

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT



ACADEMIC OF MUSIC: Professor Louie, left, with his band The Crowmatix

Louie was in a jam after Brooklyn move

WOODSTOCK automatically conjures up images of the infamous 1969 festival which promoted three days of peace and music.

But the New York town is also home to Aaron Louis Hurwitz — better known as Professor Louie.

Despite the pseudonym, he is no scientist nor chemist, more an academic of music.

Louie — who has worked extensively with Bob Dylan's former backing group The Band, as a performer, engineer and producer — plays a variety of instruments with his own band, Professor Louie and The Crowmatix.

"I started playing duo shows with (The Band's) Rick Danko and he just started calling me Professor Louie on stage," he said.

Louie, who is of Russian and German descent, said: "A lot of musicians have nicknames, think of The Duke or 'Robbie' Robertson.

"I was proud to have a fellow musician give me a moniker."

Born in 1960 in the New York town of Peekskill, Louie's big break came in

I was really curious about gospel music

his early 20s when he started touring America with The Mighty Gospel Giants Of Brooklyn.

He recalled: "Peekskill was a really ethnic town, it was full of large black, Jewish and Catholic families.

"The synagogue I went to was across the road from a Baptist church. Everyone got on great and it was a really tolerant place."

Louie is in no doubt that his home town stood him in good stead for a career in music. He explained: "It was a really artistic and musical place.

"The schools had great music departments and I remember a teacher called Winnie Corozine who used to run music summer sessions for kids.

"At night there would be performances by jazz bands, choirs and orchestras. It all added up to give me a good background."

After moving to Brooklyn, Louie attended the Manhattan School of Music for a short time. Brooklyn, he explained, was full of musicians and lots of them lived in loft apartments.

"We would start jamming at 3am and go on all night, it became like a rehearsal space for groups like The Mighty Gospel Giants Of Brooklyn," he recalled.

He later joined up with the group out touring the organ.

Louie said: "They welcomed me with open arms, I was going places no white person had ever been.

"I was really curious about gospel music.

BY SIMON YAFFE

"It is well known that rock 'n' roll had come from gospel and blues and I wanted to experience the genre for myself. It was a fantastic time."

Louie also continued to study music and perfect his abilities.

He said: "The music scene was becoming less enticing, but the studios were advancing technologically.

"Various bands began to hire me to work with them in the studio."

His lucky break came when friend Artie Traum, who had spent time as Dylan's bass player, recommended him to Garth Hudson, keyboardist with The Band.

They had split up years previously, but reformed around the time Louie became involved.

He went on to co-produce, engineer and perform on many of The Band's albums, including *High on the Hog*, *Jubilation* and *Jericho*.

Louie continued: "I was quite happy to stay behind the scenes in the studio.

"Honestly, I was happy to help in any way I could, I am a team player. The Band already had great pianists, so they did not need me in that way.

But the performing bug soon bit him again and he formed the Crowmatix in 2001.

Fellow band member Marie Spinosa and Louie are married and have been together for 25 years.

They have recorded seven studio CDs, two live CDs and their live concert CD, *The Spirit of Woodstock*, was recorded at The New York State Museum to celebrate the anniversary of the festival.

The Crowmatix's new album *Whispering Pines* is released on Tuesday.

The title track is a cover of The Band's hit and it also includes covers of two other Band classics, *The Weight* and *Ain't No More Cane*.

Louie and the group also perform their original song *Melody of Peace* with The Prague Radio Symphony.

For the last four years, he has been to the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, where he has taught English through singing to students.

A documentary of his experiences in Russia, *Woodstock-Siberia Blues Express*, has been featured at 2007 Woodstock Film Festival and The International Maine Film Festival.

Louie said: "ML Liebler, a guy I know who teaches at Wayne State University in Michigan, runs an exchange programme with Russian students.

"He was asked by Eduard Shwartz, a Russian Jewish entrepreneur if he knew anyone who would go to Siberia to teach blues and jazz.

"I met Eduard in New York and we got on really well. I was to Novosibirsk has been a great experience.

"It used to be the capital of the gulags, but is quite a modern place now."

www.professorlouie.com

Axeman Bruce spend 12 years

Mike Cohen meets a guitar hero with a stunning CV

BRUCE Kulick has never legally changed his name to 'Former Kiss Guitarist Bruce Kulick'.

Yet it seems that every magazine feels obligated to call him that.

But Bruce, who was with the rock legends for 12 years from 1984 to 1996, is quite happy with the moniker.

"I'm really proud of my 12 years in Kiss," Bruce told me. "How many people do I know who are very talented, who worked on their careers, but don't have a name as big as Kiss on their resume."

Bruce — who released his third solo album BK3 last month — took his first steps on the road to stardom when he starting playing the guitar aged around 10.

He was spurred on after being mesmerised by The Beatles appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show on February 9, 1964 — the most-watched programme in TV history to that point.

"I think my brother Bob was already playing guitar so it gave me more ambition to go ahead and grab his guitar and play it," Bruce said.

"Early on I recognised I had some easy ability on it which was fun and my friends were very encouraging."

The 53-year-old added: "There was always music in my family. Less my parents, more my cousins who played piano and violin. My mother claimed to have sang and my father played the trumpet, but I didn't see them so it wasn't like there were musicians hanging around the house.

