

# Sheila E. Biography

One of life's constants for Sheila E. comes down to a simple phrase: follow the beat. And her impeccable inner rhythm is the pulse behind a trailblazing career that still knows no bounds.

World-class drummer and percussionist whose credits read like chapters in a music history book: Ringo Starr, Marvin Gaye, Prince, Beyoncé, Herbie Hancock, Diana Ross, Lionel Richie, Gloria Estefan and George Duke. Grammy Award-nominated singer/songwriter behind the seminal hits "The Glamorous Life" and "A Love Bizarre." Sheila is a fearless multi-instrumentalist, as well as an Actress, Mentor, and Philanthropist.

These career checkpoints all converge in 2014 with two new Sheila E. projects. Coming soon is the release of her first album in 13 years, the aptly titled "[Icon](#)" (Stilettoflats Music, March 25, 2014). Leading the charge is first single, "Mona Lisa." Then the indefatigable multi-talent will add author to her list of accomplishments with Simon & Schuster's September publication of her autobiography, "[The Beat Of My Own Drum.](#)"



"The idea to record another solo album was actually spawned while I was writing the autobiography," recalls Sheila E. "I realized that some of the experiences I was writing about should be songs. That's when I also began looking back at songs I'd written several years earlier and forgotten about, but whose themes needed to be talked about in the book. Both fed each other."

As the musical half of Sheila E.'s storied life and career, *Icon* pulsates from start to finish with colorful fusions of the pop, R&B, funk, rock, Latin and jazz influences that shaped her unique style. The 16-track set opens with the soaring "Butterfly," the first of four interludes that subtly yet powerfully illuminate the versatile talent behind the music. "Butterfly" reflects part of the

journey in my book,” explains Sheila E., nicknamed butterfly by a family friend. “It’s who I am as a person. I always wanted to fly, to be the first female astronaut on the moon. It’s me running track, running free. That’s how I play.”

The album takes off from there, with most songs produced live, specifically solos, in one or two takes. “I’m used to playing live,” says Sheila E., who also produced the project. “Why would I punch in my soul?”

She unleashes that soul on feisty first single, “Mona Lisa.” Drawn from Sheila E.’s Latin roots, the track vibrantly chronicles a story about a woman who never lost sight of her dream: to perform. That’s just one of several potential singles on *Icon*. “Fiesta” opens with guest rapper B. Slade’s teasing declaration, “Just drop that beat on that.” Then the hot club jam powers up as Sheila E. drums out an infectious beat throbbing with intensity—“Can’t nobody rock a party like Sheila E.,” raps B. Slade—before closing with her coquettish laugh. A mid-tempo downshift yields the feel-good track “Lovely Day.” Its message about focusing on the bright side of life takes the song on a surprising turn as it morphs into a gospel/funk vibe reminiscent of Sly Stone.

Joining Sheila E. on her musical reverie are two singular storytellers in their own right: singer Ledisi and pioneering rapper MC Lyte. The latter’s signature edgy flow spices up the saucy themed “Nasty Thang,” while outlining the drama and glamour that often comes with a life in the music industry. Ledisi adds a poignant touch to “Girl Like Me,” an honest, empowering message about surviving abuse. An abuse survivor herself, Sheila E. originally penned the song to perform with her 2007 female band C.O.E.D. (Chronicles of Every Diva). Rounding out *Icon* is a new version of the funky tour de force “Leader of the Band.” The song features Sheila and the E Family (father Pete and brothers Juan and Peter Michael) as well as Prince, on piano.

“I love playing this song,” says Sheila E., “so I re-recorded, while still leaving a little room for Prince. It’s about how I was influenced by my pops [the legendary Pete Escovedo] and [songwriter/producer/musician] George Duke. That a female can be in charge and bring it just as hard.”

*Icon* ends as it begins with another moving interlude, “Now Is the Hour.” A duet featuring Sheila E. and her beloved “moms,” Escovedo matriarch Juanita, the clip dates back to Sheila E.’s childhood.

