



We saved Comic Sans

To the discerning font philanthropist,

I tweeted the Comic Neue website to a handful of followers on Monday the 7th of April 2014. In 24 hours it was trending worldwide on Twitter. In a few days it was featured in news publications around the world, sparking a global conversation about everyone's casual font choices.

The font wasn't finished though, and thanks to you and 180 other backers Comic Neue now supports German, French, Spanish, and 38 other languages. Technical details such as anchoring, metrics, and kerning have been refined by The MicroFoundry.

Thanks to you Comic Neue is a brilliant success, and this booklet is my way of saying thank you. We did it! Now let's start using Comic Neue.

All the best,

Craig Rozynski



Craig Rozynski
www.comicneue.com

Languages

See ISO 8859-15
and ISO 8859-2 on
Wikipedia for the
full list of supported
languages.

Traffic

Half a million people
visited the website the
week it launched.

Neue Comic

Neue is pronounced *noiyah* and is the German word for new. Neue Helvetica acted as a reference point during the creation of this font, and as a nod to that I chose the name *Comic Neue* over *Comic New*. In the spirit of the font's easy going nature, and with full respect to to the German language, I'm happy for my creation to be pronounced *Comic new* or *Comic noiyah* depending on your preference.

Serious note

Comic Sans walked into a bar. "We don't serve your type" said the barman.

Comic Neue Light

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Regular

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Bold

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Light Oblique

*The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog*

Comic Neue Regular Oblique

*The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog*

Comic Neue Bold Oblique

***The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog***

Neue Comic Angular

Terminal is the term that describes the ends of letters. For example the top and bottom of the lowercase letter *l*. The Angular version of Comic Neue loses the rounded terminals in favour of straight, angular ones. It was a happy accident during the creation of the font, and at large display sizes is possibly the more attractive of the two.

Time.com

It's casual. It's free.
And nobody will
reflexively make fun of
you for using it.

Comic Neue Angular Light

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Angular Regular

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Angular Bold

The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog

Comic Neue Angular Light Oblique

*The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog*

Comic Neue Angular Regular Oblique

*The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog*

Comic Neue Angular Bold Oblique

***The quick brown fox
jumps over the lazy dog***

The man who wants to fix Comic Sans

It's a punchline and an unsightly relic. Why did one man decide he could redeem Comic Sans?

In the world of typography, there are few fonts more maligned than Comic Sans. It's a typeface that looks like no other; it was initially designed by Microsoft employee Vincent Connare in 1994 for a cartoon dog's speech bubbles as part of a small program aimed at teaching children how to use computers. Good intentions, but horrible luck: a product manager took that font and added it as a standard typeface in Microsoft Windows, and it's been hated viciously ever since (making that his legacy, rather than his other creations, Trebuchet and Maggie).

Today, with clean lines and minimalism increasingly the norm, Comic Sans is an ugly artifact of a time when dial-up screeched and hissed and Netscape was king. It has become an easy punchline (even the stone-faced no-nonsense scientists at CERN, creators of the large hadron collider, joked on April Fool's Day that they would write memos in

Comic Sans) inspired cutting satire (a piece by McSweeney's remains one of its most popular reads) and has even found itself the target of an eradication campaign. ("By banding together to eradicate this font from the face of the earth we strive to ensure that future generations will be liberated from this epidemic and never suffer this scourge that is the plague of our time," says the Ban Comic Sans campaign.)

But none of that stopped Australian-born graphic designer Craig Rozynski from deciding to rescue the irredeemable font, creating Comic Neue, described as a more sophisticated fix to Comic Sans—a decision so daring that it found itself trending on Twitter this week.

We spoke to the 35-year-old Rozynski in Kobe, Japan, where he's been living with his wife since 2010.

How familiar were you with Comic Sans's horrible reputation? That was how the idea came about. It was an opportunity. I think most graphic designers toy with the idea of creating a typeface in their career, but it's not something you take on lightly because it's a hell of a lot of work. I thought, I'll spend a month or two on it. But I just started taking it more seriously the more I worked on it, and three years later, it turned into this.

