

NOTHING STANDS IN OUR WAY/119

MARCO

I like streaming music. I sometimes use Spotify or listen to satellite radio in my car when I'm driving; it's very easy and I can hear any type of music that I want to. But I still buy vinyl and occasionally a few CDs – mostly special or limited editions. I still have a lot of vinyl from my childhood as well as some that I acquired from my father. That's why I think this physical market will never die. I used to do the same for films and art: when there is something that I like a lot, I want to have it in physical form. I'm sure many of our fans are the same. Whether streaming is good for the band's business is not something I know much about. But I can't imagine that streaming has been a good thing.

ANDREA

I doubt there's a band in the world that wouldn't like to rewind the clock to when everyone bought the physical product. Streaming has become the standard nowadays; it's comfortable for the listeners and it's cheap, but in my opinion it has cut a lot of the value out of the music. The more that each generation keeps streaming new things, the harder it's going to be for them to form a real, durable attachment to an artist. Obviously too, now that the royalties on sales have dropped so drastically and since streaming is mostly a joke unless you have billions of people doing it, bands have no choice but to adapt to this new reality. We started by cutting costs wherever possible and by playing more shows in more places. We also tried to find new ways of maximising revenues on the road, with merchandise, sponsorship, publishing/licensing; when things changed we had to spend increasingly more time monitoring the business side of things instead of just focusing solely on the creative process of making music. It hasn't been easy, but luckily we've been able to develop a loyal fan-base that has followed us through our various eras – in addition to the fact that our music seems to also appeal to new generations of listeners.

OPPOSITE

119 is everywhere we go, U.S.A., 2016



Streaming is growing rapidly, changing the way both artists and labels have worked for ages. It's incredible, but there's a whole new generation that has no idea what it feels like to go out and buy an album in a store. At the same time, the hard rock and metal sector is the most traditional, and in some countries holds the record for percentage of physical vs digital. In Italy, for example, physical sales in the metal genre are 90% of the market! When fans are that dedicated, they want something to own, to touch.

VALERIE

BELOW AND OPPOSITE

Backstage getting ready for the 119 Show at the Forum in London, 2018

On the other hand, social media seems to not have any boundaries in terms of genres and is now widely considered essential for visibility. There are artists who don't interact directly but have social media teams in place to do it for them. Lacuna Coil have always been a very hands-on band, in particular with their fans. They've always had a very special connection and have never held themselves back. They simply took their established relationship with their fans to social media and continued online. Personally I don't have any input on what they post unless it's related to announcing a release, a show or something business oriented.

MARCO

To me personally, social media is not important at all. I don't have Facebook and I don't feel that I need it. Occasionally I feel like I live on another planet because I don't use it but honestly, I don't care. The good thing is that when I do go out with real friends and we talk face to face almost nobody holds his or her smartphone for more than two minutes to check their various social networks...apart from a few exceptions. So, I'm very happy about that, particularly when I regularly see tables of zombies, heads bent into their phones and not talking.

The only social networking I have done since almost the beginning is Instagram. When it wasn't popular at all, I discovered it while looking for specific photographers and websites related to the photographic world – and I immediately found the concept very interesting because I have always loved to take pictures. From there it became a good way of reminding myself of places, or showing friends where I was or what I was doing.

Then one day my girlfriend told me that, because I don't use other social media, maybe it would be a good idea to use my Instagram as kind of a tour diary for fans who might want to know a little more about me. Gradually, I started to use it as a social network but I'm not very good at the chatting and liking side of things and I'm too lazy (and it's not in my nature)



to spend time writing or answering questions online. So in my mind it's still my photo diary – and I'd much rather spend time hanging out with fans or people I meet in real life.

