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Caruso brothers make the grade

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The reactions were all the same. Of course, they knew what to expect. They were so excited; after the first song they knew I hadn't been exaggerating.

Last week I took some friends to see Caruso.

The band was playing at New York, New York, which is a pretty scary place if you're not a nightclub veteran. My friends were uncomfortable, (read petrified), but they really wanted to see Caruso, so we waited, standing, while The Edge warmed up the crowd and I found a few empty chairs.

I had already told them about the four Caruso brothers - Trenton natives who have been gaining a growing loyalty from college after college on their recent tours. They have consistently set attendance records at colleges all over the U.S. and Canada; they have opened for artists such as Cory Hart and Joan Jett, sometimes receiving better reviews than the headliners.

They play often at dance clubs, but, according to Rob Caruso, they prefer doing concerts at colleges. 1986 marked the second straight year that the brothers were nominated as Contemporary Artists of the Year by the National Association for Campus Activities.

The group has been around for a while; I first heard about them from the 18-&-over girls at my first job who went to see them at various clubs every night. The next day they were always so high on those guys. "Debbie," they'd say, "you *have* to see them..." Oh, how I hated being underage.



Journal Photo by DEBBIE STANLEY

Mike, Dave, and Joe Caruso perform at New York, New York in Warren.

I quit the job, and didn't much think about Caruso until this summer. At the Fourth of July Festival, someone handed me a Caruso poster - they were scheduled for a concert the next day. Awesome, dudes! I'd finally get to see them...

It rained that day. A lot. At the Crestwood field, that means you might as well rename it a pool party. The poster laid around the house for a while, until I joined the Michigan Journal staff. I knew instantly who my first story would be about.

I'd had to drag her out to see them; when we were leaving she asked if we could come back next night.

I called one of the girls from the old job; she told me to call the Caruso hotline (671-ROCK). The recording listed all the clubs they would be playing at that week.

For a second I panicked - they were all bars. Then I remembered: I'm 18. Finally.

It was fun watching my friends watching Caruso for the first time. Cori, I knew, would flip out when she heard the harmony in "She's a Sensation." She did. Did she ever. Cori loves harmony.

Same with Rose and the harmony in "Emerald City." Rose was too tired to care about anything until she heard that. I'd had to drag her out to see them; when we were leaving she asked if we could come back the next night.

Angelique, who has average untrained musical appreciation, loved them too. She didn't know the fancy words for all the stuff they were doing, but she still knew they weren't any ordinary group. Anyone who sees Caruso knows they're special, a step above, a little better.

Magnetic is a good word to describe their show. "Riveting" works well too, as in "Their eyes were riveted to the stage."

Caruso's album, *In the Face*, doesn't tell the whole story. It's very well-done; the songs are excellent and their vocal quality comes through clearly. But, you can't see them. And that's essential.

Magnetic is a good word to describe their show. "Riveting" works well too, as in "Their eyes were riveted to the stage." Caruso on tape is good listening, good dancing. Caruso live is the ultimate musical experience. The brothers, Dave, Rob, Mike and Joe, and their new guitarist Lee Thomas provide the perfect excuse to sing, yell, dance and be joyful, even if you're not drunk.

Watching them is fun in itself because there's so much to watch. Not that they do a lot of theatrical things or choreographed dancing; it's just that they are each a commanding presence - you can't decide which one to watch. And they're all very easy to look at.

The best part is that they're so close to the audience. Places like Jaggers, New York, New York, and other clubs have stages right next to the tables and the dance floor, so you can *see* them, and you can feel the music. Every drumbeat resonates in your chest and in your feet. Torture is wanting to dance, but having an $800 camera in your lap.

The album is a great way to recapture the excitement after the show. When you hear "London" you'll see Dave Caruso with his Lennon glasses singing, "England swings; why can't we?"

In the Face has five songs: four that they play in the shows and one, 19-second piece, "Get Together", which is an a cappella pure example of their vocal ability.

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"Young and Tender" and "Can't Stop Dreaming" are the songs you'll find yourself singing in the shower. Along with "London" and "She's a Sensation", these songs are destined for Top 40-ism very, *very* soon. In fact, "London" can be heard now on WLLZ; it received 91% approval on the WLLZ Rate at 8:00 program. Doug Podell of WLLZ, who introduced Caruso at their show the next night, admitted that he was surprised - and impressed.

In the Face and the single "London" are available at all Harmony House stores.

While the album has only five songs, their show is packed with about 20, 17 of them originals, and the selections change from show to show. You can see them three nights in a row and get three different performances.

Caruso will be playing a day show at Monroe Community College on Sept. 14, and at Kip's West in Toledo that evening. They will be at California's in Windsor Sept. 16-19. On Sept. 27, they will be performing an outdoor concert at the Dearborn Heights Civic Center.

For those who wanted to see the July 4th. show, this is the official make-up date.

For more information and more concert dates, call 671-ROCK.

Oh yeah, one more thing. Rob Caruso asks that you buy their album. I'm asking you to see the show - you'll be glad you did.



Journal Photo by DEBBIE STANLEY

Guitarist Lee Thomas recently joined Caruso, becoming the only non-related member of the band. Drummer Rob Caruso is the youngest at 24.