

10/22/01 - Biketoberfest, train travel, rewrites, a future solo show?:

Just got back from Biketoberfest in Daytona. Big fun. All the major manufacturers are there and they let you ride any bike you want. Highly recommended if you're looking to buy a motorcycle sometime soon and you want to test drive a bunch. My favorite was the Triumph Bonneville America (see photo below). Triumph had a whole fleet of these bikes there. They were the first ones in the US.



Took the train down there. Not as romantic as people might lead you to believe. 24 hrs long, no bed, screaming kids and old people that want to talk about their grandkids. Need I say more? The good thing is I had a lot of time to do some writing. Completely rewrote any of the old songs I plan on going forward with. A lot of them are almost unrecognizable. "Misunderstood" for example has a totally new chorus (the old one never worked). Can't wait to learn these new versions as well as finish the new album's stuff.

I need to practice bad. I don't even have enough finished material right now for a full show. I was hoping to do a solo acoustic gig at The Bitter End before the end of the year but I think it might be spring before all this stuff is ready for public display...

11/8/01 - Massimo meets Boz Scaggs

So I'm hanging at the local Irish pub for lunch like I do often when I hear some guy being all loud at the end of the bar carrying on about how he performs and sings, begging the bartender to call her mother in Ireland to ask her if she know who Boz Scaggs is. Figuring he's just some drunk blow hard, I ignore him and go back to my writing. I'm about to leave when the man accosts me and asks me if I know who Boz Scaggs is because he is "the Boz" himself. I say "I know who you are. I even have a 45 of "Look What You've Done To Me" at home. He beams and offers to buy a round for the house. I chat with him for a while still not really believing the guy, telling him I know about his new album out on Virgin called "Dig" and he tells me about touring the country (he's to play in FL the next evening). Reluctantly I eventually go back to work. I find out days later he continued to get even more drunk and obnoxious and desperate for recognition from the patrons. So much so he got kicked out of the bar!

11/14/01 - band bookings, new covers, website update, rehearsal room needed:

Trying like crazy to get bookings for the band. Went to Bar A (Belmar, NJ) and Chubby's (Red Bank, NJ) over the weekend. We might get into Bar A on a Thurs. night but Chubby's is booked thru NEXT MAY?! Last week's show at Downtime was cool. I think we rocked the place. We'll be back Jan 31st for 2 sets next time. Need to start learning some new songs. I have to admit I'm really digging Incubus these days although I could do without their DJ. Seriously, would anyone miss all the bleeping noises this guy makes? Why do they feel the need to tack a DJ onto a rock band that can operate perfectly fine on its own? He better hope the rest of the band doesn't wake up and realize there's no reason for this guy to collect a check. We're gonna cover "Stellar" and "Wish You Were Here". Also, completely

love that new Nickelback song, "You Remind Me", and that song I think is called "Crawling In the Dark" by Hoobastank. Worst name ever for a band (it will probably doom them to obscurity), and more complaint-rock lyrics but the tune is pretty cool. Also been going crazy with the website lately. Retouching tons of pictures for the Gallery page. Some of them are really nice. They look great on the desktop. I might frame a few digital prints, maybe even enter a few in some photo contests just to see what happens. Can't wait to be done doing all this website stuff so I can get back to just writing, but I think it's gonna be really cool when it's finished. This friend of Roger's is going to be a big help.

Went to Casey O'Tooles in Wayne with Roger last night to drop a TT CD. Nice place - built in crowd (there's not much else nearby), good stage. They have bands Wed-Sat and appearing soon... Todd's Theory! Or so we hope.

Got my Grammy ballot in the mail today. Yes, even lowlifes like me can be "members of the academy" and vote. Watch this space for my picks. Need to get a new rehearsal space ASAP since Jack has moved and we can't play in his basement anymore. If anyone has any ideas, please let us know.

11/27/01: Massimo's Grammy picks

Let me tell you something: if it's one thing that I realize when I receive this ballot every year it's that I am woefully out of touch with a large majority of the popular music scene. Like most of you, I glean new music from word of mouth or the radio which is terribly unfair to the nominees that don't get any airplay (and consistently inaccurate in terms of taste!). Keep in mind this is the case for most of the Academy when you're watching the Grammys. You don't get to see the huge book of nominees that gets sent out. I've never heard of most of these people! That being said, all I can really do with a clear conscience is support my favorite artists and do what I can to further the cause of what I think is good music (that means NOT voting for Puddles of Mudd, Gorillaz etc.). The truth is, it's not that hard to make the first cut. It's a matter of filling out some forms and getting a minimal number of votes to be included in the list. Further proof that winning a Grammy does not equal musical worth. There are literally hundreds to choose from in almost every category. From that list I can choose up to five votes. And there's a limit to how many categories you can vote on. Sadly, I used up all my categories by the time I reached "Best Polka Album". Here are some highlights (My apologies to those I offend in advance. Feel free to write in and disagree if you wish):

Record of the Year:

Jaded - Aerosmith (I can't believe it either; I never liked this band but I love this song)

Wish You Were Here - Incubus (one of the best new bands around, see above)

Absolutely (Story of a Girl) - Nine Days (Very poppy, I know, but I love it anyway. Plus you gotta vote for the local boys from Long Island, what happened to them after this song?)

Album of the Year:

Steady Pull - Jonatha Brooke (she'll never win, but I think she's great. Sold more of this album on her own than she ever did when she was signed!)

Comfort Eagle - Cake (They're just so much fun)

Shangri-La-Dee Da - Stone Temple Pilots (I'm surprised we haven't heard more from this album on the radio)

Lateralus - Tool (what's good for Tool is good for Todd's Theory)

Music for the morning after - Pete Yorn (gotta support the new crop of male s/s, it's good for business. Plus, he's a Jersey boy)

Song of the Year:

Absolutely (Story of a Girl) - Nine Days

How You Remind Me - Nickelback (LOVE this song (see above) but it's already getting played out)

I'm Like A Bird - Nelly Furtado (very poppy, I know, but undeniably infectious)

Jaded - Aerosmith

Wish You Were Here - Incubus

Best New Artist:

Ryan Adams

David Gray

Pete Yorn

Best Rock Performance By A Duo or Group With Vocal:

Jaded - Aerosmith

Stellar - Incubus

Wish You Were Here - Incubus

etc., etc., etc....

I will say that due to the dearth of decent nominees this year, I voted in less categories than usual. BTW, anybody heard of John Mayer yet (see review of his album, Room For Squares, in the latest Rolling Stone)? Just excellent songs, easy going delivery, smart. Check him out: www.johnmayer.com.

12/5/01: Jets choke in week 12, songwriting in high gear, TT @ Ringside Pub, demo vs. album

Those of you who know me know I'm not the biggest sports fan. I watch mostly racing and football. I did not enjoy watching football last Sun. as the Jets, in true Jets fashion, squandered their 16 to 0 lead in the fourth quarter to lose by one point to the New England Patriots. New England!? Let's hope they get it together in Pittsburgh this week. When the Jets win, NYC is happier... www.newyorkjets.com.

So, although I've been working on this new album for quite some time now, I must admit it's been slow going. A lot of painful artistic growth. That is until last Wed. I don't know what happened; it's like someone flipped a switch but suddenly all the malaise is gone and I can't keep the guitar out of my hands. I'm writing all the time now and when I'm not writing, I'm thinking about when I'll have time to sit down and write some more. Finished the title cut to the new album last night ("Reckoning") and suddenly I'm back in the flow again. It's funny how that works. One minute you're completely down, then you write one thing and you think you can do anything. Playing nothing but the electric these days. It's gonna give all these songs more of that modern rock feel I've been missing. I'm pretty confident now that a solo show next spring will happen as planned. TT did an open mic at the Ringside Pub in W.Caldwell last Sun. Really cool place; a lot of the bigger names play there. They dug us. Working the phones now to turn it into a regular gig.

I'd like your opinion on this: instead of spending a ton of money to make a full length recording, I'm thinking of doing a 3-5 song streamlined demo, spending most of the money on production to make it sound as professional possible (Does anyone know any producers?) and selling that to finance the rest of the album and create industry interest. Who knows? Someone may dig it so much they might put up the money to record the rest of it. All I know for sure is my pockets aren't nearly deep enough to go up against the likes of major labels in a retail environment where whoever can spend the most on promotion wins. Instead my website will be the key. This time around I'm gonna work on getting industry allies to help me instead of just being a record store even though the line between the two is often very blurry. Your thoughts?

12/10/01: Jets choke yet again, TT back at The Rustic, TT miss "getting signed"

Pittsburgh 18, Jets 7. That's all I have to say. No, wait, it isn't: Giants 13 COWBOYS 20?! It's NYC football in Dec. as our teams lose to those teams they should beat. Playoffs slipping away...Ok, I'm done now.

Anyway, not a bad show last Fri. at Texas Arizona. Had a rough start with some equipment problems but we warmed up as they evening rolled along. Then at the end of the night one of the bartenders gives me a handwritten note forwarded from some girl named Mona who wanted to know if we were signed or not (who signs a cover band?). Said something about she works with bands etc. etc. Anyway, somehow between Denny's at 4AM and my apartment..... I lost the note. Classic. But you have to figure if she was anybody who was anybody, she would've had a business card and if not, she's just gonna think the bartender never gave me the note. Hey, we're not hard to find if she wants to get in touch with us, she will. Maybe she was just a girl that wanted to give me her phone number. If so, I'm even more pissed about losing it. Something else I can add to the list of reason why I don't have a girlfriend. Saturday night at a Xmas party in NYC was much better though:



Yes, you did read correctly, TT is returning to the Rustic Inn on Staten Island. Band consensus is if people will pay us to rehearse, why shouldn't we do it? I tend to concur. Hey, it's a gig. If the guy's willing to pay us, who I am I to say no? And, hey, the kitchen's open 'till 4AM! Woo hoo!

Dropped in again on Poor Billy's in Woodbridge. Chipping away there...

Tentative dates for the Mad Hatter in Sea Bright, NJ: Sat.'s 2/9 & 2/23.

Ringside Pub is being elusive. Might be time for the Wrath Of Todd to make another visit...

1/14/02: HAPPY NEW YEAR!, booking frustration, MM plays house concert, album update, Jets crumble in LA, new music review

So Happy New Year! I don't know about all of you, but I'm very happy to say goodbye to last year for a number of reasons. Something bad happened to almost everyone I know. Glad the holidays are past. Life/business pretty much gets put on hold until they're over. Looking ahead...

OK, I must admit to getting a bit frustrated over band bookings. While TT did a great show at Bar A Jan. 3rd and everyone there (all 10 of them) loved us, it seems they might be giving us the big blow off due to poor turnout. So much for their policy of "we're willing to work with bands that have potential". Poor Billy's only uses STARS bands exclusively (for those of you who don't know, STARS Productions is like the booking agency mafia. They're book the bands in virtually every big club in Jersey and the surrounding area which explains why the music is the same everywhere you go. These are the people who are responsible for bringing the world Dog Voices, Big Orange Cone, Shouting Asparagus (actually Screaming Broccoli, what a fucking dumb name) etc. Yes, of course, they should be booking us, too, but I don't think we're at a level where they'd be interested. I'll be getting in touch...

Park City Bar & Grill in Rutherford is still being difficult ("contact us when your buzz gets bigger") as well as Packees Pub and Paradox ("we're not having any new bands in just yet"). I guess the downturn in business has affected everybody. I feel like I'm losing steam here. If you have any ideas about clubs in your area you'd like to see TT play, please let me know. Texas Arizona coming up again this Sat. Meanwhile, a rough TT website is in the works and TT stickers should be showing up on tollbooths soon...

In MM news, I did a house concert at Mark Aaron James' (www.markaaronjames.com) place in Jersey City. Mark is a singer songwriter originally from Nashville but moved here a couple of years ago. We met at the '99 Philadelphia Music Conference. He's anxiously awaiting the release of his next album, titled Adventures With A Plastic Bag (taken from a late 60's children's book of the same name depicting different fun things you could do with a plastic bag! I didn't believe it either until I saw it.) After having a couple of recent gigs cancelled

and itching to play, he decided to have a concert in his apartment! (for those of you not familiar with the folk scene, house concerts are actually becoming pretty common as suitable venues are drying up). It was an "in the round" type of show with other singer/songwriter friends of Mark's including Meghan Carey, Fragile Male Ego and Claire Cooper. I did 3 songs from the upcoming album: "Wasted", "Daylight" and "Fall Down". Even though I was getting over a throat infection (which I incurred by rooting too hard for the Jets last week) and sounded like shite, people really dug it and I got a lot of names on my list. Afterward we all hung out and partied together. It was a really fun, positive experience. Mark wants to make it a monthly event. I'll let you know when the next one is...

The new album is progressing albeit slowly. Only 2-3 songs still need music then the polishing begins. I'll be testing new songs as they get finished at open mics around town before booking an actual show. Soon. Very soon. It's all happening...

And yes, just in case you thought I forgot, I did see the final demise of the Jet season last Sat. to the Raiders. Very disappointing. Even worse was watching the game being heckled by an Eagles fan (Andrew Diem I'm looking in your direction) after they handily won they're game. Jeez. Remember when the Eagles sucked? No matter. NASCAR starts in a few weeks. And I'll be in the infield of Daytona Int'l Speedway for the Rolex 24hr race in just a couple of weeks. Should make for at least a few good stories.

Picked up a few good CD's over the holidays. Worthy of note: JOHN MAYER (I can't recommend him enough, going to see him live at Irving Plaza 2/22), new Incubus, new Ben Folds, A PERFECT CIRCLE (worth the purchase if only for the 3 songs that made it to radio). New Pat Metheny Group album drops next month. Only act in Grammy history to win 7 consecutive awards. If you haven't seen them yet, you should (4/15 at the State Theatre in New Brunswick, NJ. I'll be there front row).

2/5/02: Rolex 24HR race, MM working with producer?, Downtime sneak previews

Nothing's quite like spending a 4 day weekend in FL where the weather is in the upper 60's only to return to 4 degree windchill weather here in NJ. Ouch. Went to Daytona to see the 40th running of the Rolex 24 hr race at Daytona Speedway. It was really something to see. Me & my friend Dave rented a cargo van for the weekend and camped in the infield for the whole race. Dug a hole in ground, built a fire (I still can't believe they let you do that there), grilled steaks, drank cheap beer and listened to the roar of engines for 24 consecutive hours while getting a tan on the roof of the van during the day. Even snuck into the pits overnight as cars were breaking down and watched them frantically being repaired. Some highlights (see the gallery for more pics):

The real reason I go to the races...





In music news, I've been in preliminary contact with a producer for the upcoming album. We're still in the get to know phase, but he come highly recommended and I'm looking forward to seeing what we can do together. Finished a few more tunes: "Reckoning", "Deliver Me" and "Mountain". If you're really curious how this new stuff sounds, I can usually be found at Downtime's open mic on Thursday nights trying them out (251 W.30th @ 8th). My goal is to debut two new songs a week there. We'll see if that actually happens...

3/5/02: Producer on board, new backup band being formed, MM injured

Yeah, I know it's been a month since I've written anything here. It's hard to write for a section of the website that isn't even up yet and won't be for quite a while yet. Unfortunately, there hasn't been much to tell. Things are moving forward but sometimes at such an imperceptible rate it might be mistaken for standing still. Met with the producer I spoke of earlier (see 2/5). Very cool guy, killer bass player, has experience with rocking singer/songwriter types and has a lot of good ideas. And he seems genuinely excited about working with me. We'll be getting together soon for some preliminary rehearsal/preproduction/jamming sessions. Actual recording may have to wait 'till I find more money via winning lottery ticket, a successful bank heist, a loan/grant from a generous fan. (Anyone? Anyone?) Probably will do just 3-5 songs just to get the hype machine started up. Finished a couple more songs for the album: "Anywhere But Here" and "Bonnie & Clyde". I've been thinking about debuting these songs with a band right from the start instead of doing a solo gig or two first. Then when I take the same band into the

studio to record we'll be tight. I already have Roger (from TT) on board and he has a possible bass player but I still need another electric guitarist. Most of all I just want to finish all these songs first...

And now another installment of "Great Moments In Idiocy": I'm a few hours and several drinks into a poorly attended Christmas party when me and the host (Jack from TT) get the brilliant idea of racing two Razor scooters down the hill his house is on. Of course, halfway down the hill, in my intense struggle for victory I give the scooter a big push that only serves to upset it, sending me tumbling down the hill in a flash of torn winter clothing and aluminum. But I walked away from it. Or so I thought. One month later, a mild hamstring injury appears then dissipates. Two months later, after a couple of particularly vigorous TT shows, I wake up virtually paralyzed and limping from a now very aggravated pulled hamstring (or ligament or tendon. The doctor fails to pinpoint it). Pain always. Welcome to physical therapy. Still not walking normally as of this writing. Hope I'm OK for the 3/22 TX/AZ show.

Speaking of TT, bookings are kind of on hold right now as we search for a replacement bass player (Jack will be switching to guitar as Lane will soon be leaving us to record a solo project on Wall Street Records). Bar A said "thanks but no thanks" after our show there failed to break any attendance records. Been talking to the Cadillac Bar. Also, look for TT stickers cropping up on tollbooths everywhere and keep an eye on the website for constant updates: www.toddstheory.com)

And after all my previous blah blah blah about the Grammys and voting etc. (see 11/27/01) I didn't even watch them last Wed. Wound up seeing a friend's band play instead. It was the thing to do.

3/18/02: MM still limping, meets Carly Simon

It's my leg and I'll cry if I want to. You would cry too if it happened to you. Still limping around from the tendon injury (see below). Walking is one of those things you take for granted until you can't do it anymore. I'm slowly healing but I'll still have to be considerably more stationary for Friday's TT show. I hate not being up to par. My doctor says I need to be patient. He obviously doesn't know who he's talking to.

So, I sit down at my desk this morning and immediately the phone rings:

"Hi, this is Carly Simon. I'm looking for someone to answer some questions I have about my contract for the "My Romance" TV spot."

"Yeah, right. Seriously, who is this?"

"It's Carly Simon."

"Seriously?"

"I could sing the song for you if you want"

"No, that's OK"

After taking down some information regarding her call I say "Someone will get right back to you. I'm sure they know how to get in touch with you"

"Actually they don't. HERE'S MY NUMBER" !!!??

No, I didn't tell her I was a singer/songwriter. No, I didn't ask to send her my music. And, no, you can't have her number. I'm taking it as a good sign that things are moving in the right direction...

4/10/02: Metheny at The State Theatre New Brunswick

"You don't suck!"

- *an autograph from Pat Metheny to yours truly obtained by a friend (thanks Ed) at an album signing after telling Pat how much I think I suck after seeing him play.*

OK, first of all, the man gets a standing ovation for just taking the stage. If there was room people would have knelt and prayed. He was, of course, awesome and so was the new band. Played for three hours, sometimes wailing so hard you thought he might just spontaneously combust. Know him, love him: www.patmethenygroup.com

My guitar now seems to be mocking me.

4/16/02: Bucky & John Pizzarelli at NJPAC, fish wisdom

Got a free ticket to see jazz guitarist Bucky Pizzarelli and his son, John, at the NJ Performing Arts Center in Newark yesterday (nice venue, brand new, check it out: www.NJPAC.org). Free concerts being my favorite kind, I went. It was basically just two guys sitting on the stage playing an occasional song or two while John talks about what it was like growing up in Paterson, NJ with jazz great, Bucky, as his dad. Bucky is a long-time jazz musician, known initially for his work with the Benny Goodman Orchestra, having a strange first name and being from Paterson. John is known mostly for being Bucky's son and, most recently, the Foxwoods theme (Of course there's more, he has a site: www.JohnPizzarelli.com). There was a Q&A session the audience, too. I learned Bucky's full first name is actually Buckskin, his Dad being a huge fan of the Old West and cowboys after spending three years living in Texas. Hanging with the mostly geriatric crowd, it was hard resisting the urge ask for a Metallica request or yell "Babba Boeey". I am such a child. What I really wanted to ask him was how many times he got his ass kicked when he was a kid living in Paterson for having a name like Bucky. Watching them both jam on 7-string guitars was very cool. Sounded like there was a standup bass player off stage.

But it weren't no Metheny concert; I'll tell you that.

Did some fishing over the weekend at Lake Hopatcong, drove past western-themed attraction , Wild West City along the way. Anybody who was a kid in the 70's in the tri-state area would remember the commercials. And the theme song: www.wildwestcity.com. Didn't catch anything, really. While I was fishing, I found myself envious of the fish and their simple lives, how they're not concerned with the complications of a career in music.