As much as Marco says that he doesn't like or use social media very much, when he does, he's great at it! He simply offers fans little glimpses of his private life: his cats, his cooking, his practice space. He can be very open and funny. Cristina was probably one of the first to use social media in a very personal and open way, exposing vulnerable and intimate aspects of herself to show fans that off stage she's just another human, like them. She's very motivational but at the same time knows how to clean up and be the stunner that she is. Andrea is probably the most private, though he also posts lots of home shots with his wife Paola and his cats. Overall, I think the way they use their socials is very generous and not at all obvious. Lots of artists aren't so comfortable revealing so much of themselves and their private lives, or when they do it's somehow constructed. Lacuna Coil are very genuine, in everything they do, socials included.

VALERIE

ANDREA

I like social media and I understand its importance – although there are moments where I'd often like to erase my profile completely, especially on Facebook. I see far too many people talking shit without any knowledge or experience, so I mostly keep it just to stay in touch with my friends and communicate information to the fans but I rarely engage in a conversation. I really like Instagram, because it's more about the images and less about useless words. I never got into Twitter. I have a LinkedIn profile but I'm still trying to figure out why I have it.

For the band it's a completely different story, and social media has become one of the biggest sources for fans to know what's going on and to stay in touch with the artists. I share part of my life on social media but there's a line of privacy that I don't like to cross.

VALERIE

I've been with the band from day one so the idea of planning various forms of celebration for their 20th anniversary was very exciting. The biggest celebration, without a doubt, was the special show in London on January 19th, 2018 (119 Show).

The band had this idea of a "gothic circus" style event already in late 2016 and by early 2017 we began brainstorming in earnest on how to put it all together. There were so many elements to tie into place and though it was extremely stimulating, it was also quite crazy! Furthermore, it was the first big event I was involved in as their new manager. Definitely the baptism of fire!

Everything was studied and planned to the finest detail, from the stage set and lighting – courtesy of the incredibly talented Richard 'Wolfie' Wolfgang - to the circus performers from the exceptional Incandescence Theatre Company. Everyone worked so hard to make it the most special show in the last 20 years and I think the results paid off. It was an amazingly tight show, and everything went smooth like clockwork also thanks to the band's longtime tour manager Gus. I think there couldn't have been a better birthday party, for Lacuna Coil and their fans. And for those that weren't able to attend there's a DVD so it will remain as a landmark moment in their career forever.



The anniversary show (19 January 2018) was tone of the days I've been the most nervous in my whole life. I know it was meant to be a celebration, but I was so worried because I wanted everything to be absolutely perfect. I wanted everyone to celebrate with us and in order for that to happen, *everything* had to be amazing.

My biggest worry was how the collaboration with the circus company would work. Being the two who would interact with them most, Andrea and I went to meet them in Bristol, a day or two before the show. During those rehearsals in a gym, I had a couple of moments where I had to practise being lifted up in the air. Suddenly I was in the circus world and not the Lacuna Coil world that I was used to. It was the first time I'd been so high in the air, wearing a huge parachute skirt; I had no idea how that would work in relation to my voice either, because we had no microphones and no amplification at the circus rehearsal.

CRISTINA

ABOVE

Celebrating 20 years on stage, Forum London 2018

OPPOSITE

Before the show backstage, Forum, London 2018

BELOW AND OPPOSITE

Below: Setting the stage on fire with Incandescence circus performers, London, 2018

Opposite: the stage clothes for 119 were designed based on the iconic priest outfits from the Comalies era.

I only was able to test my voice in this set up on the afternoon of the actual show, where we did full rehearsal without breaks and with all the stunts in order. So you can imagine how stressful it was, wanting it all to be perfect, while at the same time being worried about nobody getting hurt amid all the fire, the lifting and the chains, the positioning...

Obviously on show night, on stage with us we had the performers, but there was also the sound and the general vibe in the venue; it all had to work and it was only during the breaks between each song that I was truly able to feel the joy of the audience – where I could hear them screaming our name and cheering. Everyone was so happy; I was speechless at some points.