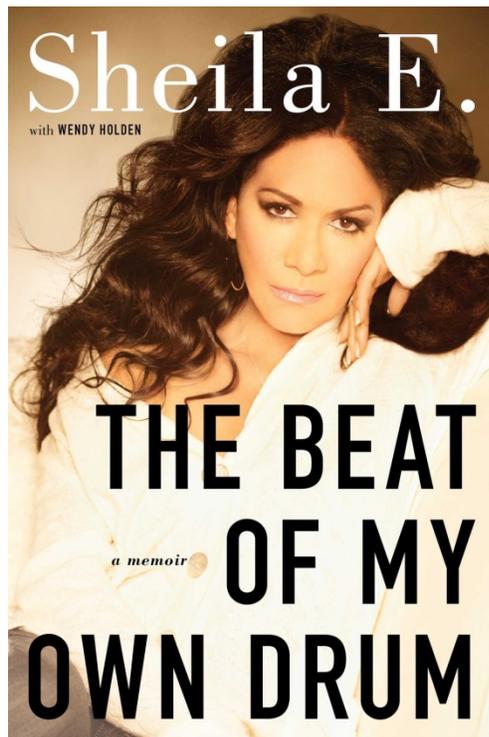


Family, faith and music were guiding forces for Sheila E. growing up in the Bay Area. In addition to percussionist dad Pete, the Oakland, Calif. native counts former Santana member/Azteca founder Coke Escovedo, solo recording artist Alejandro Escovedo, The Dragons front man Mario Escovedo and from The Zeroes Javier Escovedo as uncles. Fellow Latin star Tito Puente was her godfather. In addition to being weaned on Latin jazz and Motown, Sheila E. was exposed to a diverse array of Bay Area acts and artists. Those influences ranged from the rock of Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead to the R&B/pop of the Pointer Sisters and the funk of Tower of Power and Sly & the Family Stone. “I used to sit on the corner outside of the local community center with Twinkies and 7-Up listening to Tower of Power, Sly and Larry Graham rehearse,” recalls Sheila E. “The sounds of the Bay Area molded me.”

So it’s no surprise that after such a music-immersive childhood, the gifted drummer/percussionist began amassing an impressive string of credits playing not only with her dad but also with pioneering talents like George Duke, Marvin Gaye, Lionel Richie and Herbie Hancock. Following a Bay Area gig in the late ‘70s, Sheila E. met Prince backstage. Their Purple Rain recording sessions—including her vocals on the 1984 classic “Erotic City”—morphed into launching her solo career that same year. Debut album [The Glamorous Life](#) spun off the Grammy Award-nominated top 10 hit of the same name plus a second top 40 single “The Belle of St. Mark.” Between her ‘80s tenure as drummer, songwriter and musical director for Prince’s backup band, Sheila E. released three more solo albums ([Romance 1600](#), [Sheila E.](#) and [Sex Cymbal](#)) and scored two more classic hits with “A Love Bizarre” and “Hold Me” a romantic ballad. After taking some time away from the spotlight, she then decided to tap into her Latin Jazz roots and under the name E-Train, released ([Writes of Passage](#) and [Heaven](#)).

Sheila E.’s fierce, dynamic verve onstage has made her a major concert draw since the ‘90s. Along the way, she has acted in several films (“Krush Groove,” “The Adventures of Ford Fairlane,” “Chasing Papi”) and launched various music projects (E Train, The E Family). Adding to her arsenal of credits such names as Ringo Starr (as a member of Ringo Starr’s All Star Band in 2001, 2003 and 2006), Gloria Estefan and Beyoncé as well as

performing on the 2012 Academy Awards with pop hitmaker Pharrell Williams and composer Hans Zimmer. She was the first female Music Director for a late night talk show (“The Magic Hour” with Magic Johnson) and received an Emmy® nomination as Musical Director for “Fiesta Latina – A Performance at The White House.” Sheila E. was recently among the roster of stars chosen to perform at the Kennedy Center Honors whose 2013 honorees included artists Herbie Hancock, Billy Joel and Carlos Santana.



Away from the spotlight, music doubles as a source of healing and giving back for Sheila E. In tandem with the city of Oakland, she staged the first annual “[Elevate Oakland](#)” benefit concert in February of 2014. A host of Bay Area artists and other acclaimed musicians performed at the city-donated Fox Theatre. The goal: to raise funds to improve student academic achievement and attendance through music and arts programming. But this isn’t Sheila E.’s first time giving back. Between gigs, she has also crisscrossed the country, speaking at schools and colleges, shelters, church organizations, music classes and clinics about music’s effect on her life and career. “Sharing music in any way I can is my ministry,” she says.

And that was part of the inspiration for penning the autobiography “*The Beat of My Own Drum*.” Several years ago Sheila E. publicly acknowledged she was an abuse survivor.

“The book was the beginning of the healing,” says Sheila E. “I’d talked about the abuse in my ministry and addressed it in some of the song lyrics I’d written. But it was challenging to sit down and really write about it in detail for the book. But through pain comes realization, understanding and the opportunity to help others overcome those challenges.”

After ringing in 2014 in concert with Sergio Mendes on New Year’s Eve at Disney Hall, Sheila E. is now ready for her Icon debut. With no Google or YouTube artist script to follow back then,

she says her career drive was propelled by one thing: “I just did it because I loved it. And that’s what Icon represents. I started all this as Sheila Escovedo then became this persona named Sheila E. Now Sheila E. and Sheila Escovedo are the same person, still making music that comes from the heart.”

- See more at: <http://www.sheilae.com/bio/#sthash.79Pqrkpc.dpuf>