



KARMACODE



OPPOSITE

Press photo for Karmacode, 2006

Immediately post-*Comalies* was the very first time we felt that we were able to survive only on the music, without any of us having to do other jobs when we came back from touring. For an entire album cycle we were able to live just from sales of that album. At the time you're not really aware of it because you're so focused on all the minor details that need to be addressed. We were simply doing what we had to do and enjoying it every day. For someone prone to anxiety and mild-depression like I am, it's always a good thing to be busy all the time. When you're active you don't even have time to worry about inner problems or deeper reflections.

ANDREA



CRISTINA

I don't think we ever said, "Oh yeah, let's make a really heavy record." I just think that, because we were getting other influences from the U.S, it came out that way. We were touring the states during and after Ozzfest; I suppose it was inevitable that we absorbed some of those styles.

ANDREA

We had more scope than ever with *Karmacode* because its advance, on the back of our touring success and elevated profile, was the most we'd ever been given to spend on a record. After *Comalies* we renegotiated our deal with Century Media and included a series of new clauses that essentially meant our budget increased with each record.

More generally, we have always viewed each of our records as a snapshot of that particular moment in time. Because of that, we didn't tend to reflect too much on what we'd done in the past. The past is the past, and every record to me is the very best we could have done at that time. For that reason, on *Karmacode*, we weren't ever thinking: "Let's do another 'Heavens A Lie' or another 'Swamped'." Those were undeniably successful songs, but they were successful songs in the *past*. To some

