Proxima Nova

Visigothic

Proxima Nova was first conceived in 1981 as "Visigothic"; nothing more than a set of caps drawn on lined paper. Mark Simonson had been interested in type since he was little, and doodled letterforms much over the course of his day at college, or his ensuing graphic design career as a magazine art director and package designer. His early efforts were crude, but over the years he refined his drawings until one really stuck with him— That sketch was Visigothic. The caps may have been drawn in 1981, but the lowercase forms would take another decade.

1981

abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

yy
aa
ll

1994

K **k**

42°   45°

J **j**

S **s**

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Proxima Sans

12 years after Visigothic's conception in 1981, Simonson had just started a new graphic design job. One of his first assignments was to work on packaging design for Star Wars: The Original Radio Drama. *"On a whim, I tried Visigothic. It felt a little weird using my unfinished type design for the project, but it seemed to work. I showed it to the other people I was working with and they thought so, too. So I used it."* This boosted Mark's confidence in his type project, and gave him enough to release it eventually as Proxima Sans.

Unfortunately, upon release in 1994, Proxima Sans was not a particular success. Sales were few and far between, and with other things happening in his life (like the birth of his child), Simonson decided to put Proxima Sans on the backburner. However, two things in the early 2000's would change the course of this font's legacy from "nothing" to "noteworthy".

Gotham

In 2000, Tobias Frere-Jones, a Brooklyn native of 30 years, created Gotham, a "Geometric, New York City-inspired" typeface. It quickly became popular, being used prominently in Barack Obama's 2008 campaign. In 2002, Rolling Stone used Proxima Sans in a major rebranding project. These two events convinced Simonson to revisit Proxima Sans, seeing a growing opportunity for geometric fonts.

2002   2009

Proxima Nova

Proxima Nova was born from the ashes of Proxima Sans, completely retouched and retooled to support OpenType standards and digital usage especially well. It was also extremely versatile, featuring 42 type styles, up from Proxima Sans' 6. Proxima Nova was still a bit of a slow starter. However, with the popularity of geometric typefaces as a whole, it would still eventually eclipse Gotham and become the most popular typeface on the web.

ΠΩ
μΣ

tapered forms

With the advent of TypeKit (now Adobe Fonts) in 2009, Proxima Nova was available at release. TypeKit's popularity and ease of use over other font hosting and serving solutions gave the fonts contained within a huge boon in popularity. Gotham would not be available for another four years. This long stretch without Gotham, as well as their similar geometric forms, led many Gotham enthusiasts to switch over to Proxima Nova. After over two decades of development, Proxima Nova had mainstream recognition.

the web's first choice

Design

Eliana Luchinsky

https://portfolio.cerv.id

eluchinsky@cerv.id