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Link to my home page

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## **A report outlining the design and evaluation of the promotional website for Joanna Forest**

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## Summary

This reports explains briefly how the promotional website for Joanna Forest was constructed. I have explained more thoroughly my thinking about the layout and design and the problems I overcame.

## Introduction

People who arrive at websites don't read pages but scan them (Nielsen). By applying good design principles, the intended users of the website can navigate easily, get the information they are looking for and be entertained

## Methodology

The software used to construct the multimedia promotional website is listed, in order, in the appendix.

1. Access the competition and discuss with the client their needs, preferences and ideas
2. Conceptualise the design and discuss & agree design decisions with the client
3. Preparation: I made all the components and resource files, including MP3 files, Flash FLV files, JPEGs.
4. Build: I used these files to construct the multimedia scenarios in Adobe Flash, then saved the scenarios as SWF files to be used in Adobe Dreamweaver

I constructed the basic layout and tabbed navigation and footer in Notepad++ and then brought those seven pages into Dreamweaver.

5. Upload: With the seven pages ready, I imported the content including the multimedia content I had prepared.
6. Validation

7. Test: I thoroughly tested all the pages, across different browsers and for accessibility
8. Show the client

## Design decisions

Before I started design and construction, I looked at the competition to see what they are doing, what they are not doing and what they think their users expectations are. (Baxley 2002)

### Audience

The users of Joanna's website, in order of importance are likely to be:-

1. Casting Agents
2. Fans
3. Friends and Family

### Website goal:

Showing off Joanna in the best possible way to potential employers is the most important goal of this website.

I can assume that a potential employer will be looking at other possible actors to invite for an audition and so they must be able to get the information they need from Joanna's website quickly.

Everything has to be clear and professional look and feel is essential if she is to be taken seriously.

When the site is live I can get more accurate information of the technology profile of the users.

Reporting software e.g. Google Analytics provides end user information on the type of machine they are using, which browser, screen size and internet connection. This will help develop a more appropriate website in the future. In addition The user profiles ( or personas) will become more accurate and so content and layout can be changed to become more relevant. An online survey or questionnaire will also provide useful insights into users/ personas needs.

### To achieve the current design

I asked Joanna to send me a list of websites that she liked (full list in the appendix).

It was [www.conormichaelsheridan.com](http://www.conormichaelsheridan.com) that was the closest to this project's specification.

It had a clear structure, plus it had in my opinion a professional look and feel.

### Choice of Colour

The black background, giving out no light works well (Gotz) with no flicker, in addition I felt it gave the most professional look. I chose white text throughout to provide the most contrast, except for the link colours.

Gotz says that you should avoid highly intensive contrasts, but I don't think that this is the case here because the black is very restful and there is enough space around the text to make it readable.

### Choice of Font

Often a screen renders serifs badly (Sevilla 2007) so I have used a sans-serif font throughout. To reach the widest audience I used the most commonly available true type. To make the text scalable and satisfy accessibility requirements I used ems, rather than points. (Gotz)

#### Link colours

The colours of the links I have chosen are muted to complement the overall design style of the website. I agree with Sevilla (2007, p281) when she says that different link colours are fine as long as they consistent. We have moved on since Jakob Nielsen published his top ten web page errors in 1996 where this appeared as point eight. I have kept underlining just for links (Gotz)

#### Navigation

Sevilla says users ask : “Where am I? Where can I go? How will I get there? and How can I get back to where I once was?” (Sevilla 2007)

I choose tabbed navigation as according to Krug it is “self-evident, easy to see and distinctive” (Krug 2006). Tabs answer the basic user questions listed above instantly. I gave the navigation more visual appeal by making the tabs of the pages transparent so that any future header image shows through (but currently just plain black). I sign-posted “Where am I” by making the page the user is on solid pink with the name of the page in black. The tabs expand with the text if some one should choose larger text for accessibility reasons. For the tabbed navigation I used a tutorial from Andrew 2007. Navigation of all the pages is also available via the footer.

