



# INIZI (BEGINNINGS)

## ANDREA FERRO (vocals 1994-present)

I'm an only child, born in 1973, from what you might call a classic 'mixed' Italian family—one that ultimately gravitated towards a big city, in this case Milan, ostensibly to find work. My mother Letizia was originally from the south of Italy, from a family with Spanish blood, whereas my dad was from the east of the country. I had a happy childhood, although we weren't rich by any means, more working class, but we always had food on the table.

I was a fairly typical kid, interested in the usual stuff like sports, specifically soccer, martial arts and skateboarding. I wasn't, however, a good student at school. I didn't actively dislike going; it just wasn't a preference, and neither was the idea of being under any kind of authority. For some reason I always had difficulty with that concept.

My first musical awareness primarily came from my dad, Almerigo. He was always listening to music in the car or at home, and he gave me some of my first tapes of rock bands like KISS, or some of the Italian bands that were around at that time when I was just six or seven years old, along with a small tape recorder to play them on. By the time the 80s came around, and although there was almost no metal scene in Italy, it seemed like all of my friends were listening to metal bands like Iron Maiden, Mötörhead and Saxon.

When I was eight, my cousin bought me a copy of AC/DC's *Let There Be Rock* (1977) and shortly afterwards I went to a little, local metal music shop that was within walking distance of my house and bought an Angus Young t-shirt with a picture of him playing the Gibson SG guitar on the front. This place was a mecca where my like-minded friends and I would hang out whenever we could, and pretty soon I was bringing this world home with me in the form of posters to hang on my bedroom wall. This was all a significant step towards me becoming a metalhead at a very young age, and all my friends were doing the same thing. But for me it wasn't just metal...



LEFT

ANDREA FERRO, 2017, Milano

BELOW

Andrea's introduction to Rock n Roll:  
AC/DC "Let There Be Rock"

OPPOSITE

Andrea, c. 1990, at the historical  
halfpipe ramp in Monza

Because of my interest in skateboarding and the culture that ran parallel with it, I was also interested in other types of music that, while not heavy metal *per se*, weren't that far removed from that world—bands like the Beastie Boys, Run DMC and a few punk or hardcore bands. So, while I considered myself a metalhead, I also was drawn to the world that could generally be called 'alternative'.



**MARCO 'MAKI' COTI  
ZELATI**  
(bass 1994-present)

I was born in Milan on August 19th, 1975 and I lived for the first 20 years of my life between my family's house in Milan and my two grandparents' homes, one in Milan, the other in Maro, a small, remote village in a part of the Apennines called Castelnovo ne' Monti.

The district of Milan where I grew up was not one of the city's more beautiful, but it certainly wasn't the worst, either. My parents, **Gian Paolo and Renata**, were both very busy all day with their coffee and ice-cream bar which was situated right in front of our house and in the forecourt of the church, so I was often alone, playing with Lego, watching cartoons or, when the weather was good, playing football or hide and seek outside with my friends.

I attended kindergarten, elementary and middle school in that same neighbourhood and, because of the nature my parent's business, almost everybody knew me. As a result, I never had any problems other than those of my own creation. I wasn't a bad kid exactly, but from an early



age I was drawn to physical activities to release my frustrations: soccer, basketball athletics and judo.

Throughout my childhood it seemed like there was always music playing. My father loved to play the harmonica, electric bass and guitar, and our house was filled with musical instruments of various shapes and sizes. I vividly remember a keyboard, a violin, a banjo, a mandolin, a classical guitar, an acoustic guitar, a trumpet, a saxophone, flutes, harmonicas, percussion, djembe, and I'm sure there are some others I've completely forgotten. There was also what seemed to me to be *millions* of vinyl records occupying different rooms in the house. They were *everywhere*—LPs ranging from classical to rock, from progressive rock to blues, as well as hard rock and pop music from the '30s until the '80s.

My father loved bands like Pink Floyd, Deep Purple and Dire Straits, and the first clear childhood memory I have is of taking car trips to my grandparents' house in Maro, always sitting in the back, ready to throw up at every turn, while my father continually played various tape compilations he'd made, which included tracks by bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd, Doobie Brothers, Steely Dan and all kinds of other acts from the '60s, '70s and '80s. I suppose that I absorbed it at the time and now, when I hear certain songs, particularly 'Do It Again' by Steely Dan or 'Burn' by Deep Purple, all the wonderful memories of travelling to my favourite place and the people I love most, come flooding back.

**ABOVE**  
Marco, C.1979, first musicals steps

**OPPOSITE**  
MARCO COTI ZELATI, 2017,  
Milano

**BELOW**

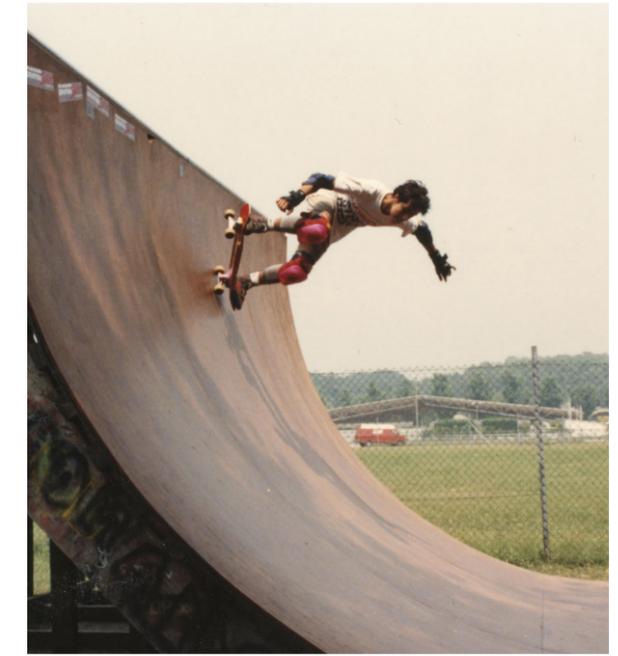
Marco's life-changing records:  
 SLAYER "Hell Awaits"  
 CARCASS "Symphonies Of Sickness"