At times I felt like a puppet master in a way, suspended above the stage, with this incredible view of everything going on below. It was the weirdest feeling; I felt naked in some ways. But it worked. I sang in the



most heartfelt way and could see people in the audience crying. From that moment I wouldn't say I felt totally safe, but a little relieved for sure. We essentially merged two worlds. It might sound easy, but it really isn't. Looking back, it was like having your own apartment, where everything is in place, then adding eleven people that you've invited to be at home with you, walking around. But you have to deal with their various idiosyncrasies. It's the dealing with unexpected detail that is sometimes one of the hardest things about collaborations.



There was a huge amount of work required for the 20th Anniversary show. We knew that we had a little bit of extra budget available, because we also had a DVD to shoot at the same time. So, we all knew that we wanted to celebrate twenty years by doing something special that we'd never attempted before: an upgraded version of our standard show comprising a very wide set list that encompassed our entire career, including perhaps four or five songs from each release. We also decided to include five songs that we had never played before. That

ANDREA

left us with a proposed set list that would compromise ten songs we almost always play; ten we sometimes play and then five we had never played at all. It was an ambitious idea, especially when combined with the circus performances by a British company called Incandescence. We asked them to make something happen after every five songs in the set: a trick or a circus related special effect. In that way the show was a combination of songs and accompanying visuals on every fifth song.

Cristina and I flew to Bristol a couple of days before rehearsal to practice some of the choreography with the company. She'd be singing while suspended five metres above the stage for a couple of songs; she had to experiment, as she'd obviously never done it before. Then, on the day before the show we joined the other guys in London for the set-up: the stage, the circus rig etc. A month or so prior to the show we had also changed venue from the Shepherd's Bush Empire to the Kentish Town Forum because it turned out that the former would have been too difficult to set up the circus elements. In addition, we were also faced with some fire regulations that would have meant we'd have had to cut certain visuals from the show, which we obviously didn't want to do. It was the only way we could have fulfilled the vision.

Obviously, to achieve all this required a huge amount of effort, not just in terms of putting together the set list and learning the songs in the first place, but also for me, Marco and Cristina to learn those five songs again. And then, on top of that, Ryan and Diego had to learn at least fifteen songs from scratch!



MARCO

It was an extremely stressful time, though i'm happy with how things turned out. Fans were happy and that's the most important thing for me. At the time though it was very difficult, I had to re-arrange and re-work a lot of our older songs. All of our music up until Comalies was recorded on analogue tape so i had to remake a lot of it. Certain tracks, such as 'Soul Into Hades' off the first E.P., which we hadn't played live since 1997, was completely 'renovated' to make it fit more with our current sound. I had fun doing that because it felt like making a cover song of my own song!



I also reworked 'A Current Obsession', one of my favourite songs, and we used it as the opening song for the show. Some of the songs I had to cut down in length or use the edited version – which I arrived at usually by just cutting the last twenty-five choruses down to just a couple. In the past we had far too many choruses! We even played 'I Forgive (But I Won't Forget Your Name)' off *Broken Crown Halo*. It's a song we all really like; it was the single from the album. But we had never played it live, simply because the key is very high, even for Cristina. So I thought: "OK, for one night we can make it work."

And on the night, I think the fans enjoyed the songs. We didn't get any complaints for songs not played and our longterm fans are very honest

ABOVE

119 stage banner was designed by Ivan Rosario, a longtime fan and friend of Lacuna Coil.

OPPOSITE

Diego backstage before the show, London, 2018

with us so they would've let us know if we let them down! We played 25 songs, and tried to really put in as many rare tracks as possible. At the same time, fans know as much as we do that you can't play every single song, there are time limits!

CRISTINA

It was interesting giving a new vibe to some of these old songs, but that only added to our nervousness because we hadn't played some of them for such a long time. When you play a song regularly, it's easy to focus on other aspects: movement, performance, connection with the audience for example, because you automatically know the song. But for some of these numbers I was thinking: "Oh my god, am I going to forget the lyrics?!" There just wasn't much time to rehearse. And then we played songs like 'I Forgive...' for the first time. Those vocals are really difficult for me because they're very high. When we think about hypothetical set lists we also have to address whether I can hold my voice. And for that reason we never included it – however much we like it and the fans are connected to it. But we said, "Let's do it, but let's try to create a vocal part that'll allow me to sing it live more easily." In the end it went amazingly.

