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ARLEN REDEKOP/PNG

Robert Ward always had time for music and now his son, David, makes a living as a singer, musician and songwriter. They are shown at Robert's law office in downtown Vancouver.

## MUSIC

# FATHER ENCOURAGED HIS SON'S love of music

Lawyer Robert Ward passed on a passion for hot licks to son David

**JASON MOTZ**  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

*Fathers, do not exasperate your children ... bring them up in the training and instruction of rock 'n' roll.*

— (inspired by) Ephesians 6:4

Some sons are gifted with a genetic predisposition for male pattern baldness, heartburn or, most tragic, an insensible passion for the Canucks. Not David Ward. His father, Robert, gave him an early education in rock 'n' roll, a relationship that prevails today in the lives of both, and in David's case, has become his career.

David, 31, is one of Vancouver's most promising and gifted musicians, a songwriter and song interpreter of extreme felicity. He has crafted a soulful-but-mystical sound unlike any of his peers. 2014 has been busy for David: tours of Canada and the United Kingdom, replete with critical raves from noted publications Mojo and Uncut, and the release of his second album (Golden Future Time), have led to a slew of jazz festival bookings in Vancouver and Victoria later this month.

From an early age, Robert home-schooled his kids in music — and not just rock.

"I played what I wanted to listen to and if they didn't like it they could go to their room. I didn't care," Robert,

70, says with a fatherly smirk on his face. Father Ward would hold his rock 'n' roll duty (a basic diet of Stones, Beatles and CCR) but would add Glenn Miller and The Phantom of the Opera to the mix.

The Ward household was a musical one. Mother Kathi would hold baby David while dancing around the house to a Mickey's Disco record or Michael Jackson. A handy man, Robert spent his downtime building stereo equipment as a hobby, littering the house with ongoing projects and a steady stream of music.

Robert chaperoned David to his first concert, a literal baptism of rock 'n' roll: Little Richard.

"They passed out bibles by the end of the concert," says Robert with bemused reflection. "He was a preacher by then." Neither remembers much more about the gig itself.

And together they have seen so many gigs they cannot even agree

which was first: Was it the Steel Wheels or The Voodoo Lounge tour? This is not the typical father-son dispute. This background would suggest that David's foray into the arts was preordained. But for his part, David isn't so sure.

"That's impossible to say. I mean, is it in you regardless of your environment? I don't know."

There is no relationship in the life of a man as that with his father. Fraught with the complexities of tradition and the constraints of expectation, each father-son relationship is further challenged by generational divide. But one only needs to spend an evening with the Wards to see they have had no such trouble. In conversation, the Wards exude a comfort and ease that many families would find enviable. There is none of the expected hierarchical formalities between the two men. And they both seem utterly charmed by their counterpart. Robert dispels the notion that there is anything unusual about his relationship with his son. It's simple, really: "David and I were always friends," Robert says.

David's seriousness as a musician and the extent of Robert's encouragement can be noted in a timeline of guitar ownership. First was a cheap, no-name electric guitar David acquired when he was 13 and just messing around with a saxophone.

"I remember waiting until I thought you were serious (about

**"I played what I wanted to listen to and if they didn't like it they could go to their room. I didn't care."**

**ROBERT WARD**  
MUSICIAN'S FATHER

music), and then when I saw you were, I thought, yeah, it'd be worthwhile getting you that guitar," Robert reminisces. Guitar No. 2 was the first special one.

"My dad walked into a store and because he's a big Rolling Stones fan, he just said, 'What does Keith Richards play?' And that's why I play a telly (Telecaster)," David adds.

The memory inspires a boisterous laugh, a kind of acknowledgment dads are prone to doing cool things for their sons.

Robert, a lawyer who practices commercial litigation, picked up David's third, a Fender acoustic, from Ward Music, no relation but an old client.

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