I had a very brief period listening to Madonna and Michael Jackson LPs before passing on to "the dark side" of music, which was initiated by a trip to a music store/record exchange in Milan called The Discomane. I brought with me a whole pile of pop albums and exchanged them with only 2 records, the very albums that would change my life forever. The first was *Hell Awaits* (1985) by Slayer and the second was *Symphonies of Sickness* (1989) by Carcass. Even now, when I think of those two albums, I'm transported back to our sitting room, in front of my father's HI-FI with headphones, listening to songs like 'Reek of Putrefaction', trying to absorb everything I could of this "new" music, while giving the "thumbs-up" to my father who was just staring at me with a satisfied, if slightly bemused, smile on his face.

From that moment it never stopped. Pretty soon I was falling in love with Metallica, Megadeth, Iron Maiden, Prong and Morbid Angel, along with other bands like Circle Jerks, DRI and Black Flag. As I got older, I took my aggressive tendencies to school. After several suspensions for brawling, insulting teachers, bad behaviour in general including a few episodes of shoplifting in the area just to show off to my thirteen year old schoolmates who truly were 'goodfellas', I started to ride a skateboard in earnest. I 'boarded with no limits and no thought of the damage I might do to myself.

Thanks to tapes and videos of skateboarders imported from the States that were circulating through friends with the same passion, I began to listen to some other genres of music which I fell in love with and I still listen to today, such as hardcore, punk, thrash and grunge. A few months after I started skateboarding seriously, me and two friends, Giorgio and Pietro, ventured out of the area which we were instructed to stay in by our parents and went to a part of town called Largo Brasilia. It was as if we'd stepped through a stargate and found all these other kids into skateboarding, and a park where they were doing mad tricks.

I finished middle school with specific directions from my parents to develop a career in drawing, become an athlete or find a regular job. I asked them if I could go to a graphic art college, but it was a very expensive private school, and unfortunately we couldn't afford it. So I opted for another school in which, to be honest, I wasn't very interested. I spent two years at a Technical Institute, then switched



to studying commercial art. Unfortunately, neither of these schools allowed me to draw anything fun, like comics or skateboard logos. So I decided to draw them at home for other people, in return for cash, which I used to buy more skateboards.

Strangely, during all those years, I never really decided to learn to play a musical instrument. I'd always been attracted by all the instruments I had at home, and I started playing bass simply because it was the only instrument we had with an amplifier in the house, so, logically, it made the most noise. Then one day, I asked my father if I could replace the bass with an electric guitar and a distortion pedal in order to make even more noise. That's how it happened. Then I received guitar tuition from a friend of ours, Cristian – who was not only a very good guitarist, but also a total metalhead. But because he lived on the other side of the city, I quit with him after a couple of lessons and continued trying to learn composition on my own instead, focusing specifically on how bands like Megadeth, Iron Maiden and Metallica created their music.

Soon I met another group of boys who, like me, had total passion for skateboarding and among these kids was Andrea Ferro. He and I quickly became close friends. After a few months we met Michelangelo Algardi and Muriel Peretti, and a few years later, we formed our first punk/hardcore band called Arachnophobia with me on guitar, Andrea on vocals, Muriel on bass and Michelangelo on the drums.

**ABOVE**

Left: Marco, C.1991, Milano Gratosoglio Skatepark  
 Right: Andrea, C.1990, Milano Largo Brasilia (with self-constructed ramp)



I was born in Milan, Italy at the San Carlo hospital, on the sixth of June 1972. I have two brothers, and a sister who are all older than me, so I was always the little darling, spoiled rotten by a family that loved me very much. The area where I grew up was called Quarto Oggiaro, which in those days was considered to be something of a Milanese Bronx, a place frequented by drug dealers, junkies and various Mafia-related people who operated throughout its narrow alleyways by day and night.

As I got older, I was never drawn to, or even interested in becoming involved in the nefarious goings-on in my neighbourhood. Instead I became fascinated with the place, happy being a witness, an observer. It was not uncommon to have friends who were taking or pushing drugs, and it was never talked about, but everyone, even the kids, got to know the last names of the various main mafia players in the neighbourhood. It was all so fascinating to me. Their names were spoken in hushed tones only, but it was common knowledge that they controlled everything that happened with that relatively small, compact sector of North West Milan.

Fittingly perhaps, the clearest early memory of my childhood, apart from those typical hazy recollections of opening gifts on my bed at Christmas, is related to music. My parents, Francesca and Dario, recorded me while I was singing songs learned from watching a famous kid's international song festival, called 'Zecchino D'Oro'. I still have the tape they made for me. They were humble beginnings for sure, but I'm told I always liked to sing despite being uncomfortable about being seen doing it or being the centre of attention.

As I grew up, as is the case in many families, my awareness of, and exposure to, music developed on the back of my siblings' tastes. It's hard to avoid in a small, city house with four adolescents in residence. My eldest brother Andrea liked Pink Floyd, The Beatles and Genesis. At the other end of the spectrum, Antonella loved traditional Italian music. Then, somewhere in the middle of all of that, Alberto was getting me into dark electro music like Soft Cell or bands like The Cure and The Smiths after his trips to London to experience punk and new wave. People back then in my super conservative neighbourhood, who'd never left Milan, saw this guy coming back with bleached hair and earrings from London and they were all freaked out!

**CRISTINA SCABBIA**  
(vocals 1996-present)

**BELOW**

Cristina, C.1972, Milano

**OPPOSITE**

CRISTINA SCABBIA, 2017, Milano





There was an eclectic mixture of styles and influences being thrown my way and it fuelled my curious mind for all things that were unusual. Strangely, in retrospect, I remember hearing very little hard rock or metal music—possibly only Back In Black (1980) by AC/DC.

