Pop Talk: Don't believe everything you read about the Lynam family tree

by Nick Rogers

A sound that "can't be classified." Mangled metaphors comparing the music to trains barreling down iced-over lakes into your brain. Boilerplate sentiment that really, truly is B.S.

Band bios are stupid, repetitive and conjured up for nearly every band.

Thankfully, Jacob Lynam took the history of his rock band, Lynam, into his own creative hands.

LYNAM - Jacob, left, and Mark, center, adopted the last name of David Lynam, right, for band-mythology purposes. CNS Photo.

On behalf of brothers Mark (bass) and David (drums), the guitarist-vocalist frontman told the tale of their father, Ronnie Lynam - stage name Ronnie James Dio, who, after joining Black Sabbath, shared one rowdy rock 'n' roll night with Stevie Nicks, then of Fleetwood Mac.

When Dio and Nicks reunited eight months later, Nicks was pregnant with Mark. This secret rock 'n' roll relationship saw two more years and two more children. Once their busy careers took their toll, Nicks and Dio placed Jacob, Mark and David in foster care in Birmingham, Ala.

It wasn't until 2001 that the brothers found each other and, with a shared love of music, formed Lynam, combining thick patches of guitar-drenched arena rock with small blades of bluegrass. Sounds like this band that's comfortable sounding like OK Go, Mark O'Connor and Puddle of Mudd really is an amazingly hidden rock 'n' roll story.

So how did they reconnect with Mom? Jacob persuaded his girlfriend, Dixie Chick Natalie Maines, to record a cover of "Landslide." And Dad? He's busy in Middle Earth slaying dragons.

"I wanted to show people we're not so serious all the time," Jacob says. "But it's come back and bit us on the butt with people thinking it was true."

The worst instance came when a festival promoter in Maine used Lynam's "lineage" in ads for their performance and found out, once they'd arrived, that it was but a fable.

"He was super-nice and paid us more than we'd agreed to, but said we couldn't tell anyone that that wasn't the case," Jacob says. "I never in a million years thought somebody would actually believe it, but people say all the time I look like my mom. Stevie Nicks was 4 foot 11. Dio was, like, 5 foot 3. We're all more than 6 feet tall. If we were their kids, we would all be very, very short."

Height doesn't run in their family, either. No surprise here - they're not siblings. The only legal Lynam is David, and the rest adopted it a la the Ramones. So why his surname?

"When we started, David was a terrible drummer and if we named the band after him, he'd have no choice but to get better unless he wanted to drag his family name through the mud," Jacob says.

Lynam is serious about one thing - returning to the style of rock that welcomed ringleaders, not shoegazers. Jacob says it's being ushered back in fashion by Hinder, a band they've opened for.

"Honestly, for so long, I felt like most people my age didn't remember a band before Alice in Chains or Nirvana," Jacob says. "Some of the people in those types of bands looked like they'd just walked in from mowing the lawn, and in between songs would talk about how the world sucks. Now it seems like bands finally are putting on shows again and people are starting to have fun."

Lynam's influences are as far-flung as Ricky Skaggs (the bluegrass breakdown on "White Trash Superstar") and Yngwie Malmsteen (for Jacob's speedy guitar shredding). "The Party Starts Now," a "kind-of-joke" rap song, even ended up in Fox's 2004 children's action film "Catch That Kid."

Jacob adds that the trio is into the complexity of Steely Dan and the "passion and lyrics of truthful music" like Americana. It's his hope that Lynam won't be "one of the 10 million bands that sound a little different, but nobody cares about."

"I definitely feel like people are being a little more open-minded because everything's starting to sound the same again," Lynam says. "We definitely hope to have that crossover song at some point. Maybe it's on this record. Maybe it's on the next record. But it's definitely coming back around to the big choruses and the big guitars."

Of course, Nirvana's music is better than Winger's, but we're about having a good time and want to bring that fun element back. It's why we're so passionate about the '80s. Everyone just seemed happier."

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