Then again, getting a hook through your lip when you're just trying to have dinner can't be that much fun either.

4/29/02: NARAS annual meeting, discovering 8 minute dating, TT has busy weekend

Went to the annual NARAS (Nat'l Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences,

www.grammy.com) meeting the other day. After the usual Academy business (humanitarian/educational efforts, the Grammys coming back to NYC!, new membership) there was a panel of A&R execs (Jimmy Bralower - Atlantic, Michael Caplan - Epic, Tina Davis - Def Jam, Arif Mardin (!) - Manhattan) speaking about current signing practices and what's next for the industry in the wake of the Internet and flagging sales (down 15% in the first quarter alone). While it was nice to get some confirmation from industry folks on issues I've been griping about the past few years (no one's addressing the adult market, radio blows, lack of artist development, the attack of the clones, the cost of playing the game these days is too high to be profitable) no one has any plans or desire to change things. It amazes me how they're able to identify everything that's wrong with music today and yet act as though they have nothing to do with it. While some of the younger A&R people would like to sign new and exciting acts, they still have to answer to their dinosaur bosses on the bottom line of profits. And quickly, too. No time for the slow build anymore. It seems that these older executives either have to die or retire before anything really changes for the better. In the meantime, the things that have been true in the past still are: find what you're good at and then be great at it and don't make music that chases the marketplace - sooner or later the cycle of music will swing your way. You just have to be ready when it does. More than anything else it's a matter of who can go the distance; it's a battle of attrition and time is on my side. The man who said "War is hell" must've been listening to the radio.

So, due to my lack of a social life and unsatisfied with the results of Internet dating, I decided to try something new last week - 8 minute dating: 8 "dates" in a row, 8 minutes each (www.8minutedating.com). Now, I consider myself to be open minded and not all that shallow but this particular event should've been called "8 minute grazing" due to the abundance of cows in attendance. I like voluptuous women but when I can't distinguish your breasts from your butt, that's a real problem for me. I'm blaming it on the Edison, NJ dating pool and not the concept itself. I actually think it's a good idea; I'll be trying it again next week but this time in NYC. Hopefully with better results.

Todd's Theory had a great weekend. We debuted at the Cadillac Bar on Fri. and did our steady gig at Texas Arizona on Sat. The shows couldn't have been more different. Fri. rocked: Cubby Bryant from Z100 was there DJing between sets (he even announced our gig on the air all day Fri!) and plenty of hot girls dancing (and drunk!). We played great and will be back in early Sept.

Sat. we did just as good a show and were soundly ignored at Texas Arizona. Plus, there was the issue of dealing with an irate bar manager arguing with Lane over whose fault it was that a circuit breaker blew out (see Lane's latest rant on the TT site). No matter: we got paid and we'll be back. The Power of Todd always prevails.

6/18/02: LA observations, TT gets uninvited from TX/AZ

Spent a long weekend in LA recently to visit a friend I hadn't seen in a long time. My first time there. On the surface it seems to be a place or many paradoxes. To wit: so many burger joints yet people barely eat and when they do it's usually tofu based, everyone's supposed to be so laid back but they drive like psychopaths, so much sun but almost no one has a tan, so much traffic but no turn signal streetlights that would completely solve the problem, so many stores yet most people can't afford to shop there.

Seems to me LA spends most of its time trying to convince itself it's as cool as NYC because the reality that it isn't would be too much to bear.

Unique cars abound; chrome rims a definite must.

Saw a live coyote! Like an emaciated German Shepherd with big ears.

No sense of community. Everyone kind of keeps to themselves. And for a big city, it's eerily quiet after only 1AM..

In general, I was largely underwhelmed by LA. I had the same reaction to most of the tourist-y attractions: that's it? Mulholland drive at night was way cool. You get to see just how sprawling LA really is. Driving up the PCH through Malibu to Santa Barbara was also cool. Strange how almost nothing is being done to hold back the inevitable rock/landslides that occur there. The most popular method of holding back the land was a plastic bag weighted down with a sack of sand. We do have better engineering available, right? Talk about ignoring a problem. Not to mention the entire state is hanging on a fault line. But that's LA: blissfully soaking up the sun while the world around them sinks into oblivion.

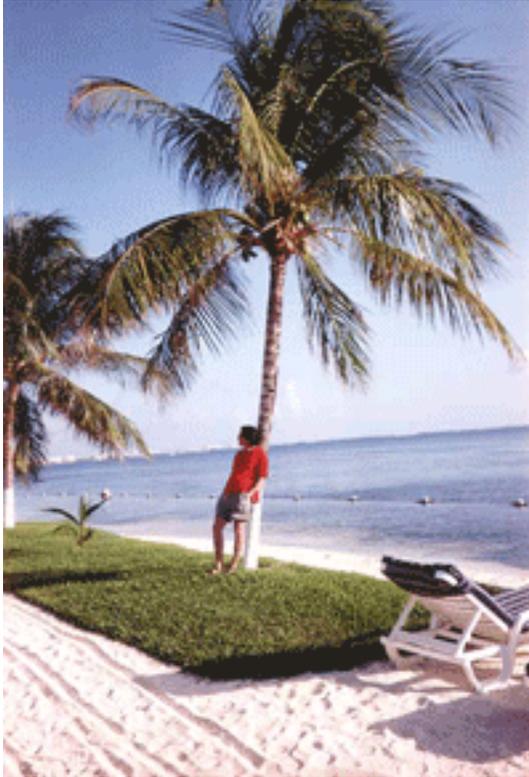
A nice piece of real estate with strange inhabitants.

So the feud with TX/AZ has escalated. It seems they won't be needing our services anymore, citing poor turnout (we kept their lame happy hour crowd longer than most) and a failure to comply with audience requests (a flat out lie). But, OK. Whatever. It's a blessing in disguise. I was getting sick of that place anyway. I'm sure it had nothing to do with the argument with the manager last time we were there. For a more scathing take on the situation, check out the "Lane's rants" section on the TT site. (And the infantile entries in our guestbook). Feel the love. We have one more show there before we split. I say we do an entire set of "Killing In The Name". No matter. Coming up The Mad Hatter 7/20 in Sea Bright, Packees in Woodbridge, 8/2. Cadillac Bar...whenever the guy there decides to book Sept.; keeps putting it off...

8/22/02: Happy Birthday to Me!, summer wrap up

Yes, that's right, today's my birthday. I'm ## years old. (Yes, we have gotten to that point- I'm however old you think I am). Honestly, birthdays stopped being a big deal a while ago. And it seems I'm never growing up anyway so...

Went on an actual "vacation" last month to Cancun.



It was my first time out of the country; I finally had to get a passport. It was nice in Cancun but sometimes it was a little much. There's an inescapable party going on whether you want it to or not and attendance is mandatory. Snorkeling in the coral reef was awesome, like swimming in my fish tank. The hotel was nice. Three words: swim up bar.

But it's time to get back to work! Enough screwing around "writing". I'm a little nervous about it all. There's much to be done: website, band rehearsals/arrangements, promotion. I know it will all get done. It was nice calling the Bitter End the other day and not having to re-introduce myself after all this time. Should be no problem getting a show there every 5-6 weeks or so (And then what?) Just need to build some momentum first. All the songs for the new album are done except for one ("Big Idea"). Gotta finish it and rewrite the 7 oldies I'm going forward with. In fact, I have a lot of work to do. Why am I sitting here typing to you? Gotta go...

9/9/02: Back to work, sports?, TT back at Packees, photo shoot, 9/11

I am getting really revved up for this upcoming show(s). Getting some serious players together for the band. We are going to kick some ass. I need to start rehearsals, like, yesterday. Made a set list for the show. It's looking like 70% new stuff and 30% old (which one's do you want to hear?).

OK, I can't believe that I'm writing about sports again but I am. The NFL has started its season and I'm pretty excited about it. With an opening day concert from Bon Jovi no less! Woo! (Sometimes it's hard to be from Jersey.) And the Jets won their first week (barely) against Buffalo. And the Eagles lost (hi, Andrew). All is as it should be.

In TT news, after a solid but poorly attended show at Packees Pub in Woodbridge, I worked out an opening slot for the hard rock cover band, Gotham, who plays there about once a month. After opening for them a few times and getting some good names on the list, maybe we'll be able to have our own monthly gig there. Other than that I am all out of ideas for this band. I have other things on my mind anyway. The Massimo project rolls on...

Finally shot some new pictures over the weekend. I think it went really well (good photographer: chadvegaphoto.com) but, man, I hate photo shoots. You have to think about all that image stuff you'd prefer to not think about. Of course I woke up with a most inconvenient and uncharacteristic zit on my cheek. Thank God for Photoshop. I think the pics will be OK. A bit more "rock" looking than they've been in the past. It'll be nice to have some new pics on the website finally. Damn website. I spent a good part of the weekend retouching a bunch of pictures for the Gallery section. I wish it was done already. Of course, it will be by the time you read this. If anyone reads this....

The city streets feel weird this week in the wake of the upcoming 9/11 anniversary and all the heightened security. I know I won't be traveling during rush hour Wed. My office is opening late anyway. I think it should be a permanent national day of remembrance. My heart goes out to anyone who suffered a personal loss in that tragedy. Those responsible can never be dead enough. Don't get me started...

9/17/02: 9/11, theology, WWF, Massimo begins to panic

Man, last week was a drag here in NYC because of 9/11. It wasn't helping that I couldn't stop watching all the coverage of the anniversary on TV. Some of the stories are just unbelievable (like the 14 people who survived in stairway B of the North Tower after it fell down on them! Incredible.) The best story from last Wed.: the winning lottery numbers for the Pick 3 were 9-1-1. You can't tell me there isn't some higher power at work. Some things are just beyond coincidence. Of course there will be some people that will claim it was fixed because they can't deal with the reality of what it might mean if it wasn't. Then they might actually have to believe in things they'd rather not because it make life easier not to. I personally like the fact that our Pledge says "One nation under God..." and that our currency says "In God we trust..."

Caught a brief moment of the WWF while channel surfing last night. If you need proof that the minds of Americans are turning to mush, that the mean intelligence of our country is plummeting, one need look no further than the performance atrocity known as the WWF. I can't believe there is a market for this. It's a national embarrassment. Anytime someone tells me they're a fan of wrestling and they're above the age of 5, my opinion of them goes through the floor. Then I apologetically ask them if they're retarded.

OK, I am severely beginning to panic about this upcoming show (date still TBD! I'm calling the Bitter End today). While I do have my drummer (Rog from TT - www.slamminggrooves.com) and my bass player (Antar Goodwin) I'm still missing band members (I NEED A GUITAR PLAYER ASAP! IF YOU KNOW ANYONE, WRITE ME), the website isn't nearly done, none of the songs are arranged yet, one more needs to be written, I need to get prints made from my photo shoot, need to practice on my Strat etc. Plus, I accidentally gave myself a deep cut on the tip of my middle finger on my left hand yesterday so being ready to play for our first rehearsal Monday is questionable. Good thing I recorded a tape of all the new songs for the band over the weekend. (Hearing them back, I'm getting excited - I really, really like this new crop of tunes) But, man, I can't wait until this is all done.

Just be happy you're not my girlfriend right now.

Time for lunch. I'm getting a beer...

9/20/02: Massimo gives thanks

So I was on the elevator at work today and a guy got on with NO HANDS. Not just missing one, but both. I was thinking "Damn!" but I didn't say anything. He didn't look too pissed about it either, just talking with a co-worker of his like everything was cool. I guess he's a better man than me because I don't think that's something I'd ever get over. These are the things you should think about when you're getting annoyed about something trivial. So today I thank God I have my hands!

9/23/02: 1st band rehearsal cancelled, Massimo a dirty old man?

Antar called yesterday and cancelled today's rehearsal. Glad I drove myself crazy all weekend arranging vocal parts so I'd have things ready for tonight (these new arrangements are going to kick ass, though!). Whatever, it's all gotta get done anyway. While I do understand he is a freelance player and needs to make his money when he can (he's getting paid to record with someone) it's just that this doesn't help to alleviate the anxiety I'm already feeling about this whole project. I still don't have a guitar player. Or a definite date for our first show at the Bitter End. Or a respectable website. Yeah, yeah, I know. Bitch Bitch Bitch. But that's why I have the Flip Side in the first place. So you can see the other side of the story. And so I can have a forum to say whatever the hell I want. I'm sure everything will work out fine. At least that's what I keep repeating to myself like a mental patient...

Went to my alma mater's homecoming over the weekend (Wagner College, class of '##).

I go almost every year and I always have a good time but things were different this year. While the beers were still free and it was good seeing some old friends, I was now the oldest alumni of my friends in attendance. It sure took long enough, but I finally feel old. Wagner is now an almost Ivy League school at this point (it sure wasn't when I went there) and as a result seems to attract a hotter student body, so to speak. I know it's not just my age, and maybe the girls are dressed more provocatively these days but, there a way more hot girls attending that



school now and all me and my friends could do is stand around and stare at them like the guys on King Of The Hill just sipping beers and saying "Yep". The problem is I still think I can successfully hit on these girls because in my mind I'm still 21. To these girls, though, I look as old to them as people my age did when I went to school there saying "Who brought the dinosaurs?". The only thing I could do was stand by my friend's new BMW Z3 and tell anyone who asked that it was mine. That seemed to work for a while. Doesn't matter. I couldn't score when I was younger either. Some things never change. It occurs to me that the only difference between a horny young man and a so called dirty old man is only about 10 years or so. One interesting episode: watching a sorority girl puke in the parking lot, go into the woods to pee, completely fall down a hill and wipe out and have to be carried out by her limbs. Ah, those were the days... And let's not mention those Jets this week...

9/24/02: 1st Bitter End show date set

Just talked to Kenny at The Bitter end. It looks like our first show there will be Nov.14th at 9:30, Greg Tannen will be opening. OK, now I'm beginning to get nervous. Time is ticking so much louder now. "The clock is laughing at the only joke he needs..."

9/25/02: Bass player here and gone, well dressed homeless, searching for "covers"

OK, now I'm really beginning to worry. The bass player I had online to be in the band has been hired to do a recording project with someone else for more money. While I can understand he's gotta do what he can as a freelance musician to make money, I'm really panicking about the prospect of not having a band for this show that just booked yesterday (!) Not only that, the website isn't any closer to done than it was 2 months ago. As it stands now, I'm preparing to have to cancel the gig, have no band, no website and become pretty depressed for the holiday season. Can someone remind me why I'm doing this? OK, I must try and remember that there's probably a very good reason I don't have this bass player anymore. Maybe there's a better one around the corner that I just don't know about yet. I'm trying to stay positive. As Voltaire writes in *Antigone*: "All is for the best in this best of all possible worlds."

So I'm walking to work the other day, and I see a homeless man wearing a brand new Chaps by Ralph Lauren sweater. I can't even afford those clothes. And I work for their ad agency! Since when do the homeless dress better than me? Maybe he was just a narcoleptic account executive that needed a nap right there and then...

I've been thinking about doing a cover with this new band. Maybe a few of them. It occurs to me that many new bands have been broken by doing a remake of a popular song first before introducing their original stuff (The Lemonheads' "Mrs. Robinson", Limp Bizkit's (I fucking hate Fred Worst) "Faith" etc.) But what song to do? It's gotta be something that was a big hit a while back but not so long ago that no one would remember it. And something that harkens back to my singer/songwriter roots. Maybe amped up versions of "You're So Vain" ? "Summer Breeze"? That might be funny. Please send me any ideas you might have.

10/2/02: BAND FINALLY TOGETHER, the 9-5 cam, band name?

I am proud to announce I finally have a band! It's about fucking time, too. Roger, God bless him, has found me 2 of some of the best freelance player around. Both Berkeley grads, too, I believe. They've all played together beforehand have nothing but good things to say about each other. The bass player is so in demand that I can only get him for two rehearsals before the show. I'm anxious to see what we'll sound like. View this space for details in the future. I don't what you were all so worried about. I told you everything would be fine, didn't I?

And the website is finally coming together as well (although by the time you read this it'll be done already). A friend of mine had an interesting idea for the site: a 9-5 cam! A webcam that would sit on top of my computer at work in case you ever wanted to see me working my day job. I'm sure my IT administrator will never go for it but I think it would be funny if I actually could set it up.

I've been thinking that it's easier to break a band name than it is to sell a solo artist. There are many "bands" out there now that are really just one guy (Badly Drawn Boy, Dashboard Confessional, anyone remember NIN?). So should I call this new project by a band name and if so what name? I'm thinking just "Massimo". It's what everybody calls me anyway. When I call someone on the phone I don't say "It's Michael" (because then they say "Michael who") I usually say it's "Massimo" and then they know exactly who it is. I had an English teacher in high school who only called people by their last name for this very reason. It's more unique. And it's not like it hasn't been done before, using the last name as the name of the band. To use some poor examples: Bon Jovi, Hanson, Winger (!), Nelson

(enough with the 80's bands already!). Then again there's the problem of mispronunciation. I think I'm gonna stick with it for now and use the full name for any solo gigs I might do (or maybe not? Just use Massimo all the time? Like Cher? Like Madonna?) Opinions anyone?

10/16/02: band begins rehearsals, west coast trip #2, no California dreaming for MM

So I've had a couple of rehearsal with the band(minus the bass player for now) and I must say I'm getting a little excited. We're starting to sound pretty good and these new songs are beginning to sound like what I had in mind when I wrote them. The new guitar player, Jess, is really good and a nice guy, too. It's one thing to play with talented musicians but it's even better when you like spending time with these guys too. I mean, this is supposed to be fun, right? We're getting together this weekend at my apt. to work out all the guitar parts. With any luck we might even start on harmonies next week! But maybe I'm getting a little ahead of myself here...

Went to Cali last weekend again (to see a girl, long story...). Didn't actually spend much time in LA, though. Went south to Laguna Beach (sadly NOT where Laguna Seca racetrack is), a rich little beach town. Beautiful coastline but the economy was a bit too expensive for this musician's bank account. Went farther south through San Diego to the town of Imperial Beach, just 10 min. from the Mexico border and got a room right on the beach. This town I liked a lot. Just a cute little beach town in its off-season, not too crowded, nice shops. Bought a 400 million year old sea creature fossil. Watched people catch Mackerel off a pier. (I know, this is really exciting for you.) Then went to San Diego's Gaslamp district for dinner. Good food (the Dakota) and hopping nightlife there. I recommend it although I didn't even see half of what the city has to offer. Then to Tijuana the next day. What a trashy town that is! There's basically 4 main businesses that repeat themselves block after block: taco stand, silver shop, nudie bar, pharmacy. That right, I said pharmacy. Because in Mexico, no prescriptions necessary! For anything! Don't think I didn't come home with a few "souvenirs". And tequila, of course. Then back to LA to walk through some museums (including the Petersen Auto Museum. Really cool. Complete with cheesy dioramas depicting a certain time frame behind every car) and the world famous La Brea Tar Pits! Woo! Not that exciting really. Just a couple of pools of tar with methane gas bubbling through them. If that isn't a place to take a date, I don't know what is. Now about LA...

First of all everything they say about driving in LA is absolutely true. I got lost a few times (me, the Eagle Scout. Can you believe it?) and I blame it on the sorry state of signage on the entire LA freeway system. I was doing 85mph and traffic was pulling away from me (!) except when it slowed down without warning because somebody had to read a sign. In my opinion all the signs on LA freeways should say one thing: "You Just Passed You Exit" or "Good Luck" as in "good luck trying to find out where you're going because you'll get no help from us signs". You get about 1/2 mile warning at best before any exit if you get any at all. So if you're in the left lane of a six lane hwy doing 85 so you don't get run over, you get only a few seconds to cross the entire hwy to make your exit, provided there was even a sign alerting it to you in the first place. Piss poor city planning. There were many times I made lane changes and just prayed for the best. Keep in mind this is coming from someone who absolutely loves to drive.

Besides that, I just get a really weird vibe from LA as a whole. And I want to like it because I'm out there pretty often visiting someone close to me. Yes, the city itself has a lot to offer. I'm talking about the people. There's hardly ever anyone on the streets there and if there were, you don't get the impression you'd want to talk to them anyway. It's a kind of subtle hostility I can't put my finger on. There's no sense of community. Very every-man-for-

himself. Everyone just keeps to themselves and only seems interested in you in as much as you can help them further their careers. It's like the whole city is one big movie set but there aren't any cameras rolling. I'll take NYC any day of the week. If you ever think you hate NYC, just go to any other city for a while and then come back. You'll have a whole new appreciation for it. At least this town has a pulse. And maybe you won't like what people say all the time but at least you'll never have to guess where their coming from. I'm gonna stay for a while...