BELOW

Cristina Metal Hammer Awards, London, 2006

OPPOSITE

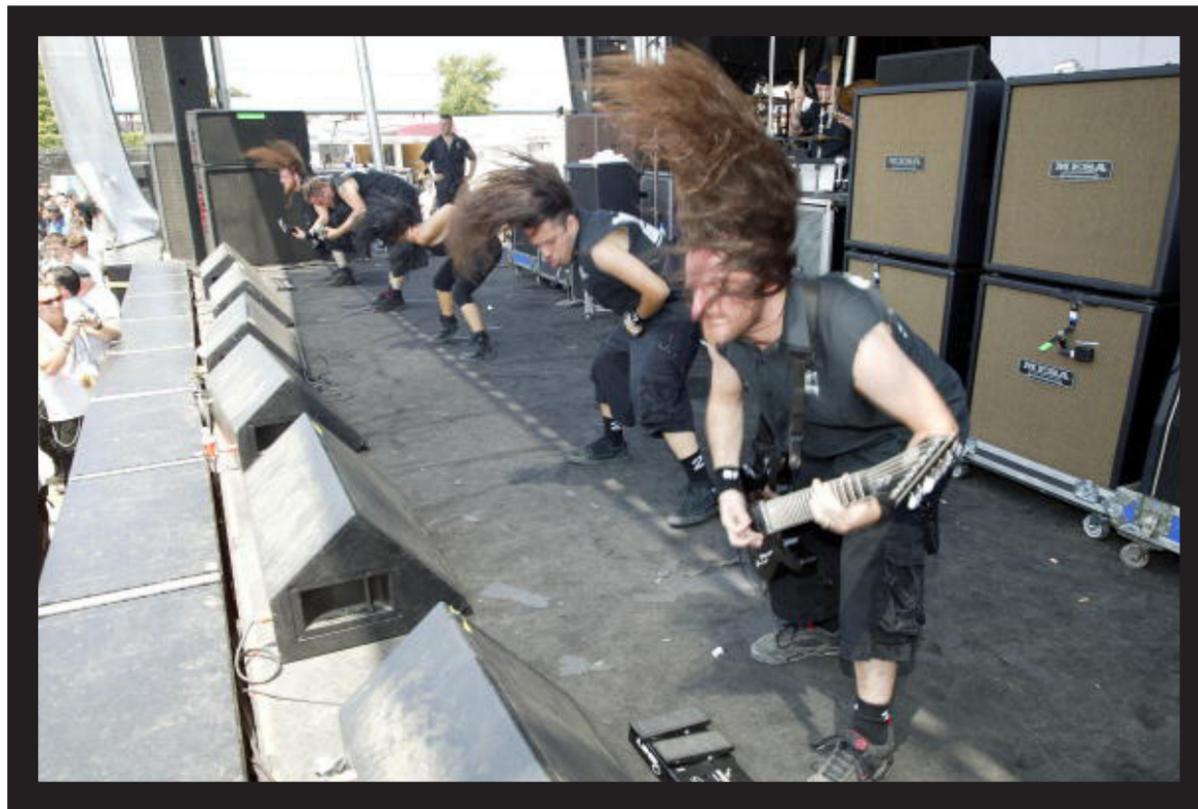
Backstage Karmacode photo shoot, 2005



degree we were different musicians when we wrote them, and we like to think we'd improved sufficiently since we did them, to come up with songs that are not only successful, but also new. Naturally, we are Lacuna Coil and always will be, so anything we do will always be in the style of the band, but it's not enough to simply replicate past moments. Those moments are gone. As such, *Karmacode* represented a whole new story to be viewed through different eyes.

MARCO

People said, "Oh, it's great that you used keyboards on *Karmacode*." The reality is that keyboards were prominent on both *Comalies* and *Unleashed Memories*. The difference was that Waldemar incorporated them into the music to the extent that you didn't really feel them. But they were there.



On *Karmacode*, because we essentially did two mixes— one in stereo and another in 5.1— I decided to make them even more present. Instead of stereo, with left and right, at Galaxy Studios in Belgium I started experimenting with surround sound whereby the music is not just on either side, but *all around* the listener. It was a great moment, with a different type of mix option available, to try and illustrate the more orchestral aspects of our sound.

I've also heard references to Middle Eastern influences in *Karmacode* but really that wasn't the case. I love Japanese and Chinese music and have always used those as ways to create melodies in my music – but no more so on *Karmacode* than on "Halflife" or *Unleashed Memories*. If these influences are more prominent, it definitely wasn't intentional on my part. It might just be the mix that allowed people to catch more of these sounds.

ABOVE

Cristina getting ready to perform at Jimmy Kimmel Live, 2007

OPPOSITE

Ozzfest, 2004



Where did this influence come from? Well, there's an Italian band called Goblin – who were pretty famous in the '70s for creating soundtracks for Dario Argento movies like *Profondo Rosso* and *Susperia*. If you listen to those soundtracks you'll hear that they used a lot of these dissonant melodies; it was weird stuff and, subconsciously, maybe I absorbed it and it came out in my songs. It's funny, but they're now friends.

On *Karmacode* I wrote all the parts for violas and cellos and then recorded all these string parts with real string players. With so many instruments competing for space in the mix, 5.1 allowed me to build them all in without, for example, the bass and the cello frequencies fighting each other.

ANDREA

As I recall, the metal vibe from *Karmacode* came from the fact that we had been touring with so many different bands in the States. Maybe, subconsciously at least, we wanted the album to sound a bit heavier – and to sound more like the product of our live experiences with some super heavy bands, particularly on the Ozzfest cycle. The result was that *Karmacode's* songwriting was projected towards a mix of the melancholic European vibe and the more in-your-face impact from the American sounds we'd been exposed to.

All of that influenced how the album came together – in combination with the fact that Marco really wanted to push the symphonic side of the arrangements to a level we'd never been to before. Because of the bigger budget we'd been given, there was more scope for four-piece string arrangements: live violins and cellos etc. Consequently, we spent a lot more time songwriting and in pre-production and my abiding memory of *Karmacode* is that it was a very long process. Of course, the risk with more time and budget is that you waste time in experimentation, but thankfully we didn't fall into that trap. It was our last record with Waldemar and, as it had been the case previously, he insisted that a lot of work was done in pre-production so that we wouldn't 'get lost' recording in the studio. From memory it was the mixing at Galaxy Studio in Belgium that took forever.

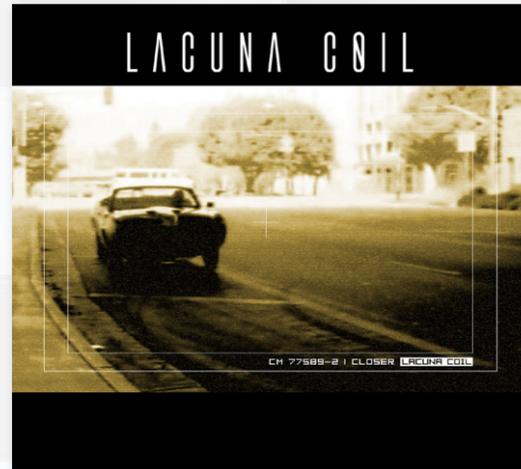
ABOVE

Goblin were a very strong influence for Marco musically.

