

HALFLIFE

MARCO

Marco 'Maus' Biazzi, a second guitar player, joined the band after a meeting at a different pub in Milan. He was in another band that was playing stuff in the style of Meshuggah and Pantera. Before he joined we had obviously tried as best as we could to make everything with just one guitar, adding keyboards where we could. But I have to say that I was never really happy about that, so I decided to look for someone else.

I met Maus one night and we started to talk. He was a bit younger than the rest of us. I said to him: "What do you think about jumping on tour with us and playing in our band?" He didn't know anything about our



OPPOSITE

Lacuna Coil promo shot from
Halflife



music; all he knew was our reputation and that we'd been on tour with The Gathering and Moonspell. I gave him a copy of *In A Reverie* and said, "Listen to this." Shortly afterwards, he joined the band and was the guitar player for seventeen years. The first thing he recorded was the "Halflife" EP.

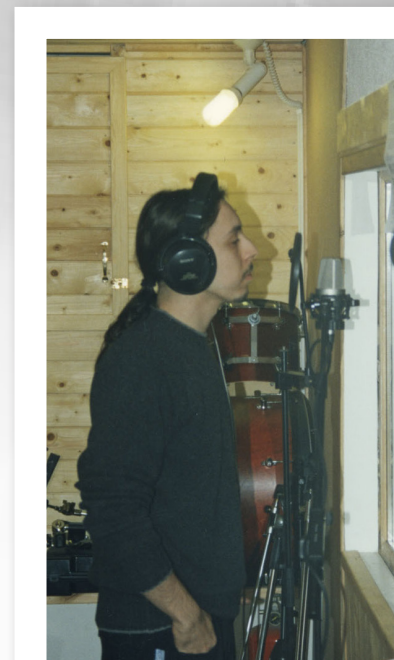
ANDREA

It was common practice at the time for labels like Century Media and Nuclear Blast to encourage their bands to do an album and then to follow that with an EP. From an industry perspective it was therefore quite normal but beyond that it made sense for us because we were still evolving. An EP is a way to take some small steps in a certain direction without being totally committed to another full-length album—particularly back then when the idea of a full-length actually meant something. Nowadays, of course, less importance is placed on having a record out. The "Halflife" EP was fine for the time. Maybe I wouldn't do that now, but back then it made sense.

Cristina, Waldemar and Pizza celebrating
the end of recording, 2000

OPPOSITE

Andrea and Marco recording vocals and
bass on Halflife, 2000



Not only can Waldemar play guitar and bass, but he can also programme keyboards and stuff – which was really helpful by the time we came to record the "Halflife" EP. *In A Reverie* had been a traditional rock band set-up: two guitars, bass, drums and vocals. But keyboards and backing tracks became more prominent on "Halflife".

PIZZA

Listening to it again recently I realised that there are a lot more Middle Eastern influences on "Halflife" than I remember at the time. Many of my vocal intros have that influence – particularly on tracks like 'Halflife' and 'Senzafine'. I used to love a singer called Ofra Haza, and still do. She's Israeli. Whenever Marco said, "Let's improvise on vocals..." that kind of style always seemed to come out. I think the crossover between metal and that style sounds awesome. I still use it.

CRISTINA

I've often thought about why we achieved the foothold that we did in the early days. Granted, female fronted bands were becoming more popular at the time, with bands like The Gathering and, later, Within Temptation appearing on the European metal scene. Truthfully, we

PIZZA



didn't have much in common with either of them. We seemed to be the only ones who were coming with a different approach to the genre because we were coming at it from a place that was much closer to a band like Paradise Lost – which is no surprise given that *Draconian Times* and *Icon* had both come out around that time and were hugely influential on our early music. If you listen to early Lacuna Coil, you can totally hear that. But beyond that, Cristina's vocals were a huge factor. As well as being talented, the way that she writes vocal lines is not strictly speaking metal. Because she had come from that pop background, she had this ability to craft catchy vocal lines with the sad and gothic backdrop we had going on with the music.

MARCO

The “Halflife” cover is a good story. The central image is either one side of a face or two, depending on how you look at it. Cristina lied her head on a scanner and for three or four hours straight I printed her face and then worked on the design. Century media always wanted Cristina to be on the cover, so we delivered it to them! We had a lot of fun with that.



