



Wotton Cinema

When a community cinema, the Wotton Electric Picture House, needed a complete website overhaul, its management committee appointed Evergreen.

Integrated Film Listings and Bookings for Cinema

Full Case Study

After years of bit-by-bit development, the time had come for a complete update. This included integration with an off-the-shelf ticket booking system and an easy to use content management system. The new user interface had to work across various platforms as well as retaining the character of the existing information site. And everything had to be future proof and compatible with the cinema's new Windows 7 computers. And of course, because the cinema was keen to get its new website working for it, time was of the essence...

Being careful to maintain the look and feel of the existing website, the Evergreen team quickly delivered a design and technical solution that met the committee's brief. Then they worked closely with the cinema's webmaster, Julie Rowe, to fine tune the site and its implementation – including the mid-project decision to add the proprietary Admit One booking system.

In May 2012, the new site went live to critical acclaim from online users and cinema visitors alike. Now the 100-seat cinema, one of the oldest in the UK, has an advanced website and integrated booking system to match its state-of-the-art 3D projection capability.

Evergreen goes to the movies

Wotton Electric Picture House (WEPH) is a tiny 100-seat cinema with a charming family atmosphere. Tucked away down a narrow side street in the sleepy Cotswold town of Wotton-under-Edge, it's one of the UK's oldest cinemas. It's also run by a local co-operative as a community cinema. And while much of the old-time character remains, the Electric Picture House punches above its weight with modern 3D projection and the new website that Evergreen developed to help the WEPH compete with the major multiplexes and Art House cinemas – and support local community causes...

As part of the updating that's continued since they took over in 2006, the cinema committee realised that a revamped website was overdue. The way people use cinema websites and book films has changed with the Internet and mobile computing. And other new cinema technology had to be integrated seamlessly with the web presence. That's why, after a competitive tender process, locally-based Evergreen secured the contract.

We needed to completely overhaul the cinema's website

Until 2012, the cinema's website had evolved bit by bit. Volunteer webmaster Julie Rowe, herself a software user, explains: 'Before the update, we'd expanded the simple information website as required – often using DIY skills. It was a continuous struggle to make sure each change didn't interfere with other functionality. We eventually realised that a complete redesign was needed. And we knew our ability to do the required work was constrained by the availability of our volunteers. That's when, as a community organisation, we put the work out to tender by local companies and eventually awarded the contract to Evergreen. Not only did they inspire confidence with their technical and creative solution, but they were competitively priced.'

As it happens, the Evergreen team wasn't completely new to the technical intricacies of the cinema's website. That's because the website is linked to Wotton-under-Edge's Community site, which is already maintained by Evergreen.

Evergreen's challenge

Julie Rowe again: 'Evergreen's challenge included giving us a new website that would look good on all main user platforms, from the Web to mobile phones. It also had to be easy to update with a user-friendly content management system. At the same time, it had to retain its original look and character. And it had to be future proof, to avoid costly updates as technology evolves. Add in the last minute inclusion of a state-of-the-art online booking system, and compatibility with our new Windows 7 computer system, and Evergreen had their work cut out.'

Trouble-free collaboration

Recalling the project, Julie describes a trouble-free collaboration, with prompt responses to queries and unceasing willingness to spend time finalising the site's details face to face. 'That saved a lot of time,' she continues, 'as some issues are easier to resolve when you're sitting next to the developer.'

The standout moment

According to marketing manager, Angus McCubbin, the project's standout moment was when Evergreen presented the design and technical aspects of the site and everyone knew it would do what they wanted. Several months on, with the website working hard around the clock, the committee's confidence in their local partner has been rewarded.

Evergreen confidently overcame minor teething troubles

As with most projects there were a few teething troubles. These were minor issues such as getting some internal links working correctly. A bigger challenge, a sudden plot twist, came part-way through development, when the committee decided to add the proprietary Admit One booking system. 'Introducing this to the development mix created extra challenges for Evergreen, but they were very patient and took it in their stride.'

A positive reaction to the new site

With the website live since May 2012, it's still too early to properly measure its impact. But, according to Julie and Angus, the reaction of site users and filmgoers bodes well for the future. Everyone's been extremely positive, which is encouraging in a conservative rural environment where small changes to the familiar often prompt raised eyebrows.

The benefits for Wotton-under-Edge

Positive comments on the website's Comments page include the complimentary 'How very impressed I am with your new look and very easy to use website. Very simple and clear, thank you.' Other good feedback has come during performances and on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook.

With work complete, the cinema committee has no doubt that the new website gives the Electric Picture House a much-needed boost and will serve their successful venture well into the future. What's more, they're confident that Evergreen's work will help raise the cinema's profile. In turn this should help the cinema raise even more funds for the community. That's because, as a community cinema, profits go to worthwhile local causes, such as new football kit for a local school team.

'Just very professional and helpful'

So Wotton's digital 3D cinema is now firmly established in the twenty-first century and, thanks to the collaboration between the committee and their web development partner, so is its online presence. Summing up the experience of working with Evergreen, Julie Rowe says: 'They were just very professional, helpful and always had time for us when we needed it. The whole team was very flexible and accommodating – especially as we didn't make life easy for them by any means!'

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Julie Rowe, volunteer webmaster
Wotton Cinema

