

Tony the Tiger

Anthony "Tony" the Tiger is the advertising cartoon mascot for Kellogg's Frosted Flakes (also known as Frosties) breakfast cereal, appearing on its packaging and advertising. More recently, Tony has also become the mascot for Tony's Cinnamon Krunchers and Tiger Power. Since his debut in 1952 the character has spanned several generations and become a breakfast cereal icon.

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History


In 1951, Eugene Kolkey, an accomplished graphic artist and Art Director for Leo Burnett, sketched a character for a contest to become the official mascot of a Kellogg's brand-new breakfast cereal. Kolkey designed a tiger named Tony (named after an ad man at Leo Burnett—Raymond Anthony Wells^[1]) and selected Martin Provensen for the finished artwork. Tony competed against three other potential mascots for the public's affection: Katy the Kangaroo (originated by Robert Dulaney in the early fifties), Elmo the Elephant, and Newt the Gnu.^[2] Within the year, the other mascots were dropped (with Elmo and Newt never once gracing the front of the box), and Tony was given a son, Tony Jr. Tony the Tiger would eventually become a cereal icon. The final Tony the Tiger design came from a group of former Disney animators known as Quartet Films, which also designed The Jolly Green Giant, Snap Crackle Pop, the Hamms Beer Bear, and the Baltimore Orioles mascot, among others. Stan Walsh, Art Babbitt, Arnold Gillespie, and Michael Lah were the artists/filmmakers that formed the Quartet Films of Hollywood.^[3]

A recognizable and distinct voice was needed for the Tony the Tiger character. Initially, he was voiced by Dallas McKennon, but shortly after the initial Sugar Frosted Flakes advertisements aired, McKennon was replaced by Thurl Ravenscroft, who spent the next five decades providing the characteristic deep bass voice associated with the character, notably the familiar "They're grrrreat!" catchphrase. John E. Matthews came up with this phrase while working as copywriter for Leo Burnett. Ravenscroft spoke to an interviewer of injecting his personality into Tony: "I made Tony a person. For me, Tony was real. I made him become a human being and that affected the animation and everything."^[4]

In 1958, Tony appeared on Kellogg cereal boxes with Hanna-Barbera characters such as Huckleberry Hound and Snagglepuss.

Tony began to be humanized in the 1970s; he was given an Italian-American nationality and consumers were briefly introduced to more of Tony's family including Mama Tony, Mrs. Tony, and a daughter, Antoinette. Tony was a popular figure among the young Italian-American population and it showed in 1974, where he was deemed "Tiger of the Year" in an advertising theme taken from the Chinese Lunar Calendar. The advertising theme declared, "This is the Year of the Tiger and Tony is the Tiger of the Year." Later that year, Tony

Tony the Tiger



Garry Moore says: "Won't they tell even you, Tony?"

Tony with Garry Moore in an October 1955 *Life* magazine ad

First appearance	1952
Created by	Kellogg Company
Voiced by	Dallas McKennon (1952–1953) Thurl Ravenscroft (1953–2005) Lee Marshall (2005–2014) Tex Brashear (2014–present) Tony Daniels (Canada) Tom Clarke Hill (UK)
Information	
Species	Tiger
Gender	Male
Family	Mama Tony (mother)
Spouse(s)	Mrs. Tony
Children	Tony Jr. (son) Antoinette (daughter)
Nationality	American

graced the covers of *Italian GQ* and *Panorama*. In addition to Tony's success, during this decade, son Tony Jr. was even given his own short-lived cereal in 1975, Frosted Rice. Provensen's original art design for the tiger has changed significantly over the years, as Tony the whimsical, cereal-box-sized tiger with a teardrop-shaped head was replaced by his fully-grown son Jr., who is now a sleek, muscular sports enthusiast—he was a coach for the Monster Wrestlers in My Pocket and a referee for the Monster Sports Stars in My Pocket (see Monster in My Pocket). Tony the Tiger was never limited to American cereal boxes, appearing on Kellogg's European brand cereal boxes.

Tony frequently appears in American commercials as an animated character in a live-action world, frequently with his drawn image rotoscoped over a live character, such as an extreme sports athlete, allowing Tony to not just appear in live action, but interact as well.

The longtime voice of Tony, Thurl Ravenscroft, died in 2005. In North America, he was replaced from 2005 onwards by announcer Lee Marshall, who maintained the role until his death from cancer in 2014. However, advertisements for Frosties in the United Kingdom are re-voiced locally; here, Tony is voiced by Californian-born British actor, Tom Clarke Hill.^[6] For some time in the UK, the rock song "Eye of the Tiger" by Survivor was used in conjunction with Tony's viewings. In Canada, Tony is voiced by animation, commercial, and promo voice artist Tony Daniels.

