER



AGOGÔ BELLS > TWO DIFFERENT SIZED PANS



GÜIRA > STIFF BRUSH AND PAN



TURNTABLE(S) > POWER DRILL(S)



CYMBAL > TRASH CAN LID



CABASA > COMPRESSED AIR CANISTER



TOM-TOM DRUM(S) > PLASTIC BUCKET(S)

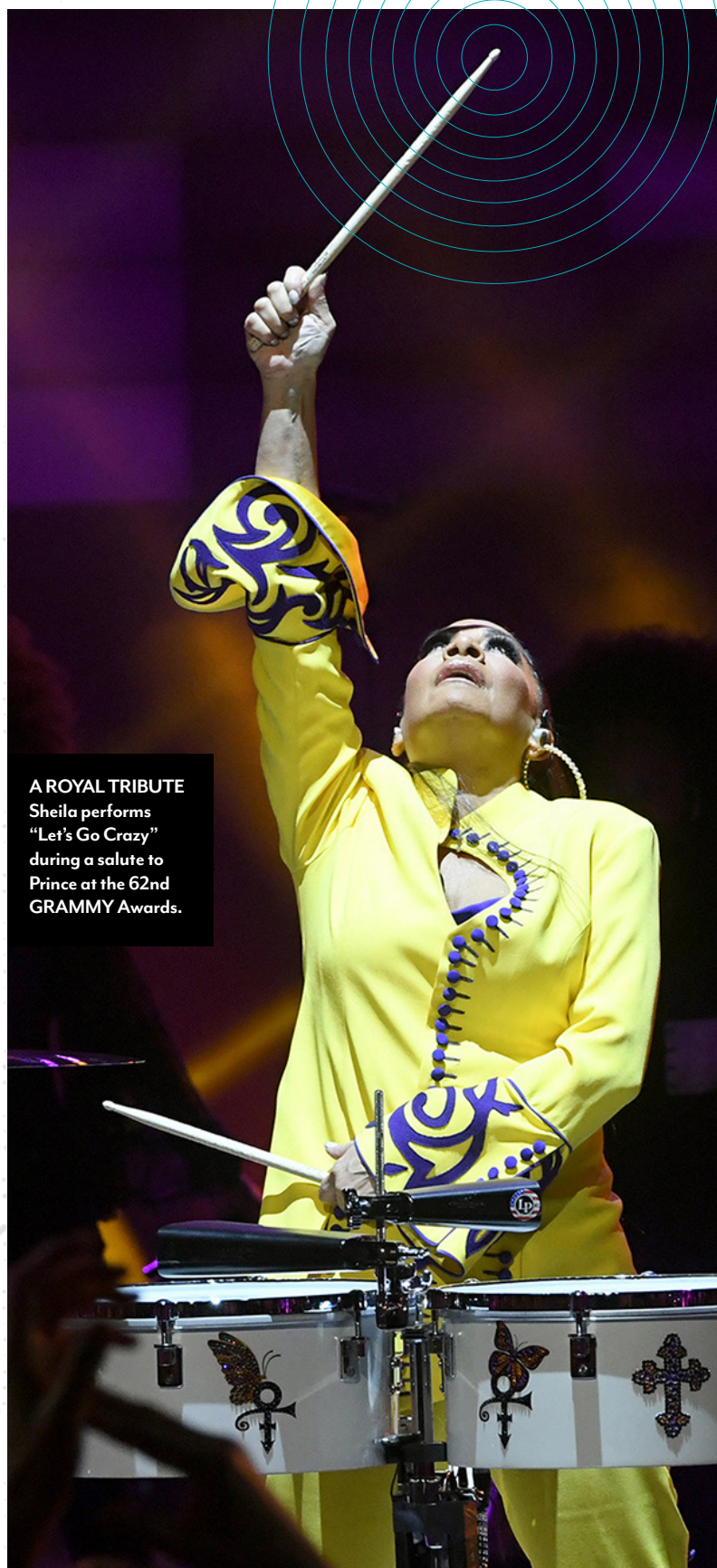


GETTING WARMED UP

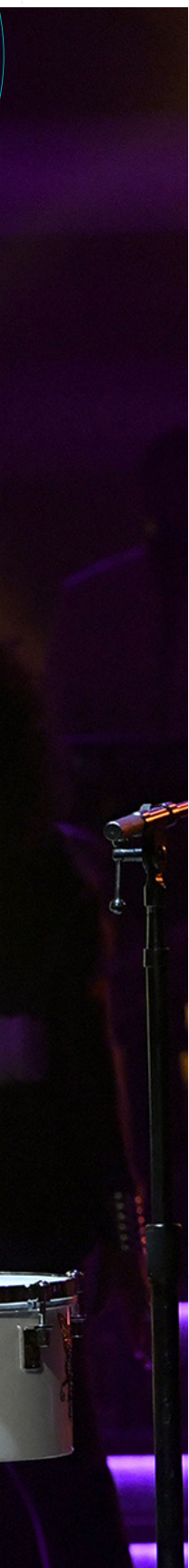
WARMING UP properly is serious business. And now that you've got rhythm down, you'll be warming up in two ways: First, as you progress on your journey deeper into rhythm, you are warming up by learning fundamentals that will prepare you for the instruments introduced later on. And second, like an athlete, you should spend some time warming up every time before actually playing.

Conveniently, drum rudiments are the solution in both cases. A rudiment is any of a series of basic patterns that can later be combined to create a more complex pattern. Beginners use rudiments to improve their speed and control, and pros use them to stay sharp. Sheila, for instance, does rudimental drills to ensure both of her hands sound alike—that left and right are hitting with equal force and accuracy—by the time she sits down at the actual drum set.

**"YOU HAVE TO WANT TO GROW,
YOU HAVE TO WANT TO CHANGE."**



A ROYAL TRIBUTE
Sheila performs
"Let's Go Crazy"
during a salute to
Prince at the 62nd
GRAMMY Awards.



PICK UP STICKS

GO FROM DRUM ZERO TO DRUM HERO WITH THE POWER OF RUDIMENTS

Regular practice is the not-so-secret secret to getting good. Rudiments help you:

- Get your hands used to holding the drumsticks
- Foster discipline by allowing for daily practice
- Train your muscles so your hands sound alike
- Improve your aim as playing becomes natural
- Increase your speed as you gain confidence
- Build up to more complex rudiments and rhythms
- Warm up for the big gig, because now you're a pro

Rudiments require drumsticks, but that's about it. You can practice them on the floor, a table, a pillow, a bucket, a practice pad, or an actual drum. Here are four common rudiments:

- **Single-stroke roll:** Repeatedly alternate right (R) and left (L) in time with the beat.
- **Double-stroke roll:** Play two single strokes on each hand (RRL). Repeat.
- **Paradiddle:** Play two single strokes followed by a double stroke (RLRR or LRL).
- **Flam:** Two single strokes on alternating hands that are played almost simultaneously. The first stroke should be quieter (a grace note), and the second should be louder and on the beat.

LISTEN UP

3 DRUMMING PODCASTS TO PASS THE TIME

> Rudiments are necessary but monotonous, and you can't listen to music while you do them. When you're good enough to handle a little external input, however, the following drumming podcasts can provide the right mix of entertainment and inspiration to keep you going

1. DRUMMER'S RESOURCE

▶ With more than 500 episodes, most featuring in-depth interviews with seasoned drummers or music industry professionals, this podcast is overflowing with advice and insight.

2. THE MODERN DRUMMER PODCAST WITH MIKE AND MIKE

▶ Modern Drummer managing editor Mike Dawson and columnist/online educator Mike Johnston discuss techniques, gear, hacks, unique rhythms, and important artists.

3. THE TRAP SET WITH JOE WONG

▶ Wong treats his interviews with musicians as diverse as Reggie Watts, Money Mark, and, yep, Sheila as springboards for larger conversations about life.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Spend 20 minutes practicing the above rudiments to a metronome. Sheila suggests doing at least that much every time you're scheduled to record or perform. That said, and especially if you're new to the drumsticks, you should aim for a minimum of 30 minutes per day, every day, of rudimental drills (whether or not anyone will hear you play).



SURROUND SOUND
A young Sheila shows off an impressive kit during a live demo.