UNLEASHED MEMORIES



OPPOSITE

ABOVE:

Press flyer for Halflife, 2000

BOTTOM:

First draft lyrics to Hyperfast by Andrea, 2000

ANDREA

To my mind, we partially achieved what we wanted with *Unleashed Memories*. You could see that we were moving away from a standard, European gothic metal sound and towards more modern rock and metal, with influences from America. I don't think that was intentional – I just think that we were absorbing sounds at the time, as we still are today whether the music is new or old. When you come out with your first material, people will inevitably compare you with whatever bands have come before you and that may have influenced you – in our case Paradise Lost or The Gathering.

BELOW

Press photo for *Unleashed Memories*,
Germany, 2001



As you evolve, you start looking for more of your own personality and there's no doubt that, back then we were looking for more of a definitive sound, and *Unleashed Memories* was a necessary step – in combination with all the touring that accompanied it. Some songs gave us a semblance of identity, but others felt somewhat incomplete. Nevertheless, it was the next step. As second albums go, it was good. But it could have been even better. It definitely wasn't the album where we said: "Right, this is the album that will define our career from now on."

The Mexican sun image for the cover was interesting. It was a picture we took of a piece of furniture we'd seen in the home of our German manager at that time, Carsten Otterbach. We were trying to give the sense of something being unleashed via the rays of the sun. It was a good-looking image and it caught people's attention.



Our first touring experience in Europe had been with Moonspell, so it was appropriate that our first tour in America was also with them. It was an absolute pleasure for us; it was like touring overseas with family. The tour manager we had at the time was this crazy American guy and we had an equally crazy, typically American driver. I have so many good memories of that tour as a first experience in the States. Honestly though, at that time I still didn't think this would be our career.

MARCO



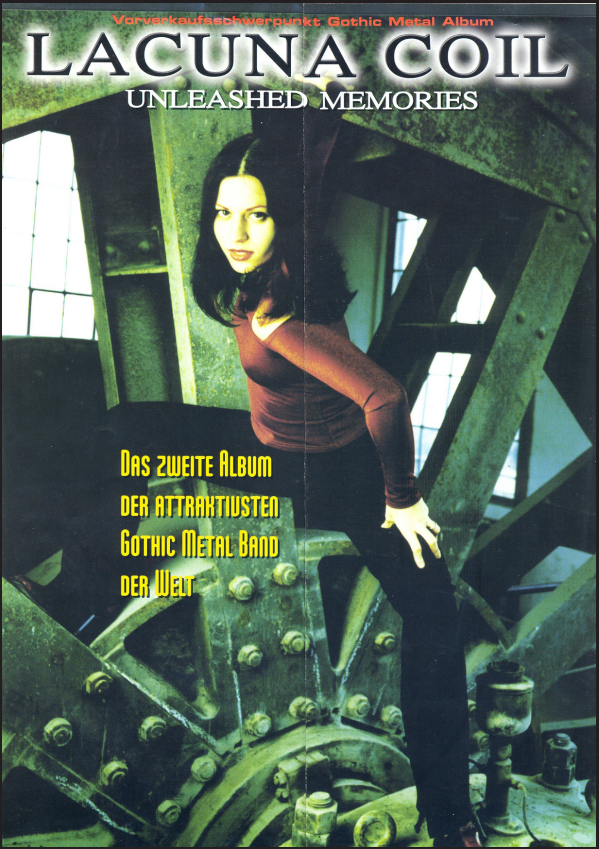
Everything we knew about America had come to us via the movies. When we went there first with Moonspell in 2001, even the simple things – like a van or a truck – would make us say things like: "Look! Just like in the movies." Predictably, we were doing all the clichéd things: taking pictures of everything, ordering certain things to eat or drink – all because we'd seen it in the movies. It was a very, very pleasant time, not least because we were fulfilling one of our dreams: to be a band, touring internationally. We were in heaven.

