

THE BIG DEAL

ANDREA

With an offer from Century Media on the table, we realised that there were another couple of bands with the same name. We had to change to avoid problems, as the label suggested. As much as we liked the name Ethereal, it was no big deal to brainstorm for something new. We wanted something that was totally unique, so we created a band name that combined an English and an Italian word for something that kept an ethereal meaning – in the sense that it wasn't concrete and couldn't be touched. Eventually, we settled on the word 'lacuna', which basically means 'an empty space' and then coil, which can also mean 'a spiral'. So if you want to translate it literally it means 'empty spiral'. In the beginning it was actually spelled 'lacoona', and I think the draft contracts with Century Media had it spelled that way.

CRISTINA

To get a record contract of any kind was a game-changer. Even after the demo, I wasn't certain how far we'd be able to go with it. There were three magazines that were really into us, but they didn't have anything close to the circulation and outreach of other, more important publications. There was something there in the underground, an enthusiastic bunch of die-hards, but that's all the momentum there was at the time. All our excitement was coming from bands outside Italy, and while I liked the so-called classics such as Pantera, Metallica and Maiden, it was Type O Negative and Paradise Lost—who made me go, "Wow!" What really had an impact on me was the melancholy, the drama, the deep and intense feeling I was getting from bands like them. It's hard to describe; it's very emotional. Nobody was playing that music in the Italian scene, and the few bands that did exist locally were playing some variation of power metal, and yet, here we were with this combination of gothic, hardcore and weird riffs. Oh and the voice of a guy and a girl singing! It was all so peculiar for us around the time of doing that demo.

OPPOSITE

Faxes from interested labels Century Media and Nuclear Blast



While we were signing our record deal and attracting the interest of other labels, the official '96 demo was declared to be 'demo of the month' by many metal magazines. Obviously, we thought that something was happening. But even then, we couldn't have possibly dreamed that we might sell more than two million records. We might have thought that maybe we'd make a couple of records and tour a bit in Europe. And that would have been fine. We never thought it would last this long. That it was a career was only something we realised much later in the process.

ANDREA

Initially my parents were a little sceptical when it was presented to them that I was going to follow the path of being a full-time musician – probably because these things don't happen in Italy. They were never actively against it; they were probably just a bit worried about where it could all go and whether it could surpass the security of being in an office somewhere, which was probably where my mother would

have rather seen me going. My dad, being a creative person, was very helpful. He would take me to the airport whenever I needed help – all our parents helped us.

CRISTINA

It's not that we didn't have huge aspirations and dreams in the early days. But it started as a hobby and twenty years ago it was so hard to do anything worthwhile coming from Italy. It felt impossible. We had dreams, but to temper them we said: "It's never going to happen."

MARCO

I was a chef; that was my job. My work wasn't in any way related to music. So then, to go and jump in a professional studio with a producer was a huge thing. Basically, we knew very little and Waldemar (Sorychta) helped us grow up in every sense. As much as Andrea, Cristina and I existed as the creative core of the band, we still only had two songs ready when we went into the studio. It was with Waldemar's help that we created the remaining four tracks that would later appear on the EP.



My relationship with the band came about as a result of my connections with Century Media. To rewind slightly, without knowing what it would lead to, I found myself producing an album by my and Robert Kampf's band Despair – which turned out to be the first album on Robert's Century Media label. He then asked me how I would feel about producing albums for other bands. That's how it all began, in 1986. It was fun, and people seemed to like working with me.

I'd heard the Ethereal demo before I started working with them on the EP and at that point the music was an attempt to create something that was too popular-sounding – a mixture of death metal with a growling voice, and this woman's voice somewhere in the background. So, Century Media brought me to Lacuna Coil and it's important to say that, in order to work with someone, I have to like the music and I have to like the people. Without those two things in place, I can't produce a band because, to me, production is a very personal act. When you're approaching production as simply a job, then you're in the wrong place. Music is a view of life – your vision of how you see life and yourself. Also, as a producer you have to know what a band wants, how they see music and how they see life. These are the most important aspects of production in my eyes. Fortunately, I always felt like being with Lacuna Coil was like being in a family.