ANDREA

The songs that we had never played, were simply too difficult to recreate because we didn't have backing tracks in those pre-*Comalies* days. Marco had to rearrange and adapt the songs to the one guitar player line-up we have now. In the end he did a really good job in making them fit. After all, the older songs still felt good and solid, although obviously some of them are stylistically different. And from my position onstage it seemed like they went down really well at the show,



On the day before the show, we built up the entire stage set with the circus company and then did a generic rehearsal in order to work out what spaces they'd occupy on the stage, based on their performances. Then, on show day, we had to go through the entire set with the circus, followed by another hour of fixing whatever had gone wrong. Then, we did the show itself. That day we played for six hours. But it was worth it. Ninety per-cent of it was right. And the other ten, nobody would have noticed. I was amazed how well everything fell into place given how complex all the scenery changes, performances and filming was. There was so much happening all at once, and we hadn't had much time to rehearse. But it seems like the fans really enjoyed it.

ABOVE

'The House Of Shame' choreography
Forum, London, 2018

CRISTINA

When I think about it all now I say to myself: "It's done!" The greatest thing about the 119 show was that it was unique. I like the idea that whoever came to see us really felt that they were part of a one of a kind event. Equally, for the ones who weren't there, I want them to look back and wish that they had been. It was a never-to-be-repeated one-off event. That said, we looked on that whole year as one big celebration.

ANDREA

I would like to incorporate theatrical elements in future shows, but the expense involved is always going to be the deciding factor. To redo it in exactly the same way for any of the other shows in our anniversary year would be too expensive. However, for 2018, we did keep some of these old songs in the set list for the summer festivals.

We used the same clothing etc. so presented at least a reduced version of the anniversary show. Thereafter there's so much more to do – a new album to write, more touring, and so on.

MARCO

For our anniversary show in London we decided to play 'Falling' and 'Wide Awake' in a piano and voice only version. In order to prepare the performance the best way, I called a friend of mine who lives in London who's a very good pianist. When I asked Silvia Zanaboni to join us onstage for the show, she answered: "Sure! Just give me the partiture I have to read and perform and I will do it!" I replied: "Er... wait, we need to work on it all together, there is no partiture yet and I don't know how to write music!".

While working on songs for the show I realised how difficult some of them are for Cristina to sing night after night. I realised that I'd like to focus more on building songs from a different perspective, one that allows her to be a bit more comfortable singing them every night.

Already a month after show I began writing new material. Sometimes I'd find myself sitting at my desk for hours with a piece of paper and the TV on. Nothing would happen except a game of basketball with the trash bin. It's all so random – sometimes nothing happens, sometimes I find something I like. But I need to start somewhere so I carry on; drawing, watching films, listening to music ..until i find some inspiration.

Interestingly, and this isn't unusual for me, I already had an album title in mind. Although Delirium's title came to us at the very end, the meaning and everything else was already there. All that was missing was the name. In this case, when we thought of the title, Cristina and I really liked it. Whether it'll be the title of the new record, doesn't matter; it's an important vision to have in my mind for now.



ABOVE

Marco designed the 119 logo on the new stage outfits, 2018

OPPOSITE

Due to time constraints between changes, Cristina was wearing three different outfits while suspended for two songs 'Falling' and 'Wide Awake'.

CRISTINA

An invitation to discuss the idea of me being on *The Voice Of Italy* TV show came about without any prior recommendation or effort from our management. I was extremely surprised that they asked me to go along and have initial talks. I went to a dinner with some of the people behind the show, and I specifically asked that I wasn't told what their individual roles in the show were beforehand. They were very nice people; we started talking, and it evolved from there.