ANDREA



RIGHT

Press photo for Unleashed Memories,
2001



THIS PAGE

Press flyers for Unleashed Memories, 2001

OPPOSITE

Marco modeling his new bikini in Acapulco during first Latin America tour, 2000



IN A REVERIE

CRISTINA

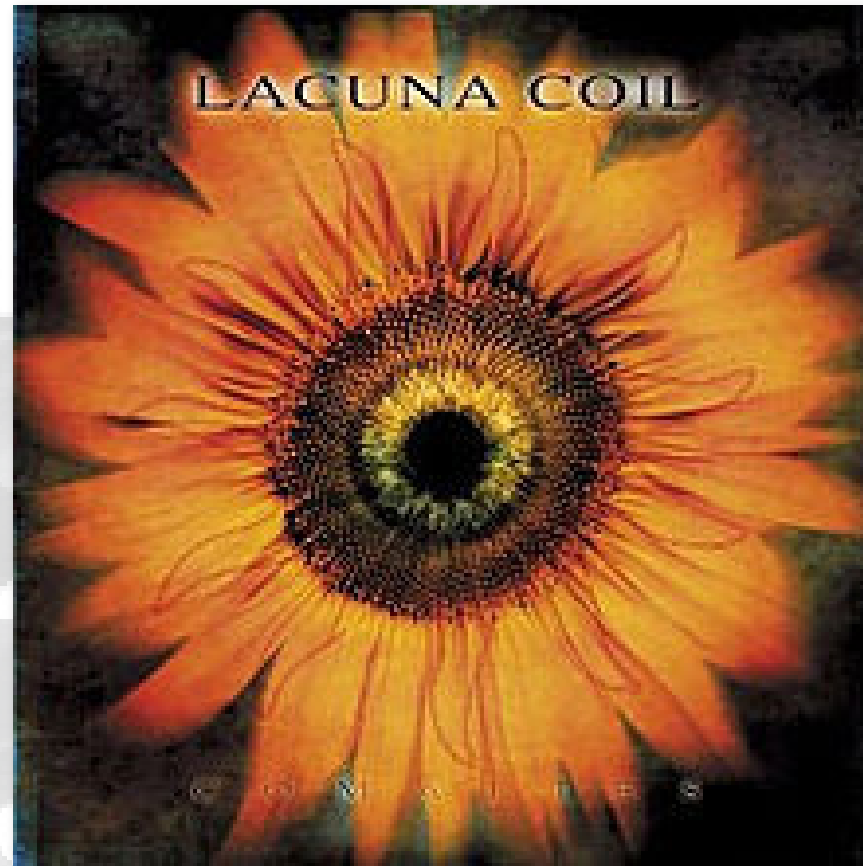
We loved touring in the States. It felt as if we adapted immediately. We thought that we knew the U.S from the movies – and we found out that the reality was just like that. The streets were so big; it was all so insane. Even though the Moonspell tour was very short, we became swamped in American culture within a matter of days, if not hours!



COMALIES

ANDREA

When making *Comalies* we all felt that it was a good album, and an improvement on anything we'd done before. We had no sense of its commercial potential at that time or how much further forward it would take us. We were, understandably perhaps, just expecting a steady, constant incline like it had been from *In A Reverie* to *Unleashed Memories* via the interim EP, where there was growth in terms of the sales and the touring scale. We expected the same step, but that step turned out to be ten times bigger. *Comalies* was the first time where I think we sounded like Lacuna Coil and nothing else. When a band comes out with their first album or two, people always want to



categorise them with whatever it is that's either preceded it or is around at that time – in our case that was Paradise Lost or The Gathering. Obviously, there were still subtle influences here and there but in general I think we found on *Comalies* the right balance between the music, the vocals and the direction we were going in – it was a complete package that served to broadcast the various abilities of the band in different directions. *Comalies* closes the first part of our career where we were a young Italian band getting our first chance, into a successful international band.

Making the record was a great combination of working at home on computers and then getting together as a band in the practice room. It was the perfect compromise. *In A Reverie* was almost all practice room; *Unleashed Memories* comprised a lot of computer work.

