



# Palm Wine Boys

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*"Listening to their music is like taking a tropical vacation." - San Jose Mercury News*

West African palm wine music and American folk and blues all come together to make up the mellow rhythmic sound of the **Palm Wine Boys**. Palm wine music is West African roots music. Like folk and blues, the roots music of North America, it is the music of the township and village; "an expression of the day-to-day life of ordinary people, the music of their hearts. It tells of their joys, their sorrows, their pleasures and their displeasures" said the late S.E. Rogie, one of the great innovators of the genre. The **Palm Wine Boys** fuse the lyrical sensibilities of folk and blues with the guitar lines and rhythms of palm wine music to create a new form. They play innovative world roots music.

*The rich vocal harmonizing, combined with intricate guitar interplay and lilting rhythms make Palm Wine Boys a fresh, warm breeze in the increasingly stale 'world music' atmosphere - Larry Kelp, KPFA*

Their recently released second album, *Up & Down*, their first for Oakland, CA based indie folk label Wildplum Recordings, will remind many of early highlife or acoustic calypso with its lilting melodies, irresistible bouncy rhythms, and playful lyrics. On the playful side, there's the opening lines of the title track: "Oh my lover she's like a hollow tree, you find comfort in the shade, even through its full of bees." Being folk music, it has a serious side also. For example, *Its Important*, which Richard Linley, the band's primary writer, sang at his mother's funeral: "for all those who have come before us, they are the stepping stones on which we stand, they are the one who cleared the path through the forest, and its important to remember them." The new CD features four part harmonies, the dual intertwining guitars of palm wine music, strong bass lines, occasional flute, and various African hand percussion throughout.

*Playing out of my little computer speakers was this music that made me stare off out my window into the clouds and smile. I called everyone in the house into my room and we all smiled. - Judy Wolf, edificewrecked.com*

Palm wine music is a West African style of guitar music, mainly from the countries of Sierra Leone, Ghana and Nigeria. It dates back to the days when Portuguese sailors introduced guitars to West Africa. Early African guitarists played at gatherings where revelers drank palm wine, the naturally fermented sap juice of the oil palm. Their influence can be heard in both highlife and soukous guitar players. In its pure form, palm wine music is mostly acoustic played on a couple of guitars and accompanied by percussion. The late S.E. Rogie, the "Golden Voice of Sierra Leone", is the godfather of modern palm wine music. In the 1950s and 60s, he introduced electric guitars to the traditional acoustic guitar/percussion palm wine configuration. This subtle mix of acoustic and electric guitar reinvigorated palm wine music and it experienced a resurgence in popularity that took palm wine music beyond the shores of its native West Africa. In the 1980s, Rogie lived in Oakland, CA. It was there that Richard Linley, founder of the **Palm**

**Wine Boys**, learned the style from the master himself. "It completely changed my life", Linley says of his experience playing with Rogie. "I was just really, really searching for a way to express the music I loved; the African music and the folk music together. I'd never heard them played and mixed before even though that's essentially what I was searching for. What I had heard of, of African music, was the highlife, soukous, township jive, all dance type of music, which is great, I love it. What seemed to be going unfulfilled was the ignoring of the songwriting part of myself; my folk roots. I didn't know how to mix the two and hearing him was like 'wow'...he was doing what I felt inside."

*Combining elements of highlife and acoustic folk, this group calls to mind all that is wonderful about African music: Hope, history, and a bit of joyful tipsiness. - Metro Santa Cruz*

Linley formed **Palm Wine Boys** in 2002 when he teamed up with Tom Chandler and Q.B. Williams, former band mates in the world beat group Mud Hut. Linley, a guitarist, is a student of Indian as well as African music. He was formerly co-director of Vukani Mawethu, a choir singing South African freedom songs. Chandler, a 1992 graduate of the Berklee College of Music, played heavy metal as a teenager -but has moved on. Today he is an accomplished oud (Arabic lute) player and jazz guitarist. He has studied with Nubian master Hamza El Din, performed throughout the Western U.S. with Turkish musician Latif Bolat, and performs and composes for the medieval fusion group Heliotrope. Percussionist Williams is a composer for stage plays, TV, radio and film. He has a background in R&B and was an original member of the popular accapella group Street Sounds.

The original trio later expanded to include jazz and world music bassist Eliyahu Sills. Sills attended the New School of Jazz, in New York City, where he learned at the feet of three masters: Reggie Workman, Arnie Lawrence, and the late Makanda Ken McIntyre. He is a student of music from the Middle East and India, and is an amazing flutist as well. He is passionate about music education and divides his time between performance and teaching. "The diversity we all have and all of our points of view with one common goal is what really adds to the chemistry" notes band leader Linley. "It's what makes what we do the 'palm wine' style; we just add our own little twist."

The **Palm Wine Boys** play music of gentle conviviality, soaked in the confidential fluids of the small hours, back country places, front porches, village shade trees, moonshine, and, of course, palm wine. Starting with the roots of both North American and West Africa music, they create music which is simultaneously tranquil and yearning; both invigorating and contemplative. With their intertwining guitars, simple catchy rhythms, and harmonizing voices, this is a group that entices the listener to sit back and enjoy while letting their feet tap on the floor.

*So sweet -- you just have to hear them! - Kevin Vance, KALW*