#### Media Pages

Joanna is a big fan of Apple products so for the Audio page to have her sound files played through the latest generation of Apple nano seemed the obvious choice. The Nano and it's buttons I drew in Fireworks. The actionscript I found at <http://schoolofflash.com>

Rather than have 5 Nano players, one for each sound file I thought it would be better to use the Next and Previous buttons to good effect and play all 5 sound files through the same Nano player. For this the 5 sound files had to be called in using an XML file.

The specification stated that the fade-in and fade-out should be 1 second only but I felt that with Joanna's voice 4 seconds seemed more natural.

For the Video page the clips I am showing are from a pantomime production and so grand curtains were I thought a good choice. The buttons are from the components library and I learnt how to use them to control the FLV sequence from Adobe's own tutorials.

# Problems

## 1. Audio

Problem: The client, Joanna sent me an audio CD which contains a file that was in .cda, a format not supported by Soundbooth.

Solution: To overcome this I downloaded a piece of software called Express Rip and used this to save the .cda the file as Windows Media file and MPEG3.

Then I could use SoundBooth to take the bits I needed and added fade in and fade out. Also her voice reel sequences on the CD were all in 8 – 12 second chunks so I have looped some of them to make them up to the 20 seconds required in the project specification.

## 2. Video

Problem: After converting the VOB file using DVDx to AVI, I found that the sound was not appearing in Premier Pro.

Solution: I recoded the VOB file to MPEG2 which opened up fine in Premier Pro.

However, the video quality was not as good, so I matched up the sound from the MPEG2 with the video of the AVI to gave the best results.

Although on the third twenty second sequence Joanna starts her song with her back to the camera and this made it difficult to match her voice to her. Persevered, job done.

## 3. Video encoding

Problem: To encode the video I had understood from the lecture that I should use the Sorenson Spark video codec.

Solution: This did not work with Flash Player 9 on my machine so I looked up the reason on the Adobe website: [http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flash/quickstart/video\\_encoder/](http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flash/quickstart/video_encoder/)

Adobe said;-

“The encoding profiles are based on the Flash Player version for which you intend to publish content and the data rate at which you want your video content to be encoded. If you choose an encoding profile using Flash Player 8 or later, the On2 VP6 video codec is used to encode the video. If you choose an encoding profile using Flash Player 7 or earlier, the Sorenson Spark video codec is used to encode the video.”

I then used the On2 VP6 which does not have such a memorable name but worked.

## 4. XML driven Apple Nano Player – didn't work to begin with.

Looked on the web and found a tutorial at <http://blog.six4rty.ch/tutorials> but could not get it to work and spent a lot of time on this

Solution:- searched the web and tried another at SchoolofFlash and this did work.

## 5.Pre-loader sequence – didn't work to begin with

I originally added the pre-loader to the stage show but the action script conflicted

Solution:- I saved the Stage show as a swf and brought it in into the pre-loader sequence.

## 6. Browser Testing

Problem: When running the audio page in IE7 I got this Action Script Error #1065.

```
sof_mc.addEventListener(MouseEvent.CLICK, playAd);
```

```
function playAd(e:Event):void  
{  
    ad_mc.play();  
}
```

.

Solution: I searched on internet forums till I found the explanation of the action script error code that was causing it found that the above action script was for a button that I had deleted so I deleted the code and all worked.

## Conclusions

### Overall evaluation

My intention was to get a structure in place with the multimedia elements working and then consult the client, Joanna, on the look and feel. I met with her on 12<sup>th</sup> March 09 and she was very happy with the design as it is.

For me personally this project has taught me the most out of all the assignments I have done so far. I initially had no clue how to prepare the resources let alone achieve the final result and had to learn very quickly and delighted that I was able to complete the assignment.

### Future Development

I have used the W3C to validate all of the pages. There only a few very straight forward errors that I will correct before the site gets hosted.

This site will be up and hosted in the near future. Joanna wants some additional material, photos, song reel and more video footage. Also I will add a contact page.

