

**The Lion Sleeps Tonight** An African doo wop song popularized by the Tokens. Number 1 in 1961.

(Girls) Eeeeeeee o we mo weh, Weeeeeee o we mo weh

(Boys) Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah Wi mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah Wi mo weh,(2x)

(All) In the jungle the mighty jungle the lion sleeps tonight,

In the jungle the quiet jungle the lion sleeps tonight

(Girls) Eeeeeeee o we mo weh, Eeeeeeee o we mo weh

(All) Near the village the peaceful village the lion sleeps tonight

Near the village the quiet village the lion sleeps tonight,

(Girls) Eeeeeeee o we mo weh, Eeeeeeee o we mo weh

(Boys) Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah Wi mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah we mo weh, Ah Wi mo weh, (boys continue till end)

(Girls) Weeeeeee o we mo weh

## History of “The Lion Sleeps Tonight”

Excerpted from “Behind the Hits” by Bob Shannon

This is the story of an African doo-wop song. Its original title was “Mbube,” (pronounced EEM-boo-beh) which means “Lion,” and it was sung with a haunting Zulu refrain that sounded, to English-speaking people, like “wimoweh.” “Mbube” was a big hit in what is now Swaziland; it sold nearly 100,000 copies in the 1940s by its originator, South African Solomon Linda. Linda had written it based on a boyhood experience chasing lions that were stalking the family's cattle, and recorded the tune in 1939 with his group the Evening Birds. It was so popular that Zulu choral music became known as “Mbube Music”.

Then it passed into the broad field of “folk” music, albeit by an indirect route. The South African recording company sent it along with some other 78s to Decca Records in the U.S. Decca wasn't interested, but folk historian and musicologist Alan Lomax was. He took the records to Pete Seeger, of the American folk group the Weavers. Seeger was enchanted by “Mbube”, especially the refrain which sounded to him like “awimbooe” or “awimoweh” (it was actually “uyimbube” in Zulu). The Weavers (led by Gordon Jenkins' Orchestra) adapted it into a Top 15 hit in 1952, as “Wimoweh”. It was basically an instrumental with the group singing “wimoweh” over and over, with other vocal flourishes. The tune really took off in the Weavers' live version at Carnegie Hall in 1957. Linda was not credited as the writer; that honor went to “Paul Campbell”, a pseudonym for the group.

The doo wop group, The Tokens recorded it as the B side to their single in 1961 and when a disc jockey discovered it, it became a number one hit song.

