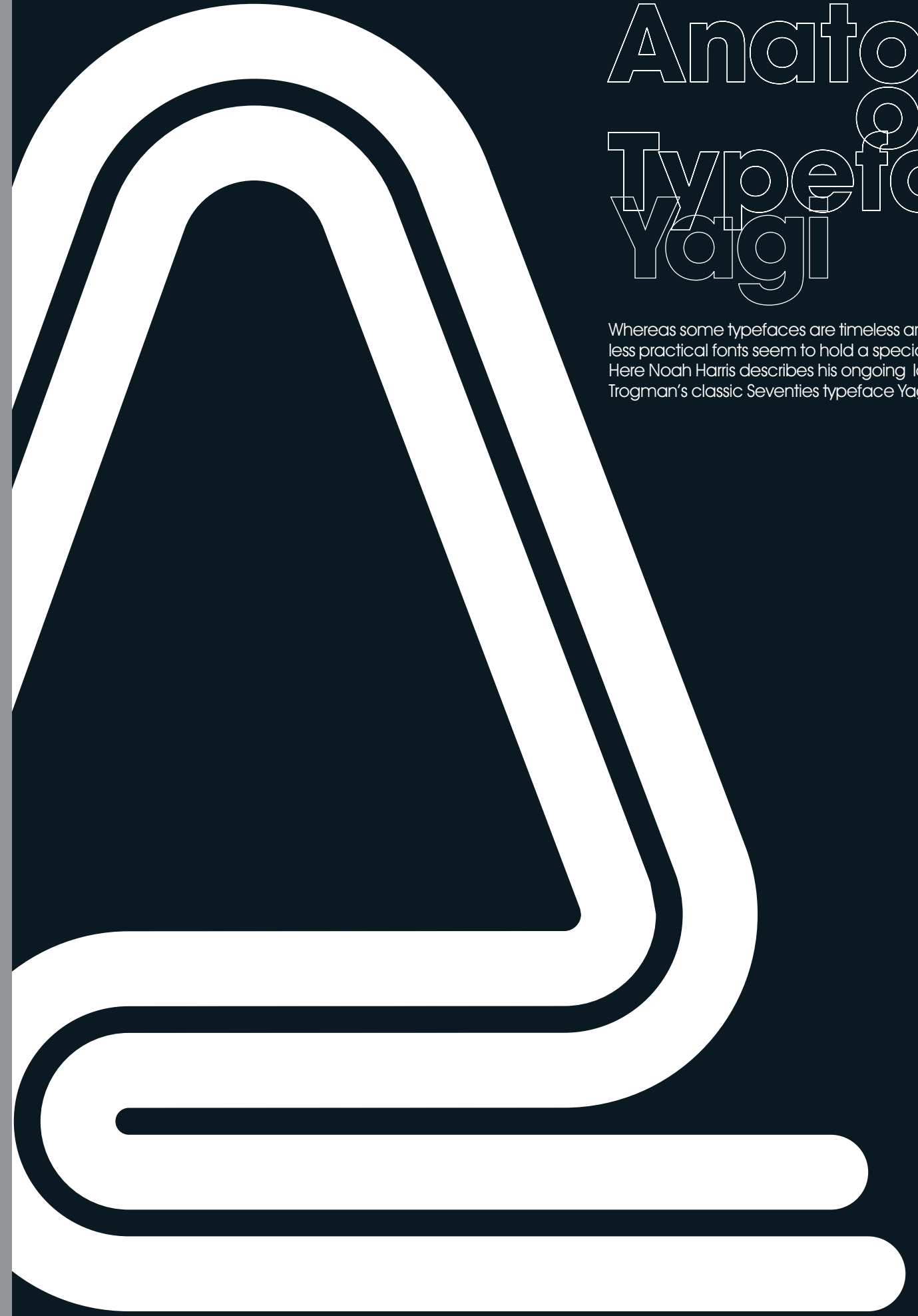


Anatomy of a Typeface Yagi

Whereas some typefaces are timeless and elegant, other less practical fonts seem to hold a special place in your heart. Here Noah Harris describes his ongoing love affair with Robert Trogman's classic Seventies typeface Yagi...

AD



A A B B C C D D E E F F G

H H I I J J K K L L M M N N

O O P P Q Q R R S

T T U U V V W W X X Y

Y Y Z Z

Since being asked to write this piece, I've been wondering whether font-freakery is any less of a bore than stamp collecting or trainspotting. My conclusion is: no, it's not, we're probably weirdos in our own little way as much as they are, in many people's eyes probably more so. Every now and then, however, I come across a typeface with merits integral to the future of mankind and I embark on a partner-/mate-losing spree through the constant expounding of its beauty and delights.

Yagi Link Double is one such font. You don't even need to look at it to know that. The name itself is fantastic enough. I was recently reacquainted with Yagi through a well-thumbed Eighties Letraset catalogue I purchased from the States via the website Abe Books (a new obsession giving more proof that the stamp collector and the font-freak are one and the same), and the memories came flooding back.

I can't remember exactly where I first encountered the font, but it would have been either at an early age rifling through my dad's transfer lettering sheets—they held huge fascination for me even then—or it could have been at college, where Carson's influence on all and sundry meant that for a brief period the Letraset collection was revived and the computer rooms were empty. Either way this was a font that had struck me early on.

The font was designed by the foundry Facsimile Fonts and it came from the hand of one Robert Trogman, also responsible for Blippo and Buxom, obviously a man firmly rooted in Seventies pop culture. I'm afraid I can't put an exact date on the font as my research didn't uncover that information. (Yes, I hear you scoff, Wikipedia ain't all that, mate, try the British Library...)

So, to the font itself. Well, on the one hand it's the ultimate retro-futurist styling. It's NASA, it's the space race, it's so unbelievably Seventies it hurts. And yet somehow it's timeless. Yagi's simplicity transcends all that and used in the right way it sheds those retro feelings. It's one of those fonts with letterforms so exquisite you don't want to muddy them with colour, layout or design. You just want to screenprint them in black six feet high and

put them on the wall. The letters 'A', 'K', 'M' and 'X' are particular favourites, the double line doubled again to create a bank of black bars. I have to admit to not being overly enamoured with the numerals, hence the fact you don't see them here.

As far as I'm aware the font was never digitised. I have it in two Letraset books, a Mecanorma catalogue and the ultimate type-geek guide, *Homage to the Alphabet*. First published in 1984, this bible of type takes pride of place in the untidy pile that graces my desk. The font you see here is a version I created using the Letraset books as reference. Here, I admit, a purist I am not. Yes, I have just wasted a few minutes of your time gushing over the beauty of a classic typeface and the truth is I changed it. There were elements of the original that didn't sit comfortably with me. The changes I made were minimal and the untrained eye probably wouldn't notice the difference. I guess the designer in me just doesn't know when to leave well alone. So, Robert Trogman, I formally apologise for messing with your baby but at least the world can revel in its glory once again.