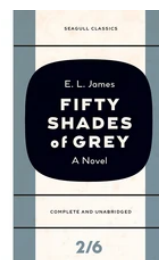
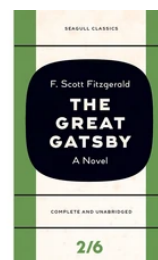
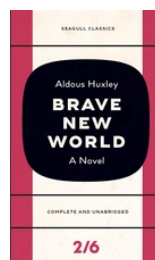
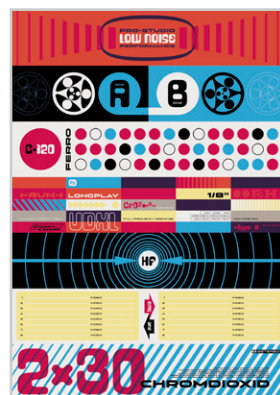


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Inside the Foundry: Device Fonts

with Rian Hughes

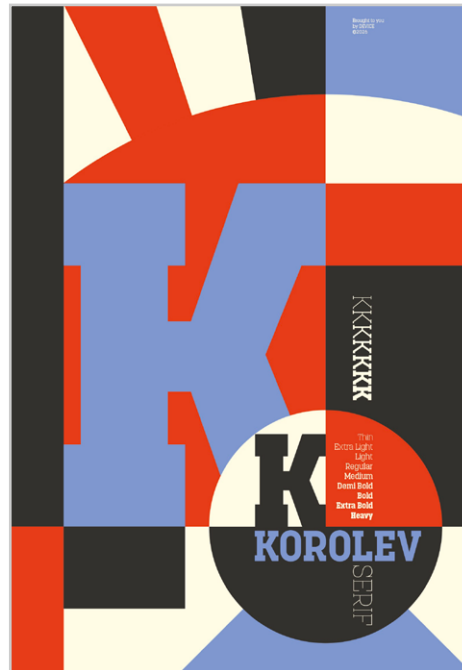


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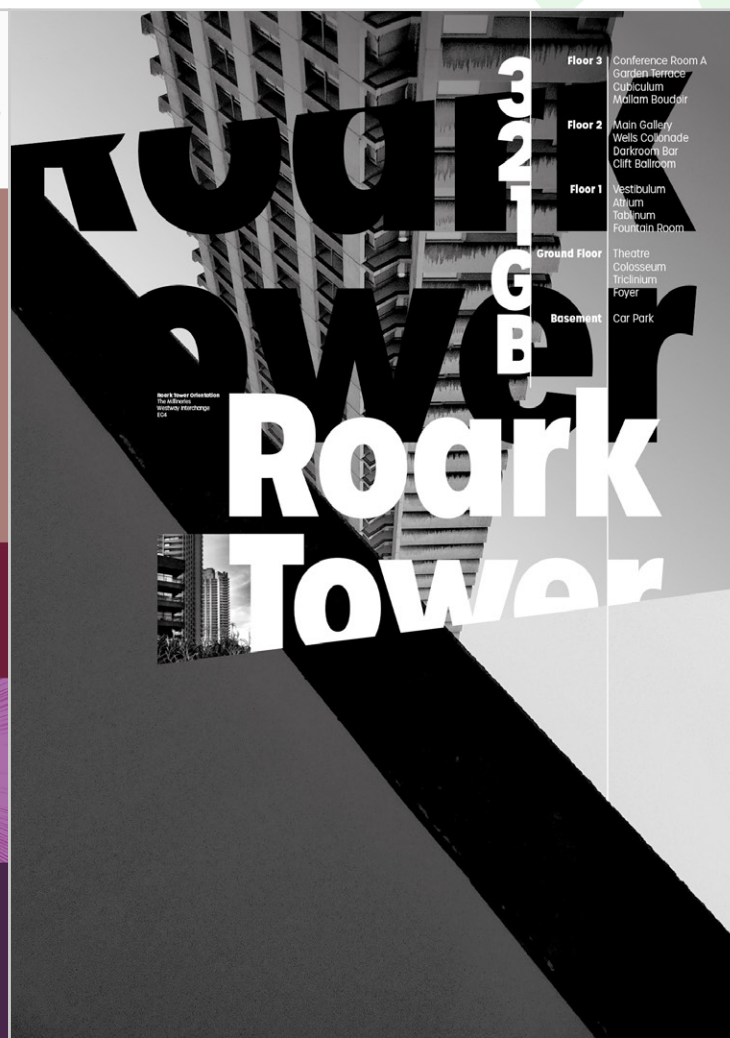
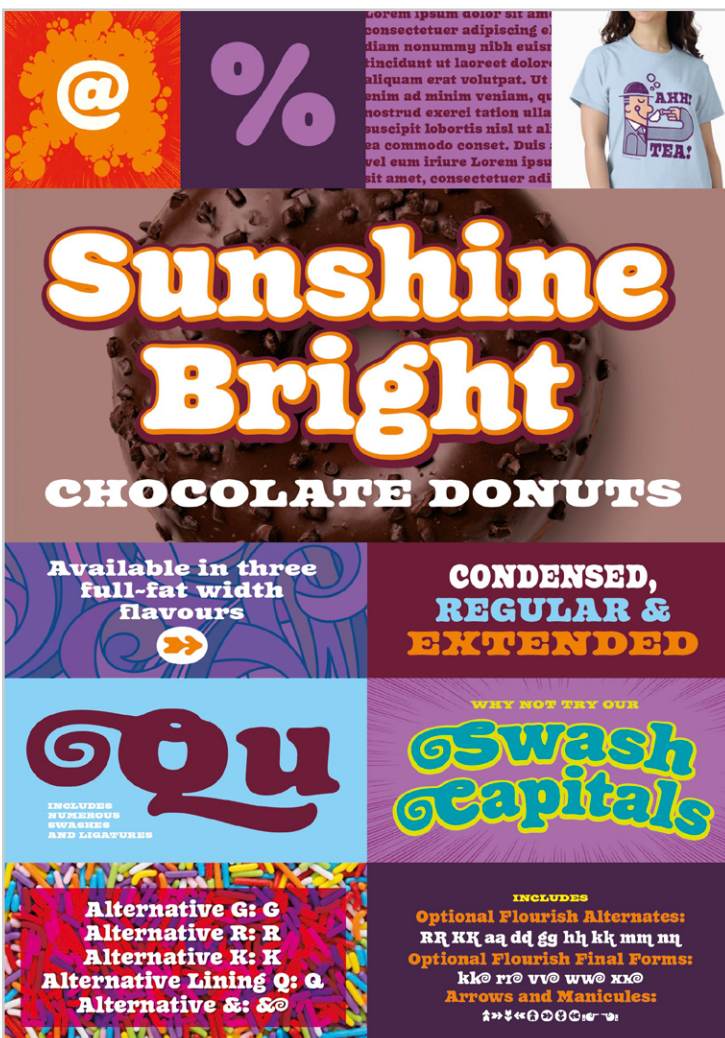
Inside the Foundry: Device Fonts.

“Type design will always continue – we have tens of thousands of fonts, but we’ve not even begun to exhaust the possibilities.”



Labeling Rian Hughes as merely eclectic undersells the breadth of his output. A masterful type designer, he also works as a graphic designer, illustrator, novelist, and occasional comic book artist. Rian’s portfolio spans the worlds of British and American publishing, music, advertising, and comics.