"Put a Tiger on Your Team"^[6] was featured in ads all across the nation in 1958 as Kellogg's cereal campaign reached out all children sports organizations and teams to build more consumers. In the same year of 1958, Tony the Tiger was joined by other popular mascots to promote the newest cereal release "pre-sweetened cereals."^[6] Mass media and marketing during this time was on the rise, especially in the food product industry. In the wake of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes the cereal company's goal was to produce a flavor that was "delicious and distinctive flavor."^[6] In 1974, after Kellogg launched a Chinese Year of the Tiger, for marketing and advertising techniques Tony was selected as Tiger of the Year.^[6] Following a few months later was the release of an innovative Tony the Tiger commercial. This commercial was significant in the humanizing factor of Tony with the birth of his first daughter, Antoinette. This advertising technique targeted the millions of infants as Antoinette the baby tigress was shown tasting Kellogg's Sugar Frosted Flakes for the first time, followed by the Tony the Tiger slogan.^[6] The shape of the featured tiger was beginning to shape the cereal marketing and advertising sector by promoting new product lines. The company used Tony Jr. as its mascot to introduce nearly six new products that are high in nutrition in the mid 1970s. Throughout all of the 1970s Tony the Tiger had a complete family of three. The evolution of this brand icon continued to rise as Tony the Tiger was featured in a Hot Air Balloon Championship in 1981.^[6]

Character design

Over past generations Tony has demonstrated a figure of human characteristics. When observed on a Frosted Flakes cereal box, Tony appears to be impersonating the fundamental muscular human-like structure. Tony's iconic appearance has evolved through the use of graphic design and its abilities to enhance creativity.^[7] Although his appearance has changed his purpose as an iconic mascot is to sell Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and throughout his career Tony has remained sufficiently consistent. The deep voice behind the famous "They're Gr-r-reat!"^[8] slogan was Thurl Ravenscroft for 50 years.

Trademark controversy

Tony the Tiger began his trademark debut with Kellogg in 1952. The Tiger was used as a cartoon character featured on every box of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes.^[9] The feline was federally registered as Kellogg's Frosted Flakes trademark. Furthermore, the registration and classification was under food products.^[10] Twelve years later one of the top oil companies, Esso (now ExxonMobil), began using a similar tiger as a promotional mascot within gasoline products. Exxon then followed through with protocol and federally registered its tiger under petroleum products category. Unlike the Kellogg slogan behind the voice of Thurl Ravenscroft, "They're gr-r-reat!", Esso also had a slogan, "Put a tiger in your tank".^[11]

The two major companies shared peaceful relations between the two iconic tigers. Throughout the time of coexistence the companies combined spent over a billion and a half in advertising in the cereal and petroleum industries.^[12] Neither companies faced any issues amongst each other, however, in 1992 this all changed. ExxonMobil opened a new business sector and product line through the promotion of the existing Exxon Tiger.^[13] The company failed to expand its federal trademark registration to its newest product line sector.^[13] Prior to Exxon's newest business addition of opening convenience stores "Tiger Marts" and selling foods and beverages, the company was cleared of all trademark litigations. After the announcement of ExxonMobil's new product line, Kellogg quickly filed a suit. The latest unnamed tiger Exxon was exploiting to sell food and beverages crossed the trademark boundaries.^[13] The confusion of using

very similar tigers as a mascot for food products did not sit well with Kellogg.^[14] The lawsuit consisted of: trademark infringement and dilution, and seeking an injunction prohibiting the further use of the Exxon tiger.^[10] After several court appearances, millions of dollars, different rulings, and years of waiting the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals decision finalized the case.

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Tracing back to 1986, Kellogg battled with a different situation in regards to trademark. During the preparation of the 1988 Summer Olympics by South Korean organizers agreed on the games' mascot *Hodori* that was very similar to Kellogg's Tony the Tiger.^[15] The very popular cereal company had concerns about the similarity and raised some red flag with trademark registration that same year. Kellogg continued to stress that Tony the Tiger was an advertising tool used on almost every cereal box so confusion of a comparable tiger which only difference shown is the addition of distinct five-ringed Olympic badge around his neck.^[15] Sports news and critics stirred up so much controversy and is remembered as "Hold That Tiger" battle of tiger trademark.^[15]

See also

- Frosted Flakes
- List of breakfast cereal advertising characters
- List of fictional cats

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External links

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This page was last edited on 14 December 2017, at 04:50.

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