

THE BEST PROGRAMMERS IN RADIO

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# RADIO INK

RADIO'S PREMIER MANAGEMENT & MARKETING MAGAZINE<sup>SM</sup>

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The Don Quixote  
Syndrome

A Peek Into  
The "Bedroom"

# Out In Front

Rusty Humphries Braves The World's  
Danger Zones For His Listeners

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Radio's Premier Management & Marketing Magazine<sup>SM</sup>  
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## FIRST PERSON

Rusty Humphries got his start in radio by interviewing an irate basketball coach whose obscenity-laden response to a question from the greenhorn reporter set in motion a whirlwind radio career. Humphries has traversed many aspects of the business — from morning show host, to producer, to the writer of parody songs heard on Rush Limbaugh's daily radio show. Today, Humphries hosts his own Talk show, which combines his unique sense of humor with eye-opening interviews with political leaders and, perhaps most startlingly, terrorists whom Humphries has met face to face. "My goal is for people to understand what's happening in the world," he says. "What I have found is that our enemy tends to tell us what they're going to do, and we don't want to listen. When you interview terrorists, they are very honest. I want people to hear what these folks have to say."

**IDEA TICKER**  
**38,431**  
...the number of useable ideas in *Radio Ink* to date

**Coming Next Issue:**  
»Sales Issue

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**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Joe Howard [joe@radioink.com](mailto:joe@radioink.com)

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
Wendy Bernstein [wendy@radioink.com](mailto:wendy@radioink.com)

**NEWS EDITOR**  
Brida Connolly [brida@radioink.com](mailto:brida@radioink.com)

**CREATIVE DIRECTOR**  
Kenneth Whitney [ken@radioink.com](mailto:ken@radioink.com)

**VP/OPERATIONS**  
Tom Elmo [tomelmo@radioink.com](mailto:tomelmo@radioink.com)

**VP/ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER** 561-655-8778  
Lois Ann Chooljian [lois@radioink.com](mailto:lois@radioink.com)

**VP/NATIONAL SALES** 800-379-8160, access #13  
Chuck Renwick [chuck@radioink.com](mailto:chuck@radioink.com)

**MARKETING MANAGER** 937-371-8666  
Evelyn Yaus [evelyn@radioink.com](mailto:evelyn@radioink.com)

**CUSTOMER SERVICE** 561-655-8778



**CHAIRMAN/PUBLISHER**  
B. Eric Rhoads, CRM/C/CRSM [eric@radioink.com](mailto:eric@radioink.com)

**CONTROLLER**  
Samantha DeQuino [samantha@radioink.com](mailto:samantha@radioink.com)

**STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER** Bruce "Flash" Cooley

**WASHINGTON, DC, COUNSEL**  
John Wells King Carvey, Schubert & Barer

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR EMERITUS/LOS ANGELES**  
Dwight Case