WALDEMAR SORYCHTA

ABOVE

WALDEMAR SORYCHTA, 2000, Damage Inc Studios, Ventimiglia

OPPOSITE

Marco at Woodhouse Studios, 1998



ANDREA

While we were in the studio recording our debut EP with Century Media, I remember there being quite an awkward vibe. Two of the guys in the band at that time – drummer Leonardo and guitarist Raffaele – wanted to move towards more of a traditional rock direction, away from the metal destination we were headed toward. This was in total conflict to what me, Marco, Cristina and the other guitar player Claudio wanted. The way we saw it, we'd been signed on the back of our really metal demo, so we didn't then want to go and release a rock EP – just because these guys wanted to become the next U2. We signed to a metal label, so we were going to produce a metal record. Obviously, when you go into the studio and are working with a producer, you quickly become aware of aspects of your own immaturity: riffs that don't belong etc. So we were expecting things to change in terms of having some of the rougher edges smoothed off, but we had no plans whatsoever to switch genre completely.

OPPOSITE
Cristina and Andrea working on the lyrics for the first EP at Woodhouse Studios, Germany, 1997

ABOVE
Left: The house where band stayed in Hagen, Germany, during the recordings of our first EP
Right: Andrea recording vocals for debut Ep, 1997

Having travelled to Milan for the first time to see them, soon after the first rehearsal I felt that the band was capable of much more than they'd achieved with the demo. From the beginning, and they initially didn't like it, I said, "What you are doing is just not good enough! I had their very best interests in mind. I wasn't being critical for the sake of it.

I thought that the best way was to create new songs that could become the new sound of Lacuna Coil, instead of simply making an album that would sound like almost anything that was out there in the world. We can view it from wherever we want, but Lacuna Coil's sound is founded on the whole package that is Cristina, not just her voice. That's an unavoidable fact. Her voice is very powerful, but on the demo she sounded like a little girl hiding.

So, in order to move forward, I thought the female voice should be brought to the forefront of the sound – in addition to Andrea focusing on melodies and singing instead of just growling. Immediately we started to work on new ideas that at that time were possibly too complex. Nevertheless, I thought they were vital to the broader learning process. I was adamant that they should make a good start, because I knew that people always look back on how a band sounded when they began. I never wanted them to be side-lined in an overpopulated backwater. They had to *find* a style – and that's how we paved a way for the future.





ABOVE
First official release as Lacuna Coil, 1998

Listening back to the first EP it sounds far less heavy than the demo that got us a record deal in the first place. I think we compromised a little on the EP, because subconsciously we were influenced by the opinions of the other guys who felt that, having signed a deal, we should take a more commercial approach. There was no input or pressure from Century Media at all.

WALDEMAR

Although he didn't speak much English, Marco was very obviously the leader from the beginning, in the most positive way. I knew that any band always needs somebody to lead them in order to avoid wasting time on endless discussion. Believe me, Italian people are very good at spending a lot of time discussing things – and they definitely opened themselves more to me than they might have to someone else. The only problem was that, when they started arguing, because I don't speak Italian, I used to have to say, "Please! What are you saying?" After twenty minutes, somebody usually explained to me what was going on.

THE BIG DEAL

Anyway, in the beginning, there were obviously a few disagreements within the band as far as direction was concerned. Not just that, everyone also had to deal with the various views I had about the direction the sound should take. It wasn't an easy situation, even for me. They had to make a decision as to whether they wanted to go different ways with the other guys.

BELOW

Marco at Woodhouse Studios, 1998

Waldemar became part of the band. We basically grew up with him and he helped us with many aspects of not just recording, but also with life in general. But, we are Italians. We're stubborn. After he got to know us well, Waldemar opened up to us: laughing, smiling and talking bullshit all day. He changed a lot from the initial distant professional producer figure and we all became good friends, not just work colleagues. He came to our homes; we ate meals together. He's an honorary member of Lacuna Coil.

MARCO



CRISTINA

It seems odd now, but we had basically no say on any aspect of that first E.P.'s cover image, beside the fact that we suggested Marco's fashion photographer friend to take the photos. He was the person that took the picture we sent to labels when we were originally seeking a contract. We gave the pictures that we liked to Century Media and they organised the design and composition.

BELOW

Photoshoot first EP,
1997

WALDEMAR

There was a song on that EP ('This Is My Dream') which, although it sounds unfinished, was one of the most important elements for the future of the band. We conceived it in the studio and it consisted of just two simple melodies. It only came about because I saw a section that was good within a song that I generally didn't rate too highly. So, I made the decision to focus on that part and to discard the rest which, believe me, wasn't a popular decision at the time. However, it was a very important decision for the future of Lacuna Coil. Not just that, we agreed to disagree because we both knew that we had to. That's such an important point for a producer and band to reach. Anything else is not only unrealistic, but it's counterproductive to expect constant harmony.

