

A Comic Sans Podcast- FINAL SCRIPT

A one time special about the world's most polarizing typeface

Snippet (Kadavy): „Tonight I want to talk to you about the most hated font in the world, which is without a doubt: Comic Sans.“

/ Background music - neutral /

Pauline:

When words and letters are printed, they have to wear the clothing of a typeface, a font family. We don't always think of it this way, but we can't type without using a typeface.

Thinking of typefaces as fashion for letters is *not a new idea*.

Some typefaces have serifs and some don't. Some are famously neutral, while others are silly or ugly.

But one typeface is so silly, so ugly and so popular, that it has become the most hated font of all time, which is Comic Sans.

/ Background music - quirky, awkward /

Oh, Comic Sans. You're the ‚Nickleback' of fonts, you're successful, you're known around the world and yet people still love to hate you. Comic Sans is round and cartoony.

People who consider themselves discerning designers scoff at its ubiquity, usually wielded by amateurs who don't know better.

Snippet (Connare): „20 years ago, I made the best font in the world. And that's how I always describe it, because I like things that /*unintelligible*/ and things that many people don't like. If you don't know who they are, you should find out.

That is Vincent Connare. In 1994, he created Comic Sans based on hand drawn fonts from comic books while he was working for Microsoft. Comic Sans was originally created for a program called Microsoft Bob, which featured a cartoon dog with speech bubbles next to his head. But there was one problem –

**Snippet (Connare): „Well the speech bubble that the dog in Microsoft Bob was talking in, it was normally like a cartoon you would see in a newspaper and it was using Times New Roman. And all the ones that I grew up with - looking at the Boston Globe - it was all hand drawn, so I thought it should be a little bit more like a cartoon.“*

Because as everyone knows ‚Dogs don't talk in Times New Roman'. So, Connare created a font he thought was appropriate for a cartoon dog.

Although it never made it into the final version of Microsoft Bob – *which was just a different user interface for Windows and was laid to rest just about a year after its initial release* – Comic Sans later bursts into public consciousness as part of Windows 95, as it was subsequently released as a font choice in many Microsoft products.

**Snippet (Connare): „I was really shocked when I was told that they were gonna put it in with the first browser Microsoft released. And that meant it went in with the operating system. And so that meant it was going everywhere.“*

A few years after that, Comic Sans is recognizable enough that it brought people together united by hate.

Holly and David Combs met and got married because of Comic Sans, they created an online petition to ban the font, though they've changed their tune on that.

**Snippet (Combs): „We still love you whether you use Comic Sans or not.“*

There (even) was a time, about ten years ago, where Comic Sans was sandwiched between airlines and Justin Bieber in 'most things complained about' on Twitter.

And there is even a dope song about Comic Sans.

♪ Song: The Comic Sans Song - gunnarolla ft. Andrew Huang ♪

After the release of Windows 95, millions of amateurs suddenly had access to this font, which seemed simple and cute and became popular on things like homemade birthday cards, but also in less appropriate situations, for instance on an official Canadian coin or on a gravestone.

**Snippet (Connare): „I think the worst one was the early ones. There was a store in Seattle that had a neon sign in Comic Sans that said ‚Fun stamps‘. And it was like a stationary store. That was kinda weird, but especially in neon. I always find it weird if somebody goes the extra mile and has to build something with it.“*

Because of things like that, Comic Sans has amassed a lot of haters. But it was never intended to be used that often or in such inappropriate situations.

**Snippet (Connare): „Uhm, People will use typefaces how they use them. And a lot of people would not have a lot of experience with type in 1995.“*

Madita:

To be sure, Comic Sans, objectively speaking, isn't really that well designed according to the fundamentals of type design.

/ Background music - neutral /

David Kadavy has a brilliant explanation of this in his book ‚Why you hate Comic Sans‘.

He points out that it's unbalanced and not very well kerned. Comic Sans is certainly not a calculated, precise font like for instance ‚Trajan‘. But it's not organic, like real handwriting.

**Snippet (Connare): „Yeah and I had to do it on a computer, so I drew it with a mouse. And that - if you've ever tried drawing anything with a mouse, it's not that easy.“*

/ Background music - serious /

Instead, it lies within the uncanny valley.

This concept often comes up in robotics. The more human something gets, the cuter it becomes and the more we like it, until it's almost human but not quite. At this point, things become creepy, almost scary. Perhaps Comic Sans exists in that same area, typographically speaking.

But that said, the screens that Comic Sans was originally designed to appear on, weren't typically aliased, and as Kadavy points out, compared to fonts like ,Garamond', Comic Sans does really well here.

Snippet (Kadavy): „In 1994, when Comic Sans was invented, computers didn't have anti-aliasing, that's what makes fonts look smooth on screen. So, Comic Sans wasn't supposed to look like this, it was supposed to look like this. It was supposed to be aliased, just a bunch of blocks. It was supposed to look like it was made of Legos. And under those conditions, Comic Sans actually looks a little bit better than ,Garamond' does.“

/ Background music - neutral /

That is how we should think about Comic Sans, a pragmatic font, a font that worked remarkably well in it's era and exists today as one of the most recognizable relics of one of the most important design revolutions in history.

Books used to be painstakingly copied by hand. Now later, you could design a story or an idea, but the final look really just came down to what a few typesetters could do. Today, almost anyone can dabble in typography and that is an amazing thing. Sure, it means that Comic Sans will be used. A lot.

But as Corey Holms points out, Comic Sans is proof that design works. The public understands that type means more than words and David Kadavy argues, that just as interchangeable type led to a spread of literacy, Comic Sans – and the personal publishing it comes along with – should led us toward a spread of design literacy.

Adrian Frutiger said that type has the power to make the whole world of thought legible, simply by rearranging the same letters over and over again.

**Snippet (Michael): „Sure, Comic Sans is a bit ugly. But it's ugly in the same way that the first few chords of ,Smoke on the Water' are ugly as played by almost every beginning guitarist who picks up a guitar at almost every instrument store. Sure, it sounds annoying and a little bit fumbly, but it represents someone who is using tools to move toward mastery.“*

Well, Comic Sans, overused by the untrained majority may seem unsavory to some people, but as such it most loudly represents something phenomenal.

Today it is possible for the whole world of the thought to be made legible and be shared by the whole world.

Snippet (Ethan): „Comic Sans warning. We got a Comic Sans warning here, guys.“

♪ Song: *The Comic Sans Song* - gunnarolla ft. Andrew Huang ♪