

A show night was always followed by a new day on the bus, and Ranta waxes almost lyrical as he describes the mood in the morning air.

“Grey morning someplace in Europe, no clue which city you’re in. No clue where the venue is. No clue if it’s open. No clue if there’s something to eat. The entire tour bus smells of sweat and piss. Someone is snoring somewhere. Another hasn’t slept a wink and is still drinking. You’re hungover, anxious, and missing home...”

The band stuck to alcohol. Neither drugs nor pleasures of the flesh were ever an issue with Sentenced. Quite the opposite, really. Bobo says the band missed plenty of opportunities for female contact by sitting in the bus, getting drunk.

“They could’ve scored lots of pussy if they hadn’t been too busy with their drinking and their NHL game on the PlayStation. They just didn’t give a shit”, Bobo observes. “Sentenced was an extremely unusual rock band on a lot of levels. I think they would’ve been very different if they had come from, say, Italy.”

Laihiala corroborates the tour manager’s story straight away. Only one aspect of the holy trinity of sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll applied to them – and even that, only sort of.

“Yeah, no. We were never on the lookout for pussy. It just weren’t a thing.”

“Fuck no”, Lopakka confirms. “Occasionally I did detect that pussy were on the lookout for us, though.”

Lopakka’s story is bolstered by the fact that the man gets conspicuously uncomfortable just discussing the matter.

“I find it hard to even think about, if I’m honest. It were more like, if a girl kept talking to me for more than one minute or so, I’d start viewing it as a threat. Soon as I realised she might be angling for something more than an autograph I thought, I’d rather get run over by the tour bus than be stuck in this situation right here. Having said that, it were the same with the guys. I had no intention of getting to know anyone, me. Someone brings up suicide or some such, and I’d grunt one ‘yeah’ and head to the bus like a fucking shot”, says the guitarist.

“But going back to the pussy, well, you could definitely say there would of been givers, if only they’d had any takers. But no. Shagging just weren’t on the Sentenced agenda.”

Lopakka has mentioned in an interview that he never leaves home to go anywhere he doesn’t have to (except to a bar once in a while, which constitutes essential business). Laihiala follows a similar line of reasoning to explain his general dislike of touring: home is just about the only place he feels happy. According to him, his depressive episodes would usually kick in around the exact same time he stepped on a tour bus.

“Constant homesickness were the worst of it”, Laihiala begins. “And then the people you met, about 99 per cent of ‘em you needed to get shitfaced to even deal with. And then you started hating yourself too for even associating with these people. I could of kept touring for 50 fucking years if I could of gone home after every show.”

Lopakka agrees with his bandmate and says his primary occupation while on tour was to count the days until he could go home.

“I reckon we all enjoyed the interaction with the audience, being on stage. But that bit is such a fucking small part of the puzzle, at the end of the day”, he says. “It’s like being forced into perpetual celibacy, and being allowed to get your dick wet once a fucking year. It’s just eating shit, all the time.”

For Lopakka, touring was a necessary, if grave, evil, which had to be endured if you wanted to make music and spread it to the world. He understands his band was in a position that most bands only ever get to dream of, and is aware how complaining about it may come across. But you can’t change who you are.

“I reckon we were a bunch of unique characters in that regard, as compared to near any other band you can think of. Some know how to enjoy touring. But then some also wear eyeliner, even if they’re guys. I can’t find it in meself to take pleasure in either of those things”, Lopakka says. “I know we’ve been accused of moaning about touring just for the sake of our image or whatever, but those people couldn’t be more wide of the mark if they tried, I can tell you that fucking much.”

Laihiala confesses he’s often wondered whether touring would have been different, or indeed possible, without the alcohol. The answer to the first question is an emphatic yes; the answer to the second, a categorical no. For an introverted individual such as himself, the constant socialising, especially with other bands and less agreeable members of the reload crew, was simply too unpalatable to manage with a clear head.

“Some mornings, I’d feel pissed off just having had a drunken conversation with some particular individual the previous night”, Laihiala says. “But if I’d been there sober, I’d of just lain in me bunk the whole time.”

Socialising was difficult for all the band members, none of them particularly adept at small talk. Lopakka emphasises that any touring-related anxieties they may have had were primarily the result of their own minds – or looks.

“Seeing meself in the mirror, that’s what got to be the worst of it, after a while”, he says.

“It were a combination of factors, for sure”, Laihiala concedes. “Cum-stained showers, the stink of piss and shit everywhere, shite food... None of it had anything to do with the real

world outside. And me, I kept sinking deeper and deeper into that bubble with all me drinking. And when some memory from last night would float up and I'd remember the shit I'd been chatting... well, fuck."

Alcohol was a necessary evil to survive a necessary evil. If you ask Lopakka whether it was a balm or a poison for the situation they found themselves in, the answer is plain as day: it was the latter.

"Fools that we were, we kept drinking in hopes of some sort of respite, I suppose. Even though we all knew what it would do to us the next day. And the next. But that's the path we chose to go down, again and again, which just goes to show how seriously shit we must of been feeling."