

Whitecrows.us - Going beyond the ordinary - YAXS

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Whitecrows.us A personal weblog. ([whitecrows.us](http://whitecrows.us))

White Crows is my first serious attempt at building a customised Xoops theme. It's a fusion of the superior features of xoops 2.2.3 and the style of Blogger's beautiful 'Scribe' theme by Todd Dominey. My aim was to produce a personal website that was functional and yet visually stimulating, without distracting from the content with lots of menus and blocks that often characterises a Xoops website. The site features are further enhanced by extensive use of a tool tip script; more about that later.

A personal web log is very different to an information site and I wanted to create facilities for a flexible journal, diary and the occasional article, so I used the excellent Word press 1.52 module ported to Xoops by phppp. For the Art and images, I used XCgallery. The music section was a problem, until I tried some language changes with the new SmartSection module. As you will see, it works beautifully. Anyone wanting to upload mp3s for streaming or user download, should easily manage to customise SmartSection for this purpose as I did. CBB provides the forum and dokuwiki is my private playground for piecing together my 'virtual junk' before publishing on the blog . The site uses XFGuestbook to accept the welcome user comments. That's all the standard stuff. The rest was considerable customising to build the menus and other bespoke features.

Working with a small fixed width page really restricts what you can do with sidebars and menus, so I completely reworked the blocks layout to offer more flexible options, by placing the half-centre-blocks at the top and spanning across the sidepanel and content area. The left and centre panels remain in the same positions and the right hand block now sits below the main centre contents at the bottom.

I used a Javascript tool tip script by Walter Zorn of walterzorn.com for the menu system and info-popups. This Javascript tooltip script is completely cross browser compatible and is used quite freely on the home page to demonstrate its potential, also throughout the site for the menus. This is an excellent script and very easy to configure. It can be used in the theme.html file and also any custom block or php/template file on the site. The content of the popup tool tip is written in the page itself, thus making it accessible to search engines. The Javascript call is placed right before the end /html tag which helps to reduce page loading times.

Stats are provided by webmaster76 and are seen from a small link to a popup, then a full details page. Again this is my concept of reducing superfluous details on the content pages.

The theme is in fact 2 themes which are virtually identical, but change automatically for different

modules. You would not notice this except for the full width display on some pages and various graphics changes.

That's it! The theme is not a perfect import and there are still some problems with ie, plus the code really needs optimising and cleaning up.

The name White Crows came to me as a snappy way to describe the visionary, the renegade, the bohemian wanderer who sits on the outside, but paradoxically knows more about what happens on the inside than those who are there. Something to do with being 'too close to see the wood to see the trees ...' or something.

A White crow is similar to a 'black sheep', but more politically correct and appealing. As metaphors they are social outcasts, because of their differences and yet they stand out from the crowd. Mythologically, a white crow has a parallel to Man before his fallen state; A fabulous beautiful creature befriended by the gods and in harmony with nature. Yet through a tragic mistake, the white crow was punished and cursed by Apollo forever to wear a blackened plumage and a coarse squawk instead of a beautiful song.

Well, it's my personal concept for a blog title and I like it. I hope you like the site.

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