

/website build-off podcast/vidcast sites

Producing an online show that rocks is one thing, but you need a slick site to support it. We invited three designers to sketch up the homepage of a fictitious podcast or vidcast site

The brief

Create a mock-up of a homepage for a podcast/vidcast site. The page should promote the show and get visitors excited. There should be an archive, a news section and a range of community features.

Have your say ...

Got a suggestion for a new site build-off? Let us know at mailus.netmag.co.uk

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Designers



Name Alastair Holmes
Company Reading Room
URL readingroom.com
Alastair Holmes is a designer at Reading Room, an agency that specialises in delivering creative and content-rich websites. Recent clients include Skoda, VC Bet and the Fashion Textile Museum.



Name Dom Murphy
Company TAK! Design
URL taktak.net
Dom is creative director at TAK!, The agency's goal is to produce work that's unique, looks good and works well. Past work includes sites for the Ikon Gallery, Thomas Tallis School, Subaru and Topshop.



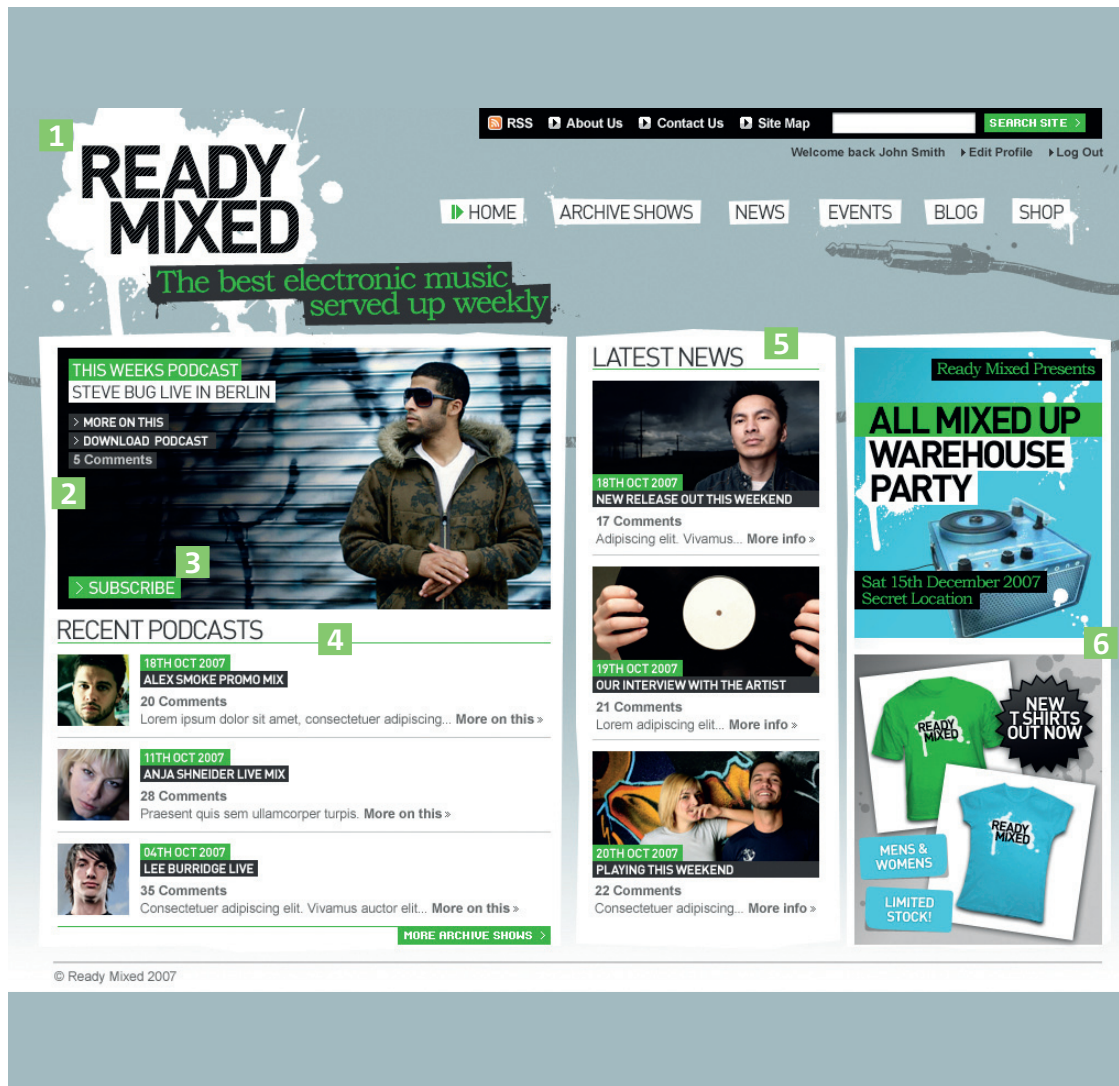
Name Jonathan Moore
Company 2Advanced Studios
URL newezra.com
Jonathan Moore is an award-winning senior art director at 2Advanced Studios. Clients include Adobe, Chevrolet, Disney, Ford, Lexus, Infiniti, Mattel, Motorola, and Warner Brothers.