MEET THE DRUMS

YOU'VE SEEN Sheila's drum set—not the one she uses during her class but the various kits that show up in the archival footage. She had cymbals and drums everywhere—above her head, behind her back, surrounding her on all sides. As she says with a glint in her eye, “I wanted to be a rock ‘n’ roll drummer.” There's no doubt that Sheila became, and still is, a bona fide rock star, but it's important to re-

member she built up to that. If you're new to the kit, ease into it.

You can do plenty with a hi-hat, a kick, and a snare—what Sheila refers to as the foundation of playing drums—but the standard modern kit is what's called a five-piece. A **five-piece** will actually have more parts than five parts, but in categorizing the type of kit, you only count the actual drums.

Here are the standard components of a five-piece drum kit:

- **Bass drum:** Also known as the kick, this large vertical drum sits front and center, is played using a beater operated by pedal, and is the foundation of the rhythm.



**“YOU'RE BUILDING CHARACTER—
YOU'RE BUILDING WHO YOU WANT
TO SOUND LIKE.”**

- **Snare drum:** This smaller drum is mounted on a stand between your knees. It has wires beneath the head that vibrate, giving it a steady rhythm character and verve.
- **Tom-tom drums:** These drums are used for solos and fills, and you'll have three—two small rack toms mounted to the top of the bass drum and one large floor tom.
- **Hi-hat:** Two small cymbals, generally used for keeping time, which are mounted, facing each other, on a stand. The cymbals are opened and closed with a pedal and/or played with sticks.
- **Ride cymbal:** A large cymbal that has a long sustain, meaning it resonates for a good length of time after being hit. It's typically used for constant rhythm patterns.
- **Crash cymbal:** A medium-size cymbal named for the loud and sharp sound it makes when struck. It's primarily used for occasional accents.
- **Hardware:** This refers to all of the stands, holders, and racks that lift the components of the kit off of the ground, including you—your drum stool, or throne, is hardware, too.

Common additions to a drum kit include cowbells, clave blocks, and tambourines, but there's no limit to the size of kit that you can build if you've got enough money, imagination, and chops. Neil Peart, legendary drummer for the prog-rock band Rush, was known to play kits with as many as 40 different sound-making components, including, at various times, about a dozen cymbals, eight toms, two kicks, chimes, gongs, and various electronics, not to mention gold-plated hardware.

But no matter your means or experience, mastering your kit doesn't mean adding a ton of (literal) bells and whistles. It's all about

keeping time and finding a groove. Some of the most memorable drum performances of all time are remarkably simple (see this chapter's playlist).

LISTEN UP

10 HEAVILY SAMPLED DRUM BEATS

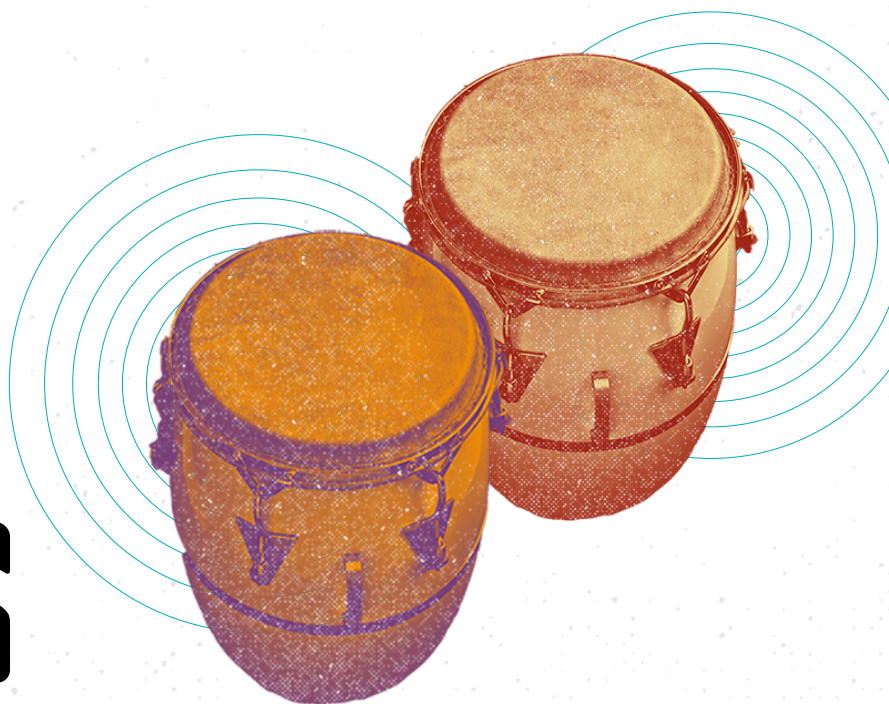
> These simple but iconic rhythms helped form the backbone of hip-hop

1. Joe Tex, "Papa Was Too" (1966)
2. The Winstons, "Amen Brother" (1969)
3. James Brown, "Funky Drummer (Pt. 1 & 2)" (1970)
4. Kool & the Gang, "N.T. (Live)" (1971)
5. Lyn Collins, "Think (About It)" (1972)
6. Mountain, "Long Red (Live)" (1972)
7. Bobby Byrd, "Hot Pants... I'm Coming I'm Coming" (1972)
8. The Honeydrippers, "Impeach the President" (1973)
9. Incredible Bongo Band, "Apache" (1974)
10. Billy Squier, "The Big Beat" (1980)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Sheila suggests starting out with a simple 2/4 beat that utilizes just the hi-hat, snare, and kick. With a metronome going, count off the beat: 1, 2, 3, 4/1, 2, 3, 4/1, 2, 3, 4 repeating. Use a stick to hit the hi-hat on every beat. Once you're steady, add the snare on the 2 and the 4. When you are comfortable, add the kick on the 1 and the 3. Says Sheila: "I dare you to play that beat...for, like, five minutes straight... If you have a [full] drum set, don't touch anything else. Just practice that 2 and 4 [until] it sounds so amazing, it sounds even, it sounds smooth." Do just that. Run a stopwatch and don't pause until you've played in time for five minutes straight. After that, add the kick drum to every beat. That's called 4/4 or FOUR-ON-THE-FLOOR. How did the energy change? What kind of genres would sound good with that kind of persistent beat?

MEET THE CONGAS



THE CONGAS were Sheila's first musical love and the first instrument she played in front of a crowd—at the age of five. That performance, with her dad and his brothers in Oakland, was just for fun, but 10 years later she made her professional live debut with Azteca. She begged her father to let her fill in for a sick band member, and with

a little coaxing from mom he agreed. When she took her first conga solo in front of a roaring audience, Sheila had an out-of-body experience. Backstage, she told her dad: “This is what I want to do for the rest of my life.”

The conga was invented in Cuba, but its roots are in Africa. As Sheila points out, congas are essential timekeepers in various forms of Latin music (salsa, merengue, bossa nova, etc.), though they've found a home in countless genres, from pop, rock, and folk to jazz, soul, and funk. In broad terms, there are three

types of congas: The **quinto** is the smallest and thus highest pitched. The **tumba** is the largest and lowest pitched. In the middle is the *tres dos, tres golpes*, or *segundo*, though this drum is most commonly simply called the **conga**.

Sheila learned the congas by watching and mirroring her dad's motions—that's why she plays left-handed to this day despite being a righty. Now you can learn while mirroring her (and wind up right-handed). While there are variations in technique, there are five basic ways of hitting the conga:

- **Slap:** Strike near the center of the drum with the flats of your fingertips while keeping your hand somewhat cupped in order to create extra resonance.
- **Bass:** Strike near the center of the drum with the full palm of your hand.
- **Open:** Strike near the rim of the drum with the base of all four fingers (near where the fingers meet the palm) and let your hand quickly bounce back up.

“DON'T BE AFRAID
TO MOVE—
IT ACTUALLY MAKES
YOU SOUND
BETTER!”

- **Muted:** Do an open strike, but leave your fingers on the drum to muffle the sound.
- **Heel-toe:** Strike the drum toward the center with the heel of your palm, then follow with your fingertips—there are two strikes, but they’re part of one motion.

GEAR GUIDE

THE CONGA BUYING FAQ

How many should I get?

Up to you. Two congas of different sizes will allow you to develop an ear for pitch and tone more quickly, but one conga has plenty to offer via differing strikes and patterns.

