

the story of changeling NEO

UNICASE DESIGN

Aabb
EEGG

ALTERNATE CHARACTERS

Yyy
ffgsl
PPRR
QQRr
kkxx

SLANTED ALTERNATES

VAWAYM
VAWAYM
VANAYM

ARBITRARY FRACTIONS

33/100
BECOMES
33/100

IN 1991, I WAS COMMISSIONED TO DIGITIZE a face called “China” for a client. It was a wide, geometric sans serif with a futuristic, high-tech feel, originally designed for VGC by M. Mitchell and released in 1975. Probably the most famous use of China (with a modified “A” and “R”) is for the title logo of the Terminator movie series. It was an interesting typeface, but had a limited character set (caps and a few alternates) and only one weight. I also felt that it had some design problems in the proportions of certain letters.

CHINA
AaBCD
EeFGH
IJKLLM
MNOPP
QaRST
UVWwX
YyZz123
45678
90 ? ! ; \$

I included my digitization of VGC China in my online portfolio in 2000 and was surprised by the interest it generated. At the time, there was only one commercially available digitization. But, it was poorly done and even included some “ringer” characters, which indicated the source was a pirated film font, not the original VGC version.

In 2003, I released my own interpretation, which I called **Changeling**. I redesigned many of the characters for more even type color. I also added lower-case-style variants to nearly all the uppercase forms, for endless “unicase” combinations, alternate forward- and back-slanting characters for A, M, V, and W, and a more complete character set. I spaced it to emulate the “tight, but not touching” style of spacing popular in the ’70s. Finally, I created four new styles—Light, Regular, Stencil, and Inline.

Changeling Neo (2008) builds on this with even more alternate characters (including a few from VGC China I had previously left out), extensive language support, and lots of improvements in fit and finish. Changeling Neo is available exclusively in the OpenType format. Alternate characters are accessed using OpenType Stylistic Alternates and Stylistic Sets features. Standard characters that were “hijacked” in Changeling (to make room for alternate characters) have been reinstated. Changeling Neo also includes support for fractions, superscript and subscript, as well as tabular figures. —MARK SIMONSON

TABULAR FIGURES

12345
67890
VS.
12345
67890

FIVE STYLES

light
Regular
bold
stencil
inline

LANGUAGES SUPPORTED

English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Basque, German, Russian, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, Finnish, Icelandic, Czech, Polish, Hungarian, Croatian, Esperanto, Maltese, Turkish, Romanian, and Albanian.

OPENTYPE FEATURES SUPPORTED

Standard Ligatures, Stylistic Alternates, Stylistic Sets (14), Class-Based Kerning, Proportional Lining Figures, Tabular Lining Figures, Fractions, Superscript, Subscript and Scientific Inferior.

MIXER

FREON

VISTA '95

STAR TREK

SUPERNOVAE

>12376.044589

СИСТЕМА ЭБЕЗДЫ

SCSI TERMINATOR THREE

Thermonuclear energy drink

"do androids dream of electric sheep?"

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND / ROBERT HEINLEIN

MIXER

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VISTA '95

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THERMONUCLEAR ENERGY DRINK
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"do androids dream of electric sheep?"
STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND / ROBERT HEINLEIN

changing neo usage examples

DISCOTHEQUE
DISCOTHEQUE
DISCOTHEQUE

the lathe of heaven

RAY
BRADBURY
FAHRENHEIT
451

A.I.

TECHNO SYNTH

HAL 9000