Close up Alastair Holmes' solution

1 Logo and header The large logo and tag line below it stand out, giving you a good idea of what kind of site this is. The main navigation is prominent, with secondary links, RSS and search at the top-right.

2 Current podcast This is the main focus of the site and, as such, has the most space dedicated to it. Important elements are the strong main image, with links to download, get more info and to comment.

3 Subscribe button I've placed a button to subscribe to the podcasts in the main part of the page, as getting people to subscribe should be one of the primary aims of a podcast site.



4 Recent podcasts Recent podcasts are listed below the current one. Each has a brief description and a link to more information. Visitors can also see how many comments each podcast has.

5 Latest news A news section is often an important part of any site, and is one of the main reasons people will return to it. It therefore takes up a large section of the homepage's real estate.

6 Event promotion and shop Promoting events can help build a regular user base. Having a shop on your site is a great way to promote your brand, not to mention being an extra source of revenue.

About the site

There are a wide range of sites on the internet offering podcasts and vidcasts for download. They range all the way from music shows to news and comedy. My favourites are usually those offering electronic music of one form or another. As someone who spends a lot of time working with my headphones on, I'm frequently checking for the most recent podcast to see what's new.

For my approach, I wanted to create a site that had a slick and professional feel while also being a bit rough around the edges. The main focus of the page is the latest podcast. Set in the largest area and given the most prominent links, users can

find out more information, download it and leave comments. I've also placed a large subscription button in this area. Below the current podcasts are the most recent shows. Each has a brief description and links to more information. There's also a space to show how many comments each podcast has received. This would also act as a link for more people to post comments.

I've made the news section of the page very prominent as, aside from the podcasts, this will be one of the main areas that will keep people returning to the site. Next to this are two more sections that are important for keeping a site such as this feeling fresh and vibrant. First is a section to advertise up and coming events, and below this a shop feature, which would be important as a source of revenue to support the site. ●

Expert info



Alastair Holmes' month

What have I been doing?

I've been balancing work between an ecommerce and a shipping information site, with a host of pitch work and internal projects. The biggest of these has been the redesign of the Reading Room website.

Sites I've visited

newstoday.com
Nice site with links to various kinds of creative stuff.

www.robidog.com
This is a site I like to visit. It's full of random stuff posted by DJ Smim.

What have I been watching?

I've recently gotten into *Heroes*. I've also been watching *Family Guy* and *South Park*.

What have I been listening to?

I've been listening to Battles recently. I've also been listening to the Ricardo Villalobos *Fabric 36* CD and podcasts from Resident Advisor (residentadvisor.net).

Turn to see Dom Murphy's & Jonathan Moore's solutions >>

Expert info



Dom Murphy's month

What have I been doing?

This month sees the launch of the Ikon Gallery's new website (ikon-gallery.co.uk). We've also just finished working on a logo for an open source application called Poky.

Sites I've visited

ffffound.com I recently discovered the joys of FFFFound after an image that I posted on our blog appeared on there. It's a simple site, which I've become quite addicted to. The variety of images and the correlation between them keeps me coming back for more.

What have I been watching?

I saw Planet Terror recently. Then I got a DVD of trashy grindhouse trailers. I also saw Cat Soup — a surreal Japanese cartoon about two cats, one alive and one dead.

What have I been listening to?