11/1/02: the Ride gets bumpy, band/website coming along nicely, MM sick before the gig as usual

OK. So it's always a pain in the ass getting the newsletter out but this time it was worse than usual. Aside from the writing of it and laying it out on the computer (which I don't really mind) it's over 700 pieces that need to be copied double sided, addressed (more on that later), tri-folded (thank you Kinko's), taped closed with tabs (by hand) and have postage put on them (by hand, again).

But first I had to edit the list that's been neglected for so long (took off people who aren't at their radio station/publication/organization anymore, never came to shows, added in the TT list and deleted doubles). This took a few days (I do have a day job as well). When I tried merging all these addresses into a document that would print them on the already printed newsletters, it wouldn't print. Neither would the old MM list. So I did what I'm good at: I panicked.

I tried everything: increasing the memory to the printer, cutting and pasting the whole list into a new document in case the document was corrupted, shortening the list in to smaller pieces, putting the document on a disk so I could print it from another computer, checking cables, sending it to a different printer. This took hours. Nothing worked. I began to get concerned that my data files were ruined somehow. Called my computer genius cousin for help (thanks Anthony) and he had no trouble with the files on his PC (which only generated more Mac-hating rhetoric from him. He hates Macs). So I decided to go to sleep and try it tomorrow.

I determined the problem was the document itself and after trying a few things, I finally got it to work. I needed to "fake out" Word into making a "custom envelope" instead of making the envelope it was programmed to make. ANNOYING! Anyway, now onto the postage dilemma.

The initial merge document I created (the one that wouldn't print) had 1487 pages (one for each address). While I thought that was a lot (my list has never been that long) I never questioned it at the time and went ahead and bought 1,500 stamps from the FDR Post office (53rd & Lex). What I didn't discover until later was that Word, in its infinite wisdom, decided to put a blank page in-between each address; the actual list was only 740. So this left me with roughly 8 rolls of 100 stamps I didn't need. That's a lot of money I could have back (\$296!), so I tried to return them. Waaaaay more of a hassle than you might imagine.

The woman at the post office told me it's USPS policy not to give refunds (this is stated nowhere in the entire post office. You would think someone might mention that to you when you're spending over \$500 on stamps). I remained calm and asked to speak to a supervisor who told me the same thing only this time with a really smug attitude. My calm promptly left me, never to return. After pleading with him (Kenny Wappinger. Please crank call him if you want: 212-330-5597) for several more minutes I was handed a customer service flyer for the USPS that had an 800 number he suggested I call. I left extremely angry, shouting

to everyone in the place as a public service announcement that there is no refunds for stamps. (Cops eyed me warily. I can be very unnerving in situations like these.) When I called the customer service line I was told there is no such policy (!) but there was nothing they could do. I asked for a supervisor who referred me to Consumer Affairs, who referred me to the retail division of that post office, who referred me to the same fucker who wouldn't give me a refund in the first place! So I tried again thinking I might get a different result. I got Consumer Affairs to open up a case file (!) on the matter and they promised someone would get back to me within one postal business day. (I'm still waiting for the phone to ring.) Knowing this was a road to nowhere I thought I might try getting a different result at a different post office. I called the Edison Post Office where I live (home of Skytide Music's PO Box 141). They said it would be no problem. Just come in when the supervisor was there and she would take care of it. I filled out a simple form and was handed my refund in cash. How easy was that? Thank you Jersey.

So of course I had to call back Mr.Wappinger and give him a piece of my mind. The conversation went something like this:

"Hello. Can I speak to Mr.Wappinger please?"

"Who's calling?"

"Fred Sanford."

(short pause)

"This is Kenny Wappinger."

"Hi. I called yesterday regarding the refunding of some stamps I bought and you told me it was not your policy to give refunds."

"That's right. It's not our-"

"Then how come I just got a cash refund at a different post office?"

"Well out pol-"

"Listen to me very closely. Fuck you. You can take your fucking policy and shove right up your ass sideways."

I found that to be an extremely satisfying conversation. Anyway, the newsletter will finally go in the mail Monday morning. All's well that ends.

Meanwhile, then band is coming along very nicely. My guitar player (Jess) came over last night to work on parts and we got a lot of work done. Getting together on Sun. as well to work on sound. The website should near completion this weekend as well. It better. If everyone that gets the newsletter promoting the site actually goes there only to find the old one up, they're going to be extremely unimpressed.

Boy, am I going broke fast. For anyone who's never done this let me tell you there's a lot of expenses in putting together a project like this: paying musicians for the show/rehearsals, studio time, postage. Then there's equipment (new tubes for the amp, strings, volume pedal) getting the new headshots done, paying the web guy. Sure, some of these are one-time fees but still. Me and my credit cards are getting very intimate and I am not someone who's very comfortable with debt at all. So some to the show so I know this isn't all for nothing!

All this pre-gig stress has worn me down to where I'm finally getting sick. Great. Just what I needed. I never get sick. At least it's happening now and not 2 weeks from now or I would have to kill myself just on principal. I'm such a joy to be around when I have a cold (note sarcasm). I get insane when I can't sing. I'm going to get some much-needed rest. Hope to see you soon.

11/15/02: day after Bitter End show wrap up

So the gig was pretty good last night. I'm not feeling like I thought I would today, though. I thought I'd feel all triumphant but instead I'm feeling....I don't know. I guess the word I'm looking for is anticlimactic. I just thought last night would've been bigger than it was. That's what I get for building things up in my head too much...



First of all, I'd just like to give a monumental "FUCK YOU" to the cop who gave me a \$70 (!) seatbelt ticket as I was sitting in traffic on 40th St. after coming through the Holland tunnel. Blew my whole profit margin for the gig. That ticket plus parking and tolls had me down \$100 before I even played a note. He was sitting in his cruiser having breakfast and had to put down his doughnut to come out of his car to give me a ticket. What is it with me that I inspire this kind of behavior in people? You know for a fact he wasn't pulling over anyone with NY plates. I

would've appreciated it more if he just held a gun to my head and said "give me \$70 dollars now". Next time can I have a little lube when I get reamed? It's not enough I pay higher taxes as a commuter to work in NYC? The City is on the verge of bankruptcy these days so watch your wallet if you intend on visiting. I'm sure writing a ticket for spitting on the sidewalk wouldn't be out of the ordinary. But I digress...

Turnout for the show was OK but I thought there'd be more people for all the promotion I did. And considering my Mom and her friends accounted for 6, it really wasn't a very good draw. Well, what do you expect after not having done a show in # 1/2 years (!). As far as how we played, opinions differ. There's my opinion and then there's everybody else's. Everybody else thought we rocked and absolutely loved the new tunes. Me personally, I think I could've been better. Could've played better, sung better, remembered lyrics I wrote (!). True, I am always my worst critic but it's not like I'm never happy with my performances; I just always set the bar really high. How else can you find out what you're made of? This being the first show in a long time, I will admit to being somewhat nervous. I'm sure the next show will be better (date/time TBD). I just have to learn how to play like I don't give a shit.

And as far as taping the show goes, the Bitter End's tape deck died before we went on so all I have is Roger's minidisc recording which I haven't heard yet. If it's any good, I'll put the best bits up on the site. And I forgot all about taking audience photos; it was all I could do to just get through the gig. I almost couldn't wait to get off stage. Man, I was nervous. Nothing a few more shows can't fix...

I do want to say "THANK YOU" to everybody who showed up. (And all the new people who signed the list - Thanks, Sharon!) I couldn't do any of this without you. It was great seeing everyone and I hope to see you all again soon. I'll have more new songs for you next time

around. Hopefully with harmonies.

Now to the pub to cure this raging hangover.....

11/18/02: tape of the show not so good, descriptions?

Roger came over today with a CD of the minidisc recording of the show. People always say I'm hard on myself and the show wasn't really that bad but the proof really is (or isn't) in the pudding. Boy, were we rough. I had so many vocal "clams" I could've been serving them on the 1/2 shell. The potential here is obvious, though. This is a great band, just need some more polishing. "Daylight" seems to be the only song I don't have major issues with so it should be up on the site soon. The recording itself is decent quality but not good enough to put in a press kit. We have to get into the studio soon so I can have something to send to clubs.

Still getting some good audience feedback. While one person likened the band before us (Greg Tannen) to Tom Petty, they were hard pressed to find someone who you could use to help describe our sound. It's nice to be unique, I guess, just really difficult to market. So I'm always interested in finding accurate ways to describe our sound. If anyone who was at the show thinks they've pinpointed it, please email me. It helps when answering the dreaded question: "Who do you sound like?" Lately I've been telling people I sound like John Mayer just way edgier and with a higher voice. Also, I find out now that the whole show was being webcast through the club's website (www.bitterend.com) so anyone who couldn't make it out could've seen us on the web. Just as well. Being our first show I can pretty much guarantee the next one will be better. Besides, I'd much rather have people some see us in person. The club doesn't count "virtual" attendance when figuring out how many people we brought.

Calling again today to get a Dec. Bitter End date. Gonna try for a Friday at 8:30 this time. Maybe more people will be able to make it. Can't believe they don't have all of Dec booked already. If they do, I'll just have to wait until January. Gives us more time to work on our sound which we need. Once I have something booked to work towards we'll get back into a regular rehearsal schedule. But today I'm just going to work on putting my life back in order; I let a lot of things go while prepping for this show...

12/4/02: Goodbye to old songs, possible solo acoustic gig, winter blues

I have been trying very hard to breathe new life into some of my old catalog but the truth is I'm just not feeling it. It's hard enough to get back into the same mindset that I was when I originally wrote these songs, and even though I feel I can say things better now, I'm not so sure some of those songs had content worth writing about in the first place. I may keep the music to songs like "Music" and just write completely different lyrics over them. So aside from "Asylum" and "Precious Seconds" (that we played at the last show) it's all about writing new songs. It's kind of freeing in a way. Of course, the flip side to this is that now I don't have half the songs I thought I had. I better get busy writing some new stuff fast! May even throw in a cover now and then (the other day I was thinking Steely Dan's "Pretzel Logic" might be good. Ideas anyone?). Should have 3 or 4 new ones at the next show that no one's heard yet.

A friend who used to live here but is now in living LA (Karen Schleifer. Also might bring another LA s/s with her, Patty Medina) is coming into NYC for the holidays and wants to do an impromptu solo acoustic show here somewhere. I don't know what's available now (Dec.'s completely booked at most venues already) but I think it'll be a good thing to get

back to my solo acoustic roots no matter where we play.

It's been hard to keep moving these days. I don't know about you, but I am turning into the biggest Scrooge with each passing year. I don't start feeling Xmas cheer until maybe Xmas eve. I think it's the weather most of all. I really just hibernate from Nov. until March. I feel like your life is on hold until you get through the holidays. It's hard to see through to the new year until it's actually here. And the holidays just magnify everything, good and bad. For example, if you have someone special, it's even better. If you don't, it only highlights that you don't. But that's why have mistletoe and the New Year's midnight kiss!

And forget about trying to write right now. I'm lucky if I get enough motivation to buy food. It's been hard finding my "voice". I mean, what really makes a good song these days anyway? I think I'll just try collecting some raw material for later use instead of trying to write a whole song. I get so torn about this whole "career" of mine. Some days I really like it, singing, jamming on my guitar. Other days I get terminally cynical and wonder why I started this all up again in the first place. Believe me, the more you know about this industry, the more you wish you didn't know. There's always more reasons to quit than there are to keep going. But what would I do instead? I guess it's true, though - if everyone could do it, they would. But doesn't it seem like everybody and their brother is these days? Wow, I'm just so inspiring today, aren't I? But you never know what you're going to get with this part of the site. You get the good and the bad. There's no editing. If you want fairy tales, go talk to Mother Goose.

Musicians - we're such a stable lot. I think you really do have to be crazy to be in this business.

I guess I belong after all...

12/12/02: Solo Acoustic Show Booked, Endorsement Deal With D'Addario Resigned

So wonder of wonders, the Baggot Inn (82 W.3rd. St., www.baggotinn.com/baggot.html) was nice enough to find a spot for us (me & two LA singer/songwriters: Karen Schleifer and Patty Medina) on Sunday Dec. 22nd at 6:30 just before their INDUSTRY SHOWCASE. OK, I know what you're thinking. The words "industry showcase" usually really mean something to the effect of "I invited some A&R guys and if their cars happen to break down nearby, they'll be there". But supposedly some A&R person from Sony is expected to attend. Whatever. I just want to do a show I can be proud of. I'm really looking forward to it. (I'm so bipolar sometimes. See last entry) As much as I'm all about the band now, there'll be something comforting about playing some of these new songs in the solo acoustic setting that I know best.

Still waiting for the Bitter End to start booking January. I'm hoping to get Friday the 24th at 8 or 9...

Resigned my endorsement deal with D'Addario strings today. This doesn't mean much except for the fact that I get to order strings at a discount, have my artist profile up on their site (www.daddariostrings.com) and can continue to put "Michael Massimo uses D'Addario guitar strings exclusively" on all my literature. No big deal but it sounds kinda cool anyway.

Going to my first NFL game ever Sun at the Meadowlands (thanks, Sal!): Giants vs. Cowboys. Not very exciting football, I know, but who cares? I'm psyched to go. If only to see Dallas get beat (I hope). Of course my heart will be with the Jets in Chicago...

12/16/02: football sadness, more Baggot show details/girls with guitars, new strategy, Puddle Of Mudd please please die

So, it seems the Jets do actually suck. I wasn't sure for a while but now I am. Further research in Chicago last night proves it. Yes, Chicago. I knew they were going to lose that game. They'll probably wind up winning in New England on Sunday (but seriously...) but no one will care. I still have nothing bad to say about Chad Pennington. But I digress...

Got more info on Sunday's solo acoustic industry showcase show with Karen Schleifer at the Baggot Inn (Patty Medina will unfortunately not be joining us). Seems not only is it an industry showcase but it's an "all-female" industry showcase and they're kind of just squeezing me in so Karen and I can play which is cool if not a bit ironic. While I am really happy to be on this bill and am looking forward to playing on Sun. night, I've about had it with the "all-female" nights that seem to be everywhere now. The truth is girls don't need any extra help getting noticed - they're girls. That's right - I said it and I'll say it again. They can get away with so much more talent and content-wise because of their physiology (is that a word?). It's just the way the world works. I'm OK with that and guilty of the lust that perpetuates the stereotype. Sex sells, no question about it. But what bothers me is having it be a classification at all. It should just be "singer/songwriters". But these days you always see shows being billed as "female singer/songwriter night" and the like. It's like a musical Affirmative Action. You never see guys having a "male singer/songwriter night" and if we did we'd be called chauvinists. It exclusionary. It all started with Tracy Chapman in '87 with "Fast Car" (which I do think is a great song, BTW). Suddenly there was this tidal wave of estrogen washing over the entire Billboard chart. No one wanted to hear from male solo artists. Or if they did they couldn't go by their own name; they had to create a "band" (Dashboard Confessional, Bright Eyes, Badly Drawn Boy - all current 1 man "bands"). So, many girls took their cue from the radio, bought guitars, taught themselves how to play and set out to do their best Jewel impersonations.

Now take it easy, everyone: I can already hear the feminists typing away. Please don't get me wrong: I have nothing against "female singer/songwriters", a lot of what I listen to would be classified as such (Patti Griffin, Jonatha Brooke (absolutely love her!), Fiona Apple, Shawn Colvin) - there are some very talented singer/songwriters who just happen to be women. But being a cute girl should not by itself be a license to get up on stage. Learn your instrument, learn to write a good lyric, a good song, even, before assaulting the public. Otherwise go be a model instead. Yes, I know I should be encouraging to all but in my opinion there's been too much coddling; it's time for some tough love.

I don't mean to cheapen the words "singer/songwriter" by using her as an example because she really isn't one but I but I just have to say Avril Lavigne needs a beating, like, yesterday. Surely it's not her stellar songwriting skills that got her where she is today. "Sk8er Boi" ? Please. Like that song isn't annoying enough by itself; the title needs to be spelled in some bullshit ghetto slang. I'm sure that makes it a much better song. She's not even hot enough that she should be allowed to be as annoying as she is. Read any interview with her (see the RS "Women In Rock" issue) and you'll know exactly what I mean. And let's get back to Jewel (who's voice I actually happen to like). I'm not sure anybody would've listened to her sing about making a smiley face with her eggs in the morning ("You Were Meant For Me") if she didn't fill out her dress so well? A good "what if" topic for debate. (Everyone who listens to music is not in first grade, Jewel. Please go back to writing bad poetry; at least it's silent.) It's performers like these that detract from and undermine those women who really are good at what they do and don't cater to the lowest common denominator to make the quick buck. Hey, I have nothing wrong with female singer/songwriters using their sex appeal to sell records and have a career; it's part of the

program. I just want them to be talented enough to justify it, dig a little deeper. Yes, the same could be said for certain guys as well (Justin, I'm looking in your direction) but it seems girls get away with less more often because they're easier on the eyes. Maybe it's just me.

But solo guys might finally be making a comeback after years of waiting for the Wave of Estrogen to recede. There have been some male artists out there in the marketplace peeking through now and then (John Mayer (!), Ryan Adams, Pete Dinklage, David Gray, Elliot Smith) mixing things up a bit, fighting for what little space the charts and radio playlists afford them. We need more like them.

And not like them, if you know what I mean.

Anyway, who am I to say anything about anything? I'm just some guy with a guitar, an opinion and a website with unlimited space to write any damn thing I want to. Please tell me how wrong I am – I'd love to hear from you. Anyway, all that being said, I want to state again that I actually can't wait to play on Sunday and I'm really looking forward to sharing the stage with some talented performers. I don't care what gender they are and you shouldn't either. OK, enough petty cynicism (for now).

In other "news", I've been trying to rebook The Bitter End. I'd like to book some other clubs but I don't have a recording of anything new to put into a press kit to give to them. I was happy enough just to see if I could bring people to the Bitter End first before trying anywhere else. Maybe I've been a little hesitant. It's just been really hard to getting the band to fully realize what I hear in my head with all the vocal arrangements and everything. I think the only way I'm going to do that is to make a recording. Then I can have the band just replicate what I've recorded. So, while I will continue to play out with them, the major focus is going to be getting us into a studio ASAP. To that end Roger (always a big help) is going to introduce me to someone he knows who has a major label quality studio and a lifetime's worth of recording experience working in the industry on big name projects. Evidently this guy is willing to work with us for way less than he's worth. That's good because as of right now my recording budget is zero. Maybe even less than zero. I really need to work on that. Donations anyone?

Just made the mistake of turning on the radio right now. OK, Puddle Of Mudd? You need to die. Right Now. Waste no time. Assemble the firing squad. I'm convinced their execution is necessary for the continuation of the human race. I'm so not kidding. I just heard a song so bad on K-Rock (AKA: Amateur Night) that I thought it was a joke. Total rip off of REM's "Stand" riff with lyrics that could've been written by an elementary school student. I think the song was "She Hates Me" or something like that. "She" hates you, alright, and soon so will everyone else. So, so bad and so, so annoying. Why does it not surprise me that this is their song? I'm sitting there waiting for the announcer to tell me who the band is and then it's like, "Oh, of course. Who the fuck else would it be?" This is the same band that brought us the radio gem "Control" with such lyrical nuggets like "I like the way you slap my ass". If you're wondering why it's so difficult to continue in the popular music arena you need look no further than this band. This is why radio sucks. Hard. It rewards the talentless and programs to 11 year olds. And it is, of course, no shock that we have none other than record company "executive" genius Fred "Wurst" to thank for signing this insufferable testament to just how bad a band can be. He knows all about how to put a shitty band together; we're all familiar with his contribution to the music world, that band of Einsteins known as Limp Bizkit. ("Limp" is right. At least their guitar player knew to distance himself from that project. Don't think it's an accident they can't find a replacement for him. If there is God, he can't let this band reassemble.) But back to Puddle Of Piss. Who is buying this

crap anyway? As Roger would say they are "relentlessly mediocre". As in, there is no escape from their onslaught of mediocrity. Run and hide but it will find you. Every single time you turn on the radio. To sum up: Puddle of Mudd - possibly the worst band ever. Thank you. Oh, and while I'm at it, the Chili Peppers need to retire. Today. Anthony Kiedis, you can't sing. You never could. Even your band knows that. Stick to rapping if you must continue making music.