Can I buy them used?

Absolutely. Just check the seller’s online reviews if applicable. Look for cracks, rust, or stuck tuning bolts on the drum, and prioritize getting one that has a new drumhead.

What size do I want?

If you’re buying one, start with the middle size. It is the most versatile in that it provides a rich bass tone and sharp high notes, so it can be used for keeping time or soloing.

Fiberglass or wood?

Wooden congas (especially oak and ash) produce the best sound, but fiberglass is considerably less expensive and perfectly acceptable for learning and at-home use.

Do I need a stand?

Nope. A stand or rack is needed if you’re going to play the congas while standing, which allows you to strike harder and louder, but it’s easiest to learn while sitting.

LISTEN UP

10 SONGS FEATURING CONGAS

> Congas sound great with a band and in different genres. These tunes are proof

1. Frank Sinatra, “Luck Be a Lady” (1963)
2. The Rolling Stones, “Sympathy for the Devil” (1968)
3. The Jackson 5, “I Want You Back” (1969)
4. Santana, “Jingo” (1969)
5. Miles Davis, “Miles Runs the Voodoo Down” (1970)
6. Marvin Gaye, “Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler)” (1971)
7. The Doobie Brothers, “Long Train Runnin’” (1973)
8. David Bowie, “Young Americans” (1975)
9. Toto, “Africa” (1982)
10. Gloria Estefan & Miami Sound Machine, “Rhythm Is Gonna Get You” (1987)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Practice the five basic conga strikes on a makeshift instrument (or the real thing, if you’ve got it) until you get a good feel for them and the drum(s) that you’re using. When you’re ready, turn on your metronome and try the cha-cha-chá rhythm that Sheila demonstrates: open, open, slap on your dominant hand, while your “floating hand” adds a heel-toe between the open and slap. Experiment with dynamics—hit harder or softer and pay attention to how this affects your ability to keep time. When you’ve mastered the basic rhythm, up the tempo and go again. Do the same with the other rhythm patterns at the end of this chapter. As Sheila says, “Really dig deep and be serious about your practice.”

MEET THE TIMBALES

WITH A crisp, resonant sound and a tropical feel—they are from Cuba, after all—the timbales bring a lot to a band setting despite their relatively simple setup. Pete Escovedo, or Pops as Sheila calls him, is a master percussionist across various instruments, but he's most famously known as a *timbalero*. Lucky for you, he's passed his wisdom on to his daughter.

Sheila's first exposure to the timbales was about as simultaneously intimate and world-class as you can get:

living room jam sessions in the Escovedos' Oakland home featuring not only her father but also her superstar godfather, Tito Puente, aka the King of the Timbales. It's no wonder Sheila eventually picked up a similar honorific, the Queen of Percussion—but not without countless hours of practice and a learning-focused mindset that she maintains to this day.

The timbales are like a drum kit in miniature. You can add on to them, but let's start

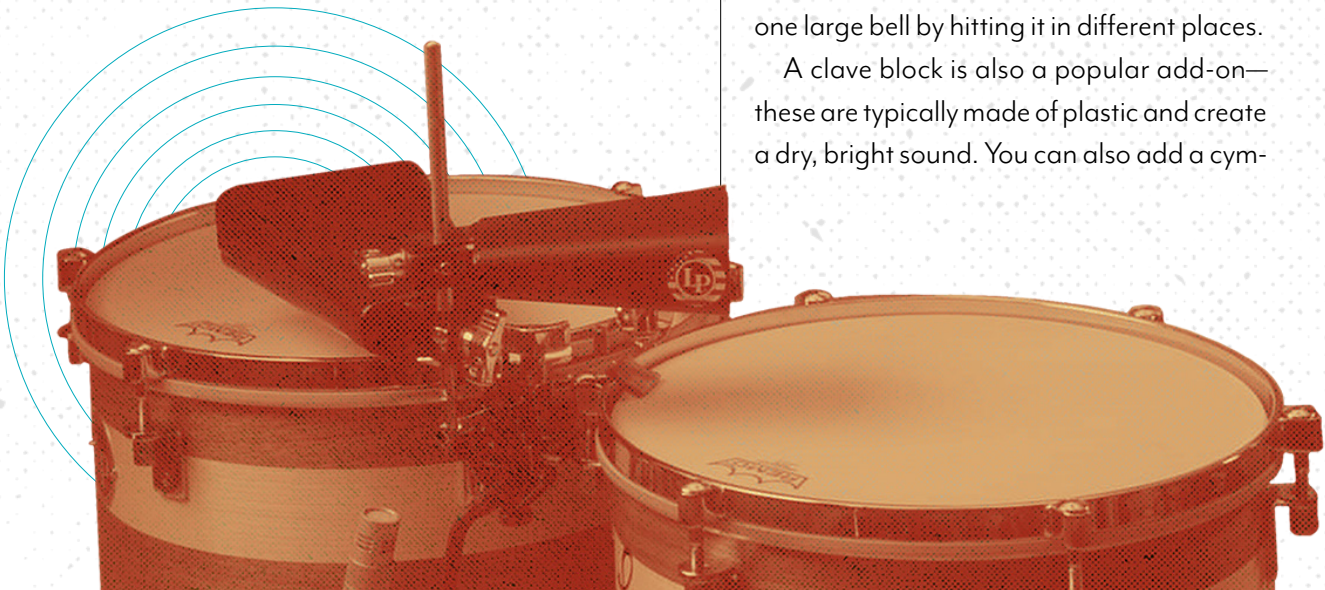
with the basics: the drums. They always come as a pair and are different sizes—typically one is 13 inches and the other is 14 inches. They look similar to the tom-toms on a standard drum kit but are shallower, usually tuned significantly higher, and offer three distinct areas of play:

- **Head:** The top of the drum. This area will create the most resonant sound.
- **Rim:** The edge of the drum, where the head meets the body. This area offers a piercing sound.
- **Cáscara:** The side of the drum, where, depending on the material used to make the drum shell, you can create a hard and crisp metallic or wooden sound.

The most common addition to the timbales is a cowbell (or two). There are several varieties of cowbell, but Sheila uses a mambo bell and a cha-cha bell. She also points out that you can sometimes get two separate tones from one large bell by hitting it in different places.

A clave block is also a popular add-on—these are typically made of plastic and create a dry, bright sound. You can also add a cym-

“DO IT WITH
PASSION AND
REALLY MEAN WHAT
YOU'RE PLAYING.”



bal to your timbale setup, and some percussionists go as far as to incorporate a snare and kick drum.

Though you use sticks to play the timbales, the strikes are conceptually similar to the congas:

- **Open:** Strike near the center of the drumhead.
- **Muffled:** Press down on the head with one stick while striking with the other.
- **Rim shot:** Simultaneously strike the rim and the edge of the head with one stick.
- **Side stick:** With one stick laid across the head, “click” the stick against the rim.

GEAR GUIDE

THE TIMBALE BUYING FAQ

What should I start with?

In addition to the two different-size drums and the stand they come on, you’ll likely want timbale sticks (thinner than drumsticks), a cowbell, and a clave block.

Can I buy them used?

Definitely, but tread lightly. Make sure a working stand is included; carefully check the shells for cracks, rust, or holes; prioritize new heads; and ask for extras like cowbells.

What size do I want?

The drums should be either 13 and 14 inches (standard), or 14 and 15 inches (also common—Sheila plays these sizes). The bigger they are, the louder they’ll be.

Brass, steel, bronze, or wood?

The material of the drum shell affects the sound. Brass is generally warmer sounding,

steel is sharper, and bronze is in between. Wood is harder to find and to work with.

Do drumheads matter?

Yes. Calfskin heads will give you the most authentic sound. Plastic heads can create a ringing effect, but there are quality synthetics on the market that improve upon this.