All the way through school, where I was always just a middle-of-the-road student, I was always attracted to artistic subjects: sculpture, photography, etc. My teachers said that I was definitely inclined to find a career in some kind of creative realm. In addition, because my elder brother travelled back and forward to London quite often, he was constantly bringing me new and unusual clothes from this place he described, but that really only existed in my dreams. As a result, by the time I was sixteen or so, I had developed a personality and a set of interests that were completely at odds with my upbringing as a girl from the 'hood.

When I finished school, my intention was always just to go to work somewhere. I've never had a problem with doing any kind of work; I liked to be active in that sense. I did every kind of job – I was a secretary, worked in a store and one Christmas in a huge hangar from where they distributed Christmas gifts around the city. That wasn't an easy job, I

had to get up early and it was fucking freezing, but I loved it. I never backed out of any job, ever.

When I was about seventeen, I started singing with friends around the city. I was shy and hid in the background but because I enjoyed it, I was always happy to pick up the microphone and express myself through singing. The weird thing is, when I think about it now, I really had no idea at that time what I wanted to do with my life. But somehow, it always felt like life put things in front of me that were related to singing in some way.

I first sang 'professionally' when I was eighteen, with friends who were professional DJs. They asked me sing on some of their records and it was an unusual process. I'd go to their studio for an hour at a time, where I'd record anything that came to my mind over a loop that they'd already written. Then they'd cut here and there to make a dance record or a very simple R'n'B track. The funny thing was that when these songs were released someone else's image was used on the cover. Only my voice was on the song, with a nickname. While i was happy to sing on these tracks and express myself, i didn't want my name or image to be used. That was my first experience, and as much as I enjoyed it and people told me I should continue, I never, ever thought it could become a career for me.

I grew up in Milan's suburbs. But I best recall vacations at my mum's small village located in the Piacenza countryside of Emilia-Romagna. All my best childhood memories belong to that place. Since childhood I have always disliked cities in general: there is too much noise, dirt and shallowness for me. I couldn't really feel a positive energy there, either. But as soon as I was in that village I remember feeling as if I was immediately surrounded by happiness. I could feel nature, the spontaneity of the people: that was the only place I always felt as if I belonged. Now that place is finally home.

I remember that my parents used to listen to Italian popular music, so nothing really interesting, and maybe that's why I started to look for some different kind of sounds. I never liked Italian pop music: it all sounded the same to me, with no strong emotions except for a

**CRISTIANO 'CRIZ'  
MOZZATI**  
(drums 1998-2014)

**ABOVE**  
Top left: Cristina, C.1976, Milano  
Top right: Cristina, C.1982, Milano  
with Biba, the cat

BELOW

Top left: Pizza's life-changing album:

DIRE STRAITS 'Brothers In Arms'

Bottom left: Criz's life-changing album:

IRON MAIDEN 'Number Of The Beast'

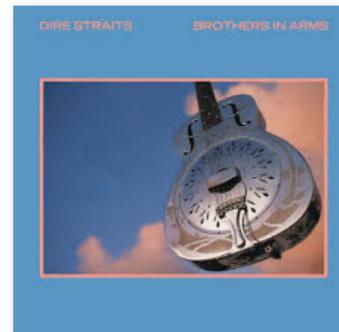
few artists that sometimes I still listen to, like Adriano Celentano and Fred Buscaglione. Then I heard the Sex Pistols' 'Anarchy in the UK' (1976) and from that moment I was hungry for punk rock and similar styles of music. I used to wear a lock and chain on my neck like the one Sid Vicious had, and that, mixed with my attitude, in polite and sanctimonious Italy got me into trouble with some people – especially teachers, but also some schoolmates.

After that punk moment, I started to look for something else musically different and I found Iron Maiden's *The Number of The Beast* (1982). Since then I've never stopped searching and listening to Rock, Metal, and almost all kinds of good music.

OPPOSITE

Above: CRISTIANO MIGLIORE, 2012, Rock On The Range U.S.A.

Below: Pizza and Andrea, C.1996, Milano outside Midnight Pub



My dad was a guitar player back in the '60s; he played traditional Italian folk-style music in bars and restaurants on the outskirts of Milan throughout my childhood. As much as I was always around music, it wasn't until I was almost fifteen that I ever considered picking up a guitar and playing myself. Even though my dad had once bought me a small toy guitar, I was always more interested in playing computer games like kids did, in the early days of Pac-Man and Space Invaders.

Then, one day, in May 1985, Dire Straits came out with *Brothers In Arms* – and with it, the incredible video for the song 'Money For Nothing.' Being a big computer games fan, I was completely captivated by not only how this song sounded, but also by how the semi-animated video looked. In combination, the images and the guitar riff caught my attention in a way that nothing ever had before. It really, really, hit me and I clearly remember saying to myself: 'I really, really have to play that riff!' So, I went to my dad and told him that I wanted him to teach me how to play guitar. The look on his face was one of pure delight! When you're that passionate about something, you never stop practicing. Consequently, every chance that I got, I took my guitar and learned whatever I could – songs by bands like Pink Floyd, The Eagles and other bands who were guitar driven. Exposure to them forced me down a path of discovering a variety of guitar techniques.

CRISTIANO 'PIZZA' MIGLIORE (guitars 1998-2014)



ANDREA

My first live concert experience was seeing Primus at the Rainbow Club in Milan in 1990. It was one of the first European tours they ever did, and I was sneaked in by some older friends. When I got in there I found this new, dark world of older guys, tattoos, piercings: a whole world of fascination for me. Marco, who I'd met with the skateboarding crew, was interested in similar things: tattoos, heavy music and horror movies. Despite being two years younger than me, our interests and passions were very much the same.