OK, that's plenty for now; I need to settle down. Let me have it if you feel the need; I'll post your responses. I just like to test if people are reading this at all.

And BTW, Audioslave rocks! People say it only sounds like the lead singer from Soundgarden singing for Rage Against The Machine. And? Your point is?

12/18/02: new Bitter End date set

The Bitter End actually called me today. That's a first. I guess we weren't as bad as I thought last time there. All the Fridays were booked already and the rest of the month was going fast. I thought it was really nice of them to think of me before the whole month was gone. They (really Ken Gorka, great guy, a real pro, one of the few) offered me a Thursday night opening for a band that just got signed to Atlantic ([New Blood Revival](#), from Jersey, I think. I haven't heard of them yet either.) Seems he really wants to work with me to put me in front of people that matter. Really nice of him, I thought. Thanks for the support, Kenny! Of course it helps if all of you don't make a liar out of him and actually come to the show; please don't disappoint. We won't: THURSDAY JANUARY 9th, 9:30. See you there!

12/23/02: Jets post game, Baggot post game

Like I said last week, the Jets would win against New England. Awesome game. It of course means nothing unless we beat Green Bay next week and New England beats Miami. Both not probable, but possible...

I'm gonna pat myself on the back here and say that I did a great show last night at the Baggot. See? I can be happy with my performances. Although barely anyone from my camp was there to see it, I did OK returning to the solo acoustic format which was all I really cared about. Being the token guy to open up an all-female showcase, I was about as popular as a one-legged man in an ass-kicking contest but I didn't care (no offense to professional ass-kickers or one-legged men). The guy who ran the showcase was impressed with me and said he'd like to have me back, might pass me off to the guy that books rock/pop. Maybe I'll get the band a Friday or Saturday there. The place is around the corner from the Bitter End, though. I'm not sure if that's a good thing or a bad thing. I don't want them competing for attendance and getting little at each venue. Still, it's always good to have another place to play and if I space the dates out right it could work. It'd be nice to play a Friday for once. I'll keep you posted. As far as the "industry" part of the night goes, let's just say no great strides were made there...

Have a Merry Christmas and a very happy New Year!

12/30/02 JETS ARE AFC EAST CHAMPS, rehearsals going well

Who would've believed it in week four, but the Jets are the AFC East Champs! What a game against Green Bay last night! Of course the only thing better than winning the division is doing it with the help of New England. Thanks, Pats! Bring on the Colts!

Had our first rehearsal since the show a month and a half ago and while we were still a bit rough I was really pleased with how things went. We're sounding better every time. I'm confident this next show will be way better than the last. And when is that show, you might ask? THURSDAY JANUARY 9th, 9:30, The Bitter End. Be there! (please)

1/15/03: Bitter End postgame/Jets' season ends

I just want to say that we absolutely rocked last week at The Bitter End. 180 degrees from the last time we played there. I'm not saying we were perfect, but we put on a really good show. If I walked in off the street and saw us playing, I would've been impressed. One observer put it thusly: "I gotta admit, seeing the first performance of the Mike Massimo show at the Bitter End was definitely different from their show tonight. Massimo sings with a grasp that asks you to think about why you do the things you do. Inspirational harmonies reflect the discordant lifestyle of the young artist as he solidifies his music. The band as a whole performs well when accurately portrayed by the sound personnel at the establishment they're performing. Guitars work...as do bass guitars, but nothing will bring cohesiveness but the man up front, the one they look to for music. Good show tonight dude..."

I concur. Unfortunately, this person was only 1 of ten on my list to actually witness the show, but the club didn't seem to mind; we'll be back on Feb. 20th. Also unfortunately, the recording didn't come as good as I hoped so no sound files from the show will be posted to the site (I know. You're still waiting for me to post "Daylight" from the last show. Some things are beyond my control.). I'll be sure to work out any recording snafus before the next show. At the very least I hope to splice together enough good bits to make a live snippet disc I can put in the press kit to get more gigs. I've been noticing an interesting trend in audience members that like our performances - they're not from around here. They're from Iowa, England, South Carolina, and yes, even Podunk, PA. Guess we'll just have to tour! While sitting near the front door, listening to New Blood Revival after coming off stage, this exchange took place:

Miss Podunk: "Great show! You should be out there networking." (an impossible task while NBR was playing) Unsolicited comment from bar patron: "He was; you didn't see him before. How much networking do you need to do anyway? Did Ghandi have to network?"

What a great quote, I thought. Not only because a conversation about me referenced Ghandi, but because I wondered whether or not Ghandi actually did network. I think all he did was network, walking around spreading his message. Maybe that's why he's so famous. He should've been a rock star. Rockin' Ghandi. Great band name.

Still kicking around ideas for a cover song. Latest suggestions: The Ocean - L.Zeppelin, Hard to Handle - B.Crows. PLEASE email me any ideas if you have any.

On the horizon, I'm trying to book a Friday at The Baggot Inn for March (7th or the 14th @ 8PM, still waiting to hear back from the club). Met with that producer Roger was telling me about. Cool guy, does good work at a fair price. I think we'll be using him in the future. The drum & bass tracks need to be recorded someplace else, though (he doesn't have the facilities). Which is fine. Well-rehearsed, we could spend one day and get the basic drum & bass tracks for possibly the whole album (I'm targeting late Feb.). Then I can build the songs on top of those tracks, one at a time, as time and money allows. All told, I'm looking to spend 2-3 grand on recording 3-5 songs (by Spring?) then spend a few grand more promoting the release, future shows, getting reviews etc. Keeping us high profile. I think 10K would get us where we need to be. Now that I have a rough dollar figure, I'll be writing

up a business plan to solicit startup funds. Anyone have any rich friends that might like to invest in a rock band?

So the Jets' season is over, ending in Oakland last Sun. Sadness. Disappointment. What else can I say? They were just too tough, never giving The Chad enough time to be the talented quarterback he knows how to be. Hopefully next season it won't take us until 2-5 (W/L) to get our act together. We will meet again, Raiders. Oh yes, we will meet again. Great billboard for ESPN spotted in Penn Station: "Even without sports, New York Would still be better than LA."

What to do until the season starts again in September? NASCAR, baby!

1/28/03: Superbowl/Bitter End date change/How cold is it?/new songs coming/Free \$20 from major labels?

So the Bucs won the Superbowl. Yeah, Raiders; eat it. Justice is served! I heard angry fans rioted in Oakland after their team lost and had to be put down with tear gas and rubber bullets. Perfect. "Our team didn't win so let's trash our own city!" Fools. Only in Cali would you see something like that. They love their riots out there, don't they? Geniuses.

The date for the upcoming show at the Bitter End has been changed from Thursday Feb. 20th to a week later, Thursday Feb. 27th, 9PM.

OK - I expected this winter to be cold, but there's cold and then there's "I almost can't breathe because the air hurts my lungs" cold. I've had it. I'm going quite mental from it, actually. Might be time for another trip to Florida (Hi, Dave). Could be good for me - I need to write more songs and haven't been able to do it here in Antarctica (AKA: New Jersey). I've been thinking about writing yet another album just to have one on reserve. 12 songs does not a catalog make. We need more. Way more. And you never really stop writing anyway. It's ongoing. It just hasn't been going on much. Plan on hearing two new songs at the show in Feb.: "Reckoning" and "Bonnie & Clyde". And as for covers, I've been thinking of doing "Angels of The Silences" by Counting Crows and/or "In The Blood" by Better Than Ezra. I think they would fit in nicely. Always taking suggestions...

Here's something interesting from our friends at CD Baby:

Have you collected your \$20 payment from the major record labels & retailers yet? They're forced to give \$44 million back to consumers, but since most people don't know about it yet, it's going mostly unclaimed. Read [this article from the AP newswire](#), Then [CLICK THIS LINK](#) to file your claim.

Cool, huh?

It seems only fair that musicians should get as much of this \$44 million as possible! There's some kind of poetic justice here.

Just one of the many reasons why CD Baby rocks.

PS: Oh yeah, and the new Foo Fighters? Don't ask questions - just buy it now. It, too, rocks.

2/14/03: Florida trip/MM teaches seventh grade/new songs on the way

So, I did wind up having to flee this weather and took a trip to Florida. Now before you start getting jealous, know that it only broke 70 degrees maybe twice the whole time I was down

there. It was actually cold. OK, not freeze-your-nuts-off cold like it is here, but definitely see-your-breath-in-the-air cold.

The thing few people realize about FL is that aside from its coast, there's a whole lot of nothing there. And I mean nothing. It's really just one big swamp with long, straight, flat, desolate roads to nowhere. So if you're not near a beach and you don't like to fish (I do but it just didn't happen), there's not a whole lot to do there. And I was staying in a large patch of nothing (Palm Coast/Flagler county). Near a beach, yes, but the weather prevented any real sun-on-the-skin time. But boredom makes for creativity which was one of my reasons for getting away so that was good. The Rolex 24hr race at Daytona was awesome as usual. Hot girls, cool cars, slot car racing (I placed in the top 5!), grilling food, fire pits in the infield and a sports car race going on all around you the whole time. Expect pictures to be up on the gallery page sometime soon. (Or not. It'll probably be some time before I get them all developed and retouched, scanned, etc. Even then, who knows how long it will take to actually get them on the site. Yes, Doug, I'm talking to you).

Taught a seventh grade class (!) while in FL. The wife of the friend I was staying with (Dave and Denise Skinner. Thanks so much for the hospitality!) invited me to talk to her class about advertising and NYC in general. Unbeknownst to me she'd been hyping my visit for days, introducing me to them as Mike From New York. You can't imagine the battery of questions these kids asked. Wonderfully inquisitive. Everything from "Can you get me tickets to Shea Stadium?" to "Do you get mugged on your way to work?". Funny story: the next day she took the class on a field trip and one of the girls was crying on the bus ride there because a boy had broken up with her. Denise told the girl to toughen up and be strong and she replied "Like Mike from New York?". If only. Classic.

Also did some motorcycle riding (thanks Dave for the use of your Triumph Thunderbird 900) and yes, managed to get some writing done. Almost done with "Big Idea" (which I should've finished months ago but sometimes songs are just uncooperative), started two new songs "Just Three Words" and "Anything For You" (strange how you write mostly love songs only after a relationship fails. Don't worry; they rock), and reworked "Music" (the lyrics of which I've grown tired of) into a new song called "Anyone". So definitely making an attempt to deepen the song catalog. Expect the debut of two songs you haven't heard yet ("Reckoning" and "Bonnie & Clyde") at the next Bitter End show (Thursday 2/27, 9PM). Still trying to nail down a Friday at the Baggot Inn. Right now 4/27 at 7PM is tentative. Thought of another cover for us: "The Difference" by the Wallflowers. What do you think?

Happy (?) Valentine's Day. Might as well name it Feel Sorry For Yourself Day for those of us who are terminally single. Curse you, happy couples...

In the CD player lately: 1000 Kisses - Patty Griffin (I never tire of hearing her voice), Audioslave (his neither), A Rush of Blood To The Head - Coldplay (they're growing on me. As usual I like the songs not released as singles best), and on endless repeat: One By One - Foo Fighters.

Hope to see you all on the 27th.

3/10/03: Bitter End postgame/demo plans-booking update/"The Oscar goes to..." /writing "from the heart"

So the show last week at the Bitter End was OK. I must admit to not paying much attention to who was on when because when they called my name as the next band, I was a little taken by surprise. I thought I had way more time. Big rush to get ready to go on, everyone

a little frazzled. But we're professionals, right? (Right?!) We played pretty well. I had to keep reminding myself during that show that everything was OK - it felt like we were running off the rails the whole time. But whatever. The crowd was happy. Including two people I met that thought we were excellent. And it was great hanging out with them, getting to know them. And unfortunately finding out later it could've all been just talk. One girl said she got signed to (or was about to be signing) a deal with Sony (she was invited up to sing with one of the bands later on in the evening - she was talented) but failed to make good on invitations to be with her in the studio and sing with my band (She left me a bogus number! It's been a long time since that's happened to me. Ouch.). Her friend, while also very complimentary, gracious and apparently rich (buying CD's and paying for my drinks all night) had me convinced he owned several clubs in NYC and would finance future Massimo projects. Which I suppose could still be true but following up with this guy has proved too impossible to be real. Anyway....

I must give credit to a fan who, on his own, had a Massimo t-shirt made from pics on the site! (Thanks for spreading the word, Joe!). It made me think maybe I should make some t-shirts of my own. So that's what I'm going to do; I've been designing some ideas. Look for free t-shirt giveaways at future shows. I'm working on it...

I called the Bitter End too late this month to get something for March so we're looking at early April for the next MM show. Still in contact with someone about doing a showcase at the Continental. In earlier Flipsides I had mentioned doing a recording of broadcast quality for our demo. While I still think that is a good idea, I am so desperate to make a recording of any kind just to get us more/better/any gigs. So I'm looking into just doing a one-day live recording session to get whatever we can to make us a booking disc. Who knows? With added overdubs etc. we might actually get something suitable for release. I'm working on it...

So I was speeding home the other night when I got pulled over (I totally deserved it - 86 and accelerating on wet roads in a 55 MPH zone on 287 South). As soon as the trooper gets to my window I switch into hysterical mode, saying that I was coming back from dropping my sister off at my Mom's house. We had been to see my Mom at the hospital - she might die from having a heart attack earlier in the week etc., etc.. Man, I was just going for it - I simply didn't want more points on my license which in NJ are really hard to get rid of. (It's the Fascist State, don't you know). Incredibly, after some preliminary questioning (and me making up answers on the spot) the officer took my credentials and went to check everything out. I thought I was done. Surely he would check to see if and when my Mom was admitted to JFK hospital and discover I was totally lying out of my ass. But he didn't. He just gave me a ticket for careless driving and warned me to get off the road. Given my emotional state, I was in no position to be driving (2 points, no insurance increase. Nice. Crisis averted!) A few days afterward, I began to receive letters from local attorneys lobbying to take my case to court (little did they know I was happy enough to receive the ticket I got, given how blatantly guilty I was) One such mailing looked like this:

I WANT TO TELL YOU CERTAIN FACTS



ABOUT THE LAW YOU SHOULD KNOW

- 1) When you send in the fine and your ticket to the court you are pleading guilty. You are giving up your right to a trial, and with most tickets you will be subject to having points put on your license.
- 2) Do NOT believe anyone who tells you "Not To Worry, Just Send in the Money" Not the police, Not your friends, Not your family, No One except a Lawyer.
- 3) Only a Lawyer can tell you the true impact of this violation on your driving privileges and its ultimate cost to you including but not limited to INCREASED INSURANCE COSTS, DMV surcharges and LOSS OF LICENSE.
- 4) Call 1-800- and set up your Free In Office Consultation. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

The person pictured above is an Actor.

Notice the type at the bottom: "The person pictured above is an Actor" (with a capital "A"). So great. I can just imagine the law firm dressing this old guy up like a judge to take this picture. (OK, more menacing, I'm not feeling scared of you. Point your finger. Yeah, like that! Perfect!)

I was figuring out the exact tempos for all my songs the other day. I noticed that most of them are between 72-82bpm (beats per minute). I wondered why this was and Roger told me it's because that tempo is closest to my resting heartbeat. Our heart beats in waltz time, BTW (beat, BEAT, rest). Interesting, that.

So I know I keep saying they're going to post soon, but I apologize for not getting any new live recordings up on the site. Sadly, the original minidisc of the only show where the quality was halfway decent, was lost. I'll keep trying. I also want to get some more pictures up in the gallery as well. My webmaster became a little distracted with some other things in his life (like there could be anything more important than my website?) so there's been a backlog of changes that need to get made. Again, I'm working on it...

4/1/03: booking update/Bitter End MP3s posted/t-shirt design

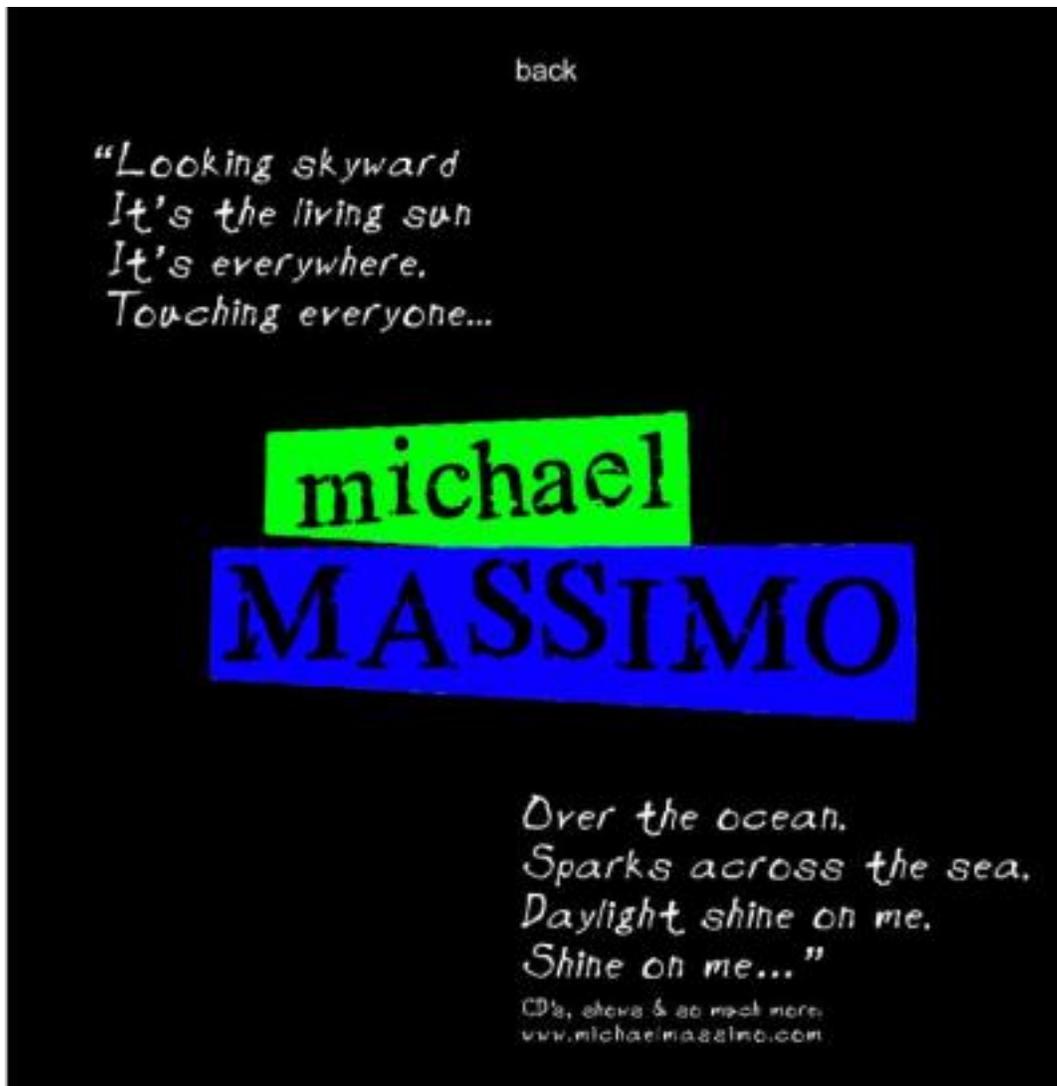
I'm sorry to report there were no shows for March and now it's looking like there won't be one for April either. Been working hard, though, trying to get other venues; I'll spare you the gory details. NEXT SHOW: WEDNESDAY 5/28, 7PM @ ACME UNDERGROUND, NYC. Upstairs you'll find some of the best Cajun food in NYC. Downstairs, a great listening room with us playing in it! Check it out: www.acmeunderground.com. Unfortunately, our show at the Baggot Inn on 4/25 has been cancelled. Please, please don't ask me why. Other clubs on the horizon: NYC - Continental, Cutting Room, Mercury Lounge, Arlene's. NJ - Whiskey Bar/Maxwell's (Hoboken), Court Tavern (New Brunswick), Stone Pony/Brighton Bar/The Saint (S. Jersey). Of course we'll need a demo to give to all these clubs; we're going into the studio next month to record one! I can't wait.