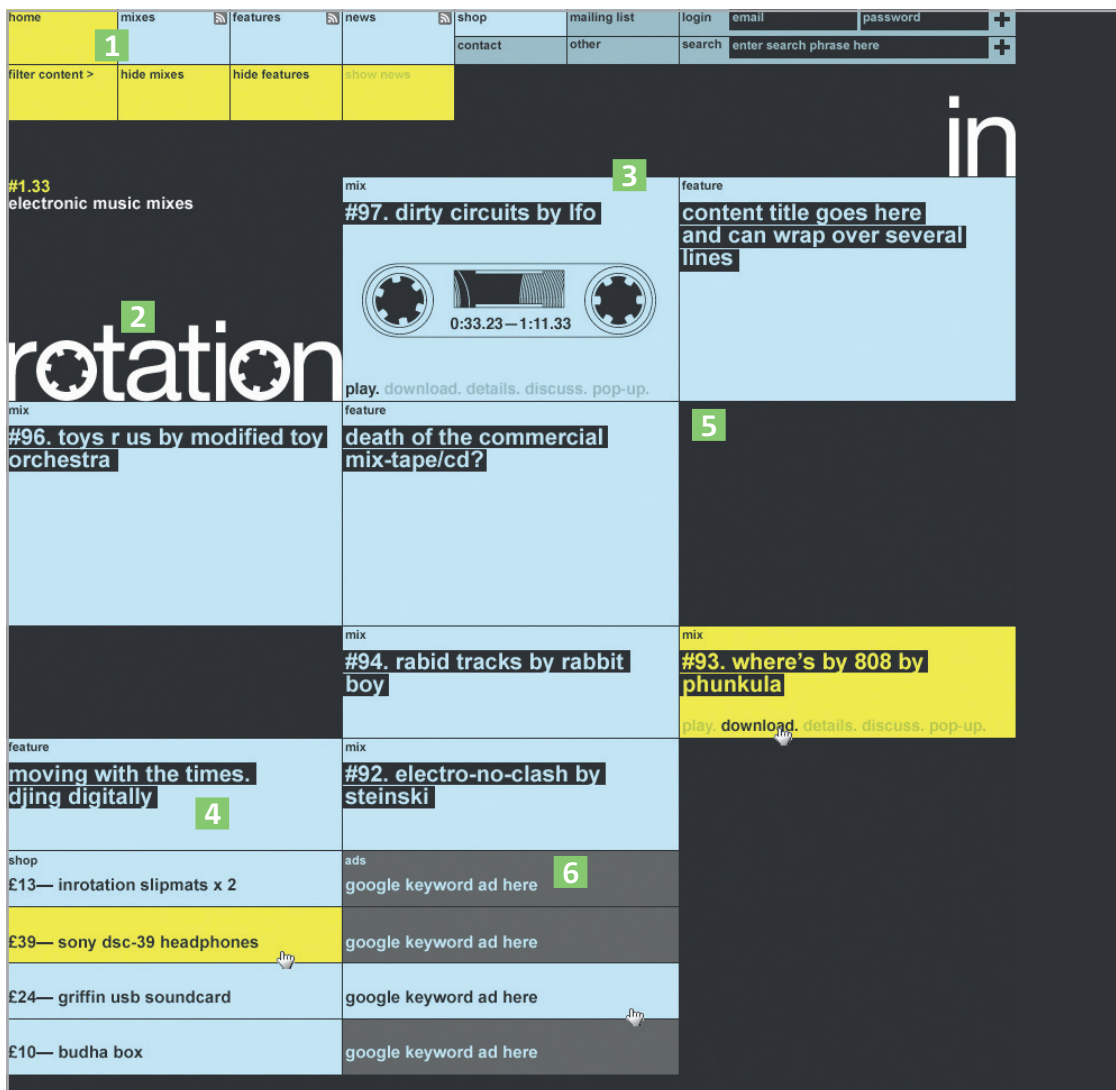
You can see what I've been listening to by going to www.last.fm/user/domtak. By the looks of it, the Beastie Boys and The Monkees!

Close up Dom Murphy's solution

1 Navigation The main site navigation acts as the core content (mixes, features and news), and are larger than the smaller, additional navigation. Each of the three content types has its own RSS feed.

2 Logo/masthead The logo playfully splits across the page. As the site window is resized, the logo stays aligned to the edge. Content blocks also wrap as the site adjusts its design.