Asked to do ghost work on Animalize

"I had some stars in my eyes, but it wasn't like my only ambition was to meet girls and be on stage. The guitar seemed to be a safe hobby.

"I could connect with it. That's why I always encourage people, even if not making a career of it, but enjoying what it is to sit playing an instrument. It's very healthy for people."

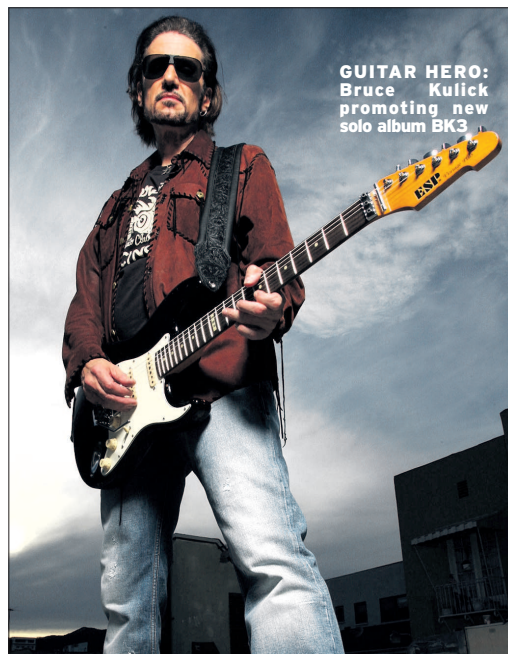
As Bruce was a big fan of Cream bassist Jack Bruce, he learned the bass guitar which "improved the strength in my fingers".

He added: "I realised I was a better guitarist than the guitarist in some of the bands I was in. I kept moving forward that way.

"I went through high school knowing I was playing well enough that people would respect me that way, but not knowing it would be a career.

"I didn't have a clue what I would major in — friends told me music so I said 'guess so'.

"I signed up for Queen's College. I did a year-and-a-half and got offers to travel. I was playing in covers bands and wound up touring Europe in a



GUITAR HERO: Bruce Kulick promoting new solo album BK3

disco band.

"I was starting the long journey of touring and playing guitar for people."

But Bruce's heart was always in rock.

He said: "Bob got an audition for Meatloaf and they were looking for two guitarists. He was very adamant it should be both of us.

"We had role models of Dick Wagner and Steve Hunter, who worked with Lou Reed and Alice Cooper — that's how Bob saw us.

"I learned Todd Rundgren's parts for the Bat out of Hell tour in 1977-78."

Brooklyn-based Bruce was in the band Blackjack with Michael Bolton, releasing two albums, *Blackjack* (1979) and *Worlds Apart* (1980).

He also featured on Billy Squier's 1980 album *Tale of the Tape* and *Great American Music* in 1981 with The Good Rats.

In 1983, he appeared on Bolton's self-titled solo album and his 1985 release *Everybody's Crazy*.

A year before the release of Bolton's second album, Bruce's life was to change as he landed the gig of Kiss' lead guitarist. Kiss were formed by Israeli Gene Simmons (Chaim Witz) and New York Jew Paul Stanley (Stanley Eisen) in 1973 with Ace Frehley on lead guitar and drummer Peter Criss.

But Frehley left in 1982 first being replaced by Vinnie Vincent ("he couldn't work out the business angle with Gene and Paul," Bruce said) and then Mark St John ("young hot shot guitar player from LA").

Bruce revealed: "I never thought Mark was right for the band. I remember reading about it and just reading his influences and thinking why did they hire him."

But St John, who died in 2007 from a cerebral haemorrhage, was diagnosed with Reiter's Syndrome — a form of arthritis. "Next thing I know, as my brother had done before, I was asked to do some ghost

guitar work for the album *Animalize* in 1984.

"I was starting the long journey of touring and playing guitar for people." "And Paul said to me 'don't cut your hair'. Now, I didn't know why. My hair was shoulder-length at the time. I didn't realise that they knew that Mark wouldn't be well enough for the European tour they were planning.

"So then I'm filling in first for two to six weeks, then it turned into 12 years.

"There was never the big announcement that I was the guitarist. (British rock magazine) *Kerrang* listed me and showed a picture of me from my Blackjack days with a moustache which said I would be filling in for Mark.

"But in the States I wasn't the official new player yet. For business reasons they gave Mark a chance. He even came out on tour with us for a few weeks.

"I treated it really positively. As much as I knew I was the better guy for the job, I wasn't going to make life hard for him. We used to jam backstage. I think he tried a little too hard.

"I had the home base advantage with gigging with them for six weeks in Europe. That was my official start of being in Kiss."

Bruce revealed that the original four members were partners, adding: "You are paid very well, but you are not a partner of the band. Businesswise I get it, but when you look at the big picture, you think sometimes, 'wow wouldn't it be great if they did this and that'.

"And, then again, you look at it like, 'I wasn't there at the start, I didn't create this thing' so it wasn't something I was really upset about.

"In the sense of being put out there on the record covers, touring together, you are all band members."

Before Bruce joined Kiss, they were one of the biggest bands in the world and their stage show was legendary.

They made their first