Is WordPress Too Complex For Most Sites? via @sejournal, @martinibuster

Joost de Valk, the founder of the Yoast SEO plugin, provoked a discussion and some controversy with a recent blog post that posited that the concept of needing a content management system (CMS) to publish a website is increasingly outdated. This insight came to him after migrating his site to a static Astro-based website with the help of AI.

Joost wrote that the reality today is that many businesses and individuals need nothing more complicated than a static website and that a CMS is overkill for those simple needs.

He affirmed that CMSs are vital for building complex websites, but he also makes the case that the complexity problem that a CMS solves is not representative of the needs of most websites:

> *"Let me be clear: there are real use cases where a CMS earns its complexity. …These aren't edge cases. They represent a lot of websites.*
>
> *But they don't represent most websites. Most websites are a handful of pages and maybe a blog."*

His article shares eight key observations:

1. Creating a website was never exclusively a conversation about a CMS
2. Yet CMS options are more widespread than ever website options

3. Growing trend right now is away from CMS
4. Joost de Valk joined the trend away from a CMS to Astro.
5. Static HTML websites are as SEO-friendly as CMS-based websites.
6. Simplicity outperforms complexity for many needs.
7. Content Management Systems remain the best choice for complex requirements.
8. The case for a CMS will become less relevant once users are able to chat with an AI in order to publish content.

Joost explained that last point:

> *"I built this entire Astro site with AI assistance. The next step, editing content through conversation, is not a big leap. It's a small one.*
>
> *…When editing a static site becomes as easy as sending a message, the CMS's core advantage for the majority of websites disappears."*

For some, it might be difficult to imagine publishing a website without a CMS, and others believe that WordPress SEO plugins provide an advantage over other platforms. But for those of us who have been in SEO for a long time, we know from experience that static HTML sites are generally faster than any CMS-based website.

Before WordPress existed and became viable, I used to spin up static HTML sites from components I hand coded, including PHP-based websites. Those sites ranked exceptionally well and easily handled DDoS-level traffic. Although I didn't have to deal with Schema structured data because it hadn't been invented yet, automating title tags and meta descriptions across a website was a relatively trivial thing to do. No plugins are necessary to SEO a static HTML website, and this is one of the insights that de Valk discovered after transitioning his blog away from WordPress.

He shared:

> *"I built Yoast SEO, so you'd think this is where a static site falls short. It doesn't. Everything Yoast SEO does on WordPress, I can do in Astro. XML sitemaps, meta tags, canonical URLs, Open Graph tags, structured data with full JSON-LD schema graphs, auto-generated social share images: it's all there. In fact, it's easier to get right on a static site because you control the entire HTML output. There's no theme or plugin conflict messing with your head tags. No render-blocking resources injected by something you forgot you installed. What you build is what gets served.*
>
> *The SEO features that a CMS plugin provides aren't magic. They're HTML output. And any modern static site generator can produce that same HTML, often cleaner."*

It's true, the web pages Joost's blog serves today are a fraction of the size of what they were when published using WordPress. One URL on de Valk's website that I checked (/healthy-doubt) went from over 1,400 lines of code to only 180 lines of code. Furthermore, something de Valk didn't mention is that the Astro-based HTML rendered with only eight minor HTML validation issues. WordPress sites tend to render with scores and even hundreds of invalid HTML issues.

Although Google can crawl and index the code that underlies the average WordPress website, invalid HTML nevertheless runs counter to the most fundamental goal of SEO: to make it easy for search engines to crawl, parse, and understand the content.

Article Provoked Controversy

WordPress co-founder Matt Mullenweg had an interesting response:

> *Glad you're finally off @WordPress, which was inevitable*

> *after your and @karimmarucchi ‘s failed coup attempt. Seems FAIR!*
>
> *— Matt Mullenweg (@photomatt) March 22, 2026*

Many developers responded against Joost’s article but many others agreed with him.

Dipak Gajjar (@dipakcgajjar) tweeted:

> *“A properly configured WordPress site with object cache and a CDN in front is already near-static in terms of delivery. You just get the CMS on top for free.*
>
> *Good luck @jdevalk convincing a non-technical client to push markdown files to Git just to publish a blog post. WordPress exists because content management is a real problem. Static tools solve the developer experience, not the client experience.”*
>
> *@cameronjonesweb asked:*
>
> *“Hands up who thinks it’s a great idea to make their clients update their website content by committing markdown files to GitHub…”*

@andrewhoyer pushed back on Joost’s article:

> *“Blogs would never have become popular without software. Only a tiny fraction of people can edit HTML and CSS by hand. Just because a few of us can doesn’t make static sites a good option.”*

But it wasn’t all verbal tomatoes getting thrown at Joost, there were some roses tossed his way, too.

Alex Schneider (@Aslex) agreed that AI is lowering the barrier to creating and maintaining static websites.

Schneider tweeted:

> *"Static sites aren't just for people who know HTML anymore. AI tools already let anyone generate and publish content to static sites with zero coding. And let's be honest, traditional blogs are dying anyway."*

@LusciousPotate shared their opinion that WordPress is outdated:

> *"Constant WordPress updates, constant plug-in updates, constant security issues. It's old, the tech stack is outdated; it needs to be put out to pasture."*

Is WordPress Still Relevant?

Generating a static site with Astro still requires some technical knowledge, and at this point in time it's nowhere near as easy as using WordPress to get online. Many hosting platforms simplify the process of creating websites with WordPress, including with the use of AI. WordPress 7.0 looks to be the start of the most profound changes to WordPress, quite likely making it even easier for anyone to publish a website.

So yes, a strong case can be made for the continued relevance of content management systems, especially WordPress. Yet it may be that static website generator platforms may become a thing in the near future.

Read the de Valk's blog post here: Do you need a CMS?

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https://www.searchenginejournal.com/is-wordpress-too-complex-for-most-sites/570274/