3 Tape Mixes can be played directly on the page (Flash), downloaded or opened in a pop-up. Additionally, all content has a detail page and a discussion board for user-submitted feedback.



4 Content blocks The most recent content displays at full size. Older content is at half-size. The content blocks would dynamically adjust themselves based on the browser width.

5 Negative space The homepage filter has the news set to be hidden, revealing holes in the design. These spaces, where the news would be, create dynamic negative space, which works well as a design feature.

6 Shop and Google keywords This is space for additional content, such as shop products or adverts.

About the site

Our fictional site, In Rotation, is an online electronic music magazine. The idea is that, each week, DJ mixes (or radio shows) are published as podcasts and are supported by text-based features, interviews and news.

Having run StickerNation for many years, we're aware of the amount of time and expense required to source and format images. With In Rotation — as music is the driving force — we made the bold decision to remove all images. By doing this, the design has naturally become typographic. After experimenting with various colour palettes and assigning content types to colours, we chose to limit the palette to an off state (light blue)

and a highlight state (yellow) for the content, which all sits on a dark grey background. We think this look fits well within the electronic music realm. Navigation sits at the top, with subnavigation appearing below. The page can "grow" down to allow for additional subnavigation, though we'd prefer to limit the site to three levels. The subnavigation on the homepage is actually a set of filters, which hide and reveal the main content. The masthead playfully wraps over two lines and is followed by the site content split into two content sizes, with most recent being largest. In the design — due to space — we've made just the latest five items bigger. In reality, this would be more. The masthead would wrap at all times, with the "in" always aligned to the right.

Close up Jonathan Moore's solution

1 Identity Clean and concise branding was created for GearBoost, along with the supporting mantra "style + tech". The brand's subtle green colour is utilised throughout the site in relation to the vidcast episodes.

2 Navigation A green-to-blue colour spectrum is evenly spread through the five primary sections of the site. The colour spectrum continues into the content, to signify which section the content belongs to.

3 Episode feature The Flash episode feature will auto-rotate through the current episode's primary content. Through the use of appropriate motion, design the user's eye will be drawn to the content.



4 Gear Viewer This will rotate through four featured products that are apart of The Lab (tech) and The Studio (style) sections of the site.

5 Blog The gear blog will allow for frequent updates to write on new products between the productions of the vidcast episodes.

6 Advertising Great content, especially vidcasts, take a lot of time and effort to produce. In order to support the site's efforts, advertising that targets the demographic will be placed into the site.

About the site

GearBoost is a new vidcast and blog that focuses on high-end consumer products with superior styling and technology. The goal of GearBoost is to focus on the overlap of style and technology, appealing to a special, niche market.

For GearBoost, content is king, so a supporting design was created that wouldn't distract the user from content. Utilising a dark background, contrast is created to enable the products to "pop" on the page. The subtle design concept is based around the use of a green-to-blue colour spectrum, to create glowing light on the background of the page. To support the simplistic

design, I went with the clean typeface, Klavika. Although the primary focus of the site are the vidcasts, I approached the design as a blog that's regularly updated. Between vidcasts, the site will feature products that may not be included in the episode, yet capture the user's passion for style. Blogging software such as WordPress or Movable Type could be leveraged as the back-end for the site.

Originally, I based the site design on a fictitious company, but as the design and concept progressed, I realised that this is a vidcast/blog that I would visit on a regular basis if only it existed. As a result, I registered the domain name www.GearBoost.com! Thanks to this build-off, I have yet another exciting project in the queue to keep me up at night. ●

Expert info



Jonathan Moore's month

What have I been doing? I've taken on the task of learning ActionScript 3.0. The possibilities that the newest version of Flash opens up allows for a lot of new, creative interactive concepts.

Sites I've visited www.behance.net The new network features creative portfolios, projects, and collaborations across many realms of design.

joshspear.com This blog features art, design, fashion, gadgets and music.

thefwa.com The FWA is a daily award site featuring the best interactive sites.

What have I been watching? I've drifted away from my love of TV and have picked up books. I'm reading *The Art of the Start* by Guy Kawasaki, *Made to Stick* by Chip and Dan Heath, and *Essential ActionScript 3.0* by Colin Mook.

What have I been listening to? Spoon, The Hives, Lemon Jelly, Queen, Saul Williams, Wolfmother, The Exies and Primus.