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## 'War' Takes Center Stage in Woodhaven

By **Nick Brandon**  
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Dave Caruso is enjoying where his path in music has him right now – playing in one of the hottest attractions in the Downriver area.

That show, called “*Piano Wars!*,” combines the Trenton musician’s talents with Bill Jacques of Belleville for a dueling piano extravaganza – one that is certain to entertain people of all ages and musical tastes.

“We’re really happy to be doing this,” said Caruso, a Trenton resident. We’ve never had such a big audience.”

The show, which takes place at Hickey’s Grill in Woodhaven, displays Caruso and Jacques playing musical favorites both old and new on two pianos with comedy, theatre and music combining brilliantly to make a memorable evening event.

“This is like we’re getting paid for all the work we’ve done,” Caruso said.

And Caruso has put in his share of work: As a member of the band “Caruso” in the 1980s, Dave and his three brothers gained a fair amount of notoriety with the younger market.

“We had some really good college success,” Caruso said. “We weren’t great musicians, but we were really proud of what we did.”

The conception of this current chapter in Caruso’s life in music actually took place Downriver.

“Somebody came to us a year ago at a bar

in Lincoln Park and said ‘we want to try this thing,’” Caruso said. “The idea is that 90 percent of the people at Hickey’s haven’t seen dueling pianos before.”

“It initially started out as piano playing with comedy. It has since developed into a genre.”

Caruso says that the pairing of his abilities with Jacques helps the show to be a memorable experience.

“Bill is more of a blues singer and I knew everything teen idol-wise.”

“I love it all ... the cool thing about us being so different is that we can cover everything.”

The show is unique in that the audience more than the musicians directs it on stage.

“The show isn’t about us, it’s audience-driven,” said Caruso. “Here they’re in the show. We make sure and play participation and sing-along songs every other song.”

Caruso has even categorized and named some of the different kinds of requests he gets.

Aside from the normal “popular requests,” such as Piano Man,” and “Brown-Eyed Girl,” Caruso said that people use “stumpers” to attempt to test the duo’s catalogue.

“Those are cool, people try to stump the band,” he adds.

Also there are “extremes,” where the audience will request everything from Metallica to Styx to Nirvana – and it is up to the members of the crowd as to how



long the song lasts.

“People can come up and give us money to stop playing the song,” added Caruso, who has been given tips up to \$20 to stop playing certain forgettable songs.

“I think I get more enjoyment out of making people laugh than anything else.”

Bill adds, “And I enjoy waking up the dogs in the neighborhood with my Edith Bunker impersonation.”

The show is not only bringing its audiences a lot of amusement, but is providing a worthy experience for the performers as well.

“It’s really satisfying,” said Caruso. “Hickey’s is a nice place and we love the people we work for.”

“*Piano Wars!*” can be seen on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at Hickey’s Grill, 22301 Allen Rd. in Woodhaven. For more information, call (734) 675-3610 or visit [www.PianoWars.com](http://www.PianoWars.com).