As a teenager I had no idea about what I might want to do with my life. Studying further wasn't an option; I wasn't someone who responded well to authority. But it's important to stress that the idea of being in a band wasn't very viable in Italy at that time. There was no history of successful heavy bands from Milan, or even Italy. I suppose I viewed my music as a passion, but certainly not as a long-term career goal. Regardless, in early in 1991, Marco, a friend of ours Michelangelo, and I decided to form a band, which we called *Arachnophobia*, after the movie of the same name. Cinema was another area where Marco's and my tastes overlapped, and the same applied to comic books. We were especially drawn to the darker, more twisted imagery within them, and *Arachnophobia* was just one that grabbed our attention at the time, so we just thought, "Why not?"

I played bass and sang in *Arachnophobia*, Marco played guitar. We wanted to be a metal band, but really we were more a punk/metal crossover, playing only rehearsal rooms and never any actual live shows.



As time passed by, I went from playing guitar in my room at home to the rehearsal room with my schoolmates and other friends, doing covers of Megadeth, Metallica and Judas Priest songs. I was becoming a bit more confident in my playing so Andrea and I decided to do something more serious and looked for other members until we formed *Arachnophobia*, our first proper band. We started to write songs and did a couple of small gigs in schools and local skateboard gatherings.

As the passion and the commitment increased, some of the guys in the band could no longer keep up. The first to leave was Muriel. He was older than us and was playing the bass for fun in his spare time because he already had a real job. His priorities were different, understandably. After a bit of difficulty we found another guy called Michele. He stayed for a while and then left too, which gave us no option but to try Andrea on bass until we found someone else suitable. Then we heard that Michelangelo, our drummer, had a mate who wanted to join us. Raffaele seemed like a great fit. He not only shared our commitment and passion, but he also had the same taste in music as us.

MARCO

ABOVE  
Arachnophobia Live, C. 1991,  
Santa Marta High School, Milano

OPPOSITE  
Michelangelo, Marco, Muriel and  
Andrea (*Arachnophobia*) 1991



I gave him some lessons and after some time spent at music school he soon became much better than I was. This lineup changed its name to Sleep Of Right, which amusingly, was a name taken from a mistranslation of a famous quote “the sleep of reason produces monsters” by the Spanish painter Francisco Goya.

**PIZZA**

I ended up going to art school, and when I finished I had to spend a year doing mandatory civil service before I got into the world of proper work. I got sent to this small town, a couple of hours away from Milan, where I had to spend my days working in the town hall. Of course I took my guitar and a small amp, because at night there was literally nothing to do. I had a driver’s license, but I had no car. Soon word got around that I played, and I was approached by a couple of guys who were basically playing cover songs in their garage. I thought: “Why not? What else am I going to do?”

Playing in a group takes a player to another level. There’s a synergy there that you can’t get in your bedroom with your guitar, and by the end of that year we were pretty good and even managed a couple of shows. My horizons were really broadened; I was starting to think about what I’d do when I got back to Milan.

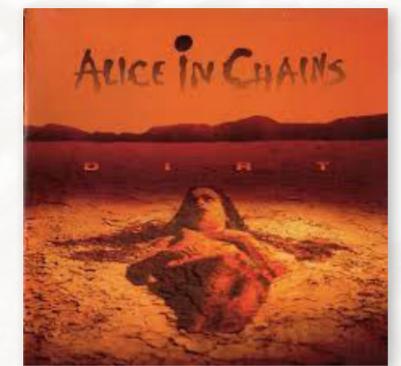
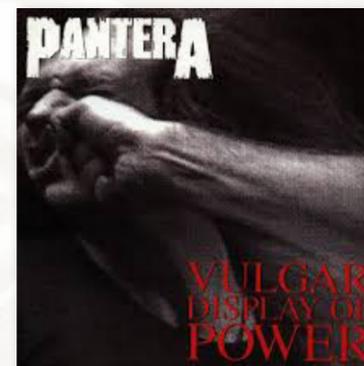
So, back in Milan, I started figuring out ways to play with other people – anyone. I got into a couple of covers bands; none of it was great. It was the usual directionless stuff that young people do. The problem

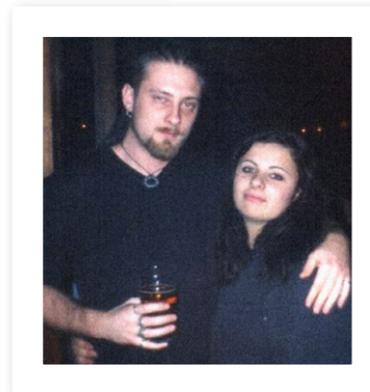
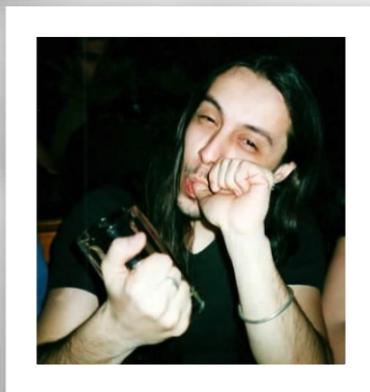
was that Italy has never been a huge rock and metal country. The scene was very much smaller back then; it was hard to do anything with that kind of music. All you’d hear on the radio was either stuff that came from England and America, or Italian pop music. Nobody played metal or hard rock. Regardless, it was a cool time because a few metal pubs and bars started opening, most notably the Midnight pub, right in the centre of Milan. It was entirely heavy metal themed and all they played was metal. This was unheard of – and everyone who was into metal gravitated towards that place, even though it was maybe only a thousand square feet. All the best and worst memories of my formative years are from there: drugs, alcohol; we’ve all done it. Understandably, in the summer when it was hot, people would spill outside where it got loud and raucous. It was open until three in the morning and the neighbours hated us and threw eggs at us. Still, I’d be there every day!

I started to study the drums by myself, so I inevitably arrived at a point where, even if I had collected lots of bad habits in terms of technique and posture, I was still good enough to start playing for a band.

