

Michigan Every Day

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8 Mile debuts

Marshall Bruce Mathers III, better known as rap star Eminem, took the stories of his rough upbringing in the tough streets of Detroit, put them to music with lyrics that disturbed some and delighted others, and won fame and fortune. Eminem's rapping style over an accessible hip-hop beat, bookended with catchy and melodic choruses, turned him into one of the most successful artists of the early 21st century.

Born in Kansas in 1972, Mathers' father left when the boy was an infant and his impoverished teenage mother shuffled the young family back-and-forth between Kansas City and metro Detroit.

As a white kid attending mostly black schools, Mathers turned to freestyle rap as a means to fit in and make a name for himself. He started rapping in his early teens and eventually took his talents to "rap battles" where performers could compete before an audience that would determine who was superior.

This was a tough path for a white kid in Detroit. And because of his race, Mathers was mostly rejected by the city's black hip-hop community. Mathers, though, fed on the rejection and his words became sharper. Despite the anger in his music, Mathers' work often exposed his vulnerability, shortcomings and dark sense of humor. Mathers was employed by the family restaurant Gilbert's Lodge in St. Clair Shores when his big break came in 1998. He had managed to release a record, *Slim Shady EP*, and legendary hip-hop artist and producer Dr. Dre heard a recording of Eminem taking part in a rap contest in Los Angeles. The unlikely underground rap star was soon signed to a label.

Eminem's first album, the *Slim Shady LP*, reached No. 2 on the Billboard charts within weeks of its release.

That breakthrough came in 1999 when, despite the dark and violent subject matter of his work, his angry wit and incredible ability to spatter words in complex rhythms attracted a mainstream following. Some believe that Eminem was able to be one of the most successful crossover rap stars because he is white.

Eminem's second album solidified his fame. The *Marshall Mathers LP* sold more than eight million copies in the U.S.

Mather's life story, in the form of fiction, was told in the film *8 Mile*, which was released on Nov. 8, 2002. Eminem starred as rapper Jimmy "B. Rabbit" Smith Jr., as a Detroit artist who overcomes hardship and racism to succeed in Detroit's hip-hop scene.