



The sounds of silence: Our reporter carefully records Rush Limbaugh's every utterance.

The World's Most Tedious Interview

Cramped into the backseat of a limo with the 300-plus-pound syndicated radio personality Rush Limbaugh, we surmise he is peeved.

In Detroit to kick off his "Rush to Excellence" concert tour, the arch-conservative talk-show host (weekdays noon-3 p.m. on WXYT-AM 1270) was expecting us to do a quickie interview. He didn't know we planned to take him for a ride.

"I just don't know what this is all about," he says, staring straight ahead.

Gosh, Rush, we only wanted to take you on a tour of our town and get your reaction. After all, we listen to your radio program. You have definite opinions about everything — especially AIDS, gays, the homeless, welfare recipients, women's libbers and commies.

But Limbaugh is distant and tired. And he has a dry, nagging cough. We offer him gum to soothe his golden tonsils. "The only way it'll get better is if I DON'T TALK," he asserts.

Oh. We get the hint. Well, on with the tour. We leave WXYT-FM's Southfield studios, driving up 12 Mile to Woodward and pointing out Father Coughlin's old

church. Limbaugh is uncharacteristically quiet. Then we head up Woodward toward Detroit, to show off Palmer Woods. We take him past the home of Pistons' star John Salley.

"Still has Christmas decorations up," Rush remarks.

Turning off into Palmer Park, we inform our usually outspoken celeb that the area is home to much of Detroit's gay community. That ought to get a rise out of him. Indeed. He tells us how, when he first arrived in New York a few years ago, he was madly pursued by *Ms.* magazine's ad director.

"It was a man?" we ask.

"No, a woman."

"A lesbian?"

"Huh? No. Oh, I must've misunderstood you."

This isn't going very well.

What's he think of Coleman Young? "He polarizes people, makes a lot of people mad, but as far as having a profound opinion of him, I really don't."

Limbaugh tells us he lives in Manhattan, and he hates to walk — he has a driver. That might explain his size.

When we in-

quire about the kind of audience his "Excellence" tours draw, he says we'd be surprised. "It's a younger crowd — heavy-metal freaks, longhairs — it runs the gamut." But he is markedly perturbed when we compare his act to that of comedian Andrew Dice Clay. Both of you, we reason, are known for saying things that many people think but wouldn't dare say.

"I'm not a bigot, but I'm not dishonest, nor irresponsible," Limbaugh says. "I do use satire, parody and a sense of humor. But to say that I'm anywhere near the league of Andrew Dice Clay is to either not know him or me."

Does he ever get a crowd that scares him? "That's a very dangerous question — there's no way to win. You can ask that of Sinatra. You can ask that of the Rolling Stones: 'Are you worried that so many people who show up at your concert do drugs?'"

"But they don't ask the Rolling Stones. They only ask people like me and Andrew Dice Clay this crap."

It's heating up in here.

We near the Fox Theatre, explaining how it's been restored, and ask Limbaugh if he wants to see the inside. "Unh-unh."

We pray for a photo opportunity: "Can we take your picture by The Fist?" we ask.

Suddenly Limbaugh's a good sport. He even lets us get a photo of him by the Spirit of Detroit. We suggest he take his shirt off. "Nah — I don't want to make your readers sick," he laughs.

How 'bout a coney at Lafayette Coney Island? "No. Well, maybe. Oh, I think I'll pass. Sounds good, though. I'm such a slob, I'd spill it all

Rush finally gets into the Spirit.



over me and this car."

After stopping for a taping at WDIV-TV studios, we grill him on our tour.

"You're not going to get me to say anything negative about this city. I loved it — I had a great time. I r-r-re-ally did."

We pass Tiger Stadium. Limbaugh thinks it'll be torn down. "Purists and traditionalists find these parks romantic and quaint. Nobody is running a business so that (those people) can be satisfied."

We park in front of the Motown Museum, our last stop on the tour. This is obviously a rush for Limbaugh, but he doesn't want to get out of the limo. It's getting late. "I hated it when the Motown sound died," Limbaugh muses. "I don't even like Motown on CD. It was not recorded for CD."

On our way up the Lodge to WXYT, we talk about downtown's new developments and the lack of dollars for more.

Out of the blue, Limbaugh says, "You mean, *Bawwwwwb Talbert* is not enough to attract new business and residents?" We laugh. "Bob Talbert," he repeats, in an odd, raspy Southern tone.

"When my show debuted, he wrote a column about it, and he really, really praised it. Then his fans wrote him letters saying, 'Bob, Rush Limbaugh's on the air saying you and him are big buddies and you love his show.' And Bob goes, 'Uh, oh — my journalistic credibility's on the line.' So he writes, 'I hate the *Rush Limbaugh Show*, I've been listening to it, it's grown old and tired.'"

"You know, he changes his mind at the drop of a hat, which I find, uh, *endearing*."

"He's done a 180 on me. No, he's done two 180s — I think he's back in my camp. But I don't know for sure."

Back in the studio parking lot, Rush seems apologetic for his earlier silent treatment.

"Call me if you have any questions," he insists. "I feel like I've shortchanged you."

Understatement, Rush.

—P.L.S.