LISTEN UP

10 SONGS USING TIMBALES

> Timbales add a lot to songs inside and outside the Latin tradition. Get to know their sound by listening to these tracks

1. Tito Puente, “Ti Mon Bo” (1949)

2. Boz Scaggs,
“Flames of Love” (1971)

3. Elton John, “Jamaica Jerk-Off” (1973)

4. James Taylor,
“Day Tripper” (1979)

5. Juan Formell & Los Van Van,
“¿Qué Pasa Con Ella?” (1979)

6. Kurtis Blow, “The Breaks” (1980)

7. Led Zeppelin,
“Bonzo’s Montreux” (1982)

8. Sublime,
“Waiting for My Ruca” (1992)

9. Timbalero, “On That Tip” (2003)

10. Shakira, “Hips Don’t Lie”
(feat. Wyclef Jean) (2005)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> With your metronome going, spend some time getting to know the different parts of the timbales and the different ways of striking them to create sound. Once again, experiment with dynamics and tempo. Work on keeping time, and try out a few of your rudiments. When you’re ready, try playing the rhythm patterns handpicked by Sheila at the end of the video chapter.

GEAR GUIDE

SHEILA'S KIT

> “I like to sit down at the kit and feel like ‘This is home,’ ” says Sheila. Here are her essentials

- **Zildjian Drumstick Wax:** “It’s wax that goes on my sticks so I’m able to grip them. I carry it wherever I go because if I don’t have it, I don’t feel like I’m Sheila E., literally. It’s like wax you put on a surfboard—it almost smells like I’m on the beach.”
- **Roc-N-Soc Nitro Hydraulic Throne:** “When my back went out, I had to change my whole setup, and this seat saved my life. It takes some of the pressure off of the sciatica, the lower back, and I’ve been using it since the early ‘90s. It’s amazing.”
- **DW 9002 Double Kick Pedal (With Extended Drive Shaft):** “I play with my double kick pedal on the outside of the hi-hat, so an extended kick pedal rod is crucial to my setup.”
- **DW Claw Hook Accessory Clamp and LP Mambo Cowbell:** “The clamp holds the cowbell on top of the kick drum, and that’s where it’s most comfortable for me. If I don’t have that, because of the size and the flatness of the cowbell, it changes how I play.”
- **Custom-Made DW Kick Drum:** “Most drummers play a 22-inch kick drum, but because I’m fairly small, I’ve got a 20-inch kick. I can still get a big sound—I always use a hard-surfaced beater on my pedals.”

- **Custom-Made DW Snare Drum:** “I started using a smaller snare so everything is more compact and easier for me to play. That way I can sit in the position I need to and not hurt myself. Everything is sitting right in front of me so I don’t have to reach.”
- **DW 9500 Heavy-Duty Two-Leg Hi-Hat Stand:** “I need a two-legged hi-hat stand so I can utilize the double pedal on the outside of the stand. Sometimes it feels like my legs are a second set of arms, so if I can’t play double kick, I feel like I’m missing an arm.”
- **DW 9000 Heavy-Duty Air Lift Snare Stand:** “A standard snare doesn’t always let you maneuver depth as well as height, but you’re allowed to switch and turn this stand every possible way. That’s important so I can sit down straight and at a safe level.”
- **Zildjian Platinum Series Cymbals:** “I use 13-inch hi-hats, 17- and 18-inch crashes, a 20-inch ride, and a 14-inch China. I adjust my cymbals as tight as they can go on the stand. If they’re loose, I’ll cut my fingers because of the way that I learned to play.”
- **Remo Emperor Clear Drumheads:** “The last thing is the drumheads, but they are very important to what sound I’d like to convey. I used to use Remo Pinstripes for more of the muted funk tones, but the Emperors are my favorite drumheads right now.”





THE QUEEN E.
Sheila has perfected her drum setup, which makes it easy for her to find her groove.

FINDING YOUR VOICE

“DRUM SOLOS are not that important,” says Sheila, and she has a point. You’ve got to crawl before you can walk, run, skip, jump, flip, and parkour off of a nearby building. At the same time, Sheila very much knows the allure—YouTube has about four decades’ worth of clips showing her improvising incredible solos to

grateful audiences the world over. Yes, solos are flashy and fun, but they serve a practical function as well: helping the drummer find their voice.

What do you sound like when you let loose? When you’re perfectly aligned with the beat and free to

play—for a few bars or a few minutes—literally anything that comes to mind? It can be a powerful learning experience, a place for instructive mistakes and emboldening victories.

But let’s start small. In your exercises so far, there’s a good chance you’ve already played around within the metronome click and found the space between beats, going beyond the double stroke into the triple and maybe a full-on roll or introducing other percussive sounds. As long as you’re keeping time, that’s great. That sort of experimentation leads nicely into a **fill**, or a brief departure from the prevailing rhythmic pattern of the song that serves to set up and give energy to transitional moments (say, just before a verse, chorus, or bridge).

One way to think of a fill is as a mini solo:

It’s typically improvised, adds flair, and is an expression of the drummer’s voice. Fills may involve creating a fresh rhythm on the hi-hat or playing a few additional hits on a tom or snare. Regardless, the fill is meant to complement the song. “It’s a conversation,” Sheila says. “Be creative and feel out what really makes sense for the song.”

A **solo**, on the other hand, can be just about anything you want it to be—though, if you’re in a band, make sure everyone is on the same page. Solos are instrumental breaks within a song, live or recorded, that are often improvised and vary wildly in length (see the chapter playlist). They are showcases for the ability and creativity of the drummer, who is free to step outside of the genre, structure, and even tempo of the song while the rest of the band stops playing.

Soloing well isn’t about being loud or busy.

“IF YOU’RE GOING TO MAKE A MISTAKE, MAKE A MISTAKE BIG AND LOUD, AND THEN DO IT AGAIN.”

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> With your metronome going, play a basic beat. Let four bars (four counts of four) pass, and then try a fill. Keep it brief and punchy. Return immediately to the basic beat, let four more bars pass and try another one. Repeat this process until you can execute a fill without dropping the beat. When you feel comfortable, go for a solo. Just keep two things in mind: 1) getting good at soloing is a gradual process, and 2) the best way to learn is to experiment without fear of messing up. Mistakes can lead to revelations. As Sheila points out, if you repeat an initial “mistake” intentionally, it’s no longer a mistake. Solos and fills can also be executed on congas, timbales, or whatever you’ve got to practice on.

As Sheila explains, what makes a solo successful is a good buildup. You want to take the listener on a real journey, starting slow and introducing subtle shifts and surprising stunts until, well, “by the end it should just be big,” says Sheila. Nailing a solo feels amazing, but don’t forget that you are also on a journey, a lifelong one, as a drummer. As Sheila puts it: “I’m still trying to find my voice in soloing because I want to continue to be a student of life.... The more I allow myself to learn and create, the better I get.”

WHO RUN THE WORLD?

WOMEN WITH RHYTHM

> As a young girl, Sheila only knew of one female drummer: the mighty Karen Carpenter, who both sang and kept time brilliantly in the Carpenters. Sheila’s family always encouraged her to pursue her passion, but she often ran into people in the industry who told her that drums are a man’s instrument. Sheila is one of many amazing women who’ve proved just how narrow-minded that outlook is. These other women have added their voices to the ongoing rhythmic conversation.

Moe Tucker (b. 1944): As a member of the Velvet Underground, Tucker was known for her unique style—playing while standing, eschewing cymbals, and using mallets instead of sticks. Her minimal touch became the blueprint for punk’s simple rhythm.

Sandy West (b. 1959): West started playing at nine years old, and by 15 she was keeping time in the Runaways—the first major all-teen, all-girl hard rock band in history. Before long, West was holding her own on tours with drum-forward giants like Van Halen.

LISTEN UP

10 CLASSIC DRUM SOLOS

> These drummers broke the mold (and probably a cymbal or two) when they let loose

1. **The Dave Brubeck Quartet, “Take Five”** (Joe Morello, 1959)
2. **The Surfaris, “Wipe Out”** (Ron Wilson, 1963)
3. **The Who, “My Generation”** (Keith Moon, 1965)
4. **The Beatles, “The End”** (Ringo Starr, 1969)
5. **Led Zeppelin, “Moby Dick”** (John Bonham, 1969)
6. **Tony Williams, “Fred”** (Tony Williams, 1975)
7. **Steely Dan, “Aja”** (Steve Gadd, 1977)
8. **Phil Collins, “In the Air Tonight”** (Phil Collins, 1981)
9. **Rush, “Tom Sawyer”** (Neil Peart, 1981)
10. **Van Halen, “Hot for Teacher”** (Alex Van Halen, 1984)

Cindy Blackman (b. 1959): Inspired by her mother and grandmother (both classical musicians), Blackman studied music for virtually her entire life. She went on to play with a who’s who of jazz musicians (Pharoah Sanders, Ron Carter, John Medeski) and, perhaps most famously, tour with Lenny Kravitz.