OPPOSITE

Above: Live New York City Playstation Theatre, 2006
Below: With Nicolas Cage and Rob Zombie backstage, House Of Blues, Las Vegas 2006





CRISTINA

We heard a lot of people say that *Karmacode* sounded like a Korn album because of our use of seven strings at times. All I can say to that is that we'll take the compliment because we all love Korn. In any case, *Karmacode's* sound is simply a product of its time. Back then it made total sense. If we did it now, maybe we'd have gone with a different sound because equipment trends have changed. Regardless, *Karmacode* was our most successful record so, whatever...

ANDREA

Galaxy studio in Belgium was this huge complex in what seemed like the middle of nowhere – all apparently built by the University of Belgium with the most advanced acoustic technologies. There was a pad for helicopters to land and take off from, a private chef, and even a soccer field. Ronald Prent was an old-school type of guy. His way of mixing was to set the studio up before taking photos of every single rack, every single effect – because he initially mixed in analogue. It was a very long process for us, but the cool thing was that they only had premium Belgian beers for us to get drunk on while we waited to hear the new mixes. After the analogue mix, he then mixed in 5.1 so you could listen to all the separate arrangements through different speakers. When it came time to let the press hear *Karmacode*, we invited them to Galaxy studio and set up the biggest room, normally reserved for the orchestra, with a giant 5.1 P.A. It was a great experience for them and us.

OPPOSITE
 Andrea, Marco and
 engineer Marco Barusso
 during the recording of
Karmacode, Massive Arts,
 Milano, 2005

Being big video game fans, it was obviously great to be informed by the label that 'Closer' and 'Our Truth' had been selected for inclusion in the *Guitar Hero III: Legends Of Rock* and *Rock Band 2* games respectively. It was a pleasure to be associated with either a movie or a video game because these are two of the main interests we have always shared.

We've all always really been into video games. We all started on the earliest computer gaming systems, which were then followed by the first Playstation. And then everything changed. My top three ever games, in no particular order, are *Final Fantasy VII*, *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*. These are the three games that I can't live without – even though they're really old. In fact, I still have my old Playstation. I also have my

CRISTINA



OPPOSITE
Backstage of Our Truth video,
Los Angeles, 2006

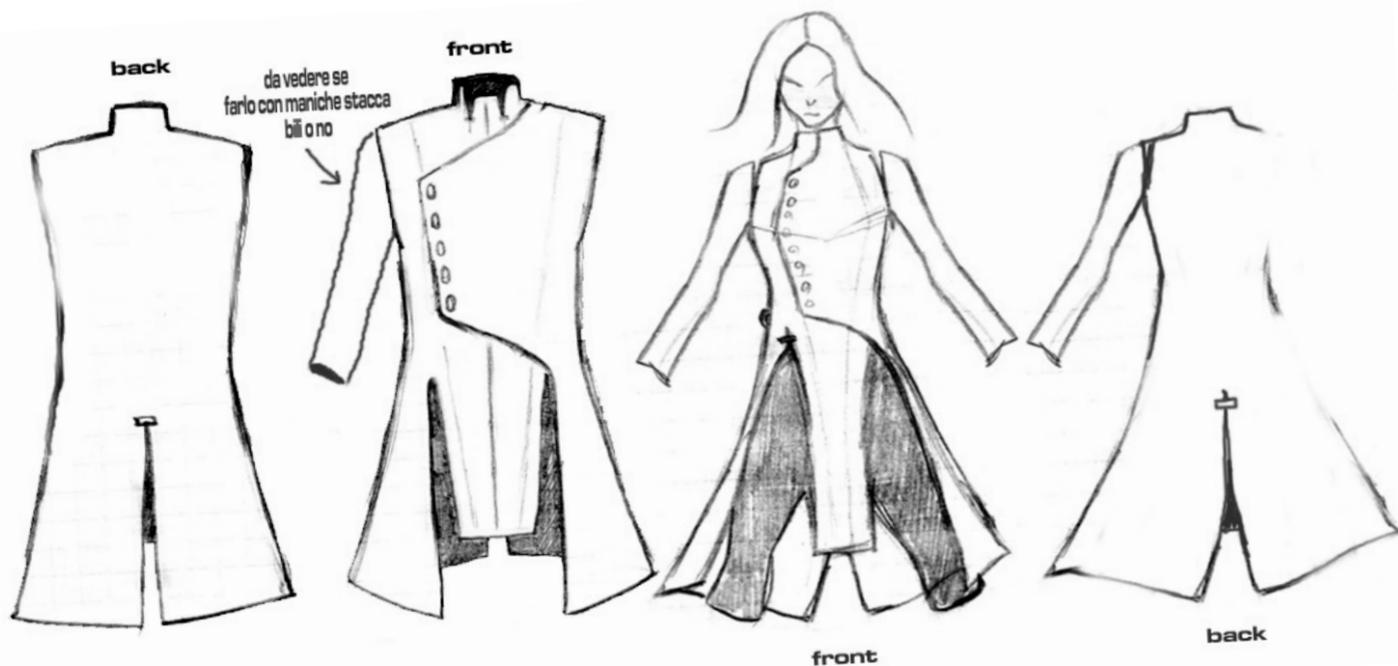
BELOW
Backstage tour wrap with the
Rob Zombie camp, somewhere
in U.S.A., 2006

