

The Show

"Who is that?" Katie asked. Her son, equipped with headphones surrounding both ears, and connected through a thin wire to a small box beside him, said nothing.

Katie muted the television set and nudged her son with the toe part of her foot. "Who is that on TV?" she repeated. Her son looked at her mouthing the words and responded "Eminem."

"I thought all of those rap guys were mean looking black men," Katie responded. She adjusted her foot to rest behind the back of her son.

"Mom, where have you been? He's a guy...twenty something now..."

Katie looked at the performer holding the microphone close to his mouth, moving his head up and down and pointing it seemed at her potted plants in the corner of the living room.

"The music is good. I don't like his lyrics. Why does he have to swear all of the time like that?"

"They all do, Mom. Rap's about swearing in part. It's also about personal expression. His real name is Marshall Mathers. He has a wife and a little girl."

"He does? And he does this?" Katie took a drink from the extra-large cola drink she bought herself earlier that evening.

Her son did not answer her question and she turned the sound back on.

The rapper continued with his song and Katie's son continued to use the small box and headphones, sitting close to the television set, his legs crossed as if he was watching a Native American ceremony.

After another moment, her son turned and asked "Remember "Stan?" "

"One of your friends?" Katie responded to her son. The song was over and the television show moved to commercial.

"No. The song."

Katie thought and then said "No."

"Yeah you do, Mom. You have the song on one of your MP3s discs. It has the woman singing and then he raps and it goes back and forth between the two. You said that it makes you sad to hear it..."

"That's him? I thought it was some black guy...Doctor something or another. You know that song's too close to home for me, kiddo..." Her son turned and looked back at his mother's face.

"Him. Dr. Dre is the guy who discovered him. He was rapping in a club as a warm-up act and Dre saw him and signed him up right away. Five records later, there he is on the TV and radio."

"Would you like to be a rapper?" Katie asked her son. He did not respond.

Katie walked over, sat down beside her son, and removed the headphones from his sweating head. He turned to look at the person removing his hearing device.

"Would you like to be a rapper like Eminem?" Katie asked verbally and in sign language, spelling out the word "Eminem".

"Maybe," her son signed, waving his hand sideways while signing the letter "M" with his hand.

Katie leaned closer to her son and continued to watch the show from the comfort of her living room floor...and against the shoulder of the person she enjoyed being around...her son.