**CRIZ**

Around late 1992 I was playing in a metal band called Kalidon, and by that point in my life I was already listening to lots of rock and metal music. I remember Pantera came out with *Vulgar Display of Power* (1992) and I fell totally in love with it. The same year Dream Theater’s *Images And Words* (1992), Alice in Chains’ *Dirt* (1992), Megadeth’s





*Countdown To Extinction* (1992) and *Rage Against The Machine* were being played in the metal pub I used to visit. I also started to listen to some funk music, and then decided to take drum lessons. I spent a year at the CPM, a very well-known music school in Milan, where I studied with great drummers like Walter Calloni, Roberto Gualdi and Ruggero Pazzaglia, and that was awesome training for me. But unfortunately I didn't find the CPM jazz class to be exactly what I wanted so I decided to talk to Mario Riso instead – one of the best drummers in Italy – about the idea of teaching me. He's very nice and down to earth and better still, he really took my drumming to a new level. Soon I felt ready for another project.

## PIZZA

I first met Andrea and Marco in the Midnight Pub and they were basically doing the same as me: hanging out, drinking beer and talking about music. Cristina was working at the bar so they'd always be in there as Marco and Cristina were going out by that time. We met casually and started talking, discovered we had the same interests and then always sat at the same table. We clicked immediately; I began hanging out more with these guys than my band-mates.

The band I was in, Paniko, played hard rock with Italian lyrics; it really wasn't too bad for the time, and we were clearly influenced by the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. Most of my band members came from an area outside of the city though, and it was harder for them to come to the Midnight pub.

Andrea, Cristina and Marco's musical styles were closer to what I liked – bands like Paradise Lost, Type O Negative and Carcass,

band members

Maiden. Not just that, we also had the same background in gaming and movies. That said, at that time Andrea was barely able to play the bass. Cristina wasn't even in the band and Raffaele, the guitarist back then, had only just started playing. From what I remember, this was the very beginning of Sleep Of Right and I'm not really sure that they'd started practising seriously, but not long afterwards they recorded a demo containing one song which ended up on a compilation called *Noise Of Bolgia* (1995). It was a compilation that featured a lot of underground rock and metal bands from the Milan area and was quite a big deal at the time, even though it was independently released.

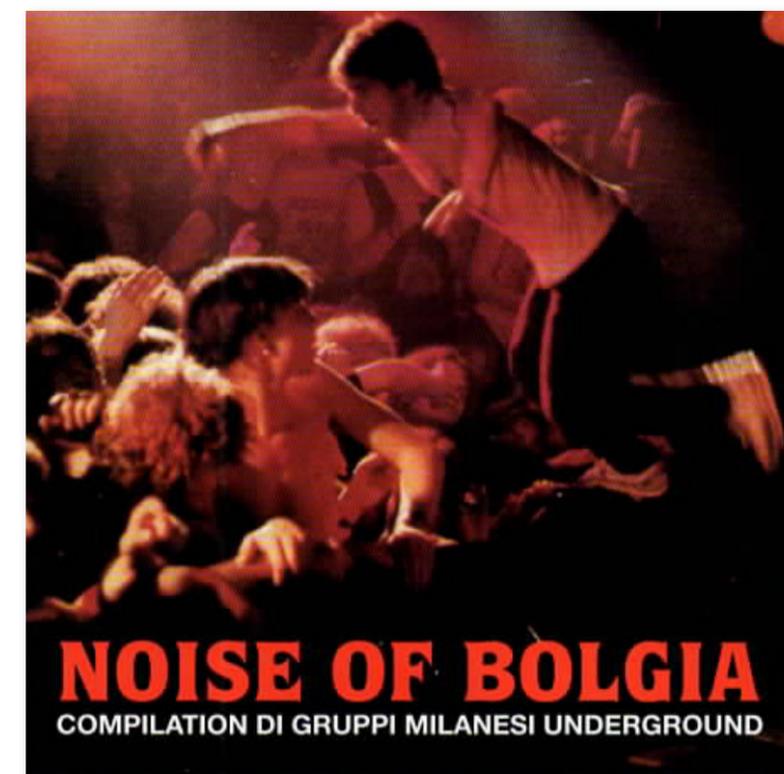
They recorded in a real studio with Marco Trentacoste who would end up being a well-known rock producer and I went over when they were recording and met the him, I was super-pumped! I remember the intro from the song they recorded sounded as if it was taken from the movie *Cape Fear*.