Janet Weiss (b. 1965): This Riot grrrl pioneer rose to fame as the timekeeper in Sleater-Kinney and became one of the most in-demand drummers in indie rock, playing with Stephen Malkmus, Bright Eyes, Elliott Smith, the Shins, and many more.

Meg White (b. 1974): White came to the drums late in life (she started playing in 1997), but her primal, minimal, hard-driving style helped propel the White Stripes into the mainstream. Her raw playing on “Seven Nation Army” is a legendary reminder of how powerful a simple style can be.

PLAYING WELL WITH OTHERS



A FAMILY AFFAIR
Sheila and her
father performing
together in 2017.

YOU FOUND your rhythm. You learned your rudiments and have been practicing daily. You know your way around your instrument and have maybe even pulled off a few fills or solos. All of that is excellent, but until you sit in with a band or play in a jam session, you likely won't have a complete picture of how important the drummer's role is in a group.

"We're the captain of the ship," Sheila says. "It's a very important part, and you're going to have to take responsibility." At the same time, it's important to remember that being part of any musical collaboration is like taking part in a conversation. These five tenets will help you keep things flowing.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Get out and play. Call up some musician friends. Stop by local rehearsal rooms. Ask around at your go-to music shop. Sign up for group lessons. Check Craigslist. Look for a drum circle. However you do it, find someone to make music with. And if you only end up "in the room" at a studio or rehearsal space, make the most of it. Pay attention to how the musicians support one another, keep an eye on the drummer's technique, and ask what you can do to help out.

"IF A SONG JUST REQUIRES A TRIANGLE AT I'M GOING TO PLAY IT WITH EVERYTHING"

1. Keep time.

If you haven't gathered by now, this is Sheila's biggest sticking point—and with good reason. The drummer drives the rhythm of the song and, hence, the entire band. If you get excited and speed up or get lazy and slow down, the band has to follow. The most important thing you can do is maintain a steady tempo in order to create a groove that allows everyone else to do what they came there to do. As Sheila says, "I love soloing, [but] I'd just as soon play time for two hours with a band [where] we're all moving together."

2. Break it down.

We've touched briefly on **dynamics**—this refers to the volume of the performance, which is dictated by how hard or soft you hit your drums. You know about fills, which are usually played loudly and used to bring the energy up before a change in the song. Just as important as these is **breaking it down**. This means playing more softly, and the band typically follows suit in or-

der to make space for a vocalist’s verse, another player’s solo, or band introductions in a live setting. You’d bring it back up for the chorus.

3. Know when not to play.

Avoiding the urge to overplay is vital. Even if you’ve got the skills to drop fills into every gap, a kit that features every piece of percussion on earth, and a deep familiarity with the music, never play just to play. This especially applies if you’re in a free-flowing jam (where every player needs to listen to the others) or hired to contribute to someone else’s session.

4. Do your homework.

You already know this first part: Practice all the time. But to expand on that, be sure you know how to play different types of rhythms, genres, and styles. Doing so will not only open up your creativity but prepare you for a wide range of collaboration opportunities. It’ll also increase what you bring to the table during a session. Another pointer: If you’re trying out for a band or heading into rehearsal, practice the songs that you’ll be playing ahead of time—exhaustively. It’s a matter of respect, and the confidence you bring with you will be palpable.

5. Just get in the room.

You may not have the opportunity to play how you want to—or to play at all—in a given situation. That’s fine. You can still learn a great deal by just being in the room. When Sheila was starting out, “There was nothing beneath me,” she says. “I’ll come in, hand out waters...whatever I could do to be a part of the team.” Playing for free, handling studio chores, or sitting on the sidelines isn’t only about learning to put your ego aside. It’s a chance to educate yourself firsthand and also prove yourself to future collaborators.

LISTEN UP

15 SONGS WHERE SHEILA’S BEHIND THE SCENES

> Sheila has never stopped lending her talent to others’ visions across genres

1. George Duke, “Dukey Stick” (1978)
2. Michael Jackson, “Don’t Stop ’Til You Get Enough” (1979)
3. Prince & the New Power Generation, “Erotic City” (1984)
4. Kenny Loggins, “Vox Humana” (1985)
5. Kurtis Blow, “If I Ruled the World” (1985)
6. Carole King, “He Will Be Mine” (1993)
7. Gloria Estefan, “Mi Tierra” (1993)
8. Poison, “The Scam” (1993)
9. Jennifer Love Hewitt, “Let’s Go Bang” (1995)
10. Céline Dion, “Falling Into You” (1996)
11. Whitney Houston, “When You Believe” (1998)
12. Phil Collins, “True Colors” (1998)
13. Beyoncé, “Work It Out” (2002)
14. Hans Zimmer, “What Are You Going to Do When You Are Not Saving the World?” (2013)
15. Gary Clark Jr., “When I’m Gone” (2019)

FATHER KNOWS BEST

POPS’ 5 GOLDEN RULES

> Sheila’s dad, Pete Escovedo, has a few bonus tips to share

1. Learn
how to read
music

2. Take
lessons on your
instrument

3. Play with
people who
are better
than you

4. Always be
15 minutes
early to
everything

5. Treat
everyone with
respect

PREPARING TO PLAY ON STAGE

SHEILA HAS brought impressive enthusiasm and discipline to her solo practice and to her bands throughout her career. It's a habit she picked up by watching her dad run all-day drills as a bandleader, but her collaborators know it as Sheila's Bootcamp. "I love rehearsing," says Sheila. "I don't get to do it enough and everyone knows. For me, it's, 'Let's rehearse until we're exhausted.'" True enough, her rehearsals are known to run as long as 12 hours, and they're guided by a principle of intensity. "Whether you're in the studio, the living room, or at soundcheck," she says, "aggressively play as if the room is filled and sold out." Whew.

That sounds grueling, but it serves a purpose—several, actually, and they go beyond chops:

Forging band bonds: There's nothing like working hard in the name of a common goal to bring people together. For that time, you're sharing the entire world: sweat, food, frustration, fresh air, laughter, criticism, breakdowns, and breakthroughs. You become a family.

"I WANT YOU TO
PLAY FROM YOUR
HEART. THAT
ALLOWS YOU
THE FREEDOM
TO CREATE."



DIVA STATUS
Sheila and Cyndi
Lauper take the
stage in 2004.

Encouraging new ideas: When everyone in the room knows a piece of music front to back, that's the best time to find something new in the composition. Songs get totally reworked mid-recording this way, and set lists can be remixed during soundcheck.

Perfecting communication: The best bands have a secret language. That can mean literal words—in-jokes and shorthand speech—but also gestures, musical cues, looks, and the energy of a jam itself. This comes from spending time together. There's no forcing it.

Increasing onstage stamina: The last thing you want is to get on stage and be out of breath two songs into a set. Drumming is hard work, and, as Sheila says, you ought to train like an athlete would. After



a 12-hour rehearsal, 45 minutes on stage is a breeze.

Making the gig more fun: If everyone in the band knows the music and understands their role, no one will be stuck in their head during a real performance or looking around for guidance. You can enjoy the moment and play from the heart.

Serious rehearsals weed out the players who may not be as dedicated as you want them to be. Your rehearsals don't have to be 12 hours long, especially if this is a hobby or you're new to drums, but whoever you're rehearsing with should share your goal. That is, in Sheila's words, "to surround yourself with people who are encouraging and want the same outcome as you do, which is being better than when we first walked into the room."