I've finally posted some live MP3s of us at the Bitter End, soon to be properly located on the music page of the site, but for now go here:

http://www.michaelmassimo.com/demo_mp3.html

And T-shirts are coming! (see design below) And by popular opinion, they will have no pocket on the front. As soon as they get made I'll be giving a few away at future shows along with discs of select Bitter End tracks (see link above). As always, feel free to write in and have your rants/pictures/artwork/links etc. posted on this site. Hope to see you/hear from you soon.





5/1/03: going into the studio!/Brighton Bar booked

I have been so busy lately; there's a lot going on behind the scenes in Massimo-land. Booked a new venue for us - The Brighton Bar in Long Branch, NJ (www.brightonbar.com). It's about time we started making the rounds in S.Jersey. The show is on Thursday, May 15th, 10:30PMish. Don't forget our other May show at Acme Underground in NYC (Wed. 5/28). Expect us at The Whiskey Bar in Hoboken and The Continental in NYC soon.

I'm happy to announce we're FINALLY GOING INTO THE STUDIO on Sunday May 18th to cut a new, long-overdue demo. Songs we plan to record: Anywhere But Here, Daylight, Deliver Me, Mountain, Accident.

In the CD player/on the turntable lately: Zwan, Bill Withers, Billy Joel, America, Incubus, Ricki Lee Jones, Bruce Hornsby, Sublime. Looking forward to getting the new Steely Dan!

That's all for now. Hope to see you all soon.

5/13/03: Continental booked/Massimo goes back to school/St Stanley Jordan at Crossroads

I guess some of our work has been paying off. Booked the [Continental](#) in NYC in June. On a Monday (the 9th). But at 7:30. I like that that we have 3 shows on the schedule now; things moving along. And probably more so after this demo gets made. It's all happening...

Got a letter from my alma mater, Wagner College, yesterday. It seems they're having a first ever, weekend-long alumni gathering in a few weeks and they'd like yours truly to join other performing graduates in a concert at the campus coffeehouse. How nice that they'd even think of me. I know I don't do the coffeehouse thing anymore but I think it would be cool to go be back on a stage I haven't been on in years and blow the froth off their cappuccinos with one of the new rocking songs. So I said I'd do it. If you're in the area (Staten Island) and you need a caffeine fix, the show starts at 8 on Fri. June 6.

Saw the legendary jazz guitarist Stanley Jordan at Crossroads in Garwood, NJ last Fri. Crossroads is a nice place, a pretty intimate venue to see someone of Jordan's stature. It's a supper club really. Food and drink is kind of pricey and you have to make reservations to guarantee a seat. Kind of like a Jersey Blue Note.

For those of you who don't know Stanley Jordan (and it's sad many don't. He's a hometown boy from Plainfield!), he is an extraordinary guitar player, one of a kind really. No one does what he does and what he does is this: while holding chords down with his left hand, he taps the keyboard with all the fingers of his right like a piano. And fast! Amazing to watch. Sounds like 2 people playing at once. But first I had to sit through a blues band, decent though they were (I hate "the blues". 1-4-5. 1-4-5. It never goes anywhere. I know people can play ripping solos to it and that's all well and good but after you're done admiring what a good player they are, where's the song? It just bores me to tears.) Then we had to sit through an endless, droning speech by Mr. Jordan's personal assistant (back fat oozing out of a dress way too small for her. Lady, cover up! People are trying to eat!) about what a genius he is, how we should show him the proper respect, how he demands complete silence during his performance (I heard he walked off last time he was here after 5 minutes because people were too loud), and how later we'll be treated to a set of new music from Stanley's latest album, 5 years in the making, of raga music resulting from a collaboration with some famous sitarist I'd never heard of (as if any sitarist beside Ravi Shankar might achieve any Western fame; and he only did because he hung with the Beatles). But first a solo set from Stanley.

And it was good. He doesn't write much, mostly does interpretations of standards that become unrecognizable when he plays them, like "Somewhere Over The Rainbow" or "Sounds Of Silence". It was impressive. But after a while it became novelty and I wanted to be moved by a composition or a groove that takes me somewhere instead of just being awed by his talent. This is probably why he doesn't have as large a following as he might. And why Metheny will always rule supreme in my book. In the CD player: Zwan, Zwan and more Zwan. It gets better every time I play it.

5/22/03: Brighton postgame/Recording almost finished/Acme teaser/Massimo's Day Off/Eating skate/Goodbye to the 'Hawk/The story of "It's All Good"

Had a great time playing the Brighton on the 15th. It wound up being a lot better than expected. I figured we'd be playing to no one (11PM on a Thurs. in Long Branch?). But we actually had some people show up for us which was pleasantly surprising. Thanks to all who came out. Looks like we'll be back there again. Hopefully with a better time slot next time.

And warmer weather (the place is just blocks from the beach).

WE MADE A DEMO!!! Finally! I'm very pleased to announce we completed basic tracks for our demo. Woo! I just need one more day in the studio to add vocal harmonies and some more guitar tracks (then mixing/mastering) but basically, we're done. Expect it to be complete by July. You'll hear it here first. Songs we recorded: Anywhere But Here, Daylight, Wasted, Accident, Mountain. I plan on maybe adding a solo acoustic version of Deliver Me, too. We just ripped through recording. 5 complete songs live in 6 hrs is pretty impressive, I thought. Things went really smoothly; we were like a well-oiled machine. (Although Roger may remember things a little differently from the previous day's rehearsal session. I kept changing tempos and previously agreed upon drum parts on him. He's sure to roast me on his site www.slamminggrooves.com. I can change my mind, can't I (Roger's note - no!)? They're my songs after all. You just examine things a lot more closely when you're going to commit to recording them). It's a real privilege to work with professionals. Pictures from the session to be posted soon. Special thanks to Charlie at [Word Of Mouth Studios](http://WordOfMouthStudios.com) (www.WOMstudio.com). He really helped keep things going. And to my friend [Matt from The Guest List for recommending him](http://www.theguestlist.com) (www.theguestlist.com)

Getting really psyched for our show at Acme next Wed. Serendipitously, we're opening for a band that's doing a major label showcase and a video shoot that night ([In Spite Of](#)). Their website seems a bit pretentious but what do I know. They're the ones showcasing for a label. Cool. Another opportunity to show a label who they really should be signing. Of course, it wouldn't be the same without you. (Please join us: Wed. May 28th, 7PM, Acme Underground, 9 Great Jones St., NYC, www.acmeunderground.com). Plus, the food there is awesome. Some of the best Cajun in the city.

So after all the rehearsals, recording, shows of the past several days, I was physically shot. So I did what any red blooded American would do - I called in "sick" Tues. Let me tell you, it was one of the greatest things I've done for myself in a very long time. Rest and relaxation is so underrated. I felt fantastic. Spent the whole day just celebrating myself, writing, singing, cranking the stereo and laughing at everyone who had to go to work (most likely, you). If you haven't taken one in a while I highly recommend the "me day"; you deserve it. You've been working too hard. Just tell your boss it was my idea, I'm sure he'll/she'll understand.

Went fishing a couple of weeks ago in Moriches Bay, Long Island. Caught this:



It's a skate/stingray. People usually throw these back, but we've been catching so many of them, I've been thinking of eating them. I had skate once at the Manhattan Ocean Club in some kind of sherry sauce and it was very tasty. If I wind up making a good meal out of one, I'll post the recipe.

And now a moment of silence for a dear friend who has left for good:



Had to sell my motorcycle (an '82 Honda Nighthawk 650, it was just getting too old. It needed too many things) last month and I miss it so much. Not only because it was my Dad's bike but because I like riding sooooo much. Now I'll have to go back to pedal power on the mountain bike. Oh well. I guess that's fun, too, in its own way. Next up: a 1999 Triumph Adventurer. Next year. Right now there's studio time to pay for and a band that need promoting...

So from time to time I like to keep people abreast of the inside jokes that pass between band members. One such item is the fact that no matter what you talk to Jess about, it's likely he'll respond with "It's all good". For a while it was fine. Then I started to get the impression that you could say anything to him and he would respond with "It's all good". Like, "Hey, Jess I just cut off your hand, burned your house to the ground and killed your dog" and he would say "It's all good". Finally I asked him why he says it all the time and he regaled me with the following story. I hope I'm telling it right:

In a time long ago there was a king and his assistant. One day they were hunting in the jungle and the assistant handed the king his rifle but had accidentally put too much gunpowder in the chamber and the resulting explosion took off one of the king's fingers. The king was so enraged he banished his assistant to the dungeon for several years. Some time later the king went hunting by himself and was captured by a tribe of cannibals (I have no idea where this story is supposed to take place) They were all ready to eat the king when they discovered his missing digit. Because of their policy of not eating any meat that has any imperfections, they let the king go. Immediately the king released his assistant and thanked him for saving his life. He responded "It's all good". The king couldn't believe his ears. "All good?! But I wrongly imprisoned you all this time! How can it be all good?" and the assistant said, "True but if I was with you on that trip they would've eaten me instead." Something to think about. See you soon - MM

6/13/03: upcoming shows/PR help/lottery philosophy/Al DiMeola @ Iridium

Sooooo much going on. Items of interest: Booked the Whiskey Bar in Hoboken for Tues. 7/1

@ 8:30PM and Kenny's Castaways (more on that later) on Tues. 7/15 @ 10:30 (Expect a long set and a couple of new songs. Could be the last show until Sept. at best).

Going into the studio all day Sunday to finish tracking for the demo (completion to be determined by future budget or delay by lack thereof).

Went to a networking meeting hosted by the folks at CD Baby for the artists on their site and I actually had fun doing the networking thing. I met tons of people and got as many CDs which I still have yet to finish listening to. Met many interesting and talented musicians that I hope to be doing shows with in the future. It's nice to know there's other people out there living the same crazy life you are.

In my spare time of which I have none, I designed the CD insert for a friend's demo. His name is Pete Garcia, he's a piano playing singer/songwriter and I would describe his sound as "Jackson Browne meets Marc Cohn". No website yet to introduce him to you but I'm thinking of doing a Bitter End show with him in Sept. if the club says OK. That would be a great night if I could swing it. No one's heard Pete in a long time so his peeps will all come out and I'm thinking of not booking anything for Aug. so a Sept. show could be big. We'll see. Actually, I've been thinking about taking an indefinite hiatus after the 7/15 show due to the financial restraints of keeping this thing going; I simply can't afford it anymore. God knows when I'll have the money to finish this demo and we're not going to get much farther without it. I find myself having to make decisions like "Do I buy food or book a rehearsal today?". Unfortunate. Things have been going so well. I just can't figure out how to do this music thing without going completely broke, insane or both. It's truly maddening to not be everything you know you're capable of. This isn't a 3 yr time out like last time; just doing some emergency budget control so I can keep a roof over my head. We've come too far. Now about that gig at Kenny's...

So I work with this girl who also has a band (Kilsy, also her name. See Klisy.com, kind of a retro punk, 80's thing. Hard to explain. Very much about the groove and the slinky, hot chick front woman. 2 bass players, no guitar. Interesting. See her at Kenny's the night we're there. Anyway...) and she's been bringing so many people to her gigs that clubs are calling her unsolicited to book shows. As this phenomenon has never happened to me, I decided to pick her brain about how she gets such great attendance. She suggested I work with a PR person. (No kidding. Who has the money?). The girl she works with does everything for free (that I can afford!). Turns out the girl is from Jersey and mainly works with Jersey-based singer/songwriters. She (Hi, Emily!) started doing it so she could group talented acts together to share the stage with a songwriter friend of hers, Sam Bisby (good idea! strength in numbers! I've been thinking the same thing!). She says she has connections with The Saint and the Stone Pony in Asbury Park (I've been meaning to book shows there, waiting for the new demo) and other places in NY/NJ as well. Also, she's putting together this Heineken sponsored show at Kenny's Castaways and 'would I like to be a part of it?'. You mean there's a chance of actually playing to an audience of more than the bar staff? Color me there. A few days later a bunch of us go to talk to the guy who's booking the thing about the show. We show him press kits etc. He sees mine and says "Massimo? As in Michael Massimo? Where've you been? You used to play here all the time!" I can't believe the guy remembered me after eight years! I guess I do tend to leave an impression on people. Pretty cool.

On a whim I bought a scratch-off lottery ticket the other day (Win For Life, natch). I usually never buy lottery tickets and here's why. I won \$2 which I of course spent on another ticket that was a loser. The thing is this: I am genuinely disappointed when I don't win the jackpot. I fully expect that because I chose this specific point in time to buy a lottery ticket

after never really doing so, that naturally I should win for life. I'm honestly shocked and sorely upset when I don't win. I even have millionaire fantasies before I start scratching off the ticket. I know what the odds are, I just don't care. I feel that jackpot is rightfully mine, I'm entitled to it somehow because I want/need it so badly. Luckily I broke the chain after that losing ticket. Until next time...

Saw Al DiMeola at Iridium in NYC last Sat. For those of you who don't know him (which I'm assuming is 99.9% of you) he is a jazz guitarist who made his name in the 70's playing fusion with the band Return To Forever before embarking on a solo career. He taught Steve Vai and Joe Satriani if that gives you any idea of his chops. Plus, he's another Jersey boy (Bergenfield?)! While I enjoyed the concert (great band, nice grooves, impressive solos, good sound!) I will say the same thing about him that I said after seeing Stanley Jordan at Crossroads: where's the song? I enjoyed listening to the band, but there were no melodies for me to latch onto. His technique is flawless; rips like no one else I've ever seen, his hands moving so fast that they are literally a blur, fascinating to watch. But I didn't leave humming anything he played. Even for the greats, a melody is a hard thing to write. In contrast, Pat Metheny composes movements (even in his solos) and links them together seamlessly. Not to mention the fact that the DiMeola ticket was \$40 and he only played for 50 minutes. I've paid less to see Pat from the 6th row and listen to him for 2 1/2 hours. Again, just two reasons why Pat's The Man and everybody else is just visiting. He remains the only musician I've ever seen to get a standing ovation just for taking the stage.

In the CD player lately: Coldplay, Sublime, Patti Griffin, Norah Jones (I think I'm getting a crush on her), Bruce Hornsby, Bill Withers (still. If you can't get happy after hearing "Lovely Day" then there's something wrong with you) and yes, Zwan (still. I can't stop playing "Ride The Black Swan" over and over and over again. Totally a song I wish I wrote.) Can't wait to get the new Steely Dan!

8/6/03: Kenny's show review/demo status + new full length album possible/Massimo fans at Wal-Mart

Hey there! Seems like we haven't spoken in a while. I've been busy enjoying my summer, going to the beach, fishing, writing. How about you? Things are good? Good. Glad to hear it. I just got back from one of the best vacations I ever took - I drove across the country! A friend was moving to Santa Monica and needed someone to take the trip with him. I was just the guy for the job; this was something I've always wanted to do. Lots to tell but I want to wait until I have pictures to show you. More to come in the next Flipside.

The show on the 15th at Kenny's went really well. It sounds like something that'll be happening again. The club was happy with the attendance; their only comment was the best band was scheduled last (Meaning us! This is before we even played a note. I must've really impressed them way back when I used to play there solo. Actually, now that I think about it, what they probably remember is I brought 100 people to their club for the Perspective release party in '94. Still, that was almost 10 years ago. Amazing...) The rep from Heineken was very impressed with us and wants to help us any way he can (Hint: GIVE US MONEY!!!!) but we'll see how that pans out. Paying us to go on the road and be national ambassadors of Heineken wherever we go would be extremely great. Oh, yeah, and playing our music would be cool, too.

By the way, don't ever defrost chicken for a day, refreeze it, and then defrost it again and try to cook it. Just don't.

Going into the studio next Sat. to start mixing the demo. Feels so long ago since we recorded it. Could be a moot point in a couple of months anyway because I may have found someone who will FINANCE AN ENTIRE ALBUM, with recording to start in early Oct. I'm pretty much too excited about this to discuss it any further so let's not. I'll let you know what happens if anything....

Random product endorsement: Telex Fresh Shower. A couple of months ago I nearly threw my back out trying to scrub my bathroom after too long and I vowed never to let it get that bad again. This has significantly helped. Just thought you'd like to know.

OK, I have a great story but I have to give you some background:

First, I've been remiss up to this point to not have previously mentioned my #1 fan, Joe, who I affectionately refer to as Superfan. This guy has been on my mailing list for over 9 years (!) and remembers me from when I used to play at the local Barnes and Noble's. He comes to every show (including the one's with the cover band I'm now in which I'll get to later). He spreads the word, brings new people every time we play. Even if he has to be up at 5AM the next morning for work, he'll hike to the Bitter End from west Jersey to see us. He even had his own Massimo t-shirt made which has my headshot on the front and "Massimo Road Crew" on the back. This guy is true blue. Joe, I couldn't do this if it weren't for friends like you; you totally rock.

Second, I've also never told you about another cover band I joined. Missing being in Todd's Theory and needing some extra cash, Roger pointed out an ad in the Aquarian that he thought would be good for me. Basically a TT-like set up, a modern rock cover band that needed a frontman. Enter me. The name of the band is (get ready for play on words) Tequila Mockingbird. Get it? Tequila? To Kill A...? Anyway. It's been just as much fun being with these guys as it was being in TT and all I have to do is show up, sing like a rock star and get paid. Not a bad gig. We're taking a break to make a new demo but should be back up and running in a month or so. Check the website (weak site, needs help. Any volunteers? Email me.) for upcoming shows: www.drunkbird.com. OK, now on to the story. So Superfan is at Wal-Mart one day and...well, I'll just let him tell it:

"Hey, man, got a good/true story for you. I swear!! So I was shopping at Wal-Mart in Mansfield (just outside Hacketstown) today for some stuff, and as I was walking past the automotive aisle, I heard someone say "excuse me...you with Massimo Road Crew shirt". (Sometimes I wear your shirts besides at the shows). Anyway, I turn around and some guy is there with his family. He says, "is that the same Michael Massimo that used to play at Greens Beans Cafe"? I said "yeah". So we get to talking about you and he asks me about your career and if I am in fact employed as part of your road crew. Classic! I wish you could have been there to see this. He only knew you from the Cafe, so he has no idea about the "new you". I filled him in. I told him to check out the new website, and that there is some new and improved music in your future. You must have left some impression on him cause he remembered you from like 6 years ago when you were there. So the story gets better. About 45 minutes later when I was done shopping, I'm in the check-out line and it's my turn to get rung up. The girl, Sarah, looks at my shirt and says "I know that guy...he sings in Tequila Mockingbird, I saw them at The Whiskey Bar". She didn't realize that you have your own career. I didn't have much time to talk to her, but I told her about the Kenny's Castaways show. She gonna try to go. Can you believe that? I couldn't.

I figured you would get a kick out the story. Maybe you should try to book a gig at Wal-Mart. Probably have a hundred people show up."

Great, right? Just when you need some validation, there it is. I love when stuff like that happens. Like when I found a brand new pair of Oakley sunglasses in the case coming home from Penn Station the other day that look great on me. I love when stuff like that happens, too.

I know I'm late to the party, but I'm loving the new Jason Mraz album. The new Steely Dan doesn't suck either (as if they could). However, the latest James Taylor album does, unfortunately, suck. Hard. And I can't believe I like them but I'm really digging Saliva lately. Heard a song on LA radio called "Let Me Go In Pieces" or something like that. Good tune. The rest of the album is good, too. (Spent way too much time in a Barnes & Noble getting a sampling of the current music scene. I love that you can hear anything in the store before you buy it.)

Next Flipside: pictures and stories from the cross country trip as well as more Massimo music news. I may even have some new sound files for you to download from the next recording session (Roger is reworking the music page as we speak). See you soon. And remember: as much as you think you don't need it, sunscreen is your friend.

11/17/03: fall update / when squirrels attack / new music commentary / Metheny @ State Theatre / LBI Chowderfest

I know It's been a while since I've written to you. I haven't been blowing you off, really, I just felt I haven't had anything really important to say. The same reason I haven't sent out an issue of The Ride. There's been no ride. No riding. Rideless. Sans Ride. No gigs (we need a bass player). No CD to give you yet. It bums me out, you know? I just wanna play. OK, then. Whatever. Time to loosen up the Huggies and get back to work.