ANDREA

We had no experience of being in a real studio and no experience of having another personality impose himself on our sound. We didn't really know what we were doing and we were dealing with what are probably familiar teething issues such as our drummer never having played to a click track. With no pressure from the label about our style, it was left to Waldemar to simplify some of our arrangements. From that perspective he was absolutely right. What I personally didn't agree with was the suggestion that we should be softening the guitar tones, cutting away double bass or hiding the harsh vocals. In the end the result was great because we found ourselves reaching something of a compromise. But it wasn't the EP I expected we'd make when we went into the studio at the outset.



THE FIRST TOUR

ANDREA

As part of the promo for the EP in Europe, we were scheduled to go out on the road with Moonspell. During this tour we had to substitute Raffaele with a friend, Patrick Graziosi, because the former had to complete mandatory civil service. None of us had ever toured; it was new to all of us, including Patrick, who played in a very technical metal band in Milan who were a step or two behind us. During the tour, Patrick contracted a virus. So once we arrived in Italy, he went home. We had a problem, which we discussed with Century Media. Their view was that because the tour logistics and tour bus was already paid for we should carry on as best we could. In theory it should have been quite easy. We were only playing five songs live at that time. But Raffaele, who had turned up at the show in Italy to say hello, didn't agree. A big argument followed, with the result being that the band was split in two. Me, Marco and Cristina decide to continue the tour, and the other guys decided to stay home. We just drove to the next show in Switzerland and continued doing press etc. as a three-piece, while Moonspell's drum tech, after



listening to all our songs in his bunk and learning them in one night, filled in on drums for the live shows. Meanwhile we had another guitar player sent in from one of Century Media's Swiss bands for a couple of shows, in addition to Anders, who now plays in Dark Tranquility, on the other guitar. We finished the tour like that and it was quite the baptism. Every day it felt like the whole thing was on the brink of collapse, but we finished, came home and called a band meeting. The decision was made to separate with the other guys who'd stayed home, abandoning ship at the first hint of a problem. Yes they were friends and yes we'd known them a long time, but if we wanted a successful career we knew that we needed people with commitment alongside us.

VALERIE

At this early stage it wasn't yet clear to me who was the primary musical force in the band. I related mainly to Cristina, also because at the time she was the most reachable. She had a fax machine and a phone! Marco seemed to be very quiet, only after the band imploded did I realise he was like a dark master, the wizard behind the curtain. The show where everything melted down was in Biella, early december 97. Part of the band decided they didn't want to continue, so the next morning, I picked up Marco, Andrea and Cristina on the highway in the very early hours of a winter morning and drove them to Switzerland to continue the tour with Moonspell. They bravely carried on the best they could. In that moment it became clear that the nucleus of the band was Marco, Cristina and Andrea and they went forward as the absolute heart of Lacuna Coil.

MARCO

The reasons for the band splitting like it did during the '97 tour are very complex. When we started the tour, nobody knew who Lacuna Coil was. We didn't even have a record out. But we decided to do it because it was a great opportunity. At one of the gigs close to Milan, one of our guitar players – who had been unavailable to tour because of civil service commitments – came



ABOVE

Valerie and Cristina in Dortmund for the band's first press trip, 1997

OPPOSITE

Patrick and Marco on stage during first tour with Moonspell, 1997



ABOVE

Flyer for the only Italian show from the first EU tour with Moonspell, 1997

to the show and said we shouldn't have done the tour because he wasn't able to go out with us. We tried to tell him that it was a great chance but he kept saying no. At that moment we feared that the band was done. We drove to my house, and woke up to a call from Century Media saying that if we didn't finish the tour, it was over. We talked to Century Media's owner, Robert Kampf and told him that we wanted to continue but with only one bass player and two vocalists, it wasn't going to be easy!

CRISTINA

At the time we didn't tell the whole story, simply because it would have been too complicated to explain. Instead we just thought: 'Musical differences', which was partially true because these guys also wanted to pursue a slightly different direction.

MARCO

We finished the tour with the help of Moonspell and I've got maximum respect for them for keeping us on tour in such a desperate situation.

ANDREA

We started looking for new members among the group of friends we had at the pub. As we've said, it's as important that we can get along with people, as it is that they can play the music. So, with that in mind we asked our drummer friend Criz, and Pizza to join the band. We still had a few live shows to do before we were due to go into the studio to record *In A Reverie*, so it was a great opportunity for the guys to adapt to their new band surroundings.

We all knew that Lacuna Coil were on tour with Moonspell. It was a really big deal at the time and the whole Milan metal scene was energised by it. When the three of them finished the tour with some session musicians hired by Century Media, we got together and they told me all about how much fun they had out on the road. They also told me and some other friends about what happened and I was really bummed because you could see how much potential there was. I'd rather let Marco, Cristina and Andrea talk about the situation with the other guys because they were there. I don't want to take sides.

