

Joomla! Review: Jom Comment

I was browsing the Joomla Extensions site , and stumbled upon a very cool Component / Plugin called " Jom Comment " that adds very nice article "commenting" capabilities to Joomla, giving your site visitors the ability to read and post comments about articles. Jom Comment leverages AJAX, presenting a clean, slick Web 2.0 style commenting system. Itâ??s very complete, but its strength is in its simplicity.

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Read on for a quick reviewâ?¦.

To preface this review, I have to say that I have never installed or tested any other commenting Components in Joomla. I have used them on countless other Joomla-based sites, but I never actually researched and tested them out for myself for use on my site. There are a number of other commenting choices out there, so by all means investigate them, but Jom Comments really caught my eye, and it delivers.

Jom Comment is found at http://www.azrul.com/ , and adds very simple, yet elegant Web 2.0 style commenting capabilities to Joomla. While reading an article, a site visitor can read any existing article comments as well as write comments of his own. And because it uses AJAX, it all happens right within the page without requiring full page reloads between actions. This saves bandwidth for both the site and the user, and it makes the user experience much cleaner. In fact, Jom Comment can even be configured to "auto update" so that you can see new comments as they are posted! Very cool! It also includes an RSS feature letting your site visitors link to article comments through any RSS reader!

Jom Comment is a commercial addon, but donâ??t let that scare you off. The Standard verison only costs $8.50(US) and it is really worth every penny. The author jokes about the low price on his site, but the fact is that because it is so low in cost, even if it doesnâ??t work out for you, you arenâ??t out that much at all. A limited trial version is available, and there is a "Professional" version in the works, but the Standard version seems to have just what I wanted in a commenting addon.

What it looks like

When you are viewing an article, you see a new "Add Comments (n)" link below the article:

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When you open the article by either clicking the article link or the Add comments link, you see the article normally, but now, at the bottom is a comment section:

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When you submit the comment, it immediately appears below the article vor you to view:

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So from the site visitorâ??s perspective, thatâ??s about it. Itâ??s clean, simple to use, and nicely implemented.

But what about the back-end? What kind of control does the site administrator have? Here is a look at the Settingsâ?¦.

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The Settings

Jom Comment is very configurable letting you tailor many functions to your needs. For example, you can determine if guests can post comments or not, you can determine on which sections comments will be displayed, you can determine if the comments will be moderated or automatically posted, and a host of other goodies.

You can even configure Jom Comment to email you whenever a new comment is posted. This can be nice to help keep an eye on comments and to help to prevent abuse without requiring moderation. And hereâ??s a tip: Use a "plus" email address as your notification address. For example, enter "some.user+comment@gmail.com". If you have a Gmail account (or any email provider that supports "plus" addressing), set up a Filter in Gmail to automatically label these emails. This makes managing frequent comment notifications a snap!

Here is a screenshot of the main Settings screen showing the main settings:

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Security

Unfortunatly, there are unscrupulous people who abuse open systems, so security must be addressed. Jom Comment provides several levels of security to help prevent or reduce comment abuse. Here is the "Spam" settings screen:

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Layout

Youcan also tailor the layout to your needs. Jom Comment is template-based, so presumably, you could create some very interesting and flexible layouts for your commenting. Here is the Layout screen:

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Captcha

You can also leverage Captcha http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Captcha authentication to help reduce automated comment spam. Captcha presents a graphic image containing a string of random characters. The user must correctly enter the characters to successfully submit the comment. One thing I like about this implementation is that the characters arenâ??t so distorted that they are too difficult to readâ??a problem with many Captcha implementations.

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Support

OK, so my initial install had some glitches. I installed the Component, and then said to myself, "Now what?" Unfortunatly, the .ZIP file did not contain any documentation, and seemed to be missing some pieces. So, I emailed Azrul, and literally within minutes, he replied with an appology and a fixed file. Apparantly, he was in the middle of updating some things, and a bad version of the distribution slipped in. Anyway, I uninstalled and re-installed the new version, and it has been smooth sailing since! Thanks to Azrul for your swift and effective support!

Bottom Line

Overall, I think Jom Commentâ??s strength is in its simplicity. It seems to embrace the "UNIX way of thinking": Build a solid, simple program that solidly and simply does what itâ??s meant to do. It was easy to install, easy to use, and best of all, itâ??s unintrusiveness fits very well into my site!

So check out Jom Comment and see if it is something that would enhance your site to provide your visitors a better experience!

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