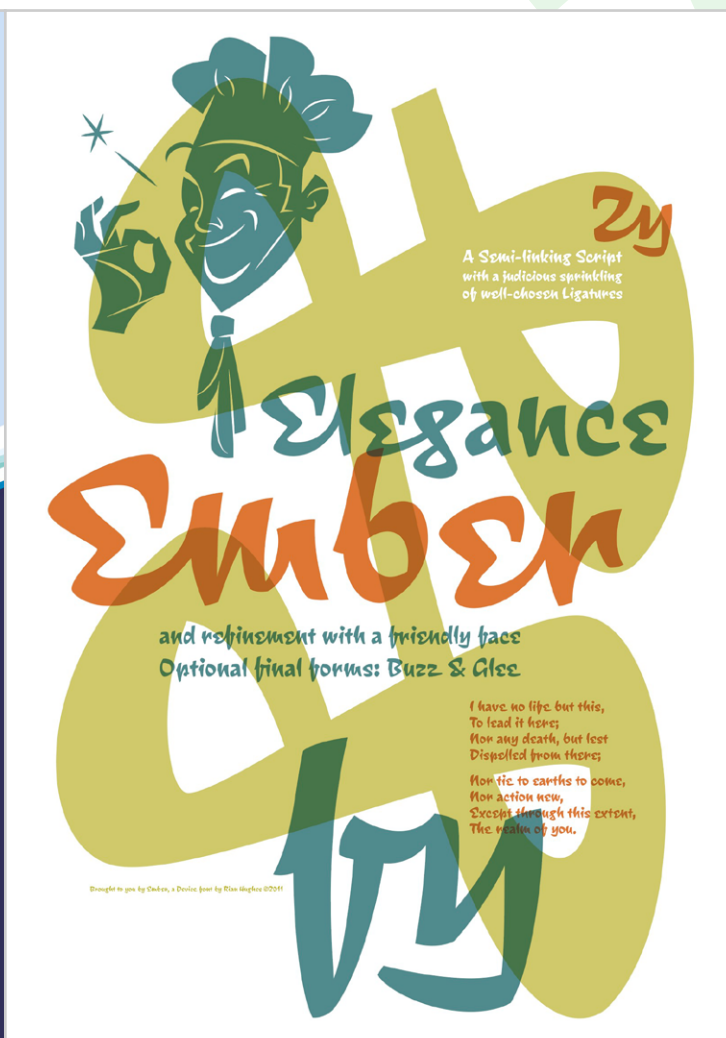
His early fonts made their debut through FontShop, becoming an important part of the FontFont library. Then, in 1997, Rian launched Device Fonts to take the reins of his growing collection. “I was producing more fonts than Font Shop’s quarterly release schedule could manage,” Rian explains. “In addition, having control over the presentation and sale of your fonts is important in building up a distinctive brand.”



Since then, Device Fonts has released over 350 original families with more than 1,800 individual weights. Rian has designed custom fonts for clients as diverse as *Mac User*, *2000 AD*, and The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

“Some Device fonts were standalone commissions, while others were part of a design project where I found there wasn't an existing typeface that was appropriate,” Rian recalls. “Sometimes I'll have an unreleased family to hand, and a project will come along at just the right time to field-test it. Others evolved from logos or magazine headlines. If a one-off piece of lettering looks like it might work as a complete font, I'll put it aside to work it up later.”