LISTEN UP

10 LEGENDARY LIVE JAMS

> These bands found their groove and followed it to unexpected places

1. Santana, "Soul Sacrifice"
(Live at Woodstock, 1969)
2. Jimi Hendrix, "Machine Gun"
(Live at the Fillmore East, 1969)
3. The Allman Brothers Band, "Mountain Jam"
(Live at the Fillmore East, 1971)
4. Grateful Dead, "Fire on the Mountain"
(Live at Cornell University, 1977)
5. Michael Franti & Spearhead, "We Don't Stop"
(Live at Reggae on the River, 2004)
6. The Black Crowes, "My Morning Song"
(Live at the Fillmore, 2006)
7. Soulive, "Backwards Jack"
(Live in San Francisco, 2009)
8. STS9, "Breathe In"
(Live at University of Denver, 2009)
9. Dave Matthews Band, "#41"
(Live at Wrigley Field, 2010)
10. Phish, "Possum"
(Live in Atlantic City, 2010)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Even if you don't yet have a band, look up local venues where you could play with one. Create a spreadsheet, listing the venue, the booking point of contact (POC), the venue and POC's phone or email, and any other insight you might be able to glean from their website or a quick phone call. Do they need to hear a demo first? Will they require you to sell a minimum number of tickets? Are you responsible for bringing a PA system? Cast a wide net to get a sense of what's out there, from parks and community centers to bars and clubs to restaurants and cafés. Get a sense of which kind of artists play where. Most importantly, now that you've got the lay of the land, get out and see a show—something small so you can get up close. With a student's eye, watch how other performers interact on stage. What do they get right? What do they get wrong, and why? While you're there, make friends. You may find your future bandmates in the crowd.

PARADISO FOUND
This Amsterdam
concert hall is one of
Sheila's most loved.





IT'S SHOWTIME

7 OF SHEILA'S FAVORITE VENUES

**1. Paradiso
(Amsterdam, Netherlands)**

A 19th-century church with high ceilings and two balcony levels that stack fans close but far above the stage, creating a uniquely vertical sense of intimacy.

**2. Oakland Arena
(Oakland, California)**

With 360-degree seating, this former home of the Golden State Warriors was made to maximize the effect of screaming fans.

**3. Madison Square Garden
(Manhattan, New York)**

A proper purpose-built arena with room for 20,000 fans that has hosted boxing, hockey, pro wrestling, and more than 120 Billy Joel concerts.

**4. The Greek Theatre
(Berkeley, California)**

This sizable amphitheater's inaugural guest, in 1903, was sitting President Theodore Roosevelt. But it might be more famously known as the venue that hosted the Grateful Dead's first concert.

**5. Blue Note Tokyo
(Tokyo, Japan)**

Though it only opened in 1988, this legendary jazz club has put on shows from countless greats, including Chick Corea, Sarah Vaughan, Milt Jackson, and Maceo Parker.

**6. Quinta Vergara Amphitheater
(Viña del Mar, Chile)**

This architectural stunner opens up to what feels like a sea of trees and is home to the annual Viña del Mar International Song Festival, the longest-running music fest in Latin America.

**7. Staples Center
(Los Angeles, California)**

Yes it's home to the L.A. Lakers, Clippers, and Kings (basketball, basketball, and hockey, for the uninitiated), but the 20,000-seat arena is also known for holding performances by pop giants and, for 20 years running, hosting the Grammys.

LOOKING THE PART

THERE CAME a point in Sheila's career when she made a drastic shift. Yes, "Sheila Escovedo" was already a gifted percussionist with a burgeoning career—an in-demand side player and behind-the-scenes studio star. But "Sheila E.," she decided, would be a front-and-center sort of musician. It was, of course, more than a name change. As she toured the world behind her own music and as part of Prince's musical family, Sheila quickly emerged as a fashion icon with a boldly creative and playfully provocative look. And she made sure her band matched.

"This comes from my daddy," says Sheila. If you look up pictures of Azteca, you'll see what she means. "You come dressed to impress. That way, when people come to see you live, they know it's our thing. If we're going to be a team, we need to be a team in every area."

Sheila knows not everyone is interested in having a loud look—her sense of style today is clean, crisp, and grown-woman glam—but taking a little time to consider your aesthetic is smart. It can up your inner confidence and outer allure, neither of which hurts your chances of getting the gig you're pursuing. During an extracurricular chat, Sheila shared some fashion wisdom:

"If you're trying to find your style, don't be afraid to experiment, because the more that you try to find out who you are, the more you'll grow as an artist. Start dabbling in different colors. Some people just want to wear black, but maybe

JAM SESSION
Sheila performs
with her band at an
L.A. venue in 2018.



**"THERE'S
NOTHING THAT
YOU CAN'T DO
IF YOU JUST TRY.
THINK OUTSIDE
THE BOX."**

their look is that their hair is a bright color, or they have tattoos or piercings or glasses. You have to experiment, just like you do with music. You're out there playing and writing with other people. With fashion you can be like, 'I'm influenced by these four people. How can I make that look mine?' Well, try it and see.

"I once wanted my hair a specific color because I saw it on someone as I was driving by them. I dyed my hair, then cut a piece off, sent it to the drum company, and said, 'I want my drums to match my hair.' Not everyone is able to do that, but thinking about the overall package of what you'd like to present makes you different from everyone else. Everyone has a friend who can bedazzle something if you want to bedazzle your gear, which I do. You can also paint your gear yourself. There's nothing that you can't do if you just try. Think outside the box."

GEAR GUIDE

CUSTOMIZE YOUR KIT

> When it comes to ways to trick out a drum set, you're only limited by your imagination. Here are five fairly common DIY approaches to making your instrument as unique as you are

- **Stencil the kick:** Got a band logo or design you want people to stare at while you're wailing on your kit? All you need is a sharp blade, stiff cardboard, and spray paint.
- **Wrap the shells:** There are various companies that sell what basically amounts to wallpaper for your drums—some even allow you to upload your own artwork.
- **Paint the hardware:** This involves completely disassembling your kit, but you can create eye-catching contrast by giving all the metal bits a new spray-painted hue.

LISTEN UP

This one's up to you. Whether it's Lizzo's "Good as Hell" or Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger," everyone has songs that pump them up, stoke their confidence, and put a swagger in their step. Find five or so that do that for you. Alternately: Sheila's *The Glamorous Life* album, of course.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Grab a pen and paper. Think about the kind of music you play or would like to play. Quickly, without overthinking, write down as many words that come to mind that describe or embody some aspect of that music. Is it loud or quiet? Bright or dark? Spiky or smooth? Don't be afraid to get abstract. What color is the music? If it was alive and standing in front of you, what would its personality be like? Would it invite you over for tea or slap you in the face?

Once you've gathered a handful of these descriptors, think about your current personal style. How does it fit with the music? If it doesn't, consider how you can play with fashion using the words and phrases you wrote down. Would you want your look to align perfectly with the music or contrast it in a curious way? As Sheila suggests, consider the sartorial choices of people who you think are doing it right. How can you fold what you like about their style into what you do? If all of this still feels too hypothetical, peruse the aisles of a local thrift store, where you're likely to find a wide variety of clothing representing different eras and styles. Grab a bunch of things you love, then mix and match to see if you can land on a look that feels right.

- **Add some lights:** The vibrancy, efficiency, and availability of LEDs make it possible to light up your drums from the inside. You can buy ready-to-install light sets or find DIY approaches online.
- **Apply glitter tape:** The easiest and cheapest hack of all. Visit a craft store or Amazon to buy as many rolls as you'd like in nearly any color you want. Then just stick it on.



COMMIT TO YOUR CRAFT AND YOUR GOALS

SOME NUMBER of years ago, Sheila realized she'd developed a regular habit of writing down the things she hoped to accomplish in both the near and far future. It was something she had just fallen into, but in time the habit became a practice and evolved into an extensive bucket list—"pages and pages and pages," she says, of personal goals accompanied by due dates.

Some entries, like hitting the gym, are easy to keep putting off. Some get recalibrated over time—Sheila hoped to win a gold medal in the Olympics for running track, but she crossed that off once she earned a gold album (500,000 copies sold) for *The Glamorous*

“CONTINUE TO BE A STUDENT OF LIFE AND LEARN EVERY SINGLE DAY.”



1985
Acted alongside Run-D.M.C. in the seminal hip-hop history film *Krush Groove* (left)

1996
Played the 1996 Summer Olympics closing ceremony with Gloria Estefan and Tito Punte

1998
Led the house band on Magic Johnson's short-

lived late-night show, *The Magic Hour*

2001
Did her first of three touring stints as the drummer with Ringo Starr & His All-Starr Band

2006
Started a soulful all-woman supergroup called C.O.E.D. (Chronicles of Every Diva)



STAR POWER

A LIFE BIZARRE

> You can only have the kind of fantastically unpredictable career Sheila has had by staying open to new ideas as they come. Here's a roundup of her most memorable unconventional moments.

