



9 OPTICAL SIZES, ONE WEIGHT, 432 GLYPHS
DESIGNED BY JAMES EDMONDSON IN 2018

Let's get high... **CONTRAST!**

While staying with Cara Di Eduardo on the Lower East Side of the city that never admits there are other cities, she asked me to design a t-shirt for the 2017 Typographics design festival. I thought that would be fun, and wanted to use the treasure trove of legendary design work at the Lubalin Study Center as a starting point. Lubalin was a famous art director for many reasons, but I particularly enjoy how the lettering artists he employed (like Tom Carnase, John Pistilli and others), were fearlessly pushing type parameters like weights and x-height to stop readers dead in their tracks. Work like the Oh! & Ah! identity is the typographic equivalent of a Joe Dart bass solo.

Using those ultra far letters as inspiration—or more honestly, ripping them off completely—I started sketching some compositions for typographics. I made a few changes to the Oh! & Ah! Model, which was more or less traditional, save for its extreme weights. I boosted the x-height to the maximum, and squared up all round shapes to get each letter filling out as much of a rectangle as possible. That way, no pockets of negative space would be distracting readers from the letters.

It was striking to me how fun it was to draw, while being totally challenging. The rule abiding letters like o,a,p,h etc weren't going to be a big problem, but letters like y, g, and s took some finessing.

As letters get more bold, the negative spaces inside them shrink. This is obvious, but less obvious is the fact that the spaces around the letters must shrink as well. Most of the time, spacing is a reflection of the size of the spaces inside

→ THE FULL STORY CONTINUES ON OHNOTYPE.CO →



Quite Large

72 POINT

Really Absurd

60 POINT

Absolutely Stupid

48 POINT

I can't believe it exists.

36 POINT

Unusable is an understatement!

24 POINT

I have zero patience for this esoteric bullshit.

18 POINT

What sort of troglodytic asshole do you take me for?

16 POINT

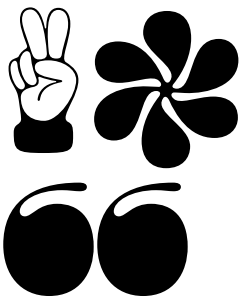
You think money grows on trees? Even if it did, no thanks.

14 POINT

But then again, it's kind of beautiful. In a strange way. I must have it.

12 POINT

JOES
CAFE



SANDWICHES SNACKS DRINKS COFFEE BAGELS CANDY

**SWEET
CHINTO**

SANDWICHES SNACKS DRINKS COFFEE BAGELS CANDY



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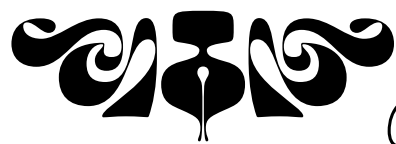


OHNOTYPE.CO

the ORIGINAL **Dave's**
vegan *
hot do *
haven *

the JOY

of DRAWING
BOLDERS



GRINGO
-TEQUILA

DEMARQUI
showering
HJEMILAND
növembris
SCROUGED
pharynges
FLAMINCO
vědeckého

72 POINT

ŠŤASTLIVEC
eurythmical
MILK-HOUSE
polystichum
SCHADELIJK
glandiforme
NIGHT-CLUB
kipróbáltam
VOCABULIST

60 POINT

DISASSOCIATED
schlüsselblume
PREFERABILITY
checker-boards
COFFEE-HOUSES
imperviousness
MOTOR-CYCLIST
hyperconscious
DOLLARISATION
deuteronomical
MAIL-CATCHERS

48 POINT

**GAPINGLY
PODSVĚTÍ
ATTUNING
DATURINE
BESTRIDE
TRIBUNEN
AZYGOSES
DREYFUSS
POLECATS
SCHOPNEJ
EKKERÄ
KYSYTÄÄN
AIRHEADS
WIRELESS**

**decorator
unbeguile
incubated
temerario
opgelucht
keystones
pamätajte
toepassen
colostomy
mistanker
observant
xiphosura
atmosféru
uramisten**

36 POINT



TYPE CO.

**OBITUARIST
KALIFORNIE
LEGITIMAVA
SOBERIZING
UTRAQUISTS
ELVESZÍTEM
ISOCHEIMAL
HUMILLIMUS
HALF-HOURS
ELUTASÍTOM
NEBEZPEČNÍ
VESZTETTÉL
CAULIFLORY
SPADE-FOOT
PERIURARIS
EQUALIZERS
ALBUMINIZE
BOJOVNÍKOV
PLURALISED
THRIFTLESS
NAUSEATING
BABIRUSSAS**

**gnatcatcher
desenvernís
decipiendus
approbation
church-goer
retinaculum
permutating
reconvengui
boosaardige
consignador
procyonidae
persónulega
panspermist
guadagnarsi
subheadings
transvorsum
advenientem
escarcanyau
esmadeixava
micrometres
musicalment
commotional**

24 POINT

AS SHAPES INCREASE IN WEIGHT, NEGATIVE SPACES INSIDE THEM SHRINK. THIS MIGHT BE OBVIOUS, BUT LESS OBVIOUS IS THE FACT THAT THE SPACES *AROUND* THE LETTERS MUST SHRINK AS WELL. MOST OF THE TIME, SPACING IS A REFLECTION OF THE SIZE OF THE SPACES INSIDE THE LETTERS. TO MY STUDENTS, I CALL THIS THE “COUNTERSPACE EQUALS LETTERSPACE” TECHNIQUE. THAT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE “THREE AT A TIME” TECHNIQUE COMPRISE MY ENTIRE SPACING STRATEGY.

