A scene from the movie 2001: A Space Odyssey. A tall, black, rectangular monolith stands on a rocky, alien landscape. The sky is a mix of orange and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. In the foreground, a chimpanzee is visible, looking towards the monolith. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and futuristic.

One night Dad loaded me and my brother Joe into the car and we drove to meet his friend Jim at the fancy electronics store that he managed. It was closed but Jim let us in and we followed him into the big demo room in the back. It was full of all kinds of stereo equipment, comfy couches, and a projection TV. It was one of those coffee table sized things with red, green, and blue projection lamps. Jim pressed a button and a ten-foot screen rolled down from the ceiling. He loaded a silver-rainbow album into the brand new LaserDisc player, hit the lights, and turned up the music. This was the night I first saw

2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY

Dad and Jim sat behind us getting stoned. Joe, who was only eight or nine, was asleep in about ten minutes. I, on the other hand, was having one of the most memorable experiences of my life.



I had no idea what I was watching but, about 19 minutes in, one ape, inspired by the monolith, uses a bone as a weapon to kill another ape. Instantly the story clicked into place and the movie became a work of art.

It was also a portal to...

THE FUTURE

GREY MATTER GRAVY
ISSUE 2
SEPTEMBER 2021

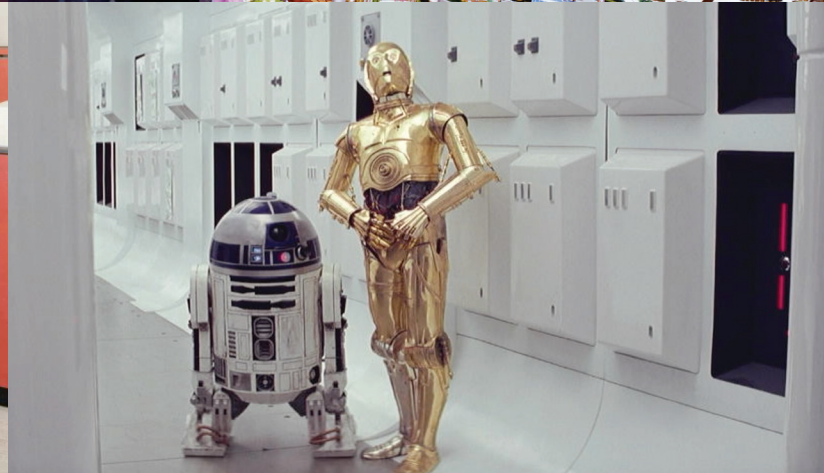


I've been in love with the future for as long as I can remember—especially that version centered around the 70s. Back when the future didn't always seem like a bad thing. Computers, synthesizers, VCRs, a tiny tape player you could clip on to your belt! We watched the Space Shuttle Enterprise on the news and then it showed up in the Star Trek movie. It seemed like it was all happening.


It wouldn't be long before we'd all be living on space stations.



