

Interview with BitC3R0 - News

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NEWS_PDF_DATE: 2006/4/20 17:03:14

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I've recently had the chance to interview BitC3R0, webmaster of the site Xoops-mexico. For those of you unfamiliar with their work, they have some of the more visually stunning themes currently available to Xoops. They recently moved to Xoops 2.2.3, and, of course came up with another inspiring theme.

Kaotik: When did xoops-mexico start?

BitC3R0: Xoops-mexico.net started its activity on June 5th 2005 (about 5 months ago).

Kaotik: How has Mexico and the Spanish community reacted to xoops-mexico?

BitC3R0: Up until now we've had very favorable reactions from our users. Despite all of our information being in Spanish, we have many users from other countries. Regarding our modules we have also received positive feedback and the number of downloads and visits keeps increasing.

Kaotik: Xoops-mexico is known for making some of the best themes available for xoops, can you inform our readers what's your process when creating a new theme?

BitC3R0: It all starts with a simple idea focused on an objective. Normally it depends on what's planned. For example: in <http://www.xoops-mexico.net> I have created a modern and dynamic theme because I wish to represent Xoops as current, different and attractive. I personally am not inclined towards the default themes because their colors are very grey. My purpose in creating any theme is to visually capture the user because when someone see a web page (before his attention is grabbed by any text, image or element) they will create a global image of the visual aspect for that site. If the user is captivated by this aspect, chances are higher he will stay and navigate through the site. It is also important to maintain a balance between a visually appealing site and its contents because it would serve no purpose to have a "pretty" site that lacks functionality.

Kaotik: Is creating a theme a team effort or the work of one person?

BitC3R0: Until now I have designed them by myself leaving me with little time to publish as many themes and modules as I would like because of my work. Nevertheless, even when I'm designing a new theme by myself I always try to get as many opinions as I can before releasing.

Kaotik: Was it hard creating your first Xoops theme?

BitC3R0: That's actually the main reason why I chose to use Xoops, its ease at creating themes. This is due to Smarty which is very simple, easy to use and doesn't require you to learn anything new (just HTML and PHP).

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For my second theme I explored even more with good results.

Kaotik: Xoops-mexico themes seem to be very well thought out from an aesthetic perspective, did you or your team have any formal education or training in art?

BitC3R0: No, my knowledge comes from experience and reading. Fortunately we have something called Internet.

Kaotik: When starting a new theme, do you first resolve it as an artistic challenge or as a technical difficulty?

BitC3R0: It's definitely a combination of both. As I've stated before there must be a balance between aesthetics and functionality. Of course it's always beneficial to understand Javascript, PHP, CSS and technologies which allow you to create themes which are attractive, dynamic and useful.

Kaotik: In your opinion which is the best place to start a new theme, on the computer or on a piece of paper and pencil? Why?

BitC3R0: Personally I prefer to start my ideas on a computer. Unlike development and programming of applications, visual design is a work that I like to do and see the results immediately. Of course before I start working on a computer I already have an idea of what I want to create.

Kaotik: What tips would you give to aspiring theme creators?

BitC3R0: Be flexible in your ideas. The main thing is that you don't have to create a theme that looks like all the others. Simply use your creativity.

Kaotik: Are there any common errors Xoops theme designers should avoid?

BitC3R0: I think the only point I could mention is, if your going to use graphics from other themes make sure they visually fit your style, Don't add them unless you need them. For example, I've seen many themes that use transparent icons and buttons (GIF, PNG) that show a white border on dark backgrounds. This greatly subtracts from a theme. Nevertheless I believe each person's artistic perception is what makes our community so "rich"

and validates each persons work.

Kaotik: What sites do you visit that inspire you?

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Kaotik: Can you tell us a little more about your modules?

BitC3R0: Well, all I can tell you is that the modules from Xoops-mexico.net and redmexico.com.mx were created considering, primarily, the needs me and my clients had. Maybe because of that I've always tried to make them as functional and professional as I could. I put great dedication into the creation of each of my modules always considering what each of their objective is.

Kaotik: Do you apply the same visual richness you have in your themes to your modules?

BitC3R0: Of course. When I work on a job that requires a graphical interface I stride for the highest level of quality in both aspects; functionality and aesthetics.

Kaotik: RMSOFT Downloads Plus and RM+Soft GS seem to be two modules rising in popularity; can you tell us what sets these modules apart from others like them?

BitC3R0: Yes; effectively, Downloads Plus and GS are 2 of our most popular modules that we have released. This is probably due to the fact that we created them aiming towards a more commercial market; in other words, we created them for Xoops sites that require modules to be highly adaptable.

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Kaotik: What limitations do you see in Xoops and what improvements would you like to suggest for future versions?

BitC3R0: On the graphical level the only thing I can think of is a limitation in Xoops 2.2 to modify the template system_siteclosed.html. In previous versions you could easily change the appearance of the site closed message. Since Xoops uses the flexibility provided by Smarty you can easily themes as advanced as you want.

In regards to the development of Xoops, I think there shouldn't be a divisive line between Xoops 2.0.13 and Xoops 2.2. This only serves to split the preferences and integrity of the Xoops community. Even though it's the same system they are not 100% compatible and that creates some headaches when trying to develop new modules.

Kaotik: Anything you would like to say to our readers as a finishing note?

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Kaotik: Thank you for taking the time to do this interview.

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