Sometime at the end of 1997, we met at the Midnight pub and at the time I wasn't doing much with the band I was in, it was in limbo. Then I remember that Andrea and Marco approached me and asked if I'd be interested in joining them. At first I was very surprised and honoured; it felt like the chance of a lifetime. On the other hand it was still a huge gamble because nobody really knew how far it could go. Not just that, I had a reasonable job that paid me regular money (although doing nothing that I was particularly interested in) and so I had to weigh up the possibilities. I told them I'd need to think about it and then, after a couple of days, I called them and said: "I'm in!" It was my dream; I liked the music. It was something I had to try.

PIZZA

BELOW

Andrea, Cristina and Fernando (Moonspell) after the band split, 1997



BELOW

Andrea and Cristina, polaroid
backstage photoshoot., 2000

OPPOSITE

Cristina live at the Coliseum in Lisbon
with Moonspell, 1998

The next thing they said was: "You know, there's a show coming up. It's in Lisbon where we're supporting Moonspell at the release party for their new album *Sin/Pecado*." If I remember, I had maybe a week to learn the six songs that they had. I had heard these songs of course, but I didn't know any of the parts. So I had to sit down and try to come up with the parts without the benefit of being able to call the recently departed guitarists to ask them their advice! I just had to come up with compositions myself. And although the songs aren't complex, it isn't immediately obvious what's going on with the guitar parts. I remember thinking: "Man, what did I get myself into..."

Why did my very first show have to be that one, in the Lisbon Coliseum in front of five to eight thousand people?! As you can imagine I was really nervous about having to play both guitar parts. Luckily we had another guitar backing track to help, but it was extremely challenging. It was awful and awesome at the same time. Cristina was super-sick; she had really bad flu. But we got through it with Moonspell's drum tech playing drums. The following day, we had a guide assigned to us by Moonspell's



management take us around Lisbon. They took us to this hotel across the bridge, right on the ocean, where everybody had their own room; it was basically the rock star dream. Anything you could think of, we got it. I was so thankful to the guys for asking me to be part of all this. Really, they could have asked anyone.

MARCO

We'd known Pizza from both the Midnight pub and from the band he played in, Thy Nature, who, coincidentally were also on *Noise Of Bolgia*. When our band split it was the most natural thing to do to, to ask him if he'd join us as our guitar player. I think he was playing in Thy Nature for fun and personal pleasure, but when we asked him to join he immediately said yes. He's always been a very good friend; he was the first person to come to our minds.

CRIZ

One litre of beer, and then another...and another more – that was the first contact with Marco, Andrea and Cristina. We used to hang out at the same rock pub in Milan called The Midnight pub, where Cristina was one of the bartenders. We used to drink together as friends and we didn't at that time have any clue what life had in mind for us. I didn't really know what kind of music the guys were playing; we just used to drink, get drunk and talk bullshit together. We never really discussed our respective projects. I was in a prog rock band at that time and Lacuna Coil just



split up with their old drummer after the first tour so they were looking for a substitute. They came to listen to my band in the practice room and they liked my way of playing drums. The rest is history.

MARCO

We met Pizza the drummer in the Midnight pub and I knew him because he played in another funk metal band that gigged around Milan. I was obviously looking for a drummer, but I hadn't even thought about him. Then one night he came to me as we were drinking and said, "Oh, I have a new rehearsal room. It's not far from here. Let's jump in the car and I'll show you." So, we went and checked out his new rehearsal place and when he started to play I was shocked. His playing had changed and improved a lot; he was very, very good. Then I said: "Dude, I need a drummer right now because Leo has left the band." Thereafter he tried out with us and was soon in the band. It was very easy. Our band came together because of our friendships first and foremost.

PIZZA

I think they'd asked Criz to be in the band before the Lisbon show, but there hadn't been enough time for him to learn the parts. I think they thought, "It's a big show, let's not mess this one up." We joined around the same time and he was part of the local scene, drumming for a few bands in Milan at that time. It felt natural to recruit someone in your immediate circles if you thought they'd be able to fit the bill.

ANDREA

Pizza's Lacuna Coil debut was live on TV at the Lisbon Coliseum in front of several thousand people. We were all very nervous and not particularly secure, but it was a good show. We then had another small tour, with The Gathering, where Criz and Pizza both played in the band. And then we had to start working on songs for our new album with a completely new version of Lacuna Coil.



ABOVE
Live line up including Steve Minelli
and Alice Chiarelli during the
Gathering Tour, 1998



RIGHT
Lacuna Coil live line up 1998