first original full greyscale Gameboy, but in general I don't go back and play on the old consoles. Whenever I do have time to play, I do it on the modern systems. Interestingly, there seems to be a big crossover between metal and gaming in general. As far as the musicians I know are concerned, many of them are very much into video games. On almost every tour bus there's a console where someone can spend some time being entertained; it makes sense given the lifestyle we live. Not just that, a lot of games have metal music for their soundtracks – from *Guitar Hero* to WWE games.



ANDREA

Because of the generally bigger budget, for the first time we used an outside graphic studio (Asterik) for the cover of *Karmacode*; they had won awards in America for a variety of images for many bands. In the beginning we weren't totally convinced by the image, although it did, for me at least, represent the concept of the album to some extent. We saw a lot of drafts for that before we settled on the final compromise. We have always been really picky when it comes to aesthetics. Yes, we're a metal band – but it would never make sense for us to just put a bunch of dragons and skulls on the cover, as easy as that would be. We're just not like that – so sometimes we complicate our own lives!



CRISTINA

We've always been very aware of aesthetics, and the weirdest thing is that we all have more or less the same kind of taste. We all love horror vibes, soundtracks, the skateboard scene and movies. There isn't one thing that one person likes, and the others don't, so in some ways we're almost always on the same page when it comes to imagery, art and clothing. Consequently, we've never had a situation where one person likes a design while someone else thinks it sucks. We usually pretty much agree when it comes to a logo, a picture or a location, we all discuss it together and it pretty much comes up that we agree. Not just that, we love the creativity tied up in imagery.

MARCO

I hate the *Karmacode* album art! I call that guy 'bottle head' because he doesn't have any shoulders. We gave up fighting with Century Media about it.

CRISTINA

I seem to remember that the *Karmacode* cover was commissioned to someone else – whose name I don't remember – because something more artistic was required. While it isn't necessarily my favourite artwork ever, I do think it was cool to have this cut in the cover and some play



CRISTIANO MIGLIORE
CRISTINA SCABBIA
ANDREA FERRO
MAUS
LACUNA COIL

with the booklet; in a way it was an original idea. Regardless, it continued with colours that we'd used before and was very recognisable.

MARCO

The *Karmacode* cover art was problematic when it came time to make the merchandise for the 2018 anniversary show. We wanted to make a range of our merchandise from specific eras available on the night and our manager Valerie said: "You've got to do something for *Karmacode*; it was such a big album for you." And I said: "Yes but it's the most horrible cover ever. I don't want to put that fucking head on a t-shirt!" It just made things complicated.

CRISTINA

Something I find interesting and frustrating in equal measure is the fact that, after many years of Lacuna Coil, Italy still isn't a rock and metal country. Artists considered rock in Italy are people who are basically melodic songwriters that include a little bit of electric guitar. Not heavy at all. People say, "It's so rock," but it really isn't. I also think there are a lot of preconceptions in Italy about hard rock and metal. A lot of people still connect it with Satanism ; some people are afraid of metal imagery. If they see something black with gothic writing, they automatically assume it to be bad. Even though Italy is a predominantly Catholic country, I don't think the reticence is related to this. Perhaps the reason is that we don't have any real history of metal culture, besides Lacuna Coil.