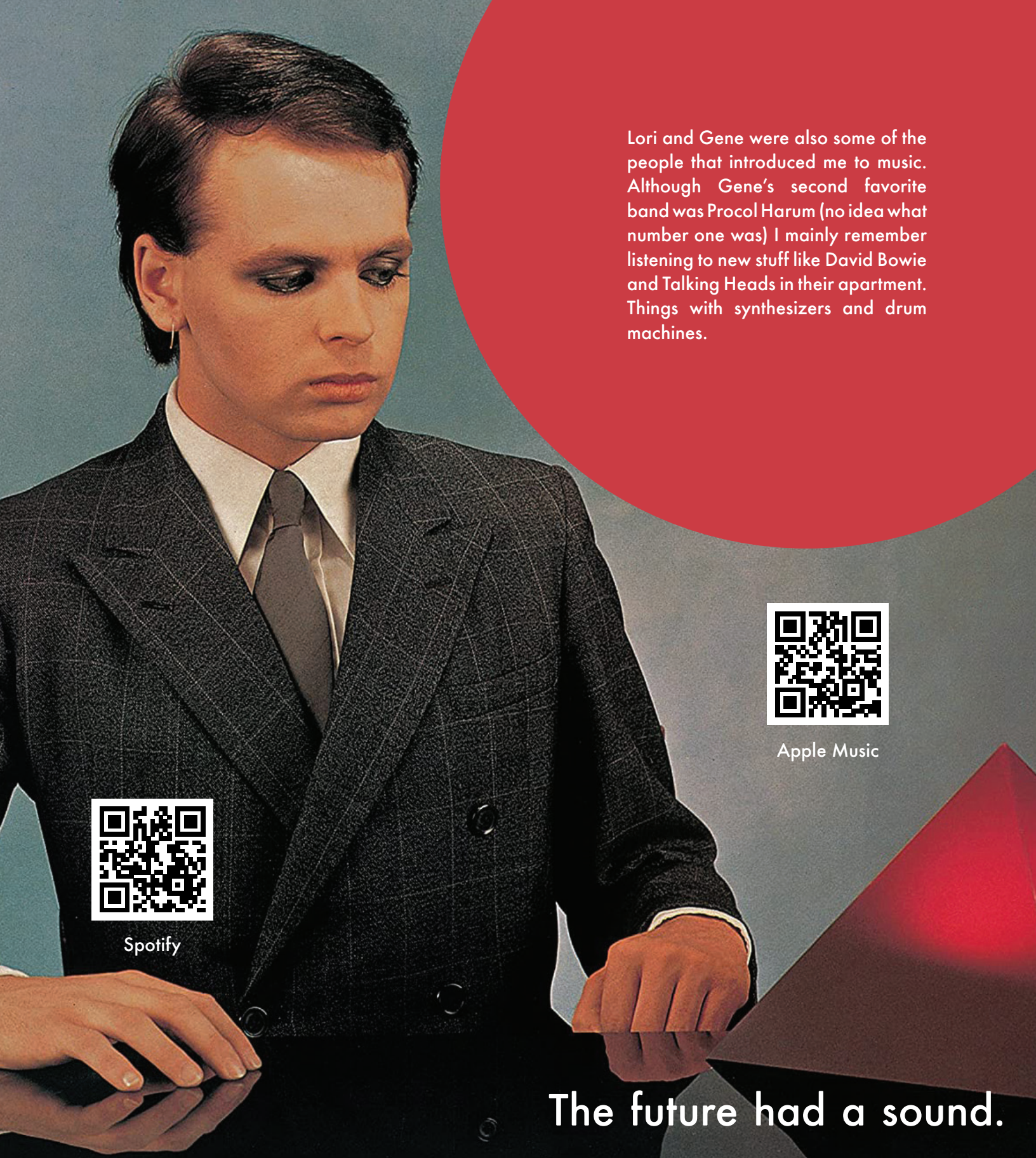
TRICK GUIDANCE



The future had a look.



That things other than paintings and drawings were art and that they shared a language of design was a new concept for me back when I saw 2001. Maybe a year or so before, I was downstairs in Lori and Gene's apartment as usual. I think I might have been showing some drawings to Lori and talking about how to make the shading look better. At some point I asked her about this ceramic cube that Gene had recently made. I didn't understand it or why he'd made it. "I thought he was an artist," I said. "Oh you better not let Mr. Harvell hear you say that!" she joked. I was baffled and a bit embarrassed. But Lori patiently explained how just like I was creating form in my drawings, this sculpture was creating form. It had texture and color too. And, oh by the way, music and clothes and houses could have all those things. It felt like learning to read. Suddenly I had access to a whole other world—one that had been hiding there all along.



Lori and Gene were also some of the people that introduced me to music. Although Gene's second favorite band was Procol Harum (no idea what number one was) I mainly remember listening to new stuff like David Bowie and Talking Heads in their apartment. Things with synthesizers and drum machines.