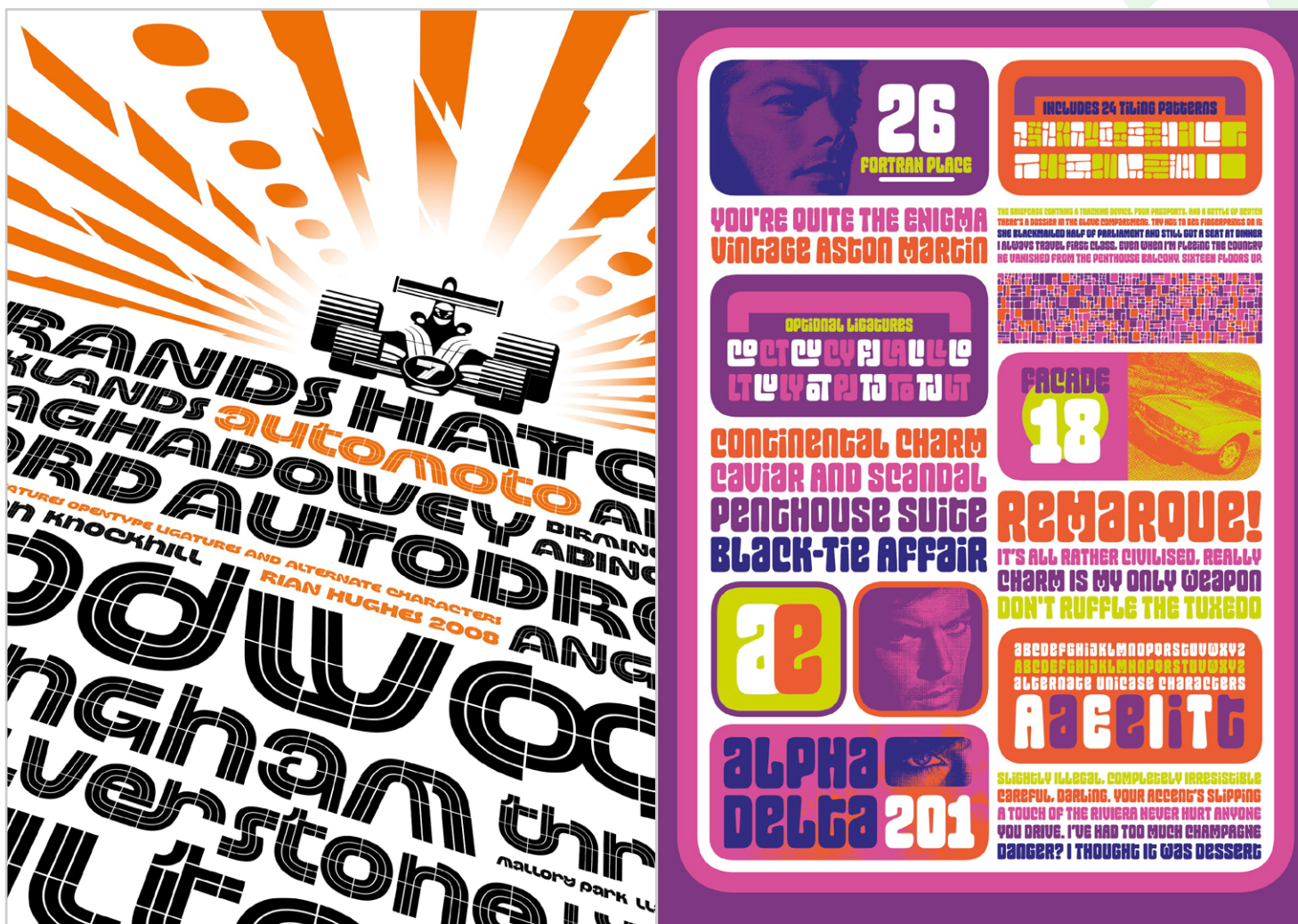
Monotype.



“But by far the largest proportion of my fonts were designed without a specific client in mind. Often, I’ll realize that there isn’t an existing design that conveys the right tone of voice for a particular field, and I’ll try and fill that gap. I think that many of my popular designs do just this – they are useful because they have a distinct, original, but not too narrow, appeal that designers can build on.”

“Fonts that are more decorative or historically specific will tend to be used only in niche applications, which can limit their appeal. But because I was weaned on the excesses of Letraset and expressive headline fonts by the likes of Roger Excoffon, Aldo Novarese, Ed Benguiat and Colin Brignall, I’ll design them anyway and hope they find a receptive audience.