What kind of work goes into creating a font? It's a lot of detailed, monotonous work. Comic Neue doesn't support a lot of European languages at the moment, it doesn't have the extra characters to do that. Comic Neue has about 100 characters, whereas Helvetica has 300 or 400. And then there's different weights—bold, italic. So you can imagine the thousands of individual characters that teams of people work on to complete a font.

What is it about Comic Sans that strikes a nerve? There's just some anomaly with Comic Sans, isn't there? It's part of the pop culture vernacular, and it has been for the last 20 years. There's just a little bit of magic there that makes it something we talk about. It's the font that people love to hate, and that's why I set out to save it. One of the most surprising things has been that 99 per cent of feedback has been totally positive. On the Internet you don't really expect that.

What were the specific problems with Comic Sans that you sought to fix? When you're critiquing anything, you can be subjective or objective about it. So subjectively, personally, I don't like Comic Sans because it doesn't suit my style. But objectively, with Comic Sans, there are just some fundamentally bad things about it. It just wasn't well done. And I think Vincent Connare himself (the creator of Comic Sans) has said that he drew it up quickly, for a certain purpose at Windows, for speech bubbles for a throwaway little application that was going to be part of Windows. I think all designers can relate to that when you look back at the work you made at the beginning of your careers. You cringe, because it's terrible in comparison, and you're glad no one can see it anymore. In the case of poor Vincent, his little throwaway creation is still being paraded about 20 years later and you've got to feel for the guy.

Did you reach out to Vincent Connare after you released the font? I sent a link to Vincent on Twitter and I said, "could you look at it and give me any feedback, whether it's good or bad," and he said, "it should be more casual." That made me laugh, as the criticism has come full-circle now; he's returning the criticism to me.

Were you worried you'd offend Connare when you reached out? It certainly wasn't the intention, and I've noticed on Twitter—I mean, he probably gets it all the time—but I might've fanned the flames there. I have no animosity toward Vincent, I certainly sympathize with him. He seems to take the criticism in his stride.

And now that you've got a Comic Sans-inspired font out, you open yourself up to similar criticism, don't you? The main criticism has been from actual type designers. I'm not a type designer. I'm a graphic designer, and it's a very different skill. I've received feedback that as it stands in its free version it's perfectly fine, but right now I'd like to be picked up by an online library like Google's Font Library, so that people can easily add the font to their websites or projects. I'm considering crowd-funding it on Kickstarter. There's been 400,000 unique hits on the website so far this week, so this could take the font to something more serious. The overwhelming feedback has been, "we want this." France, Spain, Germany, people from around the world have been tweeting to me, "please create the extra characters to support our language." It's bizarre, really.

Are you worried you yourself will cringe at your old work? I'm sure I will. In fact, to tell the truth, I cringe at it already, because it's fine as a free font, but most graphic designers are perfectionists by nature, and I look at it now thinking that it could've been better. That said, I would've been working on it for another three years, so sometimes it's better to let it go.

As long as it's not a millstone around your neck for the rest of your career, right? That's exactly right. And to tell the truth, this probably will be the thing I'm known for. Will I ever be able to match this? I don't really think so. But hopefully I am known for a few more. ■

Contributors

Passionate Contributors

Arjanen Loïc Jean David

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Ben

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Dylan Fogarty-MacDonald

"I love Comic Neue because it will still have the appeal of Comic Sans for less formal uses but it also looks far snappier without losing its intrinsic casual style. I supported the development of the font because I think Comic Neue has the potential to go global as the favoured font of the masses and I want to be part of that!"

Wendy Reid

"With Comic Sans vilified as the ultimate typographic cliché, Comic Neue brings a refreshing and elegant hope for those in need of a child-friendly yet tasteful font. I hope this soothing typeface will make its way into the world of education!"

Daniel Hu

"Comic Neue is a casual font that is safe to use in business. Let's call it the business casual font."

Marc Kociemba

This project was successful thanks to the following amazing individuals

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Creative Review

"I simply set out to fix the weirdness. I still wanted it to be a casual typeface. I still wanted it to be Comic Sans, but a version you couldn't easily fault. Make people question their assumptions."