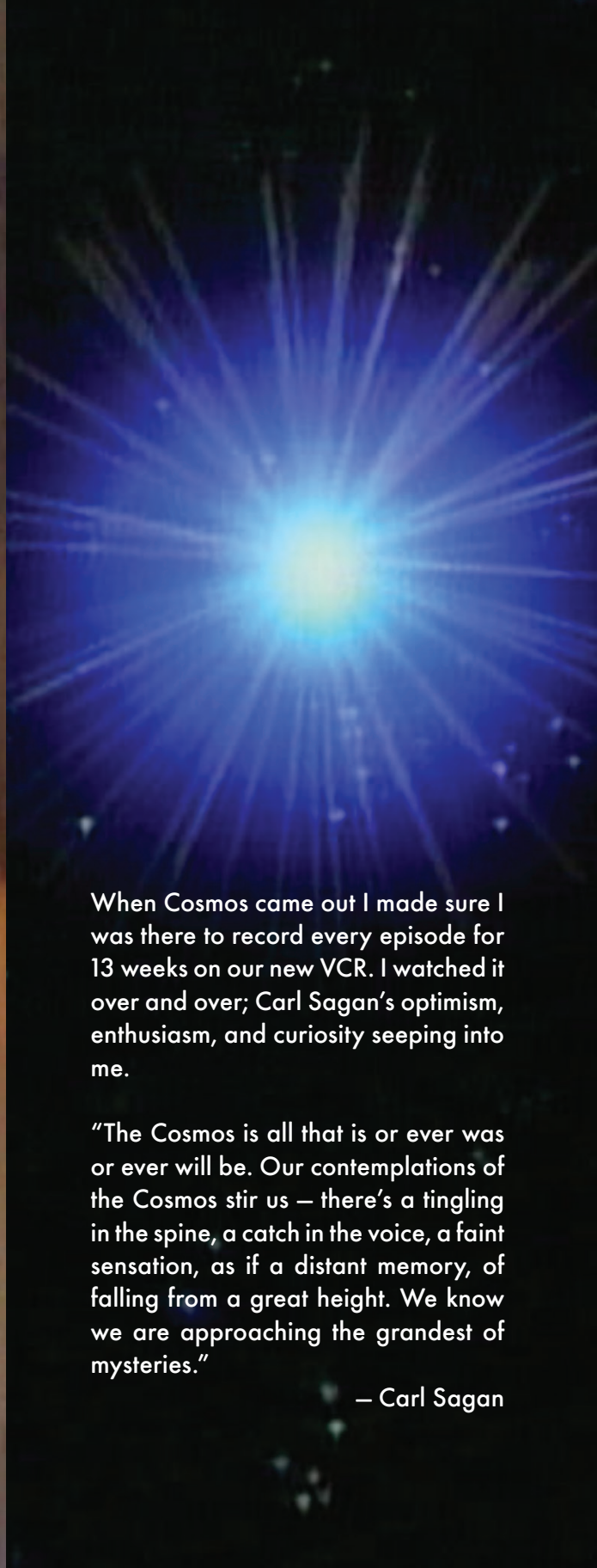


Spotify



Apple Music

The future had a sound.

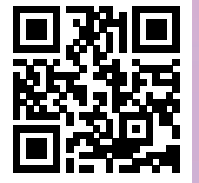


When *Cosmos* came out I made sure I was there to record every episode for 13 weeks on our new VCR. I watched it over and over; Carl Sagan's optimism, enthusiasm, and curiosity seeping into me.

"The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be. Our contemplations of the Cosmos stir us — there's a tingling in the spine, a catch in the voice, a faint sensation, as if a distant memory, of falling from a great height. We know we are approaching the grandest of mysteries."