In the world of super bold letters, tolerances shrink, and spacing issues seem to have a magnifying glass upon them. Traditional fat-faces have a ton of space around A, V, and the like. Incredibly fun to draw, and totally challenging. The normal shaped letters like o, a, p, h, and the like weren't going to be a big problem, but letters like y, g, and s took some finessing. Here, Edmund Fry's Ten Lines Pica (1816) looks ok in certain places, but all

18 POINT



TYPE CO.

EXPANDING THE ALPHABET PROVED TO BE AN INDULGENCE IMPOSSIBLE TO RESIST, AND SOON NAILING THE SPACING EXPOSED SOME UNEXPECTED RESULTS IN THE UPPERCASE AS WELL. IT'S RARE TO SEE TRIANGULAR SERIES SO LARGE, BUT INSPIRATION CAME PARTLY FROM JUST WANTING TO FILL THE SPACE, AND PARTLY FROM THE PYTE FOUNDRY'S INCREDIBLE OVERDOSE AND OVERDONE.

This technique is quite similar to the San Francisco psychedelic poster artists of the late sixties. They were inspired by Vienna Secessionist lettering that minimized negative space. It made each letter into a fun puzzle, challenged readers, and allowed for exceptional spacing! There was always a 1:1 ratio of counterspace and letterspace, allowing for eyeballs to glide along text without hiccoughs. After seeing some of these experiments of mine, an unnamed type designer emailed me to point out some flaws. I was curious to hear his unsolicited advice. In a thoughtful, concise, and poignant email, he articulately this thoughts thusly:

16 POINT

“REDUCING THE AREAS OF COUNTERS FOR E, J, L, AND T WILL ALWAYS GIVE US FITS. (THAT’S WHY THEY ALL NEED KERNING WITH AN ABNORMALLY HIGH NUMBER OF OTHER LETTERS.) I’M NOT SURE THAT ENOUGH OF THE NEGATIVE SPACE CAN BE EATEN UP PURELY BY CHANGING THE SHAPES OF SERIES. IT DIDN’T WORK OUT VERY WELL FOR THE ARTISTS WHO DREW LETTERS ON HIPPIE POSTERS, NOW DID IT? SOMETIMES, YOU NEED TO REALIZE THE INHERENT LIMITS, AND CONCEDE THAT A SOLUTION DOESN’T EXIST FOR EVERY LAST DETAIL THAT NEEDS FIXING. WISER TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE NATURE OF THE BEAST AND SETTLE FOR WHAT YOU GET.”

All good points, and the guy is without a doubt a master of the craft, but my opinion remains: there are plenty of wise and conservative designers acknowledging these limits and arriving at similar results. Ohno BlazeFace was an opportunity to try things slightly differently. Also, my friend and I can agree to disagree on how effectively it worked out for the artists who drew letters on hippie posters. I think those

14 POINT



TYPE CO.

AT THIS POINT, AN EFFICIENT AND PRODUCTIVE PERSON MIGHT COMMIT TO AN IDEA, AND SEE IT THROUGH TO THE END, BUT THANKS TO THE LACK OF A DEADLINE OR ANY ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS KEEPING TABS ON MY PROGRESS, I FELT THE FREEDOM TO SHIFT IDEAS ENTIRELY. PLUS, THERE ARE A LOT OF NICE FATFACES ALREADY.

I WAS CURIOUS WHAT A STONEY OR SLIGHTLY PSYCHEDELIC FILTER OVER THIS FOUNDATION MIGHT LOOK LIKE. I ADMIT MY HYPOCRISY DURING THIS PART OF THE PROCESS—I SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF CLASS TIME SINGING THE PRAISES OF SKETCHING, AND WHAT A VITAL PART OF THE PROCESS IT IS TO HOLD A PENCIL IN YOUR HAND AND WATCH THE RESULTS APPEAR BEFORE YOU. THAT’S WHAT I SHOULD HAVE DONE, BUT INSTEAD, I DID A FEW HALF HEARTED THUMBNAI LS, AND WENT RIGHT INTO THE COMPUTER EDITING THE OUTLINES OF THE MORE SOBER FATFACE TO PRODUCE SOMETHING CONSIDERABLY MORE GROOVY.

Chaotic, nonsensical, and more or less meaningless to anyone other than myself, this composite is actually a good representation to my sketching techniques. Towards the right shows the initial Blaze face doodles.

This actually turned out to be an acceptable way of working, as I could easily leverage all the previous weight, width, and contrast decisions, which freed other parts of a my brain to experiment with slightly unusual forms. In the capitals, particularly uneven shapes like C and L could be even more exaggerated to fill that distracting negative space. V and A pushed this to the maximum which created some bizarre and slightly illegible letters, but they failed to draw much attention to themselves in the middle of words, so their existence was permitted.

12 POINT



TYPE CO.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
À Á Â Ã Ä Å Æ Ç È É Ê Ë Ì Í Î Ï Ñ Ò Ó Ô Õ Ö Ø Ù Ú Û Ü Ý Þ ß à á â ã

UPPERCASE

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
à á â ã ä å æ ç è é ê ë ì í î ï ð ñ ò ó ô õ ö ø ù ú û ü ý þ ÿ
æ ĩ ŋ ò ß œ þ

LOWERCASE

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FIGURES AND CURRENCY SYMBOLS

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PUNCTUATION

← ↑ → ↓ ↖ ↗ ↘ ↙ ↻ ↷ ↸ ↹ ↺ ↻ ↷ ↸ ↹ ↺ ↻ ↷ ↸ ↹

ARROWS

● ■ ★ ✪ ✫ ✬ ✭ ✮ ✯ ✰ ✱ ✲ ✳ ✴ ✵ ✶ ✷ ✸ ✹ ✺

DINGBATS

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ORNAMENTS



**OHNO
BLAZEFACE**