

# Extreme Hearing Makeover



The phenomenally popular reality series on *ABC Television* called *Extreme Makeover* recently featured hearing loss as a focus for its profile on Cynthia Lunceford, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. A mother of three who was born with hearing loss, Cynthia had compensated for her hearing loss by becoming a "master lip reader" and using two older-style mismatched behind the ear (BTE) analog hearing aids for some sound amplification. Cynthia communicated this way for years, but as she got older and her sight began to deteriorate, her lip reading skills, and thus her communication, became less effective. A socially interactive person who felt very frustrated and isolated by her hearing loss, Cynthia requested that if she was selected as a candidate for the prime-time television show, that her makeover would include eye surgery to correct her vision, critical to her lip reading ability. *Extreme Makeover* surprised Cynthia with the news that her makeover would also include a visit to the House Clinic to explore treatment options for her hearing loss.

After receiving dental and cosmetic surgery, and eye surgery to improve her vision, Cynthia visited John W. House, M.D., at the House Clinic for a thorough examination. The cameras were rolling when Dr. House informed Cynthia that her hearing test and medical exam showed that she had a 90% hearing loss (73-89 dB HL), which was treatable with advanced hearing aids. Audiologist Donna Cody, M.S., CCC-A, explained to Cynthia that with a custom-molded pair of directionally intelligent, powerful hearing aids, she would probably experience a dramatic improvement in her hearing. At the Clinic with cameras in tow, Cynthia was fitted with her new digital Power Diva aids, and responded easily to questions from Dr. House as he spoke from behind her – something she'd never been able to do before without relying on lip-reading. The House Clinic was happy to provide this kind of life-changing treatment for Cynthia. After speaking with her about her wish to hear music, Dr. House and Donna Cody were very touched when they saw Cynthia's final segment showing her tearfully enjoying a symphony concert performance by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and hearing every note.

Since receiving her hearing aids at House Clinic and appearing on *Extreme Makeover*, Cynthia has helped raise awareness about hearing loss and the benefits of directionally-sensitive hearing aids on *Larry King Live* and *Inside Edition*. Cynthia says, "To many people EM stands for *Extreme Makeover*, but to me EM stands for Extremely Marvelous. That's what this experience has been for me, and best of all, I can hear. Now that's just marvelous!" ❖