

Xzibit - The Father

Written by Robert ID895

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Xzibit

A father's husky, irate voice rises over the private pool of a sprawling, gated community tucked deep into the folds of Southern California's San Fernando Valley.

"Tremaine, could you come here please?"

A wiry little boy breaks free of an escalating water war and pulls his small frame onto the sunbaked deck. Looking guilty, the dripping child pads his way over to his father, the 27-year-old rapper known domestically as Alvin Joiner, but to legions of hip-hop and rap fans as Xzibit.

"Do me a favor and don't play with the other kids' toys," Xzibit says calmly, but firmly. "I don't want to see you touching anything that isn't yours. You came here to swim, so swim, okay?" The youngster nods and slips back into the pool.

While many MCs mention the motivation their "seeds" provide, all too often the stories on hip hop dads focus on overdue child-support payments and pending paternity suits. Or, more recently, promoting the "lil'" guy's new record, a concept Xzibit dismisses with disgust. "I'm not into pimping my kid," X says, twisting his face into its signature scowl. "Tremaine would have to show some real interest in music first, because the industry is fake enough as it is."

Musically, Xzibit's integrity has never been at issue. His first two efforts—the critically acclaimed *At the Speed of Life* (1996) and the lyrically dense *40 Dayz & 40 Nightz* (1998)—both fell short

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of gold status. The closest the proud product of L.A.'s underground has ever come to "selling out" was the trunk-rattling "X" on the platinum-plus Restless in 2000 (executive produced by Dr. Dre). Now he's set to release his second Dre-assisted LP, Man vs. Machine, a thundering album of new-millennium funk that X considers his best work yet. "I'm confident in my music and my career," he says. "My biggest step now is continuing to build my family."

Although Xzibit and Tremaine's mother (who declines to be identified) split up in 1998, the two maintain a strong working relationship when it comes to raising their child. During the school week, Tremaine stays with his mom and attends a private Montessori academy. "He can say good morning in five different languages, got him talking Swahili and shit. I'm like, What the *****?" cracks Xzibit.

Weekends and the summer are reserved for father-son time. "I'm learning just like he's learning," says Xzibit, who was 19 when Tremaine was born. "I just try to keep his environment stable and make him feel like he's my highest priority." The longtime affiliate of Tha Alkaholiks now drinks only occasionally; after his then 5-year-old son unwrapped a Tootsie Roll and said, "Look, Mommy, I'm smoking just like Daddy!" Xzibit quit burning trees and hit the weight room. After a year of working out in Dre's private gym, X is 25 pounds lighter and chiseled like a prizefighter. "It's been a gradual process, but now I'm in the best shape of my life," he says.

Looking and feeling good, Xzibit is ready to pass his good fortune on to his son. "Now I can show him some things," says Xzibit, who moved from Detroit to Albuquerque, N.M., when he was 9. "The only place I went when I was his age was Kampgrounds of America in Arizona, but I'm about to take his butt around the planet." Xzibit pauses before adding, "That's my little nigga. If it ain't about him, then it doesn't matter."

Rap artist and longtime friend Ras Kass, whose 6-year-old twin boys have grown up with Tremaine, appreciates this bond. "Everything in Xzibit's life is based on putting Tre in the best position possible," he says. "If Tre is unhappy, Xzibit is unhappy. If Tre is happy, then Xzibit is ***** ecstatic."

Despite Xzibit's poolside scolding, Tremaine is re-engaged in battle within minutes, blasting a cornered kid in the face with a commandeered water gun. The mildly exasperated father looks over the scene and laughs. "He's a hardhead," Xzibit says fondly, "just like me."

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