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## Professor Louie and The Crowmatrix

### Wings On Fire

*Woodstock Records*[Archive](#)

When Professor Louie and The Crowmatrix tagged their new *Wings On Fire* album as being dedicated to “our Musical Mentors, Levon Helm & Rick Danko” they weren’t just dropping names. No, the good Professor and his friends are well-rooted in the same rich Woodstock earth that The Band thrived on – and that Levon Helm returned to for the glorious final act of his life. It’s been their home turf for many dues-paying years. Professor Louie and The Crowmatrix wear their Woodstock musical hearts proudly on their sleeves on *Wings On Fire* – playing their way though a collection of tunes that reflect the area’s musical soul.

Right out of the chute, the band sets things up with the goodtime piano stomp of “Down At The County”, complete with a one-elbow-on-the-bar sing-along chorus. By the time they leave you smiling and feeling a bit wistful 13 songs later with a cover of “4% Pantomime” (originally recorded by The Band and Van Morrison) to close out the album, you’ll feel like you’ve been places with Professor Louie and The Crowmatrix – in the nicest of ways. In the course of doing what they do, the band just naturally doles out essences of familiar vibes: “Uncommon Love” (featuring an appearance by New Rider Michael Falzarano on guitar) rocks and grinds like Los Lobos at their grittiest and greasiest while the Crowmatrix’ Miss Marie leads the way through “Top Of The World” like a modern-day Martha Reeves (Vandellas and all). The goofiness of the lyrics of “High Tech Wreck” – penned by the Professor, Miss Marie, and Ed Sanders of The Fugs – is complemented by the tune’s joyous N’awlins groove; George Jones’ “Color Of The Blues” is infused with *Big Pink* -ish soul, from the thick piano/accordion underpinnings to the multi-tiered vocals; and the acoustic “A Book Faded Brown” (originally recorded on The Band’s *Jubilation*) is as fine a tribute to Rick Danko as you could find.

Brace yourself for “Time Moves On”, an original tune that eases in on the shoulders of a cool Muscle Shoals-style rhythm laid down by bassist Frank Campbell and drummer Gary Burke. “Don’t have a thing if I don’t have you,” sing Professor Louie and Miss Marie, their voices doing a funky slow dance with each other. Guitarist Josh Colow completes the picture with luscious dollops of soulful fills throughout the tune; when he lets go with a blast of psychedelic blues at just over the 3-minute mark – *have mercy!* – it’s pure picking porn for the masses. (Colow’s playing all through the album is killer: no grandstanding – just moments of brilliance that’ll have you reaching for the “rewind” button, wanting to sop it up.)

Veteran players who are not only good at what they do; they sound like they’re having a hell of a time doing it – that would be

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Professor Louie and The Crowmatrix. And the sweet grooves of *Wings On Fire* are a fine document of that very fact.

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