

# SANS SATIONAL

Although new sans serif designs are released almost daily, those that are truly unique are tough to find. If you're looking for yet another to add to your collection, pay close attention to these 6 sensational sans.

BY ALLAN HALEY

Thousands of sans serif families are available to graphic designers. From the first sans serif typeface designed in the late 18th century to the current crop of digital designs, graphic communicators can choose from a cornucopia of serifless types.

So do we really need more? Well, some people sure think so. New sans serif typefaces are released almost daily. The list of truly versatile and distinctive new sans serif designs, however, isn't that long. Most new sans serif typefaces are, at best, yeoman designs that will be hard-pressed to distinguish themselves from existing yeoman designs. Graphic communicators probably don't need yet another industrial-strength sans based on highway signage, or a humanistic design that subtly melds calligraphy and sans serif letter shapes into a typeface perfect for restaurant menus.

There are, however, jewels among the rough—a few new sans serif typefaces that are genuinely remarkable. These are designs that strike that delicate balance between distinction and versatility and address real-world graphic communication needs. While many of the new sans serif typefaces will fade into the long tail of digital font availability, a few have what it takes to become true typographic classics. Six of these—FF Basic Gothic, Camphor, Carter Sans, Condor, Harmonia Sans and Klint—are designs worth noting and using.

BASIC GOTHIC  
LIGHT  
LIGHT ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

#### FF BASIC GOTHIC

The name says it all: FF Basic Gothic is a neutral sans with a design lineage that can be traced back to the 19th century American typefaces. "There is also a bit of Gill Sans and Verdana in the design," says Hannes von Dohren—one of the family's co-developers. Designed with the goal of performing well in a wide range of applications, von Dohren and his collaborator Livius Dietzel sought to develop a typeface that shows its 120-year-old roots, while at the same time presenting itself as a contemporary, state-of-the-art typeface family.

Basic Gothic's lowercase has slightly extended proportions, a hearty x-height, open counters and simple character shapes, which make for a highly legible type family. The italic design is more than simple oblique roman and is, in the style of serif typefaces, somewhat more condensed than the roman designs. As characters put on weight, they do not become appreciably wider, which makes for authoritative, space-efficient, bold designs. A diverse range of weights also make FF Basic Gothic an excellent choice for a wide variety of typographic projects.

FF Basic Gothic: [www.foritshof.com](http://www.foritshof.com)

#### CAMPHOR

Nick Job, Camphor's designer, proudly describes the typeface as "unashamedly English." When he developed the design, Job also was driven by a determination to avoid all calligraphic allusions, such as angular stress and organic asymmetry. He looked to the archetypal London Underground typeface drawn by Edward Johnston in the early 20th century for his design foundation. Job also studied Gill Sans—particularly its open counters and characteristic vertical terminals—to establish the overall disposition of Camphor. "Camphor is considerably narrower than Johnston's typeface, whose circular 'o's drive the design's generally wide lowercase. And my design has less attitude than Gill Sans," Job says.

The resulting typeface is space economical and equally at home in diverse environments, from branding and signage through editorial and advertising. Camphor is a sturdy, hard-working, highly readable—yet elegant—typeface that will likely enjoy a rich and long life. The complete family includes 12 typefaces. Each of the six roman designs, ranging from thin to heavy, has a companion italic.

Camphor: [www.fonts.com](http://www.fonts.com)

BASIC GOTHIC  
MEDIUM  
MEDIUM ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

BASIC GOTHIC  
BOLD  
BOLD ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 123456789

CAMPHOR  
REGULAR  
REGULAR ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo  
Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww  
Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

CAMPHOR  
BOLD  
BOLD ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

CARTER SANS  
REGULAR  
ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

CARTER SANS  
SEMIBOLD  
SEMIBOLD ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

CONDOR  
LIGHT  
LIGHT ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp  
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy  
Zz 1234567890

CONDOR  
MEDIUM  
MEDIUM ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

CONDOR  
BLACK  
BLACK ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 123456789

#### CARTER SANS

Matthew Carter describes his newest typeface. Carter Sans, as a "humanistic stressed sans." The chiseled, sophisticated Carter Sans family adds yet another distinctive shade to the rich typographic palette of Carter designs.

The Carter Sans family is made up of robust typefaces that meld distinction and clarity in near perfect proportions. The greatest influence and driving force behind the design is, of course, Matthew Carter, whose name the typeface bears. Two other type designers, however, also lent their accomplished hands to the project: Dan Reynolds of Linotype, who drew the small caps and much of the extended character set, and Berthold Wolpe.