Life. Others, well, she gets exactly right: Sharing her wisdom with you has been on Sheila's list for two years.

If there's one final thought Sheila wants to leave with you, it's to never stop learning. You'll never hear every genre, play every rhythm, rock every stage, or perform with everyone who can teach you something about your art. But you can—and should—try. Say “yes” to new experiences, and when you hear the word no, treat it as an opportunity to try a new tack.

You'd be surprised where saying “yes” can take you. It's the flipside of a carefully curated bucket list—a random-experience generator that can unlock skills and interests within you that you didn't even know you had. Just as you're pushing yourself to master an instrument, push yourself to accomplish your goals, and again: learn, learn, learn.



2009
Competed against George Clinton and others to win the reality show *Gone Country*

2010
Emmy-nominated as music director of First Lady Michelle Obama's Fiesta Latina concert (left)

2013
Became part of a 12-drummer

orchestra on Hans Zimmer's *Man of Steel* soundtrack

2014
Published *The Beat of My Own Drum*, a memoir about the healing power of music

2018
Made a surprise cameo in Fred Armisen's Netflix special, *Standup for Drummers*

LISTEN UP

10 SONGS WHERE SHEILA IS A FEATURED GUEST ARTIST

> Sheila has collaborated with all sorts of artists—and every recording was a learning experience

1. Babyface, Mariah Carey, Kenny G & Sheila E., “Every Time I Close My Eyes” (1996)

2. Selena, Vinnie Colaiuta, Sheila E., David Pack, Greg Phillinganes & John Dickson, “A Boy Like That” (1996)

3. Patti LaBelle, “When You Smile” (feat. Carlos Santana, Sheila E., La India & Andy Vargas) (2004)

4. Dave Koz, “Getaway” (feat. Sheila E. & Jonathan Butler) (2010)

5. Andraé Crouch, “All Around the World” (feat. Chaka Khan and Sheila E.) (2011)

6. Booker T., “66 Impala” (feat. Poncho Sanchez & Sheila E.) (2013)

7. Full Force, “I Feel Good, I Look Good, I'm God Good” (feat. Faith Evans, Sheila E. & the God Good Choir & Children) (2014)

8. Tony Succar, “Smooth Criminal” (feat. Jean Rodriguez & Sheila E.) [Live] (2016)

9. Debi Nova, “Dale Play” (feat. Sheila E.) (2017)

10. Johnny Gill, “Fiesta” (feat. Sheila E. & Santana) (2019)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Start your bucket list with five entries and, for now, make them all music-related. Next to each entry, save room for three key pieces of data: a deadline, the date you started, and the date you finished. The deadline can be at any point in the future: three days from now or three years from now. Think of it as aspirational. If you eventually blow past your deadline, don't beat yourself up—this is a living document. The aim is to update it regularly. Sheila does an in-depth review and refresh of her list at the beginning of each year and then revisits it every few months.

Most importantly, be sure to give yourself one task that you can complete, or at least start, in the next day or two. It can be as simple as scheduling that rehearsal, calling that local venue, or posting a note on a classifieds site like Craigslist looking for other musicians to jam with. “A lot of times we procrastinate, [but] we want to hold ourselves accountable for the things we say we're going to do,” says Sheila. “Even if it's just one thing [you do now], then you've done it!”



WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

WITH POPS' and Sheila's blessing, you're now an honorary Escovedo. Hopefully you've embraced the importance of practice, discovered the value in collaboration, and learned a Latin rhythm or two. But there's one more piece of the puzzle. It may seem ephemeral first, but the Escovedos know it as an incredibly real thing: the healing power of music.

**"HAVE FUN,
DANCE,
LAUGH,
LIVE YOUR
LIFE."**

Thanks to the curative nature of self-expression and the communal spirit of song, music can be faith, comfort, an outlet, or a companion when any of those things are otherwise lacking. As Sheila shares, there were times growing up that her family had trouble making ends meet, "but the best thing about the struggle was how music was our gift, our hope, our excitement.... It brought people together in our house every single day.... Music was our outlet."

Music has the power to bring families closer, to heal communities, and to help young people focus their energy into something positive. Another Escovedo family tenet is to give back. In 2001, Sheila cofounded the Elevate Hope Foundation in order to bring

therapy to abused or abandoned children through music and arts education. That initiative has since evolved into a program, Elevate Oakland, that helps Bay Area public schools more broadly.

Sheila shares more about that in the exclusive interview below, but it's important to note that there are always ways for musicians to help out in their communities, regardless of stature or savings account. And to do so is to expand your own family in a deeply meaningful way.

THE POWER OF MUSIC A HIGHER CAUSE

> A brief chat with Sheila about her nonprofit, Elevate Oakland

What is Elevate Oakland all about?

"We're bringing music back to the public schools, and we use artists from the Bay Area to teach and assist in classes. Kids take classes for the semester and usually come in a couple times a week. Sometimes we record them or have them open for local artists like my dad or myself at venues like Yoshi's in

Oakland. We initially started in foster care, but the need was so great at schools because of budget cuts—it's horrible. The kids are coming to us, 'We want to learn music, but our school doesn't teach it. Can you help us?' I mean, God, they're asking for it."

How have you interacted with the students?

"All of the founders, including me, have taught classes. We help with putting together events and work with kids one-on-one because we notice a lot of them are in disarray. One student was really excited for us to listen to his song. He wrote it, made the beat, and rapped it. We started listening, and I realized he was talking about himself, about how he loves music but times are hard, and he's sleeping in a friend's car in front of the school—he was homeless. This is how they're allowed to share their real stories, their lives, with other people."

How have you seen Elevate Oakland make a difference?

"Some of the kids were acting up. We realized it was because they wanted attention and help but didn't know how to ask. As we focused on them and they started to express themselves through art, they opened up. Some of them told us they're coming to school hungry because they don't have money for food. They said, 'You guys keep coming back and helping, so we believe you, we trust you. And we don't trust anybody.' That trust itself is a breakthrough."

Why was this important for you to do?

"It started with my parents. When we were younger, we didn't have much money, but my dad decided he was going to give back

LISTEN UP

THE ESCOVEDO FAMILY DIASPORA

> Take this 10-song tour through Sheila's incredibly rich and diverse musical lineage

1. Azteca, "Love Not Then" (1972)
2. Coke Escovedo, "What Are You Under" (1975)
3. Rank and File, "Rank and File" (1982)
4. Pete Escovedo, "Leyte" (1986)
5. True Believers, "The Rain Won't Help You When It's Over" (1994)
6. The Zeros, "Don't Push Me Around" (1994)
7. The Dragons, "High" (1996)
8. Pete Escovedo & Sheila Escovedo, "Happy Together" (1997)
9. Peter Michael Escovedo, "Sunshine" (2003)
10. Sheila E., "Leader of the Band" (feat. Prince & the E Family) (2014)

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

> Research ways that you and your friends can help out in your community. Are there local organizations that send musicians to children's hospitals or assisted-living facilities? Can you lend your time to community events or fundraisers? Or volunteer to help teach music at public schools, in after-school programs, or as a private tutor? Is there somewhere you can donate instruments you're not using? You could even start a kid-friendly drum circle at your nearest park or farmers' market. Find some way to experience this powerful aspect of music-making.

no matter what: We can get instruments, put the kids in the car, go to facilities for kids who are not doing well and play for them, put a smile on their face. We know how music's been healing for us—it's helped us through good times and bad—and how we can use creativity to express how we feel. We just want that for these kids."



PARTING WORDS FROM SHEILA



“IF YOU want this to be your career, you really have to work hard—and I mean extremely hard. And when you think that it’s hard enough, then go even further. Do it for yourself and believe in yourself. You have to be strong. If you show that you’re willing to work and put in the hours, that’ll change the world.”