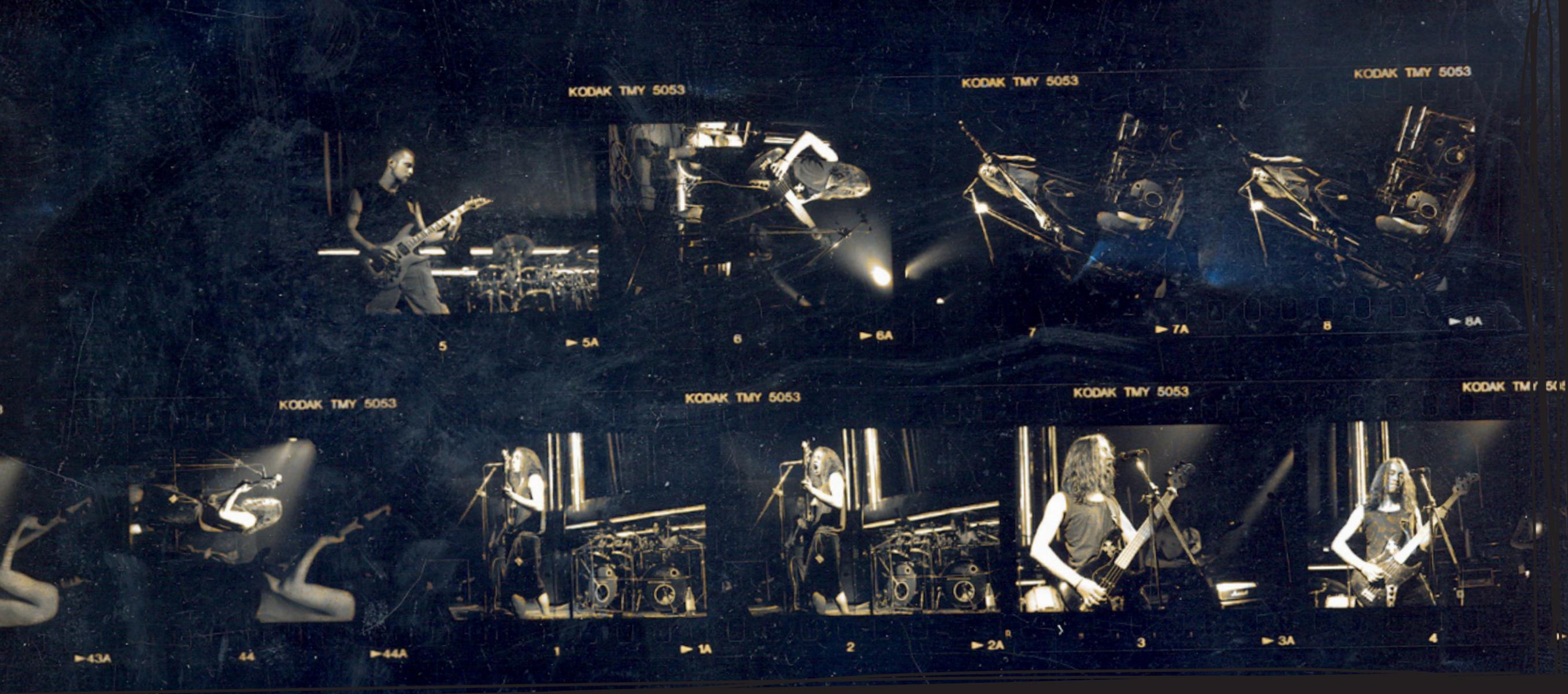
## BELOW

Iconic Noise Of Bolgia  
compilation

## OPPOSITE

Memories from Midnight pub





LEFT  
Sleep Of Right live at Factory in  
Milano, 1995.

I remember the experience of being in a *real* recording room, with a producer sitting at a desk and people standing outside listening to him saying: "No, you fucked up! One more time."

It was a huge step for them, and at that time, with my own band, I'd done a few 'Battle of the Bands' type shows in the Milan area. It was cool, but I couldn't help having my head turned by what Sleep Of Right were doing. And then, when the song came out on the compilation CD performed live. The show was great; they pulled it off. But I vividly remember that they stopped halfway through one of the songs because Marco fucked something up on the guitar, or couldn't keep up. I love

Marco, and in true style he paused, looked at the crowd and started laughing with his arms up in the air. The whole crowd laughed too, and then they restarted the song and finished the show. People liked their attitude, even though they were super-pissed afterwards saying: "Oh no, what the fuckkkk?"

When we changed the band name to Sleep of Right, sometime late in 1994, the only gigs we ever played were a couple school end of year parties and then, because we got a song selected for a compilation CD of underground bands in '95 (Noise of Bolgia), we got an opportunity

ANDREA

OPPOSITE

Sleep Of Right, C. 1994, Settimo  
Milanese

to play at a legitimate club venue. That was the first time we ever played with proper monitors and I have only vague memories of there being a lot of bands playing and that we played a couple of songs prior to a very quick changeover. Technically it probably wasn't great, but I do remember that we made a good impression for the time because our style stood out among the other bands. We slowed down and played heavy, whereas the other bands were mostly into being super-fast and progressive with dramatic lead guitar breaks.

PIZZA

As Sleep of Right, in 1995, we contributed a track to a compilation of underground bands in Milan, called *Noise of Bolgia*. "Bleeding Souls" was our first official recording at Malibu Studio with Marco Trentacoste, and it attracted good reviews and interest from third parties—as did our rather amateurish promo show at the Factory venue in Milan.

While at that Sleep Of Right show for *Noise Of Bolgia*, I saw another band called Thy Nature. They were one of the few bands signed to a real independent label called Nosferatu Records from the Puglia area. Although everybody knew who they were because they'd released an EP with four or five songs on it, they didn't play live shows very much. They were a hyper-technical death metal band in the style of many bands back then -- along the same lines as Cynic or Atheist whose stuff was played all the time at the Midnight pub. The guys were phenomenal musicians and I thought: "Damn, I want to play like *that*." They were playing that same kind of stuff and, better still, they lived in Milan.

We got to know each other and became good friends and then, at some point, Thy Nature fired their singer and went in search of a second guitar player. My band was going nowhere, so I thought, "Maybe I could audition for Thy Nature." By no means was I a great guitar player, and certainly wasn't Steve Vai at this point—being more in the Dave Gilmour or Adrian Smith vein. When I went to the audition I knew that they had tried out a couple of guys from the scene who were undeniably way better than I was. Yet, for some weird, incredible reason, they picked me. They said: "All these guys were maybe better at playing solos, but when it comes to playing rhythm, you're what we're looking for." I was so proud and thought to myself, "Wow, I'm in Thy Nature!"



In the months after the *Noise of Bolgia* gig there were many changes that affected the future of the band: the arrival of Cristina, the abandonment of Michelangelo who was replaced by Leo; the arrival of Claudio as second guitarist, and, finally, the beginning of me playing bass officially, because we couldn't find anyone else who'd do it! Apparently, everyone wanted to play guitar because they thought it was just so much cooler.