I was brought up as a Catholic and my mother took me church as a child, but I left that

OPPOSITE

Andrea and Cristina backstage during 'Enjoy The Silence' video shoot, Los Angeles, 2006

BELOW

Photo session for Metal Hammer in Venice, 2006



OPPOSITE

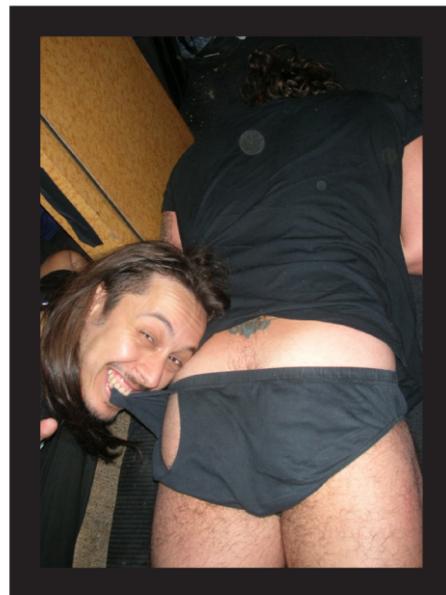
Live at Ozzfest, 2006

RIGHT

Marco visiting Gibson headquarters, Nashville, 2006

BELOW

Andrea molesting a drum tech while on tour in Atlanta, 2006



behind many years ago. Nowadays my views on organised religion are sceptical. I think there is evil and there is good, but I don't think going to church or believing in a God necessarily makes you a better person – particularly if you hold prejudices against those that don't share your views. By nature, I've always been very curious. I ask questions about life and the world around me. If doubts are in my mind, there's normally a reason.

I'll continue to stick to how I've always approached life: maintaining an interest in contrasts and the unusual. I've always asked myself why people are so scared of symbols when these symbols are *created* by man. I'm not bothered when I see an inverted cross. It's not "scary" to me. Some catholics even use the same cross as a symbol of unworthiness in comparison to Jesus. At the same time, I'm really attracted by darkness, so all the traditional occult symbols appeal to me as much as religious icons like the Virgin Mary. You can be attracted to these visuals without believing in what they stand for.

ANDREA

Italy is a difficult place for metal music and culture. There is some rock and metal played but there is no history of a national band achieving anything beyond a few underground shows here and there. Compared to England, Germany or Scandinavia, very, very few bands from Italy have made an impact on a worldwide level, we are an even more rare case. The initial part of the *Karmacode* touring cycle in North America was as support for Rob Zombie on a series of dates beginning in March of 2006. Bullet For My Valentine were also on the bill for the first part of the tour, until they were kicked out because of something they wrote online about how they felt they were being treated by the headline act. Rob didn't like it and kicked them off the tour. We had a good time with them until then!