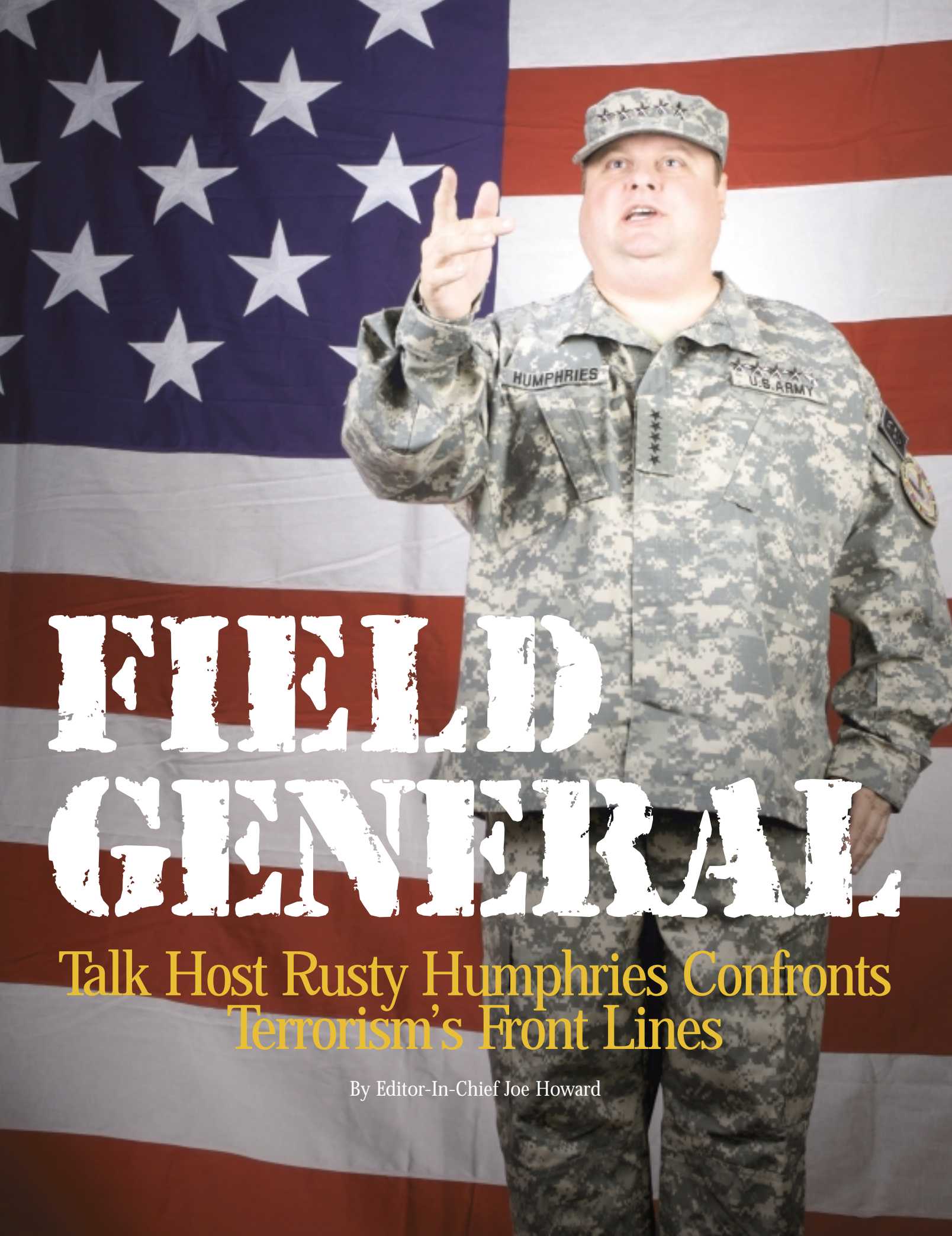
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### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Lee Abrams, Tom Asacker, Jim Boyle, Curt Brown, Steve Clark, Holland Cooke, Bob Davis, Rick Dearborn, Michael Guld, Dave Kahle, Bob Jenkins, Jason Jennings, Sean Luce, Harvey McKay, Kipper McGee, Steve Meyers, Bill Myers, Walter Sabo, Greg Smith, Steven J. Steinberg, Jim Taszarek, Jack Trout, Bill Troy, Paul Weyland, Roy Williams, Tom Zarecki

**RADIO INK** Editorial Offices:  
224 Datura Street • Suite 1015  
West Palm Beach, FL 33401  
PHONE 561-655-8778 • FAX 561-655-6164  
E-MAIL: [comments@radioink.com](mailto:comments@radioink.com)  
Subscription Information  
PHONE 800-610-5771 • FAX 561-655-6164

Have news we can use? E-mail us at [news@radioink.com](mailto:news@radioink.com).



# FIELD GENERAL

Talk Host Rusty Humphries Confronts  
Terrorism's Front Lines

By Editor-In-Chief Joe Howard

## COVER STORY: Rusty Humphries

**FROM THE EARLIEST DAYS OF HIS RADIO CAREER**, Rusty Humphries was thrown into the lion's den. As a 16-year-old wannabe radio star, Humphries marched off to cover a basketball game at the behest of a frustrated newsman, with only the slightest bit of knowledge about the team. This fact was proved out when an ill-advised question posed to the team's coach led to a verbal beating for Humphries — but the experience also gave him his first lesson in facing down adversity in pursuit of a story.

Now syndicated nationally on more than 200 stations, Humphries has honed his capability for chasing stories, moving from interviewing angry coaches to traveling to the danger zones of the Middle East to stand face to face with some of the world's most dangerous terrorists. "My goal is for people to understand what's happening in the world," he says. "What I have found is that our enemy tends to tell us what they're going to do, and we don't want to listen. This

enemy will not stop if we leave Israel or if we leave Iraq; they are very, very clear. I want to bring that back. They are megalomaniacs, and I think they get points within the organization if they are interviewed. I wasn't threatening, and I let them spout their propaganda."

