Caruso:

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the family that plays together...

by Rosemary O'Brien

The family that plays together, stays together — or something like that. Just about everybody has heard an expression similar to that at some time or another, and when it pertains to the Caruso brothers, it's all true.

Calling from his home in Detroit, Mike, 27, the oldest of the four Caruso brothers explained to me how he and his siblings formed a rock 'n' roll band.

"It more or less evolved on its own," he began. "For example, when we were really young and just fooling around in the basement no one ever thought that we'd be getting money to play. And then a couple of years later someone said, 'How about playing? How much do you charge to play?'

"That's when we took up an interest," he continued, "and one thing led to another and that takes us to where we are today — playing in 25 states and Canada."

Mike, who plays bass guitar, and his three brothers, Joe (saxophone/guitar), Dave (keyboards/guitar) and Rob (drums), have a fifth member playing with them, Bradley Davenport (lead guitar). Other than Davenport, Mike said he has never worked with anybody outside of his family. "So in a way I'm blessed with them, and in a way I'm cursed with them. "We have less of an employee turnover problem," he joked, "and nobody's quit yet. Another thing is that we all know how each one of us thinks and that saves a lot of time."

> "We like people to get involved with the show and not just sit back. A lot of our concerts turn into dances."

Being a band that has been sponsored by the Miller Rock Network for the past two years has saved the band a lot of money that might have been used for promotions. And, the sponsorship has given Caruso some national exposure.

"The exposure is great," Mike said. "It's given us, in addition to some of the things we've done in the past, some national credibility. Corporate sponsorship is a very powerful thing these day."

Some of Caruso's past accomplishments include a self-titled EP, five singles, six videos and the group was included on two Miller Rock compilations that were released on RCA Records.

The Caruso brothers, all in their 20s, are ready to go into the studio again, and hope to release an album in the near future.

The band's main songwriter is Dave, but the entire crew has a say-so on what goes into their songs. Caruso's lyrics are not political or contain messages, Mike said, but there are a few songs that talk about conformity and peer pressure. For the most part, though, the band's music reflects standard boy-meets-girl pop with some ballads thrown in for good measure.

Recently, Caruso was nominated for the National Association of Campus Activities Award in the category of contemporary music. About 1,000 colleges and universities are involved with this program, Mike said, and the band is competing with the likes of the Bangles, the Del Fuegos, the Producers and others. The award will be announced in February.

Caruso has come a long way from a group of little boys playing in the basement listening to the now defunct Detroit radio station CKLW and spinning Beatles records. Part of the reason for their popularity, Mike said, is their live show.



(from left) Joe, Dave, Rob and Mike Caruso

"It has been said in some of the reviews that we perform with the audience instead of to them. We like people to get involved with the show and not just sit back. A lot of our concerts turn into dances.

"When we are on stage, Mike continued, "we are having a good time. That doesn't seem to be the case with other bands anymore. People on MTV are grimacing and making faces like they are in labor or something like that, and what that has to do with music, I don't know."

Nonetheless, Caruso must be doing something right. The band will be heading to Cleveland this weekend and will perform at Spanky's West tonight and Friday, Sept. 12 and Spanky's East Sept. 13.

After those gigs Mike said Caruso plans to get signed with a major label, tour the United States and Europe, buy Russia, arranged for world peace by Christmas and after Christmas take two weeks off.

Somehow I got the feeling that he was only joking.

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