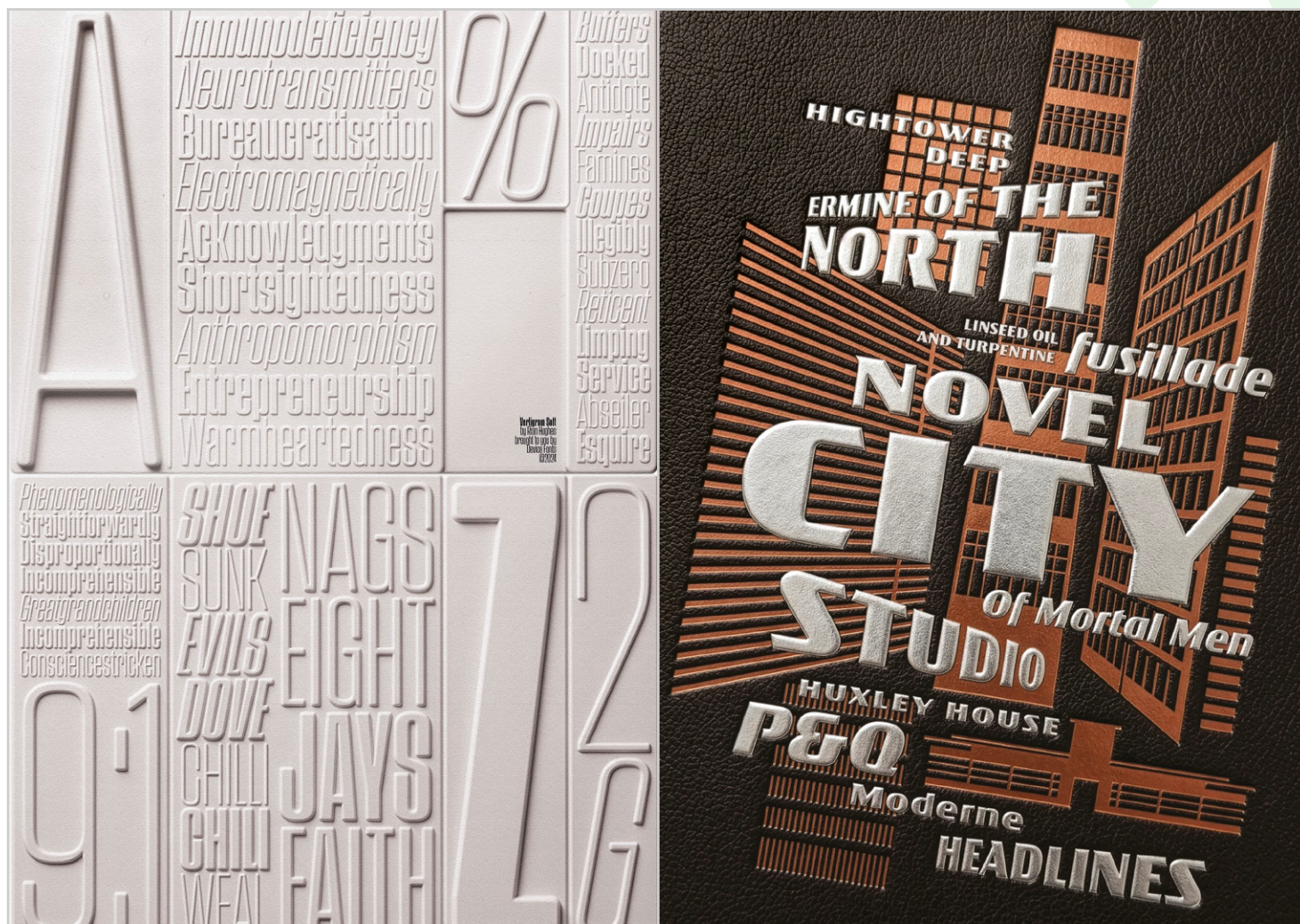
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“In fact, decorative fonts are growing in popularity, maybe as a response to the overuse of bland sans serifs. It’s happened before – there was a time in the late 60s and early 70s when every corporate wordmark seemed to be set in Helvetica – and then, as a counterpoint, we saw the excesses of psychedelia and drop-shadow Bookmans and Didones with expressive swashes and curved baselines flourish. I’m hoping we’re entering a new period of typographic flamboyance, not least because some of my underused fonts may get a look-in.”

Device Fonts’ collection ranges from single-weight designs to expansive typeface families. When asked about this variety, Rian shared, “If an idea or sketch progresses into a complete font, I’ll often expand it into a family. Sometimes I release just one or three weights to test the waters, and if the design proves popular, I’ll add italics or condensed and extended versions. This approach is how the [Korolev](#) family grew so large.

