

## **ROY EATON: Doing 200% to Get Credit for 100%**

Anyone over 30 will recognize music written or produced by Roy Eaton. “You can trust your car to the man who wears the star.” All together now, “We're having Beefaroni. It's made from macaroni.” Roy's Beefaroni served the brand for over twenty years. And, in September 2007, *Advertising Age* named that Texaco jingle from 1962 as the foundation for one of the twentieth century's top 100 creative campaigns.

Indeed, Roy Eaton's music has made an indelible mark on advertising.

Roy Eaton was not born to write ad jingles. His father and mother, a mechanic and a domestic worker from Jamaica gave birth to Roy in 1930. Despite losing part of a finger on his right hand in an accident when he was three years old, Roy took up classical piano when he was six. He first played Carnegie Hall in 1937. After New York's High School of Music and Art, Roy graduated from CCNY (magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa) and the Manhattan School of Music. Completing degrees from two colleges simultaneously “required perfecting the art of eating lunch in five minutes or less”, a teenaged Roy commented to the *New York Times* upon winning a scholarship to study at the University of Zurich (NYT, May 8, 1948.) Back in New York, he went on to win the first Kosciuszko Foundation Chopin Award in 1950. More study, this time on a Musicology fellowship at Yale, accompanied concert debuts with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and at New York's Town Hall in 1952.

Drafted into the Army during the Korean conflict, he wrote and produced programs for Armed Forces Radio.

When Young & Rubicam hired Roy Eaton as a copywriter and jingle composer in 1955, he became “the first black at a major agency, with a creative function on general accounts”, according to

Stephen Fox's, *Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators*. Roy Eaton's undeniable talent and drive cracked the color barrier at last. He worked on just about every kind of campaign Y&R produced—for Jello. Cheer. Johnson & Johnson. General Electric. Piels Beer. Spic and Span. Beech Nut Gum. He positioned a new super-premium gasoline not just for luxury cars, but as a tonic for all cars ("Gulf Crest every 1000 miles keeps your engine clean"). And more. Jason Chambers' book, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line* cites one of Roy's earliest creative successes at Y&R—music for a new kind of filter ("Micronite"!) for Kent cigarettes: "[Roy] recognized the filter's innovation and sought music to convey the sense of newness and creativity through the advertising. He crafted a jingle based on the modern jazz then being introduced by Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, and Thelonius Monk... [Roy's] music was different from anything else in use at the time, and it conveyed the sense of uniqueness inherent in the filter. The public response to both the product and the jingle was tremendous."

By 1959—having barely survived an automobile accident that, tragically, took the life of his new bride—Roy had moved to Benton & Bowles as music director. His creative experimentation continued. "I draw on music of any style as long as it goes along with the commercial's message," Roy said in an interview with the *Times*' Phil Dougherty marking Roy's appointment to vice president at B&B (January 3, 1968). Who can forget the animated Sugar Bear who sang like Dean Martin ("Can't get enough o' that Sugar Crisp"), music for GI Joe and Mr. Potato Head, "Hardee's. Best Eatin' in Town". "Deep, Dark, Delicious Yuban". Roy left Benton & Bowles in 1980 to open his own music production company. Michael Jackson earned a Citation from President Reagan for music produced by Roy's company for the dramatic "Anti-Drunk Driving" campaign. Roy's sound design on "Crashing Glasses" from this campaign also won multiple awards. Soon, he returned to the concert stage. Of "The Meditative Chopin", Roy's 1986 solo concert in Lincoln Center's Alice Tully Hall, the *Times*' Tim Page wrote: "The cumulative effect was deeply satisfying. One came much closer to the heart of Chopin—and by extension, to music itself" (NYT, February 10, 1986). Since then, Roy has toured internationally, recorded albums featuring the work of Chopin, Joplin,

Gershwin, and others ([www.CDBaby.com/artist/Royeaton](http://www.CDBaby.com/artist/Royeaton)) and is on the faculty of Manhattan School of Music. Not only does he tour internationally, but he regularly plays pro bono for nursing homes, churches, and charities. On March 26, Roy was inducted into the Advertising Hall of Fame. Olivier Dahan, the Academy Award winning director, recently chose three Chopin Preludes from one of Roy's Albums for the background music on his upcoming film "My Own Love Song" starring Renee Zellweger and Forest Whitaker.

Roy tells a story about his mother. She taught him from a young age that, to overcome prejudice, he "needed to do 200% to get credit for 100%". "So," Roy says, "that became my lifetime mantra."

Indeed.