The site is finally nearing completion with major updates to the [Gallery](#), [Other](#), [Music](#) and [Bio](#) pages as well as other tweaks here and there. The demo is at a standstill for the moment. You can hear an almost-final mix of "Anywhere But Here" on the Music page. I'm really proud of how it's turning out. I entered it into the [International Songwriting Competition](#). I'm hoping it gets at least an honorable mention ([Pat Metheny](#) is one of the judges, BTW!) The cover band should start doing shows in a month. We needed to take some time to make a new demo and take some new pictures etc., etc. , but that's all done now. Expect to see pics and MP3's of the demo on the Other page soon. Aside from writing a couple of new tunes and growing a goatee, there's not too much else going on right now. Superweak. [The Continental](#) even called the other day to offer us a show, but I had to politely decline. I kind of don't have a band right now. Just trying to get all the pieces in place. I just think it's better to do something right than do a half-assed version of it. Again, expect more details about this "soon" in an upcoming email. In other news...

[Jets](#).

3 and 7.

Time to start looking at next year...

True story: A friend of a friend got attacked by a squirrel the other day. Seriously. Just ran up to her and bit her on the leg and ran away! Funny, I know. So funny, in fact, that the girl wasn't able to garner any requisite sympathy, for what was surely a scary experience for her, from the people she usually gets it from (boyfriend, family etc.). Still though, very funny. She says it's "on" now with the squirrels; she won't brake anymore if she sees one in the middle of the road. (People do that?)

The "new" [STP](#) album drops on the 11th. So of course Weiland has to get arrested a couple of weeks beforehand for a DWI. What a dumbass. It's a greatest hits compilation called Thank You that has 1 new song on it. The "greatest hits" album usually signals the end. This band should be so much bigger that they are right now and it's 100% Weiland's fault that they aren't because his addiction kept them from touring when they really needed to. Thank you, Captain Fuckup. Thank you.

Haven't gotten the new [Fuel](#) album yet but suspect I will. I guess I really like this band (saw them at the Ketch in Beach Haven back in the day!). The last album (their second, Something Like Human) was better than anyone has a right to expect anymore for a sophomore release. Better than the first one, even. I'm sure the rest of the new album can't be as weak as the single they released ("Falls On Me"). Why do they always seem to release the lamest song on the album as a single? (Remember "Bad Day" anyone?)

I absolutely love that song [Live](#) has out now, "Heaven". Just kills me. Totally moved by it. I wish the rest of album was nearly as good. Maybe it'll grow on me. LOVE the new [Perfect Circle](#), 13th Step. Tool who? Tool what? Been digging the [Maroon 5](#) album, Songs For Jane. They have a hit out now called "Harder To Breathe" that I'm doing with TM. This album has a LOT of white soul. Darryl Hall would be proud. Yet they have a whole Stevie Wonder/Michael Jackson/Jamiroquai (Stevie Wonder) sound going on. Groovy. Zwan broke up. Too bad. I'm curious why. I predict a new Pumpkins lineup with Jimmy Chamberlain still on drums in the coming months.

There is a song I'm learning for the cover band as a goof called "The United States of Whatever" by Liam Lynch. You might have heard it during the 1 week it was played on K-Rock. It is the funniest song I've heard in a long time. I want to end every show with it. Do yourself a favor and find it. You will laugh. We're also doing that song by [Jet](#), "Are You Gonna Be My Girl" (already being used in iTunes commercials). Sounds like it could be from 30 years ago. I think I need to spend another day at Barnes & Noble getting a new music education. I love how you can listen to any album they sell before you buy it.

I wholeheartedly applaud Universal Music for dropping the price of all their artist's latest albums! The concept is if CD's are sold at a lower price, yes they will make less money per unit, but they'll sell more product overall. Good move. It's already bringing people back to the record stores. Charging 18.99 for a CD you know barely has 3 good songs on it was reprehensible. Now if more albums had more than a few songs worth listening to, they'd really have something.

Saw Metheny at the State Theatre in New Brunswick last Sunday (Thanks for the ticket, Joe!). He played solo (doing songs from his latest album One Quiet Night) and with a trio (Antonio Sanchez on drums, Christian McBride on bass). He was great as usual although I found myself spacing out during some of his more mellower explorations. I like seeing him with the Group more. Still, he remains the only artist I've ever seen get a standing ovation just for stepping on stage.

Went to the Chowderfest in Long Beach Island last month. What a huge deal it was! I had no idea. People walking around with custom-made trays that had cutouts for their beer and the tasting cups of chowder they handed out. They take their chowder VERY seriously down there. Their website is already counting down to next year's event. Check it out: www.chowderfest.com (I find it interesting that in the entire world, this particular event was the first one to have the rights to "Chowderfest.com". Like I said, VERY serious.)

Entertainment was provided by a band led by a guy that wins the award for staying true to a nickname (given to him by Bruce Springsteen & Little Steven!) instead of using his real name or changing it to a stage name: [Boccigalupe and The Bad Boys](#). You gotta admire the guy for going ahead with a name like "Boccigalupe". Try marketing that one. Actually, in Italian slang it loosely means off centered, a little crazy or kind of nuts...

1/9/04: Happy New Year, X-mas truth / CD update, band auditions / TM on hiatus (again) / R.I.P. Elliott Smith / hiding from police / deli terror cell

So Happy Freakin' New Year! I don't know about you, but I'm happy to see last year go and am looking forward to the year ahead. How was your holiday? Good? Good. Mine was OK. Had off work between Christmas and New Years' (I know you hate me for it. All my friends do, too). Spent some time in VT over the break. Saw a moose. Almost got lost on a wilderness hike. Ate much. Drank more. Did some "extreme tobogganing" (my bright idea of going down half a ski slope on a toboggan. Not smart. HUGE wipeout. Bruising. FUN!). Interesting the family gems you pick up during the course of Christmas dinner with the family. As the wine flows, secrets previously kept from you in your youth mysteriously surface. Case in point: I'm at the dinner table at my Mom's and we're talking about past family pets. We've had parakeets, fish, dogs, mice and hamsters. When I was nine I had a hamster named Bugsy (for the bug eyes I assume?) among others. Bugsy mated with one of the other hamsters and soon had a bunch of baby hamsters. Cool. My mom thought they were cute. Sometime later I discovered some babies missing and Bugsy in the cage dead. I was upset. Mom said hamsters, like all things, just die sometimes. I moved on. But here's what really happened: One day my Mom comes upon the cage and discovers Bugsy attacking the babies. (It's a little known fact that in limited spaces, rodent parents will sometimes eat their young to save themselves! Guess I should have fed them more...). In an attempt to save the babies, my mother reaches into the cage, grabs Bugsy *beats his head over the top of the cage while screaming at him for eating his cute little babies (!)*, and throws him back in the cage. "I didn't mean to kill him; I just wanted to teach him a lesson." she says now. I'm sure OJ thought the same thing. Glad I asked for seconds... The best part of the holidays for me right now? THEY'RE OVER!!!! That's right. I said it. I'm know I'm going to hear about it for writing this, but I'm not a big fan of the entire Christmas season. Maybe for a brief moment on Christmas day I feel that "holiday spirit", but for the most part, for me, Christmas is a stressful time. I don't know. There's just so much rushing around. So much expectation. Distractions. Transactions. The meaning gets lost. Just like Hallmark did to Easter. More and more each year I feel the actual "spirit" of Christmas gets lost in the commerce. I DO believe it is a special time and by all means, a festive occasion. I'm not against the holiday itself, just the red light special mania that comes with it. And it soaks up your time for weeks. Sure, Christmas is one day but think about how much time you spend on preparing for that one day (I love Thanksgiving; one day and out). I guess I like partying on New Year's Eve. But you can't get a damn thing done personally/business-wise until the holidays pass. It's like your life is on hold until they're over. And now they are!! Time to get things rolling!!!

Spent another day in the studio a couple weeks back. Helped out the vocals on "Anywhere But Here", almost finished mixing "Daylight". What a pain in the ass that song is. A lot going on there. We spent 6 hours on it that day (not including the 2 we spent in a previous session). And they're both still not done. I want to make the solo in "ABH" a bit louder as well as the guitar verso intros on "Daylight" Might add another elec. guitar track, too. I think the first chorus and the bridge still could use a little more oomph, more wall-of-guitars. Hear/download for yourself; they're both up on the [Music page](#). "Mountain" and the compilation remix are next. I'll be going back soon thanks to getting an iPod as a gift. Let me explain.

I got a 20GB iPod for Christmas. Best gift ever, right? Until you try and use it. Seems it's incompatible with Mac OS 9. And you need Firewire. While they make a USB converter cable for PC users, Apple continues to screw it's faithful customers by making product you have to upgrade your computer to use. So on top of spending the money on the iPod, I would've had to buy a new computer with the OS X operating system to be able to actually use it! Because I have a couple thousand to throw away every couple of years on a new computer! While I still defer to Mac as my computer of choice (WAY easier to use & diagnose problems) I'm a bit enraged at the fact that they don't make new products compatible with the ones that have gone before it. Thanks for the "support" Apple. So after 2 days of phone calls with tech support, getting answers with varying degrees of accuracy, I came to the conclusion that I simply couldn't use the iPod with my computer no matter how many upgrades/downgrades of software I made or hardware I bought. So I had to return it. Strangely enough, it's worth the exact amount I would need for another day in the studio. Which was what I really wanted for Christmas anyway. How fortuitous.

Regarding money for studio time, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize those fine individuals who have contributed to the Massimo CD Fund:

Suzanne Marra
Jill Zutty
Linda Curnyn
Elizabeth Massimo (Hi, Mom!)
Theresa Bruno
Laura Cihocki (from Ithaca, NY!)
Paul Ingrassia

Thanks to all of you, I was able to take this project one step further. I wish there were more out there like you. Maybe people thought I'd just spend it on beer. Maybe people think there's no point in sending even as little as \$10. But that was the original idea. A lot of people contributing a small amount of money. Like these folks you could earn a free pass to the next show, an autographed CD upon completion (with your name in the liner notes of course), and a copy of the Massimo compilation CD, Now and Then. Tracks selected so far:

1. Accident (live at Bitter End)
2. I can See That Far (live)
3. Legacy (live)
4. The Journey Is Divine (CD)
5. Wasted (live)
6. Terms Of You (CD)
7. Anywhere But Here (demo)
8. Asylum (live)
9. Back To The Wood (CD)
10. Mountain (live)
11. Everything (live on WBZC, Burlington County College)
12. Precious Seconds (live)
13. Deliver Me (NEW solo acoustic recording)

Should be a nice career overview when complete which I'm hoping should be mid Feb. Also, a minidisc recording of a show from last year, once thought lost forever, has just been found which may yield even more live gems. Now about the band I don't have...

Been auditioning players for the band on a semi-regular basis. I haven't seen this many

frosted flakes since I looked inside a box with Tony The Tiger on it. I'm trying to weed out the weak but they still keep getting through. From people who classify their sloppy, grooveless playing as a "stumble groove" (stumble your ass home, then) to people who start out so enthused with the project over the phone and then simply refuse to return phone calls or show up at the studio where me & Roger are sitting around waiting for them. Case in point: when I called a guitar player to find out where he was, he answered the phone, *pretended he was someone else (!)*, told me to hold on as he went to look for "him", and then hung up the phone. *What the fucking fuck?!* This is starting to become a pattern. People get in touch, they're excited about the project, then they disappear. Roger seems to think they realize they're in above their head with the material and rather than just admit that to themselves and/or me they opt to just disappear. Suckers! All of you! Suckers!!! Just as well. I have no use for you then. And some of the emails I get are truly hilarious. Here's one indicative of what I'm dealing with:

Hi my name is Gary i'm 18 and willing to go all the way I've been in trained achepela chiors and been playing guitar for 6 years if ur interested mail me bak

You have to be kidding me, right? I'm sorry, but if you're so lazy that you have to abbreviate the words "your" and "back" (or if you're too stupid to spell them right) this is not the band for you. (I shouldn't be too cruel; maybe he's blind.) But seriously, you're almost half my age which disqualifies you right off the bat. I'll tell ya, kids today... I might have to consider the fact that I may not be able to get the band I want before the record deal. I might have to just finish this demo and shop it until I get a deal then have the label help me put a band together for me to tour with. That happens, right? Or maybe just do a couple of showcases with paid guys if I get the label interest. Not the best way to go about it but I hate sitting around with my thumb up my ass (it's pretty uncomfortable!). Roger thinks we should go out as a duo. I'm anxious to play but I don't want to shortchange the music. I've done that for far too long. Maybe we'll do a few low key gigs. Should the band come together, I'm working with a friend to finish a business plan to help get some big money to finance the optimum, long haul, 2 year build.

Did a show with Tequila Mockingbird at The Office in Summit last month. This was our first show back after taking new pics, making a new demo (see Other page). We finally had everything together. Or so I thought. The evening started innocently enough. We rocked solidly pretty much the whole night. But between sets 2 & 3, shots were distributed. Several shots. Still, though we powered through the third set and ended strong. Later I was chatting with the staff as they were closing up and suddenly mayhem erupts from the stage area. Christmas decorations coming down, screaming, shouting, 2 band members in a fisticuffs. Not good. Not good at all. The result? After months of hard work trying to pull it together to start gigging again, our bass player quits. So now, just like me, this band is looking for a bass player. And we all know how I still don't have one yet and how long that takes. What a shame. I was actually beginning to enjoy myself there for a minute. Rock and roll...

I'd like to take a moment to remember singer/songwriter [Elliott Smith](#) who committed suicide last month. Best known for his song "Miss Misery" on the Good Will Hunting soundtrack and playing at the Oscars that year (later elated his song didn't win for best song). His songs were delicate and beautiful. Check out *XO* and *Figure 8*. However, like so many other musicians before him, drugs and depression got the best of him and he chose to end his life. But here's the thing: he didn't just cap himself like Cobain (anyone can pull a trigger), he STABBED HIMSELF TO DEATH. Imagine the will to do that! What a statement. I have to say, in some strange way, I'm kind of impressed. Hey man, nice shot!

So I had to hide from the police the other day. There's this street I speed down on my way

to the train station (never mind it's a block away from a police precinct) and I think one of the residents has about had it with me. I've been warned more than once by passing police cars after I've parked. One day, as I shut off my car, I see a police car turning onto the block far back in my rear view mirror. I take evasive action. I lean down over the front seat below his field of vision. Out of the corner of my eye I see the police car roll to a stop next to my car. But there is no car door slam. No one gets out. There is no tap on the glass. There is no ticket. Once again, I escape from The Man.

(OK, I just have to vent for a second because I'm hearing "Outside" on the jukebox as I write this: I hate Staind! And I hate Puddle Of Mudd! Hate Hate Hate! HATE! Understand? I know I've said it before, but I just can't leave it alone. And Limp Bizkit was voted worst band of 2003 by the readers of Guitar World magazine. Well deserved. Bravo. I couldn't agree more. Except maybe voting them one of the worst bands EVER. Fred Durst (the "creative" braintrust behind Gimp Triscuit and person responsible for signing both Stain and Pile Of Shit), a seat in Hell is being reserved just for you. But I digress...)

Another story: It's the night of my office Christmas party and I'm on my way home from the Upper East Side. Knowing I'll need singles for the Metrocard machine, I stop into a nearby deli to make change. I figure a YooHoo and a candy bar should set me straight for the ride home. Greeted warmly when I enter the place, I head toward the beverage cooler and discover there's no YooHoo. "Aw, c'mon. Who doesn't carry YooHoo?!" I say out loud. Then I go to the counter and discover they have every other candy bar but my personal favorite, 3 Musketeers. Again I say out loud, "You've got to be kidding me. No 3 Musketeers?!" At which point the middle eastern man behind the counter changes the way he looks at me. Not welcoming like before but suspicious. I guess the goatee threw him at first. Surprised, he says, "You speak American" (note he doesn't say "English"). I say, "Yeah, of course, we're in America right?" He then looks me up and down, squints his eyes and menacingly states this observation: "You say too much". At which point he purposefully gives me my change and slowly says, "You have a good day 'my friend'." A chill runs up my spine as I realize he thought I was one of his own until I spoke. His demeanor changed so significantly upon discovering I was American. From friendly and warm to patronizing and adversarial in a matter of seconds. I felt like he was about to let me in on the details of the next terrorist activity until he knew who he was talking to. Not like I could call the FBI on it or anything, but I think something suspicious is going on at that deli. Keep your eyes peeled, America. The enemy is everywhere, just waiting for the signal. No bullshit.

In the CD player lately:

Let It Be...Naked - Beatles (great)

Waiting For My Rocket To Come - Jason Mraz (still! He's finally getting a hit with "You And I")

Close To The Edge - Yes (the roots for "Daylight" were born here)

Slanted and Enchanted - Pavement (this album keeps coming up on critics best lists. I'm not getting it yet. Maybe I have to listen to it a few more times but it just sounds like some lo-fi demo with a singer who sounds like Lou Reed. Am I missing something here?)

CABLEVISION MUSIC CHANNELS!! PROG/ADULT ALT ¹ CH 817 (Love it! Great education of what's out there.)

The Road To You - His Patness (of course)

The Rolex 24hr [Grand Am](#) race at [Daytona Speedway](#) is coming up in a couple of weeks (see the [gallery](#) for [previous years' pics](#)). Cars racing for 24 consecutive hours, soaking up sun, defending slotcar championships, riding motorcycles, riding go-karts, crashing Porsche's wine & cheese jazz party, sneaking into the pits in the early AM, lighting massive bonfires on the infield in a ditch you just dug, driving your car on the beach. Daytona, here I come!

Tune in to [SpeedChannel](#) for 15hrs of coverage. The race is 12 noon Sat. 1/31 to 12 noon Sun. 2/1. Maybe you'll see me waving from the infield. I'll be the drunk guy on top of a U-Haul.

Shouldn't be too hard to spot.

Unless I catch myself on fire again.

See you next month.

2/24/04: MM meets Jonatha Brooke / Rolex washout / scary Quizno's commercials / random emails

Went to Brookdale Community College recently to see Mark Geary, Mike Errico and most of all, [Jonatha Brooke](#). As any regular reader of this space knows, I am a HUGE Jonatha Brooke fan. The show was actually a benefit concert for the school's radio station ([90.5 WBJB "The Night"](#), NPR affiliate) and I figured it would be easier to get to meet her at this venue than it would be next month when I'll be seeing her at the [Public Theatre](#). And after her excellent solo performance, it was as easy to sneak backstage as I had expected. What I hadn't expected was what a star struck goofball I'd become when I finally did get to meet her. There she was, all by herself, just chilling in her dressing room with the door open, and just as I was thinking about what I might say, she spotted me, a deer in the headlights. I introduced myself, told her what a fan I was, that I was a songwriter, too. Got an autograph. Sheepishly handed over a CD of what I have from the demo so far, said barely anything. Not "You've been a real inspiration to me." or "Here's a copy of my demo. I hope you like it. Maybe I could open for you sometime." More like, "I just wanted you to have this." Good going. Way professional. What an idiot. I hope I'm more prepared next time.

Two weeks later I saw her perform at a live taping of [Last Call With Carson Daly](#). It was interesting to see the taping of a "live" television show. It looks completely different as it happens that when it actually airs. One thing really cool about the show is they have go-go dancers on stands doing their thing while the band plays. The house band for this taping was [Living Colour](#)! Cool. Way cool. They're cool even when they're not playing, just standing there. They rocked, did some stuff from their new album, "Collideoscope" (including a cover of AC/DC's "Back In Black"?!). When Piece Of Wood asked where they've been hiding all this time Corey Glover said, "We had big egos for while and we fought but we grew up and everything's cool now." Good. We need more bands like this. They mentioned they're trying to put a tour together with the Roots and Public Enemy. When it came time for Jonatha to play they moved all her fans to an adjacent sound stage where she performed. I got a choice spot up front and I'm not sure but I think I got the "I remember you" smile and wave from her. At least that's how I'm choosing to remember it. She must've recognized me. I'm not that easily forgotten, am I? See you in March, Jonatha.

Did the Rolex 24 Hr race in Daytona again last month. It was OK. My only problem was...I DIDN'T BRING A SUBMARINE!!! Rain. Rain. More rain! After that? EVEN MORE RAIN!! So much rain, in fact, that for only the second time in the race's 42 year history it was "red flagged" (cars parked in the pits, covered, with their engine's off!). So there will be no pictures for the gallery this time around. I didn't take any; there was nothing to shoot. Weak. Superweak.

So have you seen the commercials for Quizno's Subs lately? I'm am very afraid of them. I don't know who came up with this concept but the last thing it makes me want to do is go to Quiznos. They feature some rat/mouse/hamster-like animal with googly eyes and a human mouth with few teeth bobbing around like cardboard cutouts, playing Spanish guitar and singing really, really badly in a half-falsetto voice. If you haven't seen them yet, you

can [see them on their site](#). If you have time, please take a look at them because I need witnesses to prove they exist. So far I can't find anyone else who's seen them and those who don't think so already are starting to think I'm a little weird. I guess they're an example of the kind of ad that's so annoying, you can't help but remember it? Like the "I'm loving it!" McDonald's spot. Worst campaign ever but I can't get that friggin' jingle out of my aching head.