ABOVE

Somewhere in United States,
2004

RIGHT

Stage clothes design, 2001

BELOW

Andrea and Cristina at Comalies
photo shoot

OPPOSITE

The band wearing the iconic priest
suits handmade
by Alberto Gigliotti, experienced
tailor. Cristina's sandals became
surprisingly iconic on their own, 2002

FRONT

BACK



Comalies was exactly the right balance between the two. It came out in a more organic way and was more complete for that reason. In addition, we were that much further down the line of having a settled group of musicians who knew each other better in terms of what we were able to achieve. And there was also Waldemar in our corner, working with Marco to drive the process forward. As I remember, he was always consulting with us during the process of making *Comalies*, but never in an aggressive way! He was, in his own way, trying to open our eyes to his ideas about possible rhythms or arrangements. He wasn't too hands-on and didn't arrive wanting to completely change songs. Instead it felt like he was driving us towards our potential. In general, he wanted the hard work done in the practice room and in pre-production, rather than having to make any significant changes in the studio, where he was always very respectful of the fact that wasted time equalled money spent.





MARCO

I am very comfortable with the idea of working alone, absolutely. Not because I want to do everything, but because it's easy for me to assemble ideas from Andrea and Cristina on my own. That's just the way that suits me. I like to try different things with nobody else around and I tend to change things a lot as I go along. Sometimes they'll bring me an idea, I'll work on it all night and then I'll take it to them and say, "Hey guys, I changed things completely." And they go, "What the fuck?!" But I just want to find the best solution. Sometimes my change is the one that ends up on the record but it's a constant process that always has to be met with the approval of Andrea and Cristina because, to me, they are the most important part of the band.

COMALIES

As far as my own instrument is concerned, I don't give a fuck about it. I'm a bass player, but the bass is just the bass. Ha ha!

WALDEMAR

We worked hard on *Comalies*. I seem to remember that we had three separate pre-production sessions. We went into that level of detail because I felt that the band had reached a point where they had good songs, but needed to take the energy to the next level. In any case, I'm a believer in never making the same record twice. I think a band should always go forwards – and that's where Lacuna Coil was at the time of *Comalies*.

CRISTINA

Comalies was a tipping point in that we knew more about ourselves and the recording process generally – how to work with a producer etc. We were also much more certain about our own style in that we'd got past that common scenario where, when you start out as a band, you are inevitably inspired more by other bands because you don't have a specific sound.

The strangest thing about *Comalies* was that, while it came out in 2002, it wouldn't be until two years later that it really created impact because of our Ozzfest appearance in 2004. So, this was an unusual situation whereby we put out a record, promoted it for a couple of years – then pushed it again even more heavily because of the response from American audiences. With *Comalies*, we came to the realisation that the world knew who we were. From that perspective the record will always be very close to my heart. It was honest, had lots of melody and great songs. They're still great now. I could never listen to that record and say that it in any way sucks.

OPPOSITE
Milan photo session for *Comalies*.

BELOW
Backstage fun during European tour with Sentenced, 2002





The concept behind 'Heaven's a Lie' has often been misinterpreted, I think, and turned into some kind of Satanic message. It's not that at all! We're so often sold the idea of heaven, that we have to get there. But one person's idea of heaven may be hell to someone else, so the song is just saying that we don't really need heaven. It's not a religious song *per se*, it's more about freedom of thought and ideas. There's a clear distinction.

ANDREA

LEFT

Cristina frozen in
Austria, 2002

OPPOSITE

U.S. Opeth tour, 2003



MARCO



When we wrote 'Heaven's a Lie' we were so far from thinking about commercial sales or radio play. In fact, it was the last song on the album we thought might be a single. It only became a single because an American radio station, WAAF in Boston, fell in love with it after Ozzfest in 2004. And then other radio stations got into it too. We were thinking more in terms of songs like 'Swamped' or 'Daylight Dancer' as potential singles off the album!

The formula is more or less the same for all of our songs. If you listen closely, all our structures are similar. They all have a potential hit single structure, even if they don't become a hit. One of the many things I really like about us is that, even if it's a five-minute song with lots of time changes, it's still the same structure. It's always rolling, and always simple.

WALDEMAR

I'd be lying if I said that I never have thought to whether a particular song might have commercial appeal. As a producer, when you see that there is potential, a way to have commercial appeal, then, you obviously

BELOW

Heading to a signing session somewhere in the U.S., C. 2003

OPPOSITE

Press photo in Milano, 2004



try to aim for that. But the main thing is to not lose the band's roots on the way. How many bands have we seen over the years that sold good numbers of records but, in the quest for more, changed in a way that they completely lost connection with the band that they previously were? There are many examples, so the main thing is to find a position between the original view of the band, with as much commerciality as possible, but still with the recognisable face of Lacuna Coil.