To balance out the gravity of that kind of programming, Humphries instills a healthy dose of humor in his show, including parody songs like those he used to write for Rush Limbaugh that deride the world's troubles, and those who cause it. "If you're just serious all the time, or just funny all the time, it doesn't give the audience a chance to take that rollercoaster ride with you," he says. "I like to give a very wide range of emotion: happy, sad, funny, serious, silly — and at the same time deliver deep political insight so that you're having a great time while learning something. It's just the way my mind works. I take my audience on that same journey. I probably have a high degree of ADD or ADHD or something. When I get bored, I'm figuring they are too."



Overlooking the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, with "warden" Col. Michael Bumgarner

**RadiInk:** You've put your life at risk in pursuit of stories about terrorism. What compels you to put yourself in harm's way to chase this story?

**Rusty Humphries:** On January 26, 1969, my father was killed in the line of action in Viet Nam; he was a Cobra helicopter pilot. For me, military stuff has always been real important. Even though he wasn't one of the guys who came home, the stories of people spitting on the soldiers has always really affected me. What if my dad did come home and had to live through that? That's always haunted me. I've always wanted to get the word out, so that when the soldiers come home, people treat them a little bit better.



Flying to Afghanistan with NATO's supreme allied commander, Four-Star Gen. David Craddock

**RI:** It's one thing to feel a sense of purpose, but you have interviewed terrorists, you've gone to Gitmo. Why go to such extremes?

**RH:** My goal is for people to understand what's happening in the world. What I have found is that our enemy tends to tell us what they're going to do, and we don't want to listen. I want to bring that back. When you interview terrorists, they are very honest. "So what are you planning on doing?" "Well, on Thursday, we have two bombs, and they will go off about 12:15." When you ask them enough questions, use the Socratic method, their argument falls apart: They're victims, it's not their fault, if it wasn't for the Jews, or America, they'd have no problems. I want people to hear what these folks have to say. The difference between what I do and what CNN does is that CNN will interview a terrorist, run it straight, then move onto something else. I'll run the interview and stop it, and say, "OK, here's where he's lying to you" or "Let me tell you what he's trying to say," or "Let me explain to you what's going on," so it makes sense.

RI: What have you learned about them?

RH: They're very clear: Democracy is hypocrisy. They believe the only thing that will bring the world together is Islam. I say you believe in Islam and I'm a Christian; you seem like a nice guy, can't we just get along? No, we cannot get along. What do you mean we can't get along? Because it says in the Koran that Christians and Jews hate me, so you hate me. The only way we can become friends is if you become Muslim.

When I was in the Palestinian area, I asked the same question of the number three leader of Hamas. He said, "You don't want to get along. You don't want to know the truth; even the Jews in America have converted to Christianity so they can run your churches and tell you what to think against the Muslims." Oh come on, you don't really believe that. "Yes, of course I do."

RI: How did you gain their trust?

RH: They are megalomaniacs, and I think they get points within the organization if they are interviewed. I wasn't threatening, and I let them spout their propaganda. They want the world to know the truth, that the Jews sent Monica Lewinsky to have sex with Bill Clinton, so the Jews could run America. To us, that's hysterical; but they believe it.

RI: How can you get through to people with such fanatical beliefs?

RH: I think it's going to be generational, as this younger generation starts to see that what the older generation did didn't work. They'll start getting things off the Internet, start being able to read. You can only be brainwashed for so long. You're hit over your head by your parents, you're afraid, you can't have any fun, you can't have a girlfriend. You can't do this and you can't do that — until you start to rebel.

And these aren't stupid people. Look at the September 11 hijackers: These guys lived in America, went to American schools. Yasser Arafat didn't blow himself up, Osama bin Laden didn't blow himself up. They're believers, but they believe that they should be in control. While they claim it's religious, there's a lot more ideology than they want to admit to their people. It's a different way of using the people to do your bidding for you. It's just a little bit different than what Hitler tried to do with his people.

It's either going to be generational, or we have to beat them. All I've heard recently from the politicians is we need a political end of this war. Vietnam had a political end, Korea had a political end; WWII, military end, WWI, military end, Civil War, military end, Revolution, military end. Political solutions don't work — certainly not in a war against people who are true believers.

RI: By that rationale, shouldn't the war in Iraq have ended with Saddam Hussein's execution?

RH: It should have, but every military plan goes out the window the minute the first bullet is fired. Here's the reason for President Bush's troop surge, it's just like in New York or Chicago, when you don't have enough police, there's anarchy, and the bad guys take over. Same thing in Iraq right now. So we put in more troops and more police to try to calm things down.