MARCO

**CRISTINA**

My first encounter with Marco was when I was sitting outside a metal pub in Milan with a friend. I saw him coming out of the place, completely shitfaced, with two friends of ours carrying him. I was twenty-two. A few days later, I met him properly in Andrea's company. We spent the evening together and went to another pub. I found out that they had a band they were playing in, which wasn't even a local band; they had only played school concerts. But they had the intention of doing a demo. Then Andrea said, "Hey, it could be cool if you could sing something with us to see how it works." So I said, "Alright..." That was my first contact, and I've been in the band ever since.

**BELOW**

Cristina, C.1995, waitress at the Midnight Pub.

**OPPOSITE**

Ethereal logo sketches, 1996



Ethereal

Ethereal  
Ethereal  
Ethereal

**ANDREA**

Marco and I used to hang out all the time in the Midnight Pub in Milan. It was the local metal stomping ground. We were in there pretty much every day, I think. Cristina was also always there and then, after not very long, she and Marco started dating. We realised that she could sing after she played us some of the recordings she'd done, but at that time the only work she'd been doing was contributing session vocals to dance music tracks. Once we heard the vocals, we thought, "This is great. Maybe we could incorporate a female voice somehow into what we're doing." By that time, we were on the brink of recording a demo as Ethereal, so we asked her to add some background vocals to some of our tracks and we really liked how it sounded. The addition of her voice seemed to make the sound different from anything else we'd heard.

Initially, Marco was a little hesitant about the idea of having his girlfriend in the band. He thought it might complicate things, as it often can. But the dimension Cristina's voice gave us was so undeniable that he overlooked that concern pretty quickly. We all thought, "We have something very special here."

**MARCO**

Cristina and I were boyfriend and girlfriend before she joined the band. But I can remember thinking to myself: 'Getting my girlfriend in the band? Come on!' I really wasn't keen. The relationship aspect aside, I was never really into the idea of female vocals in metal bands. I loved it in pop, but not in metal. But the point is, when we heard Cristina first, she was singing in a style that was more related to the pop world. Then I thought: 'Who cares. Let's do it!'



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**RIGHT**

Ethereal band shot, Settimo Milanese,  
1996.

**CRISTINA**

He didn't want me in the band at the beginning! He was a little bit suspicious to start with. When we started, there weren't so many bands with one female member. In some sense, we were interfering with what was a traditionally male dominated market. Women were entering the metal world but the perception was that women would go on stage and have tomatoes thrown at them! I never had that kind of treatment, though. In fact, not for one second has it ever been an issue for me to be the only girl in an all guy group. I always had tons of male friends; I have two older brothers. I was surrounded by guys and had many male friends in all the different groups I hung out in. In the band, it was exactly the same: I wasn't a woman in the line up. I didn't need privacy; I'm a people person. I liked to share the spaces with the guys because I feel that we're equal. Nobody cared, I was and I am still just like one of them.

**BELOW**

Hugely influential record for the band:  
CYNIC 'Focus'

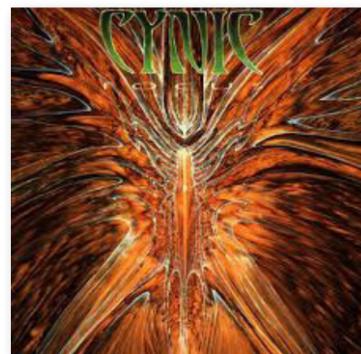
**RIGHT**

Cristina Scabbia and Andrea Ferro,  
Settimo Milanese, 1996.

**ANDREA**

We decided to put Cristina's vocal front and centre with mine for the demo. From the beginning Ethereal was a band that was much more comfortable in the practice room than playing live gigs. We always wanted to make the actual material before we played it to anyone else. So it took us a long time, almost a year, to create the two tracks that made up the demo. Admittedly, the songs are seven minutes plus in length, with several complicated sections, but nevertheless it set a tone of perfectionism that's never really left us.

It took us a long time to be satisfied with the two songs we had. The transition from being kids playing in school bands, to being a proper band creating mature compositions, took some adjustment. At the same time, we were listening to more progressive music—some Dream Theater one day, and then some really technical death metal by bands like Cynic, Death and Morbid Angel on another (Cynic's *Focus* record of 1993 was hugely influential for us and seeing Death in Milan on the tour for *Symbolic* in 1995 was equally so). Then, as well as those we'd be listening to more underground bands like Septicflesh from Greece and goth-influenced artists like Paradise Lost. We liked the contrast of listening to something simple, and then something more complicated. Contrast has always been an important concept for us and I think that you can ascertain that even from listening to that first demo of ours. We definitely always wanted a sound that was based on much more than just four chords.



