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Following their fathers' leads

By Danielle Capalbo

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Jazz guitarist Julian Coryell says he's simply in the family business.

"My other friends - their fathers worked for corporations, or maybe they were lawyers. Things like that," he said. "Then my dad was this thing. This entity. This musical force."

It's no exaggeration: Larry Coryell was a jazz fusion pioneer. That feat, by his own accounts, was incidental, the inevitable byproduct, perhaps, of an uninhibited musician in the '60s absorbing everything - from Django Reinhardt and Charlie Christian to contemporaries like Chico Hamilton and Miles Davis - and then playing electric guitar any way it felt right.

His son has a similar ethos.

At 35, Julian Coryell isn't concerned with the trappings of being a musician. Just with the music itself. That's why he formed a second-generation jazz-funk trio in late 2007, knowing it might draw attention from skeptics and cynics. The name - the Coryell, Auger, Sample Trio - will set off bells for jazz heads. Drummer Karma Auger's father (keyboardist Brian Auger, known as the "godfather of acid rock" in England, according to his son) and bassist Nicklas Sample's father (pianist/composer Joe Sample, who played with



B.B. King and Miles Davis) were both part of Larry Coryell's unofficial jazz-and-funk fraternity.

"We discussed the possible negative backlash that might come from having a band where every member was the descendant of a famous jazz musician," Coryell says. "We just didn't really care."

Each member of the trio, which plays at Johnny D's tonight, has his own style - regardless of his lineage, says Karma Auger, 38. "We're not our dads," he says. "They are them, we are us, and it's different. You can say, you know, 'I heard Julian; he just played this one thing that's totally his dad's influence.' But you'll also hear Jimi Hendrix in there."

A smorgasbord of musical influences guided a young Coryell toward rock and pop, but, oddly, not jazz - a genre that was an essential part of his DNA. Similarly, he had hopped from piano to drums and violin but avoided guitar. "There was no way I was trying to take on the gravity of what my father was doing, especially when he was really in the prime of his physical prowess as a

musician," he says. "At a certain point, when I was about 15, I realized everything up until that moment was sort of beating around the bush to get at what was really going on: I'm a guitar player. I have to deal with it."

He'd been playing guitar for less than six months when Coryell's father threw him in a room with Herbie Hancock. "Go jam," Coryell recalls him saying. A few years later, he and Dave Brubeck were hashing out "Take Five" onstage.

Fast forward to the summer of 2007, when Coryell met Karma Auger at a gig in San Diego. "We felt this wonderful, easy connection," he says, "and I realized, this is a person who, for better or worse, was stuck being a member of this bizarre club."

After a few prolific sessions, they folded Sample into the mix, and last year the trio released its debut full-length, "Coolidge Returns!" Their sophomore effort, cut in just three days, is slated for release this year.

"When we were kids, we took for granted this type of music in its proper form," he says. "One of the wrongs we feel responsible to right is that the music our fathers pioneered morphed into something completely off-base from their intention. . . . We never realized that as adults we'd actually play some part in having to keep it alive."

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THE CORYELL, AUGER, SAMPLE TRIO
performs at Johnny D's tonight. Doors at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$12 at the door. 617-776-9667,
www.johnnyds.com