

SHELLY MANNE



By Jesse Nolan
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Shelly Manne

Born: June 11, 1920

Died: September 26, 1984

Shelly Manne made a countless number of records from the 1940s into the 1980s but is best-known as a good-humored bandleader who never hogged the spotlight. Originally a saxophonist, Manne switched to drums when he was 18 and started working almost immediately. He was with **Joe Marsala's** band (making his recording debut in 1941), played briefly in the big bands of **Will Bradley**, **Raymond Scott** and **Les Brown** and was on drums for **Coleman Hawkins's** classic "The Man I Love" session of late 1943. Manne worked on and off with **Stan Kenton** during 1946-52, also touring with **Jazz at the Philharmonic** (1948-49) and gigging with **Woody Herman** (1949). After leaving **Stan Kenton**, Manne moved to Los Angeles where he became the most in-demand of all jazz drummers. He began recording as a leader (his first session was cut in Chicago in 1951) on a regular basis starting in 1953 when he first put together the quintet Shelly Manne and His Men. Among the sidemen who were in his band during their long string of Contemporary recordings (1955-62) were **Stu Williamson**, **Conte Candoli**, **Joe Gordan**, **Bob Enevoldsen**, **Joe Maini**, **Charlie Mariano**, **Herb Geller**, **Bill Holman**, **Jimmy Giuffre**, **Richie Kamuca**, **Victor Feldman**, **Russ Freeman**, **Ralph Pena**, **Leroy Vinnegar** and **Monty Budwig**. Manne, who had the good fortune to be the leader of a date by the **André Previn** Trio that resulted in a major seller (jazz versions of tunes from **My Fair Lady**), always had an open musical mind and he recorded some fairly free pieces on **The Three and "The Two"** (trios with **Shorty Rogers** and **Jimmy Giuffre** that did not have a piano or bass along with duets with **Russ Freeman**) and enjoyed playing on an early session with **Ornette Coleman**. In addition to his jazz work, Manne appeared on many film soundtracks and even acted in **The Man With the Golden Arm**. He ran the popular club Shelly's Manne-Hole during 1960-74, kept his music open to freer sounds (featuring trumpeter **Gary Barone** and tenor-saxophonist **John Gross** during 1969-72), played with the **The L.A. 4** in the mid-'70s and was very active up until his death. Throughout his career Shelly Manne recorded as a leader for Savoy, Interlude, Contemporary, Jazz Groove, Impulse, Verve, Capitol, Atlantic, Concord, Mainstream, Flying Dutchman, Discovery, Galaxy, Pausa, Trend, and Jazziz in addition to a few Japanese labels.



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By James Strain

Widely regarded as a most versatile and musical drummer, Shelly Manne (1920-1984) was a founding father of the West Coast jazz scene in the 1950s. Manne possessed a phenomenal technique, which he channeled into some of the most creative, lyrical drumming ever heard. His solos were unique, sometimes humorous, and above all else, musical.

When asked how Shelly might have responded upon receiving the Hall of Fame award, his widow, Florence "Flip" Manne, replied: "He would be astounded by how many people remember him, and deeply humbled to be honored by this award. Just before his death he remarked that there were so many new young lions playing drums, he didn't think anyone knew who he was any more."

Shelly's father, Max Manne, himself a famous drummer, exposed Shelly to a life of music from early childhood. As his father worked at the Roxy in New York City, Shelly was aware of the talents of PAS Hall of Famer Billy Gladstone at Radio City Music Hall, and after a brief attempt at the saxophone, Manne took his first drum lesson from Gladstone in the basement of the famous hall. In a *Modern Drummer* interview conducted just a few months before his death, Manne related the story as follows: "Billy was like a second father to me. I'll never forget that first lesson he gave me. Billy put me in that room downstairs at Radio City Music Hall where they kept all the percussion instruments. He showed me how to set up the drums I got and how to hold the sticks. Then he put Count Basie's 'Topsy' on the phonograph, and as he walked out of the room, he said, 'Play!' That was my first lesson, and I've been grateful for that ever since."

As a teenager, Manne played for bands on trans-Atlantic liners, and he made his recording debut with Bobby Byrne's band in 1939. After playing with Joe Marsala's combo, Bob Astor, Raymond Scott, Will Bradley and Les Brown, Manne joined the Coast Guard from 1942 until 1945. Following World War II, he went on the road with Stan Kenton's band, and soon found himself working with tenor saxophonist Charlie Ventura's sextet featuring Kai Winding on trombone, Lou Stein on piano and Buddy Stewart on vocals. Manne then joined Woody Herman's big band, and returned to the road with Kenton from 1950-51.

The most significant change of Manne's career occurred in 1952 when he and

his wife left New York and relocated to Southern California. Although Shelly has made mention of his disdain for the use of drugs in the New York jazz scene at that time, the move to California was due primarily to the fact that he and his wife loved the area and were looking for a place to pursue not only their love of music, but their love of horses. In addition to Shelly's success as a musician, he was well-known in the horse industry, winning numerous awards for Standard-Bred Trotters.