It's been this way in every civilization. Once there's security, trade can happen and businesses can flourish. People can go to stores and not feel afraid to go out and do what they need to do. In our country we have life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. We don't have to worry about life; you're not gonna get shot going down the street. We have liberty; you can pretty much go anywhere you want and not have a problem. So, we're going back there and trying to help them with life and liberty. And we're making a difference.

RI: What have you seen that demonstrates this?

RH: I got a chance to go to Afghanistan with the supreme allied commander of Europe, Gen. David Craddock. He's from America, and commands the forces in Afghanistan. We went to the northeastern-most province of Afghanistan; it's so remote that the Taliban didn't take them over, and they're very proud of this. The roads were last built by Alexander the Great. They have nothing, I mean nothing. Five years ago, ten years ago, before we got there, it was a ten-day walk to find a nurse, and the roads were littered with bodies. In wintertime, the kids had no shoes and their feet would get so cold, they had elephant feet.

We've gone to areas where the only thing they grow are poppies for opium. The Taliban give the farmers opium seeds, and if the



Helping to build a radio transmitter in northeastern Afghanistan



Broadcasting live from Radio One in Beit El, in Israel's West Bank



Shaking hands with tribal leaders in Afghanistan

## COVER STORY: Rusty Humphries

farmers don't want to grow poppies, the Taliban threatens to take their children. We're giving protection to those farmers so they don't have to grow opium. We give them pencils, pens, books, office furniture. While we were speaking to them, a guy pulled out a pen and they jumped him like it was a thousand dollar bill. They don't have pens, they don't have books. It doesn't cost us much money, but they get this stuff and all of a sudden they think: I don't lose my daughter, I don't have to grow opium; I can actually grow food for my family, and you're going to teach my children how to read. That's how we're making differences.

**RI:** Stories like that are stirring, but the nation is very divided over this war. Is there anything that can unite people?

**RH:** I think there is. I'd like them to get around the idea that Rusty Humphries is the best radio show in the country and we're all gonna listen to him every night from 9 to midnight!

I've often wondered if we had gotten into this war with Bill Clinton, would there have been be this much of a fight back? Remember, it was Bill Clinton who signed the executive order to remove Sadaam Hussein from power. Clinton said that Hussein had weapons of mass destruction; that he would use them, and that's why we had to send in missiles. The mistake has been that while George W. Bush is a pretty good commander in chief, he's a terrible *communicator* in chief. He's done a very bad job of telling people what we're doing. But the question has always been: Does the left hate George W. Bush because of this war, or do they hate this war because of George W. Bush? I don't know. I don't have that answer. This is not a bumper sticker slogan like John Edwards would have us say. We have to realize that this terrorism threat is real. We have Hillary Clinton and Barak Obama failing to stand up against an ad that calls one of our great generals in history a betrayer. They're not taking this threat seriously, and it is a serious threat.

**RI:** President Bush had the entire nation behind him after 9/11. What happened?

**RH:** This is the thing that disappointed me: At that point the Senate Minority Whip was Harry Reid. Around 9/11 he was saying Bush was doing a great job. Three weeks after, Reid started changing his tone: Bush is screwing this up and screwing that up and Bush is wrong. Wait a second, we were just attacked three weeks ago, what are you doing? Since then there has been this constant ding, ding, little tapping away trying to destroy Bush's credibility. A lot of it has been done for political reasons, and it's a shame. If Bill Clinton or Hillary Clinton or Barak Obama was president of the United States under the same circumstances, we all should have been behind him or her to try and get this thing done. It hasn't been done because they have destroyed the credibility of this president, whether you like him or not.

**RI:** What are your thoughts on how the news networks are covering the war?

**RH:** I see a lot of spin. I've gone to Guantanamo three times, usually with other media people. I can tell in the first three minutes, just by their attitudes, they've already written their story. They're just going there to get some pictures and get a couple of quotes. That's not right, that's not journalism. I'm not a journalist, I'm a commentator; my job is to give my

opinion and hopefully do it in an entertaining way. But I go there with a real open mind. Tell me what it is you believe. What is going on here? I want to learn. I don't want to make up my mind before I go on these trips.