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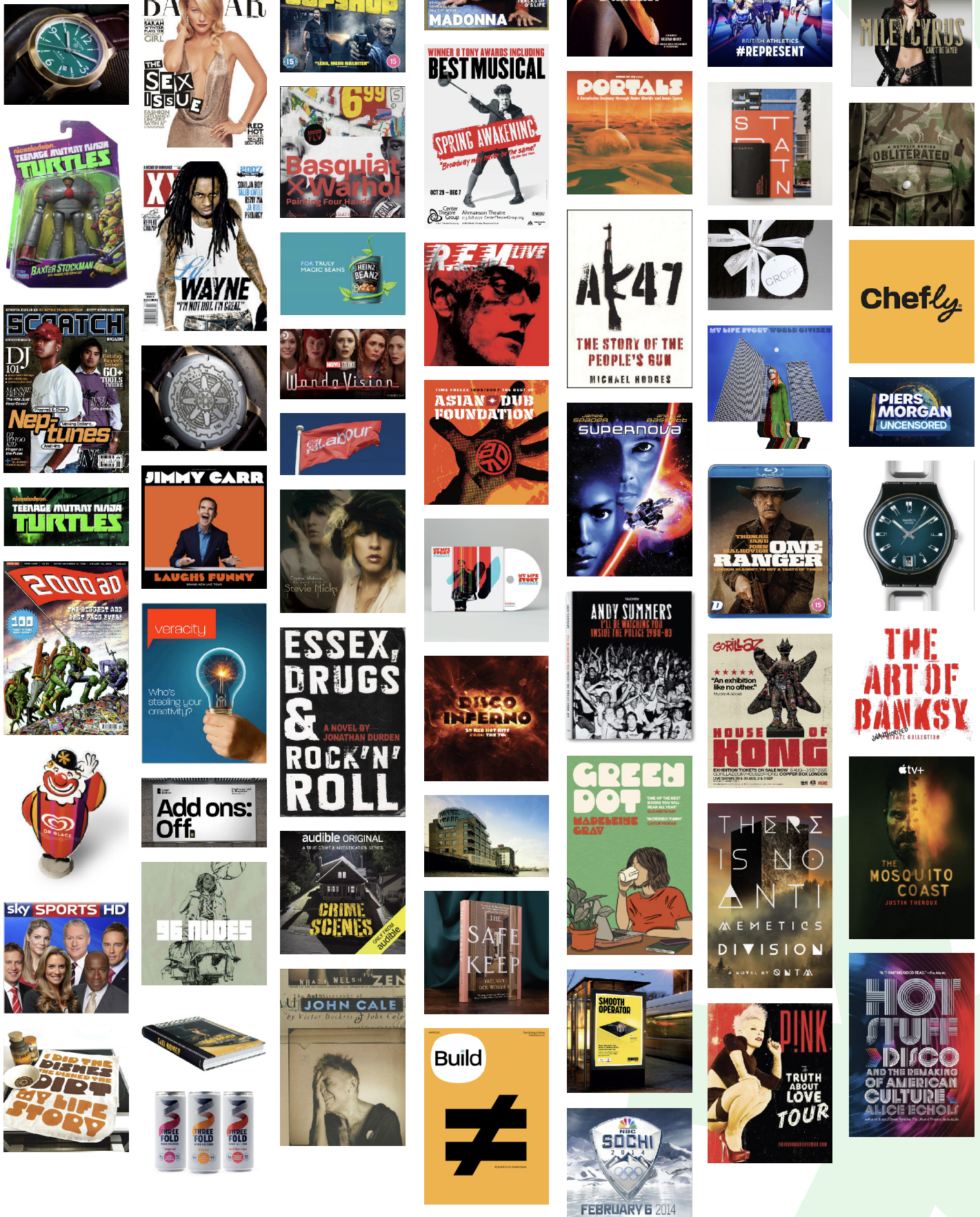
If there is one piece of advice Rian would give an aspiring typeface designer, Rian said, “Be prepared to really get into the weeds with the details. The hours spent finessing your design might be all but invisible to the non-typographer but will make all the difference. And cultivate a wellspring of original ideas. Original ideas never go out of style.”

Reflecting on Device Fonts’ 30th anniversary, Rian says “It’s been a three-decade passion project. Preparing *Typeractive*, our 30th anniversary retrospective book, has helped me appreciate how fortunate I am to be able to follow my muse.

“Type design will always continue – we have tens of thousands of fonts, but we’ve not even begun to exhaust the possibilities. That’s the amazing thing about our Latin alphabet – its versatility, expressiveness, and the way it can be continually reinvented to capture a new zeitgeist. Long may it continue.”

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Device Fonts seen in the wild



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You can order Typeractive from Rian's Kickstarter page by [clicking here](#). The project is already fully funded, so you'll be sure to get a copy.