I would also like to animate the curtains for the stage show. I have already prepared the flash file for this.

Joanna is well known in her industry and will tell all her friends (actors/singers) enthusiastically about her new website. So I expect to be very busy as a result.

# Bibliography

## Books

Adobe Creative Team (2007) Adobe Soundbooth CS3 Classroom in a book, Adobe Press  
English, J (2006) Flash 8 Training from the Source, Macromedia Publishing  
Lowery, J (2007) Dreamweaver CS3 Bible, Wiley  
Reihart,R & Dowd,S (2007) Flash CS3 Professional Bible, Wiley  
Rachel Andrew (2007) The CSS Anthology, Sitepoint  
Christine Sevilla (2002) Information Design Desk Reference  
V Götz, (2003) Type – for the Internet and other Digital Media,AVA Publishing

## Websites

<http://blog.six4rty.ch/tutorials/>  
<http://schoolofflash.com/> -Source of basic construction file, and xml file

## Software Used

### For Resources Prep.

#### 1. Express Rip & Adobe CS3 Soundbooth

Audio - To turn the CD fire into MPEG

Express Rip

<http://www.nch.com.au/rip/index.html?gclid=CND8gdHR95gCFQ6vQwodwGxblg>

Then to prepare the five 5 MPEG3 soundfiles

Adobe SoundBooth

#### 2. DIVx & DVDx

Video – To compress the DVD VOB file down to MPEG

<http://www.divx.com/en/products/software> for the codec and DVDx 2.10 to do the actual conversion to AVI.

#### 3 Adobe Premier Pro

For editing the video sequence to make three 20 second sequences and match them to the Audio soundtrack.

#### 4. Adobe CS3 Flash Video Encoder

To convert the AVI file to Flash flv

Learnt how to at:-

[http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flash/quickstart/video\\_encoder/](http://www.adobe.com/devnet/flash/quickstart/video_encoder/)

#### 5. Adobe CS3 Flash

To make the stage show fla including the button components file and save the swf.

Learnt how to at:-

[http://www.adobe.com/designcenter/video\\_workshop/](http://www.adobe.com/designcenter/video_workshop/)

## 6. Adobe CS3 Flash

To make the preloader sequence to load the stage\_show.swf

How to do this I found on:-

<http://monkeyflash.com/tutorials/custom-preloader/>

## 7. Maya Autodesk

To make the 3D logo and export as a JPEG

## 8 Adobe CS3 Fireworks

For drawing of the buttons and iPod Nano, picture sizing, tabs for tabbed navigation and stage for the Stage Show.

## For Website construction

### 9. Notepad++

To make the basic layout and the tabbed navigation and footer.

### 10. Adobe CS3 Dreamweaver

To insert all the Flash media elements, photos and add the text.

### 11. Firefox and Internet Explorer 7.0

Testing of the pages.

## Credits

### Audio sequences - Extracted from Compact Disc

Actors One-Stop Shop ([www.actorsone-stopshop.com](http://www.actorsone-stopshop.com))

Recorded June 2004

### Video Sequence – Extracted from DVD

Pedigree Punks DVD of a Qdos Entertainment Pantomime

Recorded at the Mayflower Theatre Southampton January 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005

### Photos

Taken June 2007

Actors Photographer - Peter Simpkin

<http://www.petersimpkin.co.uk>

Stage Curtains

[www.medinafreemasons.org](http://www.medinafreemasons.org)

Apple nano that I based my drawing on.