One last thing - I've been getting random emails lately from people who come upon my site through unrelated searches for "'82 Honda Nighthawk" or "Chili Peppers" and are taken aback by some of the things they find. Like "Who are you to dis Anthony Keidis?!!" or "I just wanted to look for pictures of my motorcycle but instead I was ambushed by your vulgarity!". Jeez! Why don't you cry about it?!! Relax. It's the internet, kids. You never know what you're going to get. PS, it's my site and I can say whatever the hell I want to. If you're that upset about it, go make your own damn website so you can tell the world how evil I am. I'd be flattered. Really.

Band auditions (TM & Massimo)? Still ongoing. The parade continues.
Recording? Still ongoing. Compilation should be done next time around, less than a month or so.

Spring can't come fast enough!!! Hope to have some good news for you by the time it gets here. Think warm thoughts...

3/26/04: J.Brooke at Anspacher / CD(s) progress / TM is back / show don't tell

Saw my girl (as if) Jonatha Brooke at the Anspacher Theatre last Fri. (one of the performance spaces in the Public Theatre/Joe's Pub complex on Lafayette). First of all, great venue. Steeply raked stadium seating, not a bad seat in the house. I was in the second row, sitting less than 20 ft. from her. She was, of course, brilliant. Stunning. Inspiring. Her band was fantastic, too. Had me riveted the entire time. The audience was full of many aspiring singer/songwriters like me. I had to wait my turn in line after the show to say "hi". No, she didn't remember meeting me but I think that's a good thing. She can't possibly remember everyone she meets at every show. She's getting too big for that. And good for her. I feel fortunate I got to see her in such an intimate setting before she plays a place like the Beacon Theatre and I'm lucky if I get a ticket before they sell out. The new CD (Back To The Circus) is getting good reviews. Speaking of which...

Found some more money to finish up these two albums. Did a day in the studio a couple of weeks ago. Some of the results are on the Music Pg. Almost done with "Daylight" (no, really), and the compilation is shaping up to be something very special; the songs really flow nicely together. I'll be recording a solo acoustic (maybe I'll add strings) "Deliver Me" for that album next time I go in. Thinking about adding a cover, too, redone MM style (any suggestions?). Then it's about mixing the remaining 3 songs for the MASSIMO EP, mastering and printing inserts. And then they're on their way to you! I'm really trying to stick to July as a deadline with a CD release at The Bitter End in Sept. (band or not!) In the meantime I'm going to book a couple of solo acoustic shows to get me out there and comfortable again. Auditioning a guitar player and possibly a bass player this Sat. Keep 'em coming. I am leaving no stone unturned. I'm bound to find the right guys sooner or later. Hopefully sooner.

[Tequila Mockingbird](#) has finally found a bass player so expect us to be playing out soon. If he works out, maybe I'll draft him for the Massimo project. Guitar player, too. We'll see.

That's all for now. I don't have much to say and I shouldn't. I should be doing nothing but playing and recording now instead of finding ways to distract myself like updating this web page. It is cool to write about random stuff from time to time, but it should mostly be about the music. And as far as that goes, it's been the same thing over and over again for months now: I'm working on the CD's, looking for band members etc. etc. I won't be writing anything here for a while. I need to really focus on my craft and my career, find the fire again, buckle down (up?) and get my head in the right place. Don't expect to hear from me until everything is almost done and I have good news to report. Check the Appearances Pg for some possible upcoming solo shows and the Music Pg for the latest studio mixes, but for now I'm sick of talking about all of it. It's either "the CD's are done and the band is playing" or else I have nothing to say and right now I have nothing to say. 'Bye for now...

9/15/04: Summer wrap up / CDs finished (almost) / band lineup complete

(This was originally to be posted on 8/12. But just as I was about to put it up my computer crashed. My Mac that I've owned for over 10 years finally got a virus (Yes, I have virus protection but it wasn't tough enough and Mac's are typically immune). Then I got it fixed it but had a hell of a time trying to get the version of AOL I needed back on my computer. Damn them. All the lies they told me. Damn them to hell. I won't go into the long sordid story. Anyway...)

I know it's been a while since you've heard from me. I didn't want to come out of hiding until I had some good news to report and now I do.

A lot has happened since we last spoke. The short version: lost my girlfriend, my job, wrecked my motorcycle and my car (twice). But...

I FINALLY HAVE A F***ING BAND!!!!!!

The search for a bass player and singer/lead guitar player that has lasted the better part of a friggin' year has finally ended. Once again, I have Roger to thank. In my lowest period of inactivity ("I'm not playing 'till we have the whole band"), it was his idea to do duo shows. His thinking was, "Let's just take a step forward and maybe things will fall into place." And boy, did they. He asked a guitar player friend of his (and not just any guitar player, [Chris Buono](#)). Look him up; he is the shiznite. But he had been on tour and unreachable until now) to recommend one of his students. Not only was this guy a great player (and singer) but he asked if we needed a bass player because he has someone he likes to gig with. Not only that but they have contacts and people they can draw to shows from previous projects they've been in. Not only THAT but they have their own rehearsal space in Hoboken that we can digitally record in! Done and done. And done. This is how I met [Pete Lacis](#) And Damian Peters.

Pete and Damian know each other from a neo-funk/soul band called [Barbuda](#) that frequently played in the Central Jersey area and only just recently disbanded. Both are very talented, quick to learn and eager about playing with us. Plus they're just fun guys to hang out with. Their enthusiasm has been contagious. Rehearsals have been going really well and we have shows lined up in S.Jersey, New Brunswick, Hoboken and NYC. We will repeat ad infinitum until the Massimo Mob (like the Kiss Army but with much better taste) has grown to an undeniable size. Then the record companies should come a courtin'!

I hope to have a proper band bio up in a few months after we settle in. I was almost afraid to even tell you about these guys lest something not work out. But I'm starting to feel like

they will. Now about those damn CDs...

Now and Then compilation: DONE
Massimo EP: done (except "Accident")

The only thing holding me up as usual is money. Seeing as how my credit card balances are already skyrocketing, what's a few cash advances? This is how badly I want this finished (how much can you get for a pint of blood these days?). I'm cashing in just about every so-called "investment" I have. It just needs to be DONE. NOW!!!

I would be remiss if I didn't mention going to the Appel Farm Music Festival in Elmer, NJ. There were many acts throughout the day but I only came to see one: Jonatha Brooke (of course). I stood in the pissing rain for hours only to have it rain harder later in the day when she finally took the stage with her band. But I didn't care; I got a spot right up front and sang along to every song. She was awesome. Her band was flawless. She made it all worthwhile. Later I got to take a picture with her. She said "You knew the words to all my songs!" Of course I did. It was nice to know I didn't just imagine that she sometimes was looking right at me. In case you can't tell by now, I'm a bit smitten with her. I know; it's a little embarrassing. I should have a little more self-respect (as if). I still get a little goofy every time I meet her. Here's the pic (thanks to Joe Sessanta AKA for the tickets and the photo):



Roger heard another sign of the Apocalypse on the radio the other day. A DJ had announced that it was National Duran Duran Appreciation Day. I'll say it again: National Duran Duran Appreciation Day!!! What is God waiting for? Now is as good a time as any. Please. Just get it over with. Before it's National Boy George Appreciation Day or National Spice Girls Appreciation Day etc.

That's all for now but before I go, an amusing story about our friend, Jewel (from <http://www.tech-sol.net/humor/people138.htm>):

Talk if you must during a Jewel concert, but do so at your own risk. "OK, how about the people talking while I'm singing?" the singer-songwriter snapped at the crowd, interrupting the start of "Life Uncommon" amid sporadic chatter in the front rows Sunday night at Chateau Ste. Michelle.

"I'm trying very hard for you. I don't have a band and I'm singing my little guts out for you. "If you're a guy and you're trying to talk to your date because you hope she likes you ... if she doesn't like you by now, it's too late, so just shut up."

The concert was recorded by a company called Instant Live, which sold a double live CD of the show for \$25 a copy on site. Hundreds of concertgoers lined up afterward for the souvenir recording. "When I do a new song, don't sneeze," she instructed the crowd. "I'll come out and choke you if you ruin a good take."

Jeez! Suck it up, sweetheart! I wonder if anyone quieted down after that. If I was one of those guys who brought a date that night, I'm not sure I would have. If anyone knows where I can get a soundbite of that, please let me know.

Back to the present (9/15):

Due to the computer snafu mentioned earlier I wasn't able to promote the first two shows the band did at The Continental (great) and the Whiskey Bar (even better). Imagine the frustration! I finally have a band that rocks and I couldn't email anyone about it! All I could do was sit at home, drowning in the irony. Now that I have the ability to say so, please come see us at our debut (sort of) at Kenny's Castaways on Sat.(!) Sept. 25th at 9PM! An email WILL be sent to you for this one (if you're on the list. If you're not, what's wrong with you?!)

Now if you'll excuse me, West Wing starts in 5 minutes...

9/30/04: CDs COMPLETE / CD Release date set / The Lord giveth...

Things have been going well. The CDs are being mastered this weekend and manufacturing will begin next week. They sound AWESOME. I can't tell you how happy it makes me to have something I hear in my head finally realized on CD with no compromises. But most of all, I'm just glad they're DONE! Also, [Rainmaker Publicity](#) has been hired to work the CD release party and mount a 6 month national campaign. I think this will raise our profile tremendously.

The date of CD release party will be Thursday, December 2nd, 9PM at The Bitter End. This is fitting because all of the live cuts on the compilation were recorded there. The opening act at 8PM is Elva, booked already for that night by the club. All I know about her so far is she is a very attractive singer/songwriter who performs with a trio and has some labels taking a look at her. Hope they're in attendance on 12/2. They're going to want to know who packed the place! Expect us to play for around an hour or so. The price of admission will be \$10 and that includes a copy of the EP.

The band has been sounding great and the shows have been going well. I hope you saw at least one of them because there won't be any more. Not with this lineup anyway. Citing monetary & creative issues, both the bass player and the elec. guitar player have abruptly left the band, with 4 shows left on the calendar. Evidently they want to pursue a more funk-

oriented project. We were only months away from this getting very busy and exciting and really having the potential to go somewhere but OK. Whatever. Have a day. They did me a favor. Better now than when we're about to go on the road. Two more people that just made the list of "Thank You Not At All To..."

But we will persevere! Not one show will be cancelled. We will continue as a power trio for now. I'll just be a bit more aggressive in my guitar playing and we'll be hiring a freelance bassist to cover that spot (see the revised lineup at Harvest Moon Brewery on 10/7). Truthfully, I can't even wrap my head around the fact that I have to start looking for players again as it took SO long to find these guys. Right now it's just about survival and covering the shows we have booked already. And, we'll be hiring a guitar player for the CD release to give you the show we all deserve.

I can't deny the fact that I'm a little annoyed, though. I've had a decent sulk going for a few hours. But I wouldn't still be here if I wasn't a survivor, and anyone who gets in my way just becomes fuel for flame. The show MUST go on and NOTHING will stop it.

I know. It's only rock and roll. But I just don't like it very much right now...

10/22/04: Massimo now a trio / CDs being pressed / social Darwinism / more fun with Jewel

So Massimo has been continuing on as a trio, with past bassist, Dave Bokhour, rejoining the group. I have to say it has been a bit uncomfortable for me in this format at first, not knowing how to compensate guitar-wise and missing the extra power another electric guitar provides. Had a couple of shows this week, Tues @ Whiskey Bar and Thurs @ The Saint. Thursday's show was infinitely better. I'm starting to get my sound together and things are looking promising. Now we just need to do a few shows to get the chemistry going.

Been courting some freelance guitarists for the CD Release party (12/2 @ The Bitter End, NYC). If things work out we may continue to do one 4pc show a month while covering the rest of the shows trio. It gets expensive, though. I have to admit I'm just a bit annoyed with the constant lineup changes this band has had. I wish people could stick around for more than just a couple of shows so we could finally build something. We have never sounded like I intended it to, with all the harmonies etc. Someday. It's just as well; I'd rather know as soon as possible who's in it for the long haul and who isn't. In the meantime, the game plan is to continue playing out and in the process meet players that want to be part of the project because we've got something going on. It's all about momentum. And delusion. And therapy.

CDs are being pressed as I type this! Should be delivered sometime next week, up for advance sale on the website shortly thereafter. T-shirts, stickers will be available in a couple of weeks as well.

In the "Too Stupid To Live" file:

I couldn't believe this when I heard about it. True story: A couple of winters ago, two men in the backwoods town of Tamaqua, PA were blown to smithereens (smithereens!) when they attempted to HEAT UP GASOLINE ON A STOVE. Evidently they believed the reason their truck wouldn't start was that the gas was too cold to ignite. Theory disproven in a BIG way. Score one for Professor Darwin.

And yet another gem of a story from Jewel tour log(courtesy of 9/04 Blender): "At a recent New Hampshire show, Jewel reportedly told the audience to stop staring at her teeth and to

look at her breasts (she's learning). The kooky singer also responded to a shouted song request by saying, "Shut the hell up!" In a 10-minute monologue, she then mentioned the antidepressants Paxil and Zoloft." Awesome. Though she has a way to go, she's approaching Courtney Love as my favorite musical spectator sport.

New songs are on the way. Waiting to get the CD release out of the way and solidify this damn band before giving out new music to learn. Always good to be one album ahead.

That's all I got for now. Mark your calendars: CD Release party, 12/2, Bitter End, NYC.

11/8/04: update / You know you're old when / TM no longer flying / boat ride from hell

Man, things have been busy lately but very exciting as well! I guess it's what you might expect with the CD release coming up in about 3 wks (12/2 @ Bitter End). Lots to do. It's amazing how different everything is when you finally have some product to promote. No more "yeah, well, the CDs not done just yet so we're just kind of waiting...". No more waiting! Had a little strategy meeting w/Roger the other night and we've made some definite plans for taking over the world (or at least Middlesex County) that I think are really going to work. Been sending stuff to some select radio stations that have been good to us in the past. In fact, me & Roger (Roger & me?) are doing an on air interview Mon. 11/29 from 6-7:30PM on WDVR 89.7 in the New Hope area (simulcast 91.1 in Princeton), though we never play around there. It's just a small local station but they were really supportive of the previous 2 CDs and I love doing live radio. Tune in if you're in the area or listen live via your computer at www.wdrvfm.org. Can't wait to see what our PR princess cooks up for us as well. Looking forward to reading some positive reviews. It's nice to finally let these CDs out into the world and get some feedback. Been waiting to get the t-shirts in (due to arrive today) before sending CDs etc. out to those who contributed to the project; all of you should expect something in the mail soon. The site's been updated to include the new discs; the albums, press kit, music and store pages have all been revised. CDs & t-shirts can now be ordered through the site. Keep in mind you'll get a free copy of the EP at the door when you attend the CD release (have I mentioned it's 12/2 at the Bitter End?) and contributors get in free (applies to future shows as well). And it is confirmed we will have a lead elec. guitarist joining us that night. And a photographer, too! He'll be taking audience shots as well so smile nice for the man ([Chad Vega](#)) and show him what a good time you're having.

In other news, I have officially quit the cover band I was in, Tequila Mockingbird. It was becoming a waste of time for me and I wasn't getting anything out of it. Even if everything was going perfectly with regard to musicianship, getting good gigs etc. (which it definitely wasn't) it had ceased to be what it needed to be most of all for me: fun. At thirty something years old I just can't get into singing "Lifestyles Of the Rich and Famous" especially when I'm not and the song is written by a band that's on my "needs a beating" list. The band will not continue with a new singer; the other members are all going on to other projects. So, I've effectively put an end to a band that's been together since the original members were in grade school together. Leave it me to put a situation over the edge.

So I'm at a bar for lunch the other day and I notice that I'm digging the music being played on the radio. Then came the station ID and I was horrified to know what I had been listening to: 101.1 CBS FM! The oldies station! It seems oldies means 70's to them now where it used to mean 50's & 60's (I guess that audience was beginning to die off). When you're listening to "oldies" radio, you can't help but feel old yourself. I must admit to suffering through Tom Jones to get to Orleans, Firefall, and Chicago. Not good. Not good at all. I put on some Incubus when I got back in my car and it made me feel a little better.

"Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale..."

It was about a month ago when a friend of mine asked me for a mildly dangerous favor. To save the considerable expense of having a boat hauler trail his 29ft motorboat from Eastern LI to a marina in Cliffwood Beach, NJ, he needed a copilot to go with him when he actually drove the boat there instead. Sounded a little crazy to me. Or course, I was just the man for the job. Then our plans got delayed. The weather got a little colder. Rain was predicted for the weekend finally picked to do this thing. This was beginning to sound a bit more crazy to me than it originally did. But there was no turning back; the marina and boatlift were on a tight schedule and we had to meet them during a specific window of time or the whole mission would fail. Plus, I'm a man of my word and I said I'd do it. So at around 11AM on a dreary looking Sat. morn we set out from East Moriches.

The first part of the trip wasn't so bad. We were protected from the ocean by a southern barrier island and made our way through the bay just watching for markers to keep us in the channel. But at a certain point, we had to leave the safety of the bay and head out through the inlet into open waters with only the Atlantic Ocean to our left and the Long Island coast to our right. Welcome to 8ft swells, getting bounced around, and much less fun. Then the fog rolled in. A lot of it. The shore was barely visible. We needed to rely on instrumentation. Sadly, the boat compass was not properly adjusted and was flailing around unreadably. And while the Loran unit we had on board gave us relative position (latitude & longitude), its built in compass was not all that accurate. Luckily, I'm a Boy Scout; our motto as you may know - Be Prepared. And I was, breaking out my trusty handheld compass I hoped I wouldn't need but brought with me anyway. Good thing, too. Suddenly, we lost an engine. Barley able to hold our position in the water we pretended everything would be OK while we waited for the engine to cool down, trying not imagine the worst (what could happen? We get beached and have to walk to shore? We anchor and wait for Sea Tow to come get us? We weren't going to die or anything.)

But, one engine wasn't going to get us to Jersey. Our only hope was to get to the Jones Beach inlet to a marina where we could get it fixed and continue on our way. Miraculously the engine later refired and this wasn't necessary. So we continued on into the fog, just skimming the coast, with my compass keeping us due west.

Finally we reach Rockaway Point / Coney Island. On an average clear day, from here you'd be able to see the Verrazano Bridge, Staten Island and NJ. We were lucky to see the blinking marker at the end of the point. Now we would need to cross the bay in thick fog to reach the coast of Staten Island. Keep in mind this is a major waterway that cruise liners and oil tankers cross on a regular basis. I got a little nervous as Rockaway Point faded away. Like a co-driver in a rally race I began to call out directions to keep us on course: "left, LEFT, a little more, right a little, right, steady on". We wouldn't see land again for another 80 minutes. I tried to block out the theme from Gilligan's Island that had been blaring in my head for the last 2 hrs. But amazingly we hit channel marker after channel marker and eventually Staten Island appeared out of the mist. From there it was just a short run SW to Raritan Bay and our final destination, 6 1/2 hours after we left. Crazy? Of course. But sometimes you have to do something just to say you did it. And to get more material for your website.

Regarding the recent presidential election, I think Jane's Addiction said it best:

IDIOT'S RULE!

Oh yeah, by the way, the CD release is 12/2, 9PM at The Bitter End in NYC and you should go.

1/3/2005: update / cover band downloads / Skytide Music hires interns

Welcome to the New Year! Hope you all had a great holiday season. First of all, I'd like to thank those of you that came out to the CD release party last month at The Bitter End; it was a very special evening. Though we always wish there were more people in the audience, everyone who did come had a great time. The EP has been getting good reviews so far on some internet webzines and we hope to see some more in print very soon. Here's the latest one: Kweevak.com

Something strange has been happening with regard to what's being downloaded from the website: the demos recorded with previous cover bands (Todd's Theory & Tequila Mockingbird) have been getting downloaded FAR more than the original stuff. Just in December alone, "Monkey Wrench" had been downloaded 290 times! "Suck My Kiss" - 254! But "Anywhere But Here" from the EP - 17. What's wrong with this picture?! I'm guessing it's just one or two people repeatedly and not a different person every time. You have to hunt for these clips on the Other page, they're not on the Music page with the original stuff. While I do appreciate the traffic on the site, why would someone download a cover band doing a song when they could just as easily download the actual version of it? A bit strange. Who are you, Mystery Downloader? Stand up and be counted.

