

JASKA RAATIKAINEN

- Doing a bunch of shows between Christmas and the New Year was becoming something of a tradition for us. We felt that the six-show tour we had done last year – Evijärvi, Oulu, Jyväskylä, Hämeenlinna, Turku and Helsinki – had been pretty intense, so in December 2001, we only did four shows.

ANSSI KIPPO

- That Christmas tour will definitely go down in history as one of the most tragicomic rock ‘n’ roll tours ever to happen in Finland. It all started with the weather, of course: it was thirty degrees below zero, but the biting wind made the cold feel even more merciless. I had found a dedicated bus for Bodom’s Finnish tours by then – it had been christened the Planet of the Apes, or just Planet for short, us being the apes of course – but it was several decades old and obviously refused to start up in the bitter cold.

- I then started to ask around for a tour bus we could borrow. There were a fair few candidates, but they all kept dying. I must have been offered four buses, and each one of them croaked before we ever got moving. Finally I caught one: Maija Vilkkumaa’s tour bus was available and miraculously enough, it even started up. We loaded up our gear in Lappeenranta and headed off to Nivala. We made it there without any further incidents and did the show. And we started thinking, hey, everything might be okay after all.

JANNE WIRMAN

- We headed for Jyväskylä right after the show. At some point, the heating system died, and it didn’t take long at all for the icy cold to start penetrating the interior of the bus. It was early morning by the time we pulled up at a gas station to formulate a game plan. The next thing I knew, Allu spotted the details of some fortune teller in the newspaper, and so we called the number: “We’ve had five buses break down on us, and we need to get to Jyväskylä. Are we ever gonna make it?” The fortune teller cheerily replied: “Of course you will.”

ANSSI KIPPO

- The light technician who was with us grabbed my phone, thinking he might figure things out somehow. The phone happened to be a Nokia Communicator, and those were worth something like ten thousand Finnish marks at the time. And as was only to be expected, the phone slipped and fell and broke into two pieces. So that was that.

JANNE WIRMAN

- We couldn't come up with a better solution, so we took our icy bus back on the road towards Jyväskylä. At one point I noticed one of our technicians was sleeping against the frosted window of the bus. His head had frozen to the glass. I was genuinely worried it might cause some kind of permanent damage, freezing like that. Luckily it didn't.

ANSSI KIPPO

- Finally the comforting lights of Jyväskylä glimmered before us, and we were able to take the bus in for maintenance. By the time the show at Lutakko was over, we were exhausted beyond belief. Luckily we at least got to rest for a bit.

HENKKA SEPPÄLÄ

- I think that may have been the Jyväskylä show where the acronym COBHC really started to take off? Pete Eskelinen, who toured as our technician in the early days, scribbled the letters on the backstage wall at Lutakko.

PETE ESKELINEN

- I might have scrawled COBHC on the wall of Lutakko as well, but the acronym goes back a lot further than that – to the band's first Wacken show. The whole thing has its roots even further in the past actually, in Koivukylä in Vantaa, where my skater punk mates had this SBHC thing. SBHC stood for Southern Björkby Hate Crew. I then turned that into the Children of Bodom Hate Crew, and the first time I wrote that onto my own knuckles was backstage at Wacken. One of the letters had to go on my thumb, of course.

- The idea was a bit of a slow burner, as the real launch of COBHC only really happened when the *Hate Crew Deathroll* album dropped. I wasn't around by that time anymore. As the popularity of the band kept growing, the skills of a technician kind of required other things than just... carrying drum cases. I realised the limits of my own abilities once and for all at a Stockholm show where Ale had a guitar issue. He handed the guitar over to me and asked me to change the broken string. Which put me in a tough spot, as I didn't really know anything about guitars at the time!

ALEXI LAIHO

- Hate Crew means the band and a few other trusted roadies and technicians. Deathroll means a list of people killed in the war. Now, you can decide for yourself whether in our case it means people we'd like to kill or people we've already killed.

(Juho Juntunen / Soundi / 12/2002)

ANSSI KIPPO

- We got the bus back in the morning, but the heating system died again before we even managed to load our gear. It was still freezing cold, so we couldn't take the bus anywhere. Finding a new vehicle took us so long that we were extremely late by the time we got to Kuopio. We broke the unofficial world record in loading speed and the band climbed up on stage about twenty minutes after we had arrived at the venue.

- After the show, we loaded out and headed for Tampere. The tour finale was going to be at Pakkahuone. We called the hotel staff on the way and asked if we could maybe access our rooms early, and they said yes. We hadn't slept for a long time – again – so we were overdue for a little rest.

ALEXANDER KUOPPALA

- The show started off great. The Pakkahuone stage had a lit Christmas tree standing in one corner, and we flashed the tree lights pretty intensely while banging out some classic Finnish

Christmas carol from the PA as an intro. Then Anssi switched the music into something a bit more menacing and we got on stage.

JANNE WIRMAN

- That show was memorable in the sense that we had our first pyrotechnics ever. All these fireworks and sparkler things in front of the stage. That particular set-up turned into something a whole lot more unique when I burst into flames in the middle of a song. Or, well, a stunt man did. The rest of the guys weren't clued in on the prank, but we had kind of hinted at it just before the show, saying: "Whatever happens, the show must go on." That turned into a pretty impressive spectacle in the end. Kudos to Ari Arvola, who was responsible for the special effects.

ARI ARVOLA

- The idea of the "burning man" came up when we were planning the Pakkahuone show with Janne. I think it came from Metallica's *Cunning Stunts* video, where you see an actor in flames. The way we did it was to have Janne – wearing a hoodie – wander over to the side of the stage during "Deadnight Warrior", as if to get a drink. He was then replaced by a stunt guy without anyone noticing, and the back of the stunt guy's hoodie was covered in fire gel. It did look pretty rough in the end, with the burning guy "writhing in pain" in the middle of the stage. The flames were put out with fire blankets and "Janne" was carried to the side of the stage. At least Alexander was terrified.

ALEXANDER KUOPPALA

- For a moment I really thought my dear friend was burned to a crisp. Luckily the truth came out soon enough, and I didn't have to worry about it for longer than a couple of songs.

ANSSI KIPPO

- Later that night, we organised a fairly lively afterparty at the Scandic Hotel nearby. At one point, three guys jumped into the bathtub and the tub was filled with foam. However, some people thought that it wasn't enough foam, and suddenly the door opened to reveal the

business end of an extinguisher hose. And soon the bathroom was even more full of foam... Until it turned out that the tricksters had grabbed a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher instead of a foam one. That, of course, removed all oxygen from the space. Soon a whole bunch of naked rockstars and technicians barged out into the hallway, gasping for breath. And obviously it was at this very moment that the kind hotel staff member who had agreed to check us in super early in the morning turned up to witness the chaos. And to tell us off. I was only wearing a bit of foam and a whole load of extinguisher powder. I was so ashamed in that moment. Luckily they didn't call the police, as one of the label people promised to pay for everything.

ALEXANDER KUOPPALA

- We had been watching Pantera's 3 *Vulgar Videos from Hell*, and we were inspired to take action in that spirit. The staff didn't appreciate the joke in the same way, and we got banned from all Scandic Hotels as a result. They sent us a bill for two thousand euros as well. Well, at least we found out the price difference between Scandinavia and South America. We had previously pulled a similar "extinguisher prank" in Brazil, but they only billed us for 300 dollars.

JASKA RAATIKAINEN

- The end results of this particular four-show tour were pretty impressive: a handful of broken buses, a frozen head, a burnt man, and a ban to an entire hotel chain. Just to name a few.