— Carl Sagan

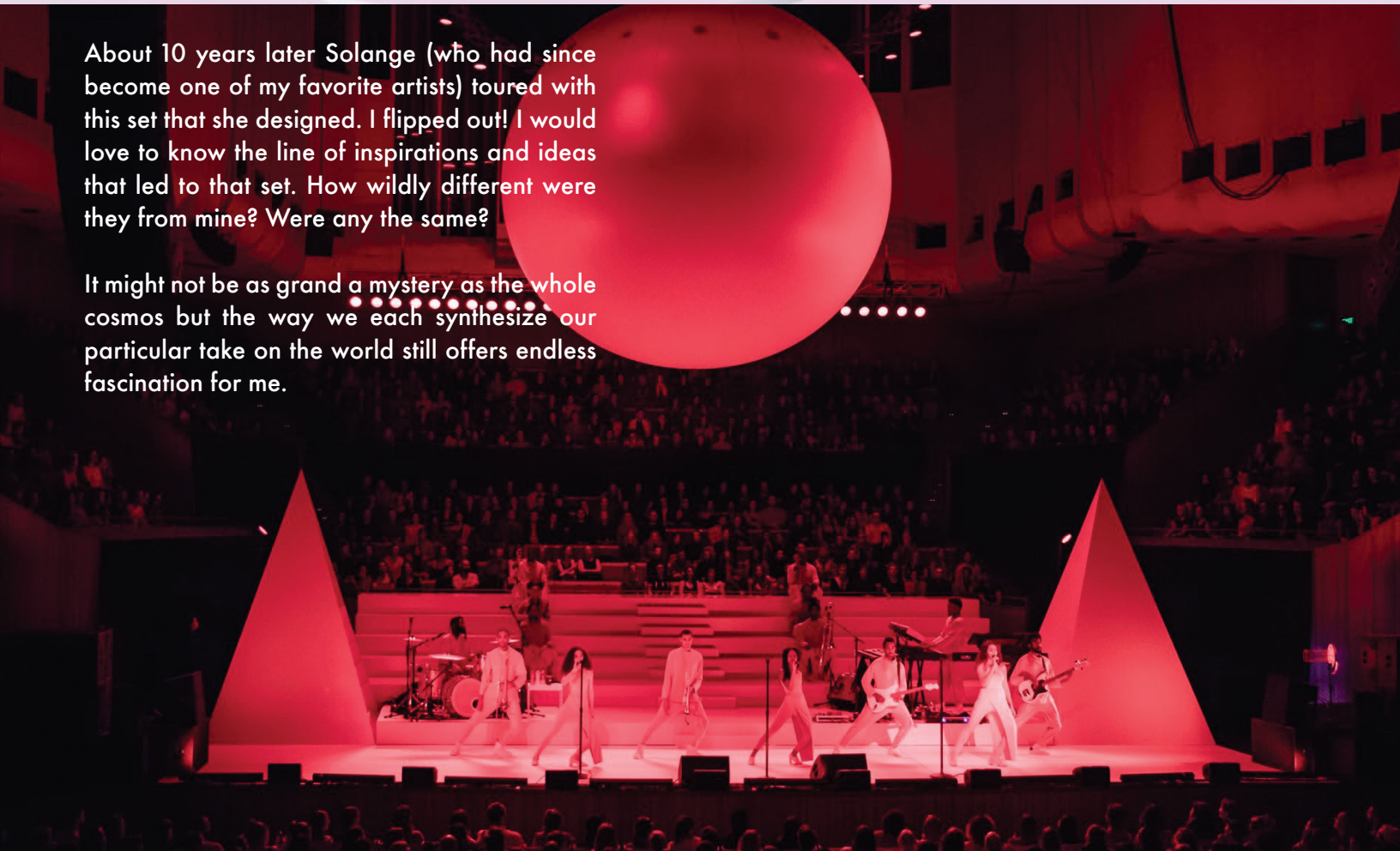
talkbot.tv



A while back I made this video series about a couple of robots. Like many things I've made, you could draw a direct line back to my 10-year-old self's obsessions—including this 70s-futuristic set design.

About 10 years later Solange (who had since become one of my favorite artists) toured with this set that she designed. I flipped out! I would love to know the line of inspirations and ideas that led to that set. How wildly different were they from mine? Were any the same?

It might not be as grand a mystery as the whole cosmos but the way we each synthesize our particular take on the world still offers endless fascination for me.



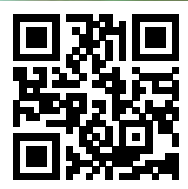


COLOPHON

GREY MATTER GRAVY ISSUE 2
SEPTEMBER 2021
BY MICHAEL VERDI
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Thanks for reading. This issue was brought to you by: Stanley Kubrick & Arthur C. Clark, Carl Sagan & Ann Druyan, Logan 5 & Jessica 6, C-3PO & R2-D2, Captain Kirk & Mr. Spock, John Koenig & Dr. Helena Russell, Aren & Lifal, Solange & Jan Hanford, Lori & Gene Harvell, and my Mom & Dad. I had a lot of fun rewatching old films and TV shows, listening to all the synth-pop, and playing around with 3D stuff.

Make sure you check out all extras I included in the envelope and online (verdi.space/qr/3).



This issue was printed by Mixam. The cover is 100lb satin finish and the inside 80lb satin. The stickers were done by Sticker Mule. The rest was printed on my Brother laser printer with unauthorized toner and cheap copy paper.

I used Gill Sans regular for the headlines because it was used for the titles in 2001: A Space Odyssey. I used Futura Round medium for the body because it's pretty close to Granby (used in Space: 1999) and I didn't want to spend another 40 bucks on a new typeface.

Want future issues? Subscribe to my newsletter on my website, verdi.space.

“When its dimensions were checked with great care, they were found to be in the exact ratio 1 to 4 to 9—the squares of the first three integers.”

From the novel, “2001: A Space Odyssey”
by Arthur C. Clarke