The move to California allowed Manne the opportunity to experiment in numerous types of ensembles, as well as an opportunity to contribute widely to the Hollywood studio scene. In addition to establishing the West Coast jazz movement with Howard Rumsey's Lighthouse All-Stars and Sonny Rollins, Manne assembled and led numerous groups under his own name. Among these were Shelly Manne and His Men, which featured trumpeter Stu Williamson, alto saxophonist Charlie Mariano, pianist Russ Freeman and bassist Leroy Vinnegar. Although this group recorded several albums for Contemporary Records, the most-often mentioned selection is Manne's rendition of Bud Powell's "Un Poco Loco," which features an extended, and very creative, drum solo.

A unique recording opportunity arose in 1956 when Manne teamed up with pianist Andre Previn and bassist Leroy Vinnegar to produce the first jazz album of a Broadway score. Their version of *My Fair Lady* became the best-selling jazz album for that year.

Manne's television and movie credits number in the hundreds, and he was well-known not only for performing, but for composing several scores as well. Among his best-known efforts at composing are his unusual scores for the television series *Daktari*, the motion picture scores for *Trial of the Catonsville Nine* and *Trader Horn*, and a musical score for a Los Angeles production of Shakespeare's *Henry IV*.

He instructed Frank Sinatra in the drumming sequences for *The Man With The Golden Arm*, and other film credits include *The Five Pennies* in 1958 and *The Gene Krupa Story* in 1959. From 1960 to 1972 Manne operated his own nightclub, Shelly's Manne-Hole, in Hollywood. Although he performed there with his own groups as often as his busy schedule permitted, the club was host to almost every combo and big band that came through Hollywood during that time, frequently featuring other inspirational drummers such as Tony Williams and Elvin Jones.

Regarding Manne's style and versatility in the studio, L.A. studio percussionist Emil Richards recalls that, "Shelly played music - not drums. He was an innovator on the skins and introduced many avant-garde instruments or sounds, such as the waterphone or putting rice on a drumhead, into the

recording studios. He was the liveliest, funniest, most wonderful person to be around."

Los Angeles studio percussionist Joe Porcaro recalls that, "Shelly was the wittiest person. He was always a joy to be around. When I first went out to L.A., I played with Chet Baker at Shelly's Manne-Hole. Shelly knew I was new in town, and was very kind to me. He was such a giving person that he helped me get work in the studios on his *Daktari* series and then on the movie *Sweet Charity*."

Manne continued to be active on the studio scene until his death in 1984, receiving numerous awards including the Los Angeles Chapter of NARAS Most Valuable Player in 1980 and 1983. Just before his death, Manne was honored by Los Angeles mayor Tom Bradley and the Hollywood Arts Council when they declared September 9, 1984 as Shelly Manne Day. Other awards include over thirty presentations from *Down Beat* magazine, *Metronome* magazine, *Playboy* magazine and *Melody Maker* magazine polls, as well as three Grammy nominations.

During his career he recorded in almost every type of music conceivable, from the combos of the swing era to the first albums by Ornette Coleman, as well as with such artists as Oliver Nelson, Mahalia Jackson, the L.A. 4, and film scores by Jerry Goldsmith.

Recordings of Manne's own groups can be found on Contemporary Records, Capitol Records, Atlantic Records, Impulse, Mainstream and Flying Dutchman Records, as well as other international labels. Those who want to know more about the wonderful music and life of Shelly Manne might look for a biography, *Sounds of the Different Drummer*, written by Jack Brand and published by Percussion Express, or visit the exhibit of his instruments that was graciously donated to the PAS Museum in Lawton, Oklahoma by Florence "Flip" Manne.

A (VERY) Abbreviated Discography

Shelly has THOUSANDS of recordings with his name on them, including scores of TV, movie, and radio credits. Here are just a few.

- Goodbye For Bill Evans** 1981
- Double Piano Jazz Quartet at Carmelo's, Vol. 1** 1980
- Double Piano Jazz Quartet at Carmelo's, Vol. 2** 1980
- Gemini Three** 1978
- Perk Up** 1977
- Outside** 1969
- Daktari** 1967
- Jazz Gunn** 1967
- Shelly Manne & Co.** 1967
- Boss Sounds** 1965
- Manne That's Gershwin** 1965
- My Fair Lady With the Un-Original Cast** 1964
- My Son the Jazz Drummer** 1962
- 2-3-4** 1962
- Checkmate** 1961
- At the Manne-Hole, Vol. 2** 1961
- At the Manne-Hole, Vol. 1** 1961
- The Proper Time** 1959
- At the Blackhawk, Vol. 3** 1959
- At the Blackhawk, Vol. 5** 1959
- At the Blackhawk, Vols. 1-5** 1959
- At the Blackhawk, Vol. 2** 1959
- At the Blackhawk, Vol. 4** 1959
- Son of Gunn!!** 1959
- Shelly Manne & His Men Play Peter Gunn** 1959

- Bells Are Ringing** 1958
- Lil' Abner** 1957
- The Gambit** 1957
- My Fair Lady** 1956
- More Swinging Sounds** 1956
- Shelly Manne, Vol. 4: Swinging Sounds** 1956
- Vol. 4: Swinging Sounds** 1956
- The West Coast Sound, Vol. 1** 1953
- Deep People** 1951