I do a lot of serious stuff because it is my passion, but my show is also fun. When most people interview politicians in the



Author Aaron Klein (c) and number three Hamas leader Sheikh Mohammed Abu Teir



"The scariest moment of my life" — in Bethlehem, with members of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade



At London Central Mosque one week before the attempted bombing in Piccadilly Circus

## COVER STORY: Rusty Humphries



Middle East, they're very serious. I get very serious too, but I also do the Lewinsky stuff, and that's fun, it's funny. It's a range of emotion, and that's what's really key about radio — you have to have a lot of range. If you're sitting there just serious all the time, or just funny all the time, it doesn't give the audience a chance to take that rollercoaster ride with you. I like to give a very wide range of emotion: happy, sad, funny, serious, silly — and at the same time deliver deep political insight so that you're having a great time while learning something.

It's just the way my mind works. I kind of take my audience on that same journey. I probably have a high degree of ADD or ADHD or something, so when I get bored, I'm figuring they are too.

**RI:** You weren't always a Talk host. Talk about your early days in radio.

**RH:** I was behind the scenes for long time; I produced some great people, and I had a company called the TM Century Comedy Network where I did bits and stuff. I was the guy that got Rush Limbaugh into doing parody songs. I was in New York at WPLJ doing the morning show, and one day we were talking about some of these parody songs I do. I said, "Rush, you should play one. Say it's the 'Rush Limbaugh Singers.'" He said, "Young man, what would I do with a goofy little song?" It was right before the first Gulf War, and I did a song to the tune of Barbara Ann that went, "Bomb, bomb, bomb...bomb, bomb Iraq." He plays the song, gets great feedback, and the next day says "What else can you do young man?" I let him hear my stupid Mike Tyson impression, and he sent me into another room to call his show. After he introduces "the former heavyweight champion of the world, Mike Tyson," I launch into it: "Mr. Limbaugh, I'm very sorry I'm tardy. I was driving down the highway and I saw a sign that said clean restrooms ahead; I must have cleaned about 150 of them." He's laughing,

and afterwards he pulls out nine one-hundred dollar bills and says, "Keep 'em coming young man. Keep 'em coming." I did stuff for Rush for a long time.

But that was a long way from where I started. I got my first radio job at age 16 at KJR in Seattle, where I was hired to sweep the parking lot. I was told on my first day to never, ever, ever talk to the DJs. Never. So, of course, on my first break I see that the news guy is mad about something, and I go over to find out what. He's throwing carts around the room — this is 1982, so he's throwing carts — and he's swearing up a storm. I go, "Jeez, is there anything I can do to help?" And he says, "Yeah I don't want to go to this f—ing Sonics game tomorrow, here's the tape recorder — go get me some tape." I have no idea what he's talking about, but the next night I go to the King Dome for the game. I show my pass, they let me in, there's free food, and my name is on the press bench right behind the visiting team!

The Sonics won, but the other team had a lot of injuries. I know I'm supposed to get post-game interviews, so I walk down to the locker room. Everybody is interviewing the coach, Lenny Wilkins, so I figured I'm supposed to ask questions too. I said "Coach, do you think the reason the other team won is because they had a bunch of injuries?" And the locker room fell silent. I didn't know they'd lost like five in a row because of injuries, so he takes my microphone and starts yelling, "I don't give an f, mother f, get the f, out of here." He throws me out of the locker room on my first day. I leave in tears.

I got back to the station, and didn't want to let anyone hear the tape. Well, it turns out they hated Lenny Wilkins, so they aired the tape, bleeped out everything, and from then on their new cub reporter, Rusty Humphries, was forced to go to every single game just to see if I could do something to tick off the players or the coaches.

**RI:** How do you feel about the state of Talk radio today?

**RH:** I believe Talk is the one format that will really continue to grow. The problem with music is it's too easy to get wherever you want it; Internet, iPod, whatever. Talk radio brings something unique to the audience. There's only one Rusty, one Michael Savage, one Laura Ingraham, one Mancow, one Rush. My show is very different than others; it's conservative like many, but I try to get a little bit deeper. I've found that when I travel to these places, I own the concept, I get them better. I do better traveling. I can read and understand, but by going to these places it becomes part of my DNA. That's why I go to these places and get to know the soldiers or the terrorists or the guy in the pizza parlor. And at the same time have fun. That's kinda hard for people to understand, but I just think it makes it more interesting to be able to have this great range of emotion.

**RI:** TRN CEO Mark Masters says you're forbidden from any more terrorist interviews. He thinks it's too dangerous.

**RH:** Well, I have two fatwas issued against me, but I don't know that I'm done. Mark is the boss; he can say all he wants, but I don't think I'm done. I'm always looking for something interesting, and if the story is there, I want to be a part of it and bring it back to the people unfiltered. ☹