As we talked and ate, I told them more about Lacuna Coil and what we do and discovered that some of them had little idea about our history. Maybe they knew something about me from social media and had some sense of us that way, but they were absolutely fascinated to learn about our history as a band. As I talked, they soon realised that I'm a talker. Then they said, "If we asked you to be one of the coaches on *The Voice*, what would you say?" I was like, "Eh?" That was my first response. I suppose I had thought that they maybe wanted me to be one of the people in the background – there to help the coaches develop artists in the studio etc. after they'd been picked up. But they told me that they wanted me as one of the coaches and I thought, "Wow, you're asking someone who belongs to the rock and metal world, and in Italy that world is not mainstream at all, to be part of a TV show that is seen by millions of people, in the evening, on a national channel?" "

My first reaction was surprise, and then I had to say that I needed to think about it. There were, after all, a few things to consider. One, I'm not a TV personality. TV is not my world – even though discussing the human voice is my world because I do it for a living. I wanted to know more about what was involved – mainly from the perspective of how it would impact my work with Lacuna Coil, because that's my past, present and future. It's complete priority. I also had to consider what people would think about my choice. As I considered, I decided to say yes on the basis that there would always be someone who agrees, and equally always someone who doesn't. But for me, I wanted to bring myself to this situation, as opposed to adapting to it. Of course one consideration was that it would bring more people to Lacuna Coil, but I was also adamant that appearing on *The Voice* would never change me. There are no plans to change my look, my lifestyle or start a solo career. Let me assure everyone that all I'm looking for is to record with Lacuna Coil – to write with Lacuna Coil. Even though I'm visiting another world for a while, the rock and metal world will always be *my* world.



ABOVE

Cristina, coach of *The Voice Of Italy*, 2018

OPPOSITE

DIEGO CAVALLOTTI, MILANO, 2017



I met Maki when I was playing in my previous band, Mellowtoy. He was the producer of our last album. Since then, we became friends, always hanging out in the same places when he was in town. In December 2015 I went to see Lacuna Coil play live in Parma and discovered that was to be Maus's last show, so a few days later I asked Maki to give me an opportunity to take his place. Initially he refused, because they already had someone else they were considering. I answered that I could accept a "no", but not without having the chance to tryout. That was my dream of a lifetime, I couldn't back down so easily!

So they decided to give me this opportunity, which at the end went well. I didn't have time to even realise, or think, I just resigned from my job and left two months later for the world tour of Delirium. My debut was at a festival in Manila in front of 25.000 people!

DIEGO CAVALLOTTI
(guitars 2015-present)



CRISTINA

Longevity is something I'm asked about often, and the truth is that there's no single recipe. Obviously, a band needs talent and some luck – but in our case it's much more because we have always tried to please our own ears first, with our music – and we've been fortunate enough to have loyal fans who have been willing to join us on this incredible twenty-year journey.

And then I get go back to that whole concept of family again because, in our case, it just can't be overstated. We are friends who happened to start something because we all loved it. And then we kept going, keeping the friendship and the family ethos in mind through thick and thin. As a group, we fear nothing. We've got more to do and as the song says...nothing stands in our way.

In another twenty years? I'll probably be in the basement. I'm like Gollum, I'll start eating raw fish soon!

MARCO

ABOVE
Milano, 2017

It's been two years now that I've been a part of the band and I'm extremely proud, because Lacuna Coil have literally changed my life. They are truly a second family for me, the band, the crew, the fans, everyone.

OPPOSITE
That's All Folks!
Last U.S. Show, 2017

I'm so proud to be able to do what I love, being a part of one of the biggest, if not THE biggest italian rock band...and i will continue to do my best to contribute what I can, until the end!

ANDREA

Looking back on our career it's sometimes amazing to think that we've been going for twenty years as an internationally successful band. Much like every relationship, there have been highs and lows, but I wouldn't change any of it. We've grown together and achieved some amazing goals. And we haven't finished yet! Twenty years is the end of a chapter yes, but it's also the beginning of another. Let's see what stories we have to tell.