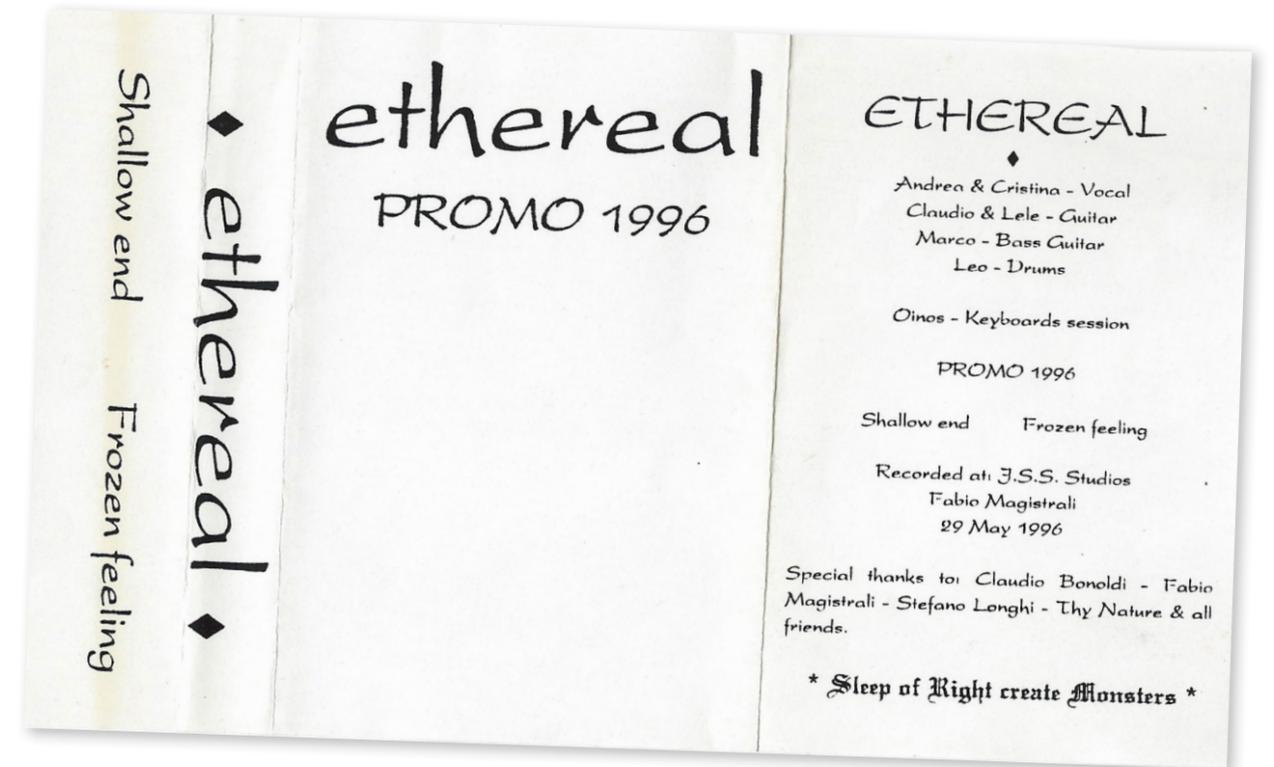
**CRISTINA**

Recording the demo together was interesting because we did almost all of it at night. There was a deal available with a studio in the region of Lombardy, whereby we could record two songs at night and it would be much cheaper than if we did it during the day. So, I was working during the day at this place where they were importing used Levi's jeans from the U.S and reselling them. There was this long table I would put stacks of jeans on and when I'd finished recording at night with the band, because I had the key to the place where I worked, I'd go back there and sleep on the pile of jeans until it was time for me to get up and work again. I did that for many days in a row. It was an intense time, but we all enjoyed it.



**VALERIE LYNCH**  
(formerly Century Media's  
label representative, and  
now Lacuna Coil's manager)

I began working for Century Media a few months prior to the arrival of Lacuna Coil's demo at the office. Before that I'd been working for a distribution company which handled Century Media releases in Italy.



**ABOVE**

Ethereal 'Promo 1996' cassette tape

**OPPOSITE**

VALERIE LYNCH, 1998, Babylonia (Biella)

I was sent this demo and was told that the band were from Milan and that the label really liked them. Century wanted me to go and meet them and find out if they were serious about their band and also to hear them play live.

At the time the rock and metal scene in Italy was not just small and underground, but the bands that were sending in demos seemed to be very focused on technical virtuosity, whereas Lacuna Coil's demo revealed a band that offered something completely different. Even though the songs on the first demo were perhaps a lot more complex than those which would eventually be recorded as a first album, they still had a freshness about them. And then of course, there was Cristina's voice, which made them stand out even more from everything that was around. They were exactly what Century Media were looking for at the time.

So, going to meet Lacuna Coil was literally one of the first things I did in this job and I met them at Cristina's brother's clothing shop, where she was helping out. It seemed like it was the band's office at the time; there was a fax machine and a telephone there. I immediately liked them and as we chatted we got along really well. I also arranged to watch them in their rehearsal space shortly after, and was really pleased to note that



they were also a real tight band. At the time they were sitting with two offers: one from Nuclear Blast and one from Century Media, which they eventually accepted.

**ANDREA**

Despite the new dimension and scope that having Cristina's voice gave us, it was also a double-edged sword in the beginning. Having two singers made things a little more complicated from a compositional standpoint. Because we have two totally different



styles, we had to learn how to find the balance that would fit the songs best. Cristina's voice was like an extra instrument – a powerful and strong instrument – that we had to learn how to manage. It wasn't easy in the beginning but we loved the contrast, not just for the vocals but also the music and imagery.

I wasn't much of a singer when we started. You've got to remember that we were basically all self-taught musicians. We all loved music, and we played and sang spontaneously. We never studied professional musicianship so it took a while to develop the quality. I always had a lot of power to my vocals but not much in the way of control – mainly because I was using my voice as a means to express very powerful feelings such as rage or sadness. I never wanted to be a high-pitched, perfect-pitch hard rock singer; that didn't appeal to me at all. I preferred throwing all the emotion out there. I think that probably came from my early exposure to hardcore music, where how you said something was more important to what was being said. Obviously, out of necessity my vocal style has developed and evolved from a self-taught, emotionally based delivery. I still like purging my feelings with my vocals but at various times I've taken lessons to improve my singing – as well as practising and exercising my voice.

**OPPOISTE**

Out-take from first Ethereal photo shoot, 1996, Settimo Milanese

In the beginning, we had no particular idea of any direction we wanted to take. We played whatever we felt – but I suppose we might have been influenced by some of the soundtracks of the many horror movies we were all watching at the time. We watched everything, from *Nosferatu* (1922) to *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and more, and the gorier the better.

**MARCO**

In 1996, we changed our name to Ethereal, and it was in this incarnation that we made our demo entitled simply *Promo 96*. It was released on cassette and included two songs: 'Shallow End' and 'Frozen Feeling'. It was this demo and these two songs that would grab the attention of Century Media in 1997. Before we signed with them though, we were told that there weren't just one but *two* other bands already called Ethereal. So, after some thinking about it, we changed our name to Lacuna Coil.



LEFT  
Band photo Ethereal, Settimo Milanese,  
1996.

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