While not an homage to the design, a subtle refrain from Wolpe's Albertus runs through Carter Sans. Carter's typeface shares the same humanistic overtones, hearty shapes and bold simplicity of the earlier Wolpe design. Stroke weights flair slightly, producing just the hint of a serif, and counters do not echo the outside character shapes. "It's a sans serif whose stroke-endings show the effect of the chisel more than the pen," Carter says. He was careful to maintain the angularity and crisp shapes of the letters as character weight increases from the regular, through medium and semi-bold to the bold design. The design doesn't just put on weight—it adds chiseled muscle mass.

Carter Sans: [www.itcfonts.com](http://www.itcfonts.com)

#### CONDOR

Drawn by David Jonathan Ross, the Condor typeface family also finds its roots in earlier designs. "Condor is a modern take on the thick-and-thin sign lettering style," Ross says. "These letterforms first caught my attention on a cross-country road trip. At about the same time, I found myself admiring Art Deco inscriptions and how the simplicity of sans serif letterforms could be elevated to an almost monumental elegance."

Ross' goal was to capture the monumentality and optimism of Art Deco lettering and combine it with the straightforward utility of work-a-day commercial typefaces in an open, contemporary design. In doing so, he fused high-contrasting stroke weights with a structure of flattened curves and open counters to create this sans serif family with subtle Art Deco undertones. In its various guises, Condor can approach the elegance of Radiant, the stylishness of Peignot or the intensity of Serpentine.

Like its namesake, Condor has an unusually broad wingspan: From taut, compact condensed weights to expanded designs with a luxurious demeanor, it's a large family by anyone's standards. At 60 designs, the Condor family is big enough—and distinctive enough—for just about any project.

Condor: [www.fonthureau.com](http://www.fonthureau.com)

## HARMONIA SANS

Harmonia Sans is a blend of contemporary geometric sans serif lettershapes and classic calligraphic proportions. Jim Wasco, who was aided by George Ryan in the production of the typeface family, began the design of Harmonia Sans with a single goal in mind. "I wanted to create a simple and legible typeface by pulling the best aspects of classic geometric sans designs, such as Futura and ITC Avant Garde Gothic," Wasco explains.

Wasco also introduced a very "un-geometric" aspect into the letters of Harmonia Sans. "I decided to use classic proportions of calligraphic lettering in developing the design. I considered several examples before settling on the work of Ludovico degli Arrighi, a master calligrapher in the 16th century," he says. Arrighi typically used a ratio of five pen widths for lowercase to seven pen widths for capitals. Wasco's x-height to cap height ratio in Harmonia Sans also is 5:7.

The Harmonia Sans family includes 17 typefaces. Each of the five weights, ranging from light to black, has a companion cursive italic. In addition, Wasco also drew condensed designs for the regular, semi-bold and bold weights.

*Harmonia Sans:* [www.fonts.com](http://www.fonts.com)

## KLINT

The Klint typeface family offers precision with subtle humanist touches. Another design by Hannes von Dohren, Klint appears at first glance to be a hard-edged, square-shouldered and straightforward sans serif. But look at Klint more closely and you'll notice that there's more to the design. The stroke weights have an understated modulation, and quiet curves soften the angular aspect of many characters. The lowercase 's' is a perfect example of this careful design intonation. It seems to be constructed of simple squared-off shapes, but the top entry and bottom exit strokes are gentle curves.

At large sizes, especially in the bolder weights, Klint communicates with confidence. Its distinctive character shapes and proportions make for a design that doesn't overpower the message and draws the reader in. At smaller sizes, Klint remains remarkably legible, thanks to the design's large x-height, open counters and stroke variation.

Klint also is an exceptionally comprehensive family. It offers five weights (from light to black), each in three widths (standard, condensed and expanded), all with italic counterparts—a total of 30 typefaces in all.

*Klint:* [www.linotype.com](http://www.linotype.com) **HOW**

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HARMONIA SANS  
CONDENSED

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp  
Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy

HARMONIA SANS  
REGULAR  
ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

KLINT  
CONDENSED  
CONDENSED ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg  
Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq  
Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz 123

KLINT  
REGULAR  
REGULAR ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff  
Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn  
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv  
Ww Xx Yy Zz 1234567890

KLINT  
EXTENDED  
EXTENDED ITALIC

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee  
Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll  
Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr  
Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx