

MOLLYWOP!

PRESS QUOTES

What inspired you to start Mollywop?

"Listening to the album "Distant Cousins" by Nas and Damien Marley got me thinking about mixing genres. I had played in reggae bands for years, and I continue to love reggae, but I was missing the funk and rock of my younger years. I also love conscious hip-hop. I wanted a band that included all those genres of music."

How did you come to select the members of Mollywop?

"Ayodele Bakari, the leader of Mollywop!'s vocal section, and I have collaborated for the past 20 years. He's one of the best singers I've ever heard. Music is in his blood and bones. In the 1980s he sang with the famed Dramatics. He brings to the band both deeply soulful vocals and an incredible ear for harmony. I play guitar in the group he leads, Afrika I.S.O.M. (In Service of Maat). We share not only a love for music but also a wavering commitment to the upliftment of our people. He has written countless songs encouraging Black people to embrace our culture and history. He was a natural choice early on in the formation of the band.

I knew drummer Aisha Ellis through the African drum and dance community. She's an excellent dancer and plays djembe and dunun drums. I had heard she also played the drum set and began talking to her about playing on some tracks. She invited me to a performance of an all-woman band she was playing with and I was blown away by her power! I wanted to make sure that we had gender balance in Mollywop!. She was the natural choice to be the band's drummer and has been with the band since day one. She, in fact, introduced me to the word mollywop, which became the band's name. In addition to playing music together we grow organic produce together at D-Town Farm.

I first became aware of Mollywop! Bassist Ufuoma Akili in the early 1970s when he was playing trumpet for an incredible band called Energy MC2. He later started playing bass, and we crossed paths many times via musicians we mutually knew and played with in Detroit's reggae scene. I wanted a bassist for Mollywop! who could hold down solid reggae grooves but also was a master of funk, rock and the other genres that I envisioned the band playing. He also has taught bass and guitar at a local music store for years, and has a great grip on music theory and has an impeccable ear. He was my first and only choice to be Mollywop!'s bassist.

King Mellow Man comes from a musical family. His father sang with the Majestics and the Contours. I knew his mother, Sister Dee (R.I.P.), years before I met Mellow. When he was a just teenager, she told me about her son who was doing music. It was clear from the first time I heard him that he was extremely gifted. Mellowman and I have played together in various reggae bands for the past 30 years, including Akoben Reggae Band and the Nomads. He is an underrated vocalist and multi-instrumentalist who is well versed in history of reggae, soul and funk. He actually replaced Mollywop!'s original keyboard player. He leads his own band Mellow Runnings.

I first became aware of vocalist Simone Winter on social media. After hearing her sing on some of her Facebook posts, I reached out to her about collaborating. When I eventually met her, I found out that she knew my son, emcee Money Wellz. She came to Mollywop!'s first performance in 2014, and soon after, agreed to join the band. Simone is an incredibly talented vocalist and dancer. She recently graduated from Wayne State University with a degree in music. She is growing into her own as an artist and is someone to keep an eye on. In addition to being a pillar in Mollywop!, she also performs with some of Detroit's most talented musicians including Nadir Omowale and Stephanie Christian. In addition to her artistic pursuits, Simone recently started teaching yoga. She is the youngest member of the band.

Solar Liquid was a parent at Nsoroma Institute, the African-centered school that I led for many years. After I had left my position as director of the school but was still coming for a few hours each day to help with the transition, Solar had been hired to paint a mural in the

school's aquaponics lab, which was directly across from the office that I worked out of. Everyday I heard him singing as he painted. His great singing and passion impressed me, One day I approached him and asked him to come by the house to sing on a track. He did a great job and this was around the time that I was forming Mollywop! It was a natural to ask him to be in the band. In addition to his vocal skills, he's a talented artist and we work together at D-Town Farm.

In 2015, Mollywop! was playing in downtown Detroit. As we were playing, a young woman approached the stage and asked to come join us for a song. We all kind of looked at each other, and I finally I signaled for her to come join us. She rocked the stage! After the show, I asked her for her name and contact info. She said she was Isis Damil. I called her the next day, and asked her to come Mollywop!'s rehearsal later that week. She has performed with us since that time. Isis Damil is a vocal powerhouse! She comes from a musical family. Her father Zion Israel is an awesome multi-genre keyboardist, who often performs with Mollywop! Isis is comfortable singing jazz, R&B, rock, reggae and gospel. She has a burgeoning solo career, having released one album and performing frequently around Detroit. She is on her way to stardom!

GMAC is an extraordinary emcee. I met him through my son Money Wellz who was married to his cousin. GMAC is a talented rhyme-smith and producer who writes conscious lyrics that reflect his knowledge of street culture and Black power politics. He has mastered several lyrical flows including being able to rap in 3/4 time. He is known for his rapid-fire delivery. He has performed with the band since 2015 and sometimes opens for Mollywop! performing tracks from his self released albums. He is a serious community activist who organizes programs for youth and adults that teach African and African American history and cultural concepts.

In addition to the band's current core members:

Venus Sky is a talented vocalist who often performs with the band, in between fulfilling her sacred duties as a wife and mother. She is comfortable singing lead or background vocals. Her voice brings a sweet mellowness to our recordings and live performances.

Money Wellz is my oldest son. He is a talented emcee and producer who periodically performs with the band on live performances and recordings. He leads the hip-hop collective Power Movement.

In addition to their talents, all the members of Mollywop! share a sense of spirituality, a commitment to health and desire to improve the condition of our community.”

What are your visions for the band Mollywop as the manager and founder?

“We'd love to see this upcoming album be well received. We'd like to perform on international stages. We'd like to get back in the studio to record some of the new tunes.”