BAND PRACTICE

DRUMMING LEGEND

Crash Cymbal Hi Hat Ride Cymbal Cowbell Rack Tom 1

Rack Tom 2 Snare Drum Floor Tom Kick Drum

GETTING STARTED ON THE DRUMS

> Warming up with rudiments

Single Stroke

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

Double Stroke

L L R R L L R R L L R R L L R R

R R L L R R L L R R L L R R L L

Paradiddle

L R L L R L R R L R L L R L R R

R L R R L R L L R L R R L R L L

SOLOS AND FILLS

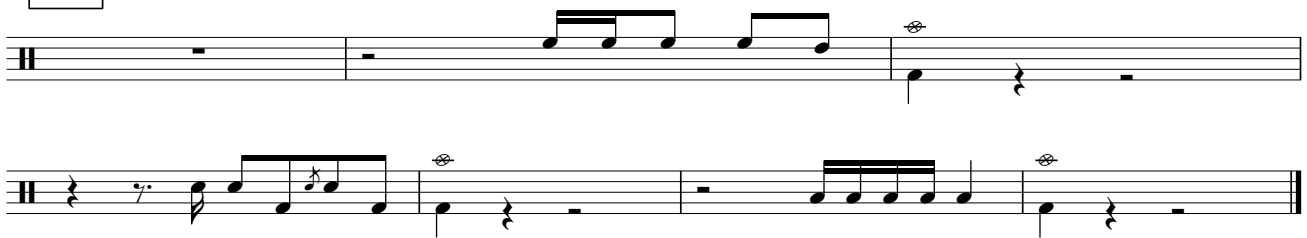
> When to play a fill

Drum Set

"A Love Bizarre" Fill



Fills



Practicing Fills



SOLOS AND FILLS

> Improvising a fill

$\text{♩} = 150$

1

3

5

7

9

11

13

15

17

Musical notation for measures 17-18. Measure 17 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 18 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 17.

19

Musical notation for measures 19-20. Measure 19 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 20 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 19.

21

Musical notation for measures 21-22. Measure 21 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 22 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 21.

23

Musical notation for measures 23-24. Measure 23 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 24 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 23.

25

Musical notation for measures 25-26. Measure 25 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 26 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 25.

27

Musical notation for measures 27-28. Measure 27 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 28 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 27.

29

Musical notation for measures 29-30. Measure 29 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. Measure 30 features a sixteenth-note triplet with an asterisk and a sixteenth-note pair with an accent. A bracket labeled '6' spans the first two notes of measure 29.

SOLOS AND FILLS (CONT.)

> Improvising a fill

31



33



35



37



39



41



43



GROWING AS A BAND LEADER

> Sheila directs the band: latin jazz jam

Drum Set

The musical score for the drum set is written in 4/4 time and consists of seven staves. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and accents. The first six staves contain rhythmic patterns, while the seventh staff shows a final measure with a half note and a fermata.

"A LOVE BIZARRE" CASE STUDY

Drum Set

Intro



Chorus



Verse



Chorus



2

Interlude



Verse




Bridge





Chorus



LATIN PERCUSSION LEGEND

 = Open

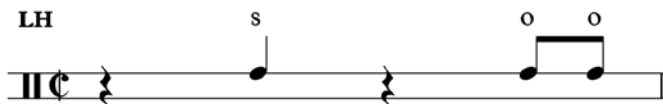
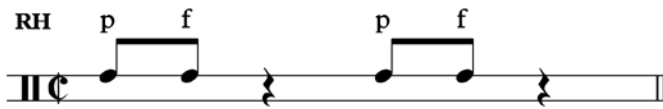
 = Slap

 = Palm

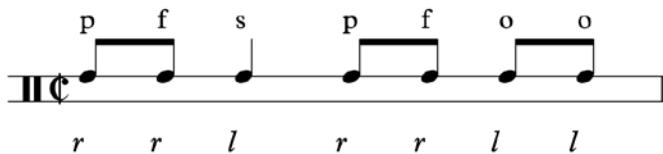
 = Fingers

PLAYING THE CONGAS

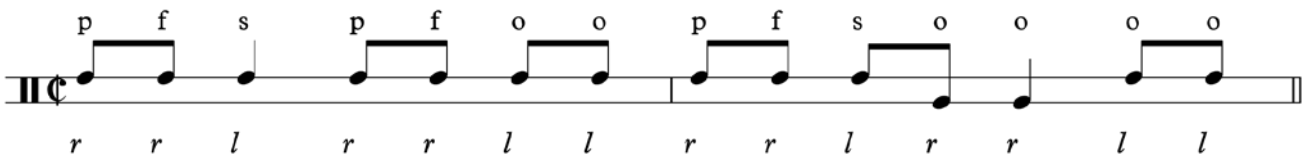
> Practice pattern: cha cha



This is the basic cha cha practice pattern broken down for your right hand (RH) and left hand (LH).



This is the basic cha cha practice pattern for both your right hand and your left hand.



PLAYING THE CONGAS

> Sheila's solo in Escovedo family freestyle

Sheila's basic pattern here is different by one note.
It looks like this:

PLAYING THE CONGAS (CONT.)

> Freestyle breakdown

BASIC PATTERN

Musical notation for the basic conga pattern in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of quarter notes. The first four notes are grouped with a slur and an 'o' above them. The next four notes are grouped with a slur and an 'o' above them. The final four notes are grouped with a slur and an 's' above the first note and an 'o' above the last note. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with 'r' for right hand and 'l' for left hand: r l r l r l r l r l r l r l r l.

PETER MICHAEL'S PART

Musical notation for Peter Michael's conga part in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of quarter notes. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Above the notes are dynamic markings: 'o' above the first note, 'p' above the second note, 'f' above the third note, 'f' above the fourth note, 'f' above the fifth note, and 'o' above the sixth note. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with 'r' for right hand and 'l' for left hand: r l r l l r.

JUAN'S PART

Musical notation for Juan's conga part in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of quarter notes. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Above the notes are dynamic markings: 'o' above the first note, 'f' above the second note, 'o' above the third note, 'p' above the fourth note, 'p' above the fifth note, 'f' above the sixth note, 'f' above the seventh note, 'p' above the eighth note, 'f' above the ninth note, and 's' above the tenth note. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with 'r' for right hand and 'l' for left hand: r l r l l r r l r l l r.

SHEILA'S PART

Musical notation for Sheila's conga part in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of quarter notes. The notes are: quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter, quarter. Above the notes are dynamic markings: 'p' above the first note, 'p' above the second note, 'p' above the third note, 's' above the fourth note, and 'p' above the fifth note. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with 'r' for right hand and 'l' for left hand: r r r l r.

PLAYING THE TIMBALES

> Practice pattern: "The Glamorous Life" and grooving with my band

*ACCENTS SHOULD BE PLAYED ON THE LARGE SIDE OF THE BELL

Musical notation for timbales practice pattern. The notation is written on a single staff with a 4/4 time signature. The pattern consists of four measures, each containing a pair of beamed eighth notes. The notes are labeled 'r' and 'l' (right and left) below the staff. Accents (>) are placed above the first note of each pair in every measure. The first measure has an accent on the 'r' note. The second measure has an accent on the 'l' note. The third measure has an accent on the 'r' note. The fourth measure has an accent on the 'l' note. The notation is labeled 'SMALL BELL' and 'LARGE BELL' on the left side, with a double bar line indicating the start of the pattern.

CREDITS

CLASS

Sheila E. live at Stern Grove Festival

Courtesy Stern Grove Festival

Sheila E. performing

“The Glamorous Life”

Courtesy Dick Clark Productions, LLC.

Dick Clark interviews Sheila E.

Courtesy Dick Clark Productions, LCC.

Various live performance footage

Courtesy of Walnut & Rose pictures

Various live performance footage

Courtesy of World Media

WORKBOOK

Sheila E. with recycling bin

Courtesy Riccardo Savi/WireImage
for NARAS

Sheila E. at the 62nd GRAMMY Awards

Courtesy Kevin Winter/Getty Images
for The Recording Academy

Sheila E. performing at a drum demo

Courtesy Concert Photos /Alamy
Stock Photo

Sheila E. and her father

Courtesy Phillip Faraone/Getty Images
for Guitar Center

Sheila E. and Cyndi Lauper

Courtesy KMazur/WireImage

Paradiso

Courtesy Erling Mandelmann/Gamma-
Rapho via Getty Images

Sheila E. and her band

Courtesy Joshua Blanchard/Getty Images
for Habitat for Humanity

Sheila E. at Fiesta Latina

Courtesy Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images