Did *Comalies* define our identity? Yes, and no. We are a weird band in that regard, in that we have an identity, but at the same time we always want to upset any preconceived ideas people have about us by trying something different. We want to write the music that we like, without making ourselves into a cliché. It would be much easier to be predictable and recognisable in a specific genre.

CRISTINA



MARCO

Touring the U.S with Opeth in early 2003 was the first time I allowed myself to think that *maybe* we could make a career of playing music. When we opened for Type O Negative – one of the bands that influenced me most – I thought, “This is going to be my job forever. I want to be a rock star and I want to be in America forever.”

CRISTINA

Our very first tour with Moonspell was so short that we hadn’t really had the chance or the time to build anything. But opening for Type O Negative really helped our profile. When I heard that we were going to tour with them it was like a dream come true; they influenced Lacuna Coil so much. Being on the road with them, seeing them every day and getting to know them as people, was amazing. There was such a great vibe.

ABOVE

Marco and Cristina at the Skywalker Ranch, California, 2003

OPPOSITE

Cri and Peter Steele of Type O Negative - US Type O Negative tour, 2003

COMALIES

relationship with bands that open for us. We always treat them nicely; we don’t play rock star cards. If there are two dressing rooms, we won’t take both. One for us and one for them – and I think that’s really important because you never know what the future holds. A band opening for you today may be the main band tomorrow. Besides, it makes for a better tour if bands treat each other well on tour.

ANDREA

During the first part of the album’s promotional cycle, we undertook the normal touring schedule. The first part of the tour in the U.S was with Opeth and you could tell that there was something of a buzz. We grew up a little too – and then, gradually, we started to get some magazine



cover stories. It was normal growth. When we went to America, WAAF, trendsetters for active radio at the time, invited us to play an acoustic version of 'Heaven's A Lie' in the studio (which we never actually did). Regardless, as a result of WAAF's attention, we soon had a hundred radio stations playing 'Heaven's A Lie' on rotation. Better still, MTV2, who still had the *Headbanger's Ball* TV show running, asked us for a proper video for the song – so we went back to Italy to create something to replace the underground version that had previously been shot in Los Angeles by a student director. It was really crap. In fact, I'm more ashamed of that video than the *In A Reverie* album cover!

We filmed the new video in Gothenburg with Patrick Ullaeus of the Revolver Film Company. The location was a warehouse in a former army base. When we first met he told us, "I'm going to make this look like a million dollar video..."

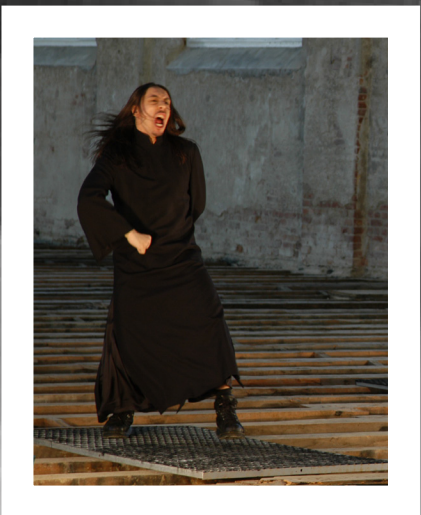
True to his word, he really made it look great, with lots of special effects – even though we only paid something like five or six thousand Euros for it. It looked really great for the time and when *Headbanger's Ball* debuted it, it really opened doors for us, not only in America, but also in Europe.

CRISTINA

The idea for the *Comalies* cover artwork came from our manager at the time, Carsten Otterbach, inspired by a mirror he had at home. I don't recall if he took a picture of it, or scanned it, but we took it, in combination with some other ideas from a Century Media graphic designer and came up with this simple, sun-like flower image that's actually just a mirror. It's not a metal image at all; it's simple and in-your-face, with really vivid colours.

ANDREA

Really the *Comalies* cover is an upgraded version of what we'd gone with on *Unleashed Memories*. It was still that same symbolism, using the sunflower instead of the sun. And then we put an eye in the middle to give the impression that the image is looking at you –all of which tied into the state of coma the album's title references.