[www.gosale.com](http://www.gosale.com)

## List of Websites liked by Joanna

[greamekinniburgh.com](http://greamekinniburgh.com)

[leilabirch.com](http://leilabirch.com)

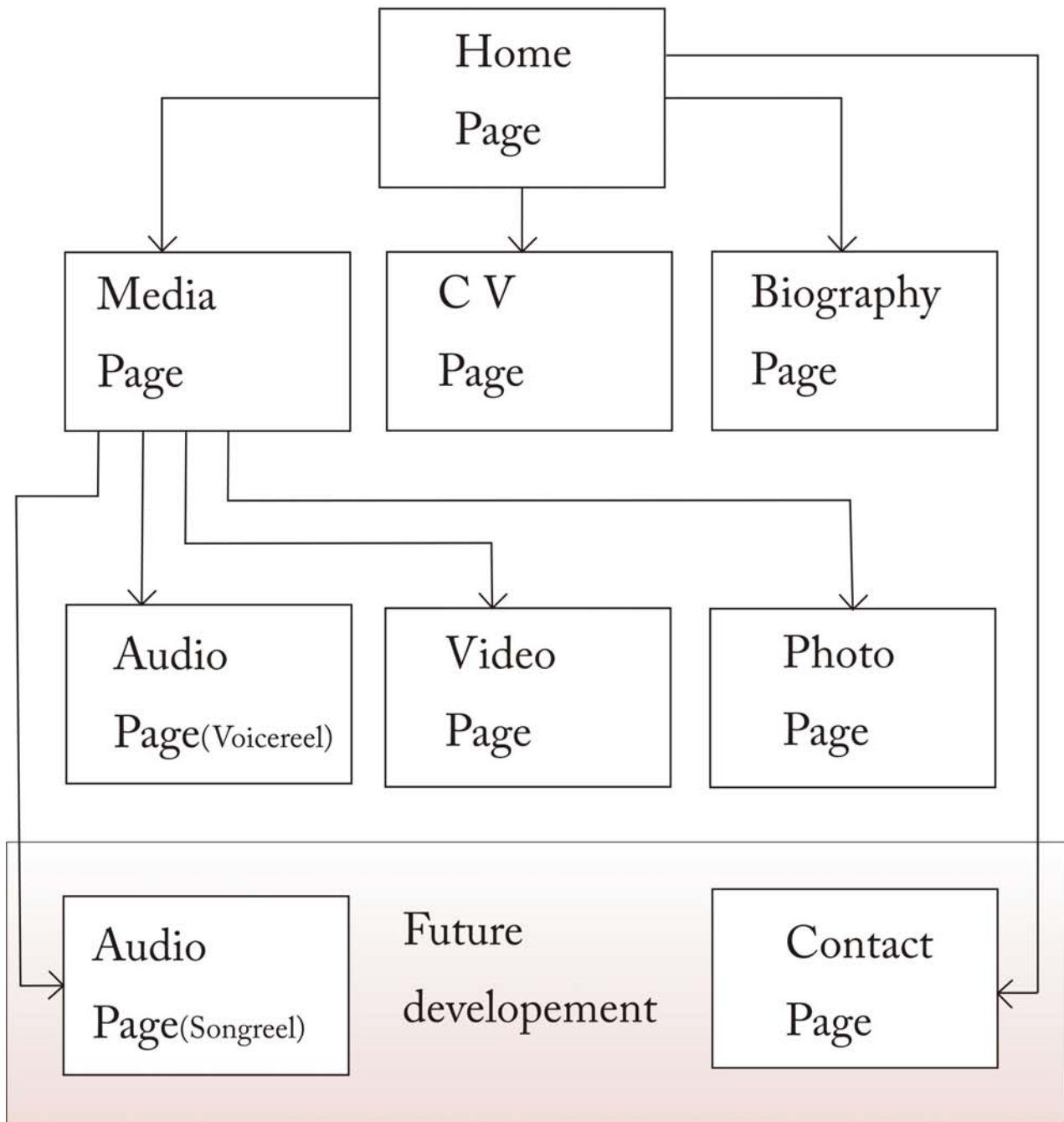
[claireanstey.co.uk](http://claireanstey.co.uk)

[sarah-jane.biz](http://sarah-jane.biz)



conormichaelsheridan.com – actual inspiration for Joanna’s website

# Site Structure Diagram - Promotional Website for Joanna Forest



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