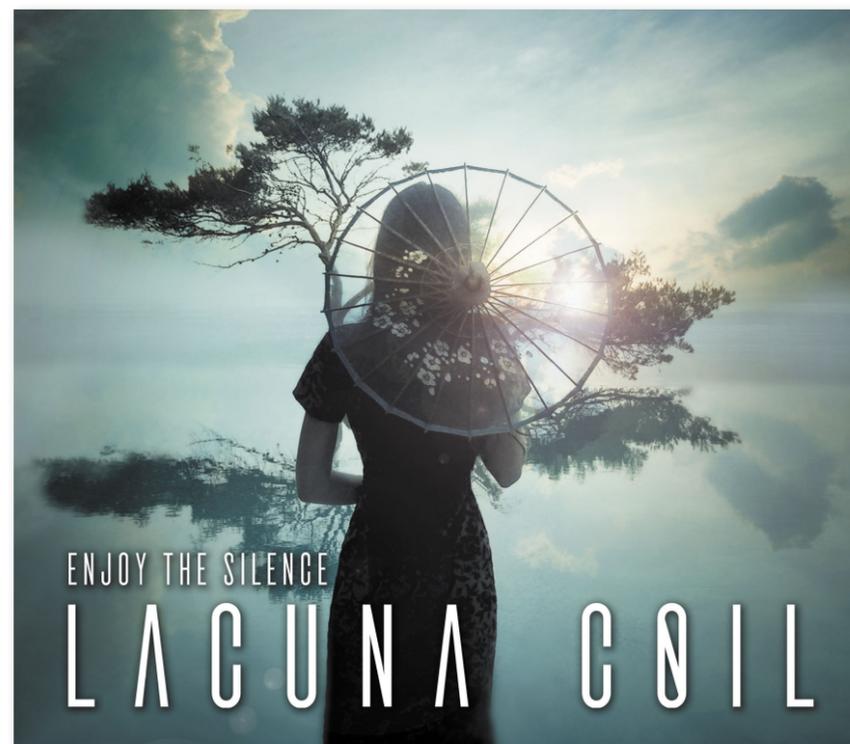


MARCO

I'd say that Cristina and I are basically pretty happy people most of the time – even though from a musical perspective I too am attracted to the darker side of sound in general – maybe because, in real life, I am the opposite. Really, I think I'm a funny person, if a little shy!

Obviously, we all have problems from time to time but not too much. There have been moments though. For example, my beard fell out because of stress during the process of making *Karmacode*!

Let's just say that I'm not crazy about Depeche Mode and the truth is that 'Enjoy The Silence' wasn't on the top of my list when the time came to record a cover song. I respect what they have done as a band but my favourite song of theirs is 'Home' and Dave Gahan doesn't even sing on it. I always preferred Duran Duran. When I was younger, my dad would play the hits by Duran Duran and because I



ABOVE
Press shot for Karmacode, Los Angeles, 2006

OPPOSITE
'Enjoy The Silence' single cover, little piece of trivia: the girl featured is actually NOT Cristina.

For us there was a sense that everything was syncing perfectly. The shows were great, albums sales were very strong, and we were hitting the Billboard charts really high on the back of that. *Karmacode* was the first record where Century Media had used E.M.I rather than independent distribution for us. Given that this was an era where downloading music was exploding, E.M.I performed a test whereby they put out a fake song containing only white noise, to see how many people downloaded the first single, 'Our Truth' in its first week of release. I seem to remember being told that there were three million downloads in that first week – which at that time was an amazing indicator of not just our popularity, but also of the direction in which music consumption was headed. Physical records sales were still important but downloading was becoming massive.



was listening to Black Flag and D.R.I at the time, I considered that kind of music to be against my ethos. But I couldn't deny that, even then, I *felt* something in Duran Duran's music. It's hard to say what the feeling was (and I wouldn't necessarily say I felt that about 'Wild Boys') but they definitely made me feel something, and still do. Although I'd never have openly said, "I like them", secretly I was thinking, "I *like* them."

OPPOSITE

Day off band and crew (Luca, drum tech) after Loud Park Festival, Tokyo, 2007

I love Duran Duran and Depeche Mode but I always felt that Depeche mode had a gothic element to their music that fitted us much better. Plus, 'Enjoy The Silence' is one of my favourite songs ever.

CRISTINA

I seem to remember there being a bunch of songs, not all of them by Depeche Mode, that we were considering. We were focusing on songs from the '80s though, simply because that was the era when we all grew up. Not just that, but the '80s is an era in music that has somehow become timeless and classic. It's true that Marco is not the biggest Depeche Mode fan in the world, but regardless he decided to try a version of 'Enjoy The Silence'. When we heard his interpretation for the first time in the practice room, I remember thinking, "This sounds like one of our songs!" It was very natural and fitted exactly the mood of the band. From that perspective, to me, it seemed like the right thing to do.

ANDREA

Fortunately, Cristina is a crazy huge Depeche Mode fan, so it came down to a decision between 'A Question Of Time' and 'Enjoy The Silence'. I tried first to cover the former and it came out sounding like a Rammstein song. I then

MARCO





photo by Steve Brown

thought, "Maybe it just doesn't work." As sick as I was of 'Enjoy The Silence' (there had been other versions by people like Tori Amos), I thought, "OK, Cristina loves this song and they want a big cover song so I'll give them a big cover." All I really did was adjust the keyboard to suit my taste and added distorted guitar. Everybody loved it – especially with Cristina's vocals on the verse. I've grown to like it a little more over time.

LEFT
Las Vegas, 2007