Speaking of traffic to the website, attendance at shows etc. Skytide Music is proud to announce that it has hired two interns from Monmouth University as Public Relations Assistants! It will be their job to increase traffic to our website, get more people to our shows and generally get us more fans. Rutgers students are also being interviewed. If you would like to get involved and become a part of our "street team" please drop us a line. I think things are going to get very exciting in the next few months as a result of their efforts.

I'm buying a new amp! My garage sale, garage band sounding, 20yr old Peavey is being put out to pasture in favor of a brand new [Fender Hot Rod Deluxe](#). Oh yeah. You'll hear the difference immediately. Should have it by the next visit to the Whiskey Bar on 1/26.

The show at the Harvest Moon Brewery has been cancelled. Again. Don't ask me why. Just see if you can feel through your monitor right now how much I absolutely LOVE dealing with club owners and booking shows. Can you feel it? Can you feel the love?

Please go to the Continental on 1/11!!!!

In the CD player: Brian Wilson - Smile, Elliott Smith - From A Basement On A Hill, Unforgiven - Soundtrack

Get ready for a big 2005. It's all happening...

2/9/05: musician search / reviews & airplay / set list adds / ATHF / football fan agony

And so the search for musicians continues. Our guitarist has flaked away and though we are doing fine as a trio, it would be nice to have someone fill that slot again. If you know of anyone who might be interested, send them our way. LOVE [the new amp](#), BTW. It freakin' ROCKS! Almost makes you not miss another guitar player. Almost.

Been getting some internet airplay on the following sites: Harrisradio.com ("There's a rock anthem-like quality to the songs on their latest CD, Massimo, that makes it instantly listenable to"), discoverRadio.com ("Anywhere But Here" is currently #2 on their Alternative

Rock chart), blowupradio.com. Also, just got a great review on OutSmartMagazine.com ("Reminiscent of Pearl Jam in their intensity and power, the band pulls out all the stops for this commanding effort."). And don't forget to check out our profile in progress on myspace.com at www.myspace.com/massimo.

Been beefing up our set list lately. While there are brand new songs in the works, I feel like I can't move on until we've done justice to some songs from the past that had been left behind. Revised versions of "Forever", "Music" (now titled "Fade Away" with all new lyrics), and soon "I Can See That Far" will be resurrected (Roger refuses to let it go). As will some covers: "In The Blood" (Better That Ezra) and "Interstate Love Song" (STP). Vocal harmonies are being added with every shows as well, trying to get all 3 of us singing at once.

OK, Now for something really important I need to draw your attention to: [AQUA TEEN HUNGER FORCE](#) RULES! For the uninitiated, ATHF is part of Cartoon Network's "Adult Swim" line up (post 11PM programming). It took a while for me to warm up to the show but now I'm completely addicted. Once you get past the fact that you're watching a milkshake, a box of fries, and a wad of meat and don't expect anything special, you might enjoy it too. Or you'll probably just think I'm crazy for watching such a twisted show. Which I probably am.

OK, I must briefly mention football. I know the Superbowl is long over but I'm not even talking about that game. I'm still thinking about the kind of game that haunts you as a fan season after season because it was just that insufferable: Pittsburgh 20, Jets 17 in final, excruciating overtime. I don't know why I even care so much. I don't know how this happened to me. Years ago I remember thinking I can't be worried about the outcome of some sporting event, whether my team wins or not; I have plenty of other things to worry about. And yet here I am. I say it every damn year - I guess there's always next season...

Next show is 3/8 @ Continental at 7:30 (Happy Hour!). Yes, squeezed another show out of them, but for real, we need some people there this time! Also, notice the addition of [169 Bar](#) on the gig schedule. A new venue for us, this looks like a great place to hang after work - pool tables, darts, a fish tank, cozy lounge, a dozen beers on tap. And MASSIMO providing the soundtrack for Happy Hour! We'll be there on 4/6, 7PM.

Latest album I can't take out of the CD player: [Switchfoot](#) - The Beautiful Letdown

That's all for now. Join us for a drink after work at Continental on 3/8!
Hope to see you soon.

4/10/05: Spring is here / band update / bad reviews / 5 sec. lottery win / His Royal Patness & JBro

"Spring is here, Spring is here
Life is Skittles and life is beer
I think the loveliest time of year is the Spring
I do
Don't you?
'course you do..."

from "Poisoning Pigeons in the Park" by [Tom Lehrer](#)

Yes, Spring is here folks. Finally. I know this because I can barely breathe. But I love it nonetheless. I know this because weird things are happening. The restlessness that has

been building all winter has begun to manifest itself in strange ways. Events you could never have imagined taking place, calls from people in the past, unexpected visitors. Be aware of what's going on around you.

Not much to tell on the music front. The band has been getting better and better with every show. We're enjoying playing the new song ("Fade Away") and I'm busy writing more. Financial hardship may have us going back to doing duo shows again but I hope it doesn't come to that. I am loving the new pedal board I built for myself; no more cable spaghetti after every show. Usually I would take this opportunity to tell you how we've been positively reviewed on some website or in print but this time I'd like to share some of the laughable, negative reviews we've gotten in the hopes that you find them as amusing as we do, lest you think everyone just has nice things to say about us.

Here's one from [IMPACT "Press"](#):

"Massimo / self-titled / Skytide Music - Michael Massimo is a rockin' singer-songwriter that delivers sub par vocals with an 80's era sound overtop basic pop-rock riffs. The agony within his voice tells stories about car crashes and getting lost inside himself through five forgettable tracks. Tempo changes occur everywhere, and Massimo uses those to hit highs and lows with his voice, reminiscent of Ronnie James Dio and the like."

Awesome. 80's! Ronnie James Dio! You gotta love it.

Here's one from [Ear Candy "Magazine"](#):

"Boring, generic melodic rock that makes you wanna burn down your local "Gen-X" radio station for ever inspiring such forgettable rock."

It just doesn't get much more validating than that. This is how you know you're on the right track, people. We'd be worried if every review was a good one. We prefer to listen to the people in the crowd: "Now THAT'S rock and roll!" (shouted out after playing "Fallen" at the Whiskey Bar).

Saw [Pat Metheny](#) at the Tower Theatre on Philly a couple of weeks ago. The Group is touring to promote their latest album, The Way Up, which is essentially a 68 minute song in 4 parts. They were awesome as usual. On the drive home I had to save my self-esteem by telling myself, "Yeah, but he doesn't sing. He doesn't write lyrics. He's not all that." As if. It's always good to see greatness. Makes you want to take your game to the next level. Speaking of which, saw [Jonatha Brooke](#) in Camden last Sat. which was a bit more challenging for me because she does sing and she does write lyrics and does both beautifully. She was great as well. Met her afterward (again). She remembered me from last year's Appel Farm Festival. I kept it together this time although in my mind I sounded like Chris Farley interviewing Paul McCartney on SNL ("Remember when you were in the Beatles? Remember that? That was awesome..."). Gave her a copy of the EP. Handed out over 100 homemade MASSIMO sampler CD1s before the show to people coming in. Turned out to be a good move; it resulted in a huge spike in website traffic for the following day. We are currently looking to build a street team (The MASSIMO Mob) to do things just like this at all our shows. If you'd like to never pay a cover to see us again and help spread the word, please email us at Mmassimo@aol.com for more details. Meanwhile, our MySpace community is growing by leaps and bounds. Join the fun at www.myspace.com/massimo.

Random quote: "The world owes all of its onward impulses to men ill at ease. The happy man inevitably confines himself within ancient limits." - Nathaniel Hawthorne

And now another story to illustrate why I don't play the lottery:

It was my Grandmother's birthday the other day and I got her a card filled with random scratch-off lottery tickets (she loves them). I couldn't attend the family get together because of band business but did get the following phone call from my Mom:

"Michael, you're not going to believe this but I think your grandmother just won \$25,000!"

"Get the hell outta here! No way! That's awesome!"

"Wait a sec...(what? It needs to be a straight flush?)...Never mind she didn't win anything."

"Thanks. You suck!"

Click!

Worried about paying my bills lately, I was elated for 5 seconds to think I might get flipped a grand or two to do just that, but just as quickly my hopes were dashed. Congratulations, Mom. You just made the Flipside.

In the "Wish This Wasn't True But It Really Is" file:

From Rolling Stone 971 - "During jury selection, when Jackson was rushed to Marian Medical Center with the flu, a seventy-four-year-old woman who had suffered a heart attack was forced to give up her bed in a trauma room to make room for Jackson. He was discharged the next day. The woman had two more heart attacks and died."

R.I.P. Hunter S. Thompson. Hey, man, nice shot!

In the CD player: The Way Up - Pat Metheny Group, on infinite repeat

I will leave you with the autograph Jonatha gave me: "Sing Loud!"

Amen, sister.

7/5/05: Update: new songs, new thinking / Rainmaker doesn't / strange gigs

Happy Birthday, America! Hope you're all enjoying the summer. Things have been busy for us as usual. Playing several gigs a month, sounding better every time with new songs on the way. Looking forward to returning to the [Crossroads](#) on Sat.(!) 7/9. and our debut at [Pianos](#) in NYC the following week (also on a Saturday!, 7/16). Our TV appearance on [Guitar Out Front \(Patriot Media, Ch.8, 11:30PM fri.\)](#) did not air as we were previously told so those of you who couldn't see it didn't actually miss anything; our apologies to all of you who tuned in for nothing - we will keep you posted.

Personally, I've been in a great frame of mind lately and it's showing; happy accidents are occurring all the time. It may be cliché, but thinking positive really helps. Feeling positive, actually (there's a difference). It's hardest, almost impossible, to do when things aren't going your way but that's when it does the most good. When you're feeling down, you sit and wait for some luck to come your way to turn things around. Unfortunately, the opposite is how it actually happens. You need to put your head in a place where you feel like that has already happened. And then it does. SO hard to do. So backwards from the way we're trained to think in society, that we're powerless and can't do anything proactive to change our worlds. Take it from someone who's reveled in the joy of misery from time to time (if there is such a thing), visualization works. At least it's been working for me. And what's been on my mind lately? Touring, with a record deal in place by the end of next year in an RV. After keeping that thought firmly in mind for a few days, here's what I find in a fortune cookie: "You will be traveling and coming into a fortune". Not any huge revelation, I know, but don't blow off these little coincidences when they happen. Enough of them in a row and it's not a coincidence. So of course as with any new discovery I have to write a song about

it. It's called "Rise"; [lyrics](#) have been posted on [our My Space Pg](#) blog along with some other stuff. We'll be taking Aug. off to learn these new songs and others. We'll be adding a few new covers as well. Please feel free to send us your suggestions. (BTW, this is Michael Massimo writing this just in case I've been rendered unrecognizable by the sunny disposition.)

While we have been busy with our own promotional efforts, some of you may remember a while back that we hired Rhonda Kelley and [Rainmaker Publicity](#) to help us out. I know these things are far from guaranteed and I don't want to be the kind of person to blame others when things don't work out but there are some things you just can't ignore; let's just say the rain never came. Not even a puddle. 5 internet reviews over 6 months does not a PR campaign make. Lesson learned. Caveat Emptor. But don't take our word for it. Read this [email thread](#) and judge for yourself. Yes, the word "sucker" does come to mind as I look in the mirror. Rhonda claims she couldn't even pay anyone to review our EP and that may be true. Hey, for all I know she tried her damnest and the CD just tanked. Recommend her to anyone else, though, we will not.

We've had a few strange gigs recently that are worth noting. One was at the [Brighton Bar](#) where our opening act was beyond description but I will do my best. Picture a man in his 50's, shirtless (and shouldn't be), in silver satin shorts, playing along to a portable 45RMP record player (to songs like "Hello Mutah, Hello Fatha, here I am at Camp Granada...") by banging on wrenches. That's right - wrenches. The "act" is called Symphony of Wrench and words really don't do it justice. I guess this is what they call "performance art" or as I like to call it, "weird for the sake of being weird". The best part was his "solo" played on a [Mattel Electronics Football](#) game from the early 70's strapped around his neck (that game that vibrated while the pieces danced around aimlessly?). You had to see it to believe it. The other gig was an ill-conceived booking on my part, our show at the Internet Cafe in Red Bank, the operative word being "cafe". I haven't performed in a cafe since my solo acoustic days. I was assured when we booked it that rock bands do play there but we really blew the place up. It being a cafe and one of the few establishments school kids could frequent, our audience was WAY "21 and under". 4 words describe the other acts there: 8th Grade Talent Show. I do not kid. But we did our set reasonably well, the only interruption being a father who was evidently tired of waiting for his son's band to go on and decided to heckle us. Yes, heckle. I'm not sure I've ever been heckled in all my years of performing but there's a first time for everything. "Get the fuck of the stage! Yeah, you think you're so good, I'm gonna come up there and beat the shit out of you". Are you kidding me?! I asked if he could speak up so everyone else could hear his not-so-veiled threat and proceeded to dedicate the rest of our set to him, who I fixed on and sang to for the rest of our set ("Cause there is nothing left for you that much is clear, you are happy anywhere but here..."). After our set, his son's band was so anxious to get on stage that they began packing up our gear. How professional. When they did finally get to play, well, let's just say they weren't even worth the wait. Hilarious. Possibly the strangest gig we've ever done. One more story for the authorized bio.

That's all for now. The open road beckons. See you in Sept.

8/8/05: band/booking update / G.O.F. video / R.C.B. airplay / MASSIMO & D.Wilcox

Hey, gang! Welcome back. Hope you've all had a great summer. We've been busy during our time off from performing: writing new songs and learning a few new covers. We have some great shows coming up, most of them in new venues for us: [Coda](#) - NYC, Downtown Cafe - Red Bank and [Rare](#) (formerly the Cooler) - NYC. We'll be playing at the Downtown

Cafe all night (9:30PM-1AM!), precipitating our need to learn the aforementioned covers as we can't quite fill 4 hours of original music just yet. Here's a sample of what you can expect: "If I Ever Lose My Faith" - Sting, "Take The Long Way Home" - Supertramp, "Doctor My Eyes" - Jackson Browne, "Eleanor Rigby" - (shame on you if you don't know). We will be taking liberties with these tunes, doing them amped up MASSIMO style. There's also a new original in the works, "Just Three Words" ("Rise", a recent addition, is sounding great as well).

A new date is still pending for [Crossroads](#); most likely we'll return sometime in Oct. And expect a [Brighton Bar](#) date mid-Sept. (unfortunately, this place can only seem to book a week ahead of time). Still trying to get 2 breweries to go our way: [Harvest Moon Brewery](#) (New Brunswick, NJ) and [Triumph Brewery](#) (Princeton, NJ). If any of you are out and about and find yourself in any of these establishments, please mention us to the management. Maybe it'll prod them to listen to our CD, get a firm date on the books. Word of mouth really does help.

Speaking of which, [our MySpace page](#) has topped over 1,000 visits! Check it out if you haven't already. Who couldn't use more friends?

In other band news, we are pleased to announce the return of Jess Converse to the band! For those of you who don't know, Jess had played with us a while back and was the lead guitarist on the EP. Then sadly, he had some other obligations he needed to fulfill and had to leave us for a time. But now he is ready to rock once again! He'll be joining us as soon as we can get him up to speed on all that's gone on since he's been away.

FINALLY, got the DVD for our performance on [Guitar Out Front](#) the other day and we look damn good! This is the first time since the inception of this band that I've ever seen any video of us and I was pleasantly surprised. "Breathe" and "Down" are exceptionally good. After some editing/conversion for web, video clips will be posted to the site (eventually).

In airplay news, MASSIMO has been selected for [Radio Crystal Blue's](#) "Future Stars" series. Artists chosen have been deemed above and beyond the top indie/underground artists heard on this weekly internet radio show. We are proud to be selected. You can tune in by streaming from their site or download the show as a podcast.

Speaking of iPods, the entire MASSIMO catalog is now available for download on over [35 popular digital music sites!](#)

Had a landmark brush with fame last month. Saw singer/songwriter [David Wilcox](#) last month at the [Towne Crier](#) in Pawling, NY. (I may have mentioned him before in previous Flipsides. Eerily similar to James Taylor vocally, blows him away guitar-wise in my opinion. Very much digging his new album, *Into The Mystery*. Anyway...). Nice dinner theatre kind of place, the Towne Crier is. It's got a South of the Border kind of theme going on. Had a table up front which proved to be very fortuitous when I started singing harmonies to myself at my table on "Rusty Old American Dream". I got the shock of my life when mid-song, DW invited me up to sing with him. It's every musician's dream to join one of your favorite artists on stage for one of their songs and this experience did not disappoint. I was high off of it for days. I still almost can't believe it.

Katrina. Helping is easy if you want to: [Donate to The Red Cross](#)

In the CD player lately: Nothing. Nothing at all. Just letting the music in my head play for now...

12/12/05: Massimo State of the Union

Momentum: n. pl. mo-men-ta or mo-men-tums

1. Symbol p Physics. A measure of the motion of a body equal to the product of its mass and velocity. Also called linear momentum.

2. a) Impetus of a physical object in motion.

b) Impetus of a nonphysical process, such as an idea or a course of events: *The soaring rise in interest rates finally appeared to be losing momentum.*

3. Philosophy. An essential or constituent element; a moment.

I had a whole cynical and acerbic rant written for this installment of the Flipside, but it sounded, well, cynical and acerbic and in the end I didn't think anyone would find it all that interesting so I thought I'd just stick to the facts.

The simple truth is things aren't so good, folks. It's hard to keep a band going with virtually no money, manpower, CD sales or attendance at shows. And so we find ourselves severely lacking in the word defined above.

It seems these things have a cycle. Write songs, put band together, book shows, release CD, be a promotional machine. Rinse. Repeat.

Then no one attends said shows (making it nearly impossible to get rebooked), CD gets ignored despite the incessant promotion (which in itself drains so much energy (not to mention time & \$) that songs no longer get written), the artist inside slowly dies, frustration rises to the point of suffocating every ounce of fun from the project, and the time inevitably comes to stop, regroup/re-evaluate and just go back to writing songs for no one.

And the songs come.

And they demand to be performed (art in a vacuum is not art).

And the whole thing starts again.

I guess what I'm saying is, for the immediate future, we're in the "step back and reevaluate" stage right now. Only a fool continues with a plan that isn't working. So, though we won't be performing for a while (next Spring maybe?), this doesn't mean we're not still working behind the scenes. We're going to spend time solely practicing, writing, letting all the promotional efforts and imagined momentum fall by the wayside, and get back in to being a confident, solid rock band. Personally, I think we're a damn good band already (it's really too bad only a small handful of people have actually seen us play over the past few years), but we could be much better. And we will be. And when the time feels right, we'll come back strong. It just needs to be fun again and right now, speaking only for myself, it's the farthest things from it. There actually is a limit to how many times you can consecutively play for no one. Some things on the horizon we hope to have accomplished during this time include: introducing an alternate bass player, recruiting backup singers, hiring more college interns, launching a proper MASSIMO band site, approaching the few industry contacts we have and possibly launching a small ad campaign.

I suppose I could make it sound more exciting to be in a rock band, but that's why this page was designed, for good or ill, to let you know about the real struggles involved in keeping the band going. Sometimes (hell, most of the time) it ain't pretty. For those of you who don't know, the music business is in a severe state of disarray right now. Every issue of Billboard holds some new surprise that needs to be adapted to. Even the major labels aren't certain where the chips are going to fall right now. It seems the CD is going the way of vinyl. And these days, people are busier than ever, facing more competition for their entertainment dollar with much less time to spend it. Yes, the digital age provides many

opportunities but many more as yet unanswered questions as to what the new business model will be.

It's hard to know where, how to fit into the landscape. The bottom line is, we've yet to connect with our audience. Any audience, really. It seems the demographic that is our audience hardly ever goes to shows or buys CD's. Awesome. It feels like we're the Jets of the alternative rock scene right now (3-10 for those who don't know). Success has a lot to do with delusion; and in the face of such adversity, the truth is, sometimes the illusion of delusion is hard to maintain. It's not always easy to "fake it 'till you make it".

And so it might seem that when the going gets tough, the tough get cranky, take their ball and go home.

But the tough are still working hard.

And they're coming back with bigger balls.

See you when we see you,