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by [Glenn H Roth](#)

Professor Louie and the Legacy of Rick and Levon

Aaron Louis Hurwitz arrived in Woodstock, New York, the same time Levon Helm decided to reform the legendary Band. During a recording session, Hurwitz impressed Helm with his engineering and producing skills. And from that day on, Hurwitz became a member of The Band organization, which in its second go-round lasted from 1983 to 1999. The first incarnation of The Band existed from 1964 to 1976.

Hurwitz, who would be given the nickname of Professor Louie by Rick Danko, co-produced, engineered, played and sang on the Band's final three albums: *Jericho* (1993), *High on the Hog* (1996), and *Jubilation* (1998). He also produced solo albums for three original members of The Band: Helm, Danko and Garth Hudson.

After The Band dissolved in 1999, Hurwitz formed his own group: [Professor Louie and The Crowmatix](#) who play a similar Americana style to that of The Band. Professor Louie recently released his eighth studio album *Wings On Fire* on Woodstock Records. The Crowmatix current lineup includes pianist-vocalist-percussionist Miss Marie, drummer Gary Burke, bassist Frank Campbell and guitarist Josh Colow. Crowmatix family members John Platania, Vito Petrocchio and Michael Falzarano also appear on the record.

Professor Louie & The Crowmatix with the Rock of Ages Horns will pay tribute to The Band and Helm Saturday Nov. 3 at Mexicali Live in Teaneck, NJ.

Following an appearance at the Simcoe Rotary Friendship Festival (Ontario Canada) Jambands.com spoke to Professor Louie by phone from his home in Hurley, NY.

How did you first meet Levon?

I met him through Garth Hudson. The way it all started was I had moved a lot from playing live shows to recording studios; learning engineering and producing. I came up (to Woodstock)

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and I was engineering and recording on a Livingston Taylor album with a producer by the name of Artie Traum; and Happy and Artie Traum were and still are folk legends of music. Unfortunately, Artie passed away a few years ago – Garth had called Artie and asked who could help him out keyboard wise and on a recording session with a group of Baul musicians from Calcutta, India. Garth had made a Baul record in 1967 and he wanted to reenact that in 1983-4 so he called Artie, who he knew for years because Happy and Artie Traum had helped bring Bob Dylan and The Band to Woodstock, NY...

So anyway, Artie recommended me to Garth and we did the Baul sessions; and Garth invited Levon to come and play some tracks with us. I met Levon for the first time during that session and right at that time as fortune would have it for me, Levon decided he wanted to reform The Band again. The Band had taken a hiatus and I was right there at that exact right time. And what happened was they got a show as The Band down in New Orleans with a public television station filming it and airing it on public TV. As fortune would have it, they asked me to help and produce and engineer to make sure it came out the best as it could come out. Levon liked my work so much at that point because I was so 100 percent into it. At that time it was recorded on 2-inch audio tape and you had to lock-it up to the TV picture – it was a technical challenge.

And we're talking about The Band, the legendary Band, you have to do a great job. From that day on, Levon asked me to be part of the Band organization.

What kind of friendship with Levon did you develop during that time period?

It was fantastic. You wanted to take-in as much as you could take in from Levon. So I hung as close as I could and we actually at one time were extremely close friends to the point that for my wife's birthday, he took us down to Nashville and we hung out and played at the Ryman Auditorium. At one point around 1994 or 1995, we were very close friends and a lot of times, Levon and I did a lot work together – just me and him in terms of TV shows, talk overs, movies, commercials and different shows together because we also played together – one time it is was even called Levon Helm & The Crowmatix.

We were really good friends right up until Rick (Danko) passed when it was decided that The Band would no longer exist. We were really good friends up until that point. We spent a lot of time on the road together because Lee didn't like to fly much. We had a tour bus and there were certain times where we had to drive without the tour bus and we would drive together a lot. Levon liked to drive, so when we had really bad ice storms, I let him drive. (laughing). There were a bunch of snowstorms, so we spent a lot of slow miles together.

You must have heard a lot of interesting stories over the years?

I think I probably heard every story that existed at least I hope I did. Even some that didn't exist, I hope he told me all of them. I think I probably heard every story from Levon and I think in all honesty, I asked every single question that there was to be asked about rock n' roll, blues, jukebox, and R&B music. Here I am sitting in the car having his attention and his generosity.

When the Band dissolved following the death of Rick Danko in December of 1999, did you remain close friends with Levon?

I think the passing of Rick took the wind out of everyone's sails. Rick was truly loved and you couldn't find a more honest person in terms of sincerity. Rick actually in a lot of ways became one of my closest friends. So when Rick passed, I wanted to keep going

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exactly the way we were going as much as possible because I really loved it, enjoyed everybody and loved everybody. There was Jim Weider, Randy Ciarlante, Richard Bell, Levon and Garth, road people and management people that I really, really liked. But unfortunately with Richard Manuel passing (1986) and Danko passing . . . maybe it was just took too much energy out of the band organization. I can never explain it – it just sort of disbanded.

At that point I worked for The Band. We could have kept the Crowmatix thing going with Lee but he got an offer to open up a club in New Orleans and wanted to do a lot more blues. When his club didn't work out, he came back to New York, but he didn't want to sing Band songs because he was having trouble with his voice.

He got new management and new musicians too and they started the Rambles, which turned out to be fantastic for Levon. I continued on with the Crowmatix and that's how it all splintered off for me. I was pretty sad about it. I wanted to keep everything together but it's just the way life works sometimes.

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