ABOVE and LEFT

Heaven's a Lie backstage
of video shoot,
Gothenburg, 2003

RIGHT

Ozzfest, U.S.A., 2004



CRISTINA

Life changed after *Comalies* in that, eventually, that record allowed us to be in the position to be smart enough to make music our way of earning a living. Up until that point, I hoped that we could, but it wasn't something to take for granted simply because no band of our kind from Italy had ever made it on an international level. We always dared to dream, but we had our feet on the ground in the event that it didn't happen. A lot of new bands back then maybe made the mistake of thinking that because it looks like the record label are paying for everything for you, that that's the reality. But it isn't as simple as that; *everything* is recouped from sales. Some of them maybe thought: "Let's get the biggest, coolest bus ever" and "Let's stay in nice hotels every night." We never did that. We were smart enough to read the contracts as we went along, with full knowledge that, every single cent we spend on anything is our money and not the label's money. That really changes how you approach being in a band and it only happened after years of toil and sacrifice. Only when we started doing more tours and selling a bit of merchandise were we able to make a 'company' out of Lacuna Coil. We're not all business minded, though.



In my day-to-day life I'm good at saving money but I really suck at organisation and planning. I have a shitty memory; I have a calendar that I never look at. When it's time to tour I say: "Just let me know when I have to go to the airport." Often I don't know where we're going. I don't stress about these things. I just show up – and I like to be this way. Luckily, Andrea is very good in all of the business areas, and that's one of the reasons why we've always survived: everyone had to do something. If you can't write music, you can do something else. If another can't write lyrics, they can take care of the website. And we always split everything between each band member. We're all in the same boat.

ANDREA

I think the Ozzfest invite came as a result of conversations between Century Media and our management at that time. I also recall that Kelly and Jack Osbourne really liked us and, as a result, suggested us to the production team. Then a deal was done for us to appear on the second stage bill. Obviously, the costs of doing Ozzfest were going to be high, so to offset these expenses, after getting the go ahead from Century



Media, we decide to wrap the tour bus in an advertisement for the movie *Alien vs. Predator*, which was out at the time, and we had a white tour bus with a giant alien on one side and a giant predator on the other. It was pretty cool – and it saved us a lot of money in that it essentially paid for the cost of the tour bus.

On the tour we took a rotating slot whereby we started at 9.00am in the morning and then every day thereafter we upgraded by half an hour until we ended up going on at 3pm. To this day I remember this as being one of the greatest experiences of my life – even though, as a second stage act, we were essentially playing in a truck in the parking lot! That was our summer: playing, signing CDs, signing for Jagermeister who were one of the sponsors – then we stayed in the parking lot until the whole show

ABOVE
Ozzfest, 2004

OPPOSITE
Marco and Pizza with Super Joint Ritual and Devildriver at Ozzfest, 2004

moved on that night. It was like a summer camp with all these other bands: gambling, drinking, smoking... I came home weighing five kilos more than when I went out, because of the static, unhealthy lifestyle.

CRISTINA

Ozzfest in 2004 was simply huge for us. That's when I realised I had a career. We were so different from all the other bands on the bill, yet still we came out the other end as one of the best-selling bands on the entire rota from the tent that sold CDs, including Black Sabbath and Slipknot. I think we were the second bestseller, which was such a huge compliment. At the same time, we were thinking: "What's happening!" And then 'Heavens A Lie' was all over American radio.

On the back of our raised profile in America, something also started happening in Italy and Europe generally for us. As soon as you do something big in the States, the ripples spread back to your home country. When we returned to Milan, everybody knew who we were and our videos were on TV. It was so surreal. I think we all thought, "We might be going to the next level." And then we just got stronger and stronger.

MARCO

As well as being boyfriend and girlfriend, Cristina and I were also like brother and sister. For more than ten years, we were basically like Siamese twins. When you're on tour with other friends it's hard to be a real couple and then, eventually, stuff happens. At that point we said, "You know what, it's better if we split." I think it happened while we were in L.A on the Ozzfest tour and it wasn't exactly an ideal moment given that we still had to spend the next two months together on the tour bus. That was not easy, especially if there was some drinking. Sometimes there would be a few drunken fights but really after that there was no problem. We split as good friends – and it's testament to the strength of Lacuna Coil that we don't let things like break ups affect us. We are so complementary.

OPPOSITE

Cristina live at Mera Luna Festival, Germany, 2003

