

AMC Makes Movie History With Image-Rich Mobile-First Website



INDUSTRY
Entertainment

HEADQUARTERS
Leawood, Kansas

SIZE
30,000 employees

\$4 billion revenue
2,807 screens in 353 European theaters and
7,755 screens in 593 American theaters

Optimized 7M+ movie-related imagery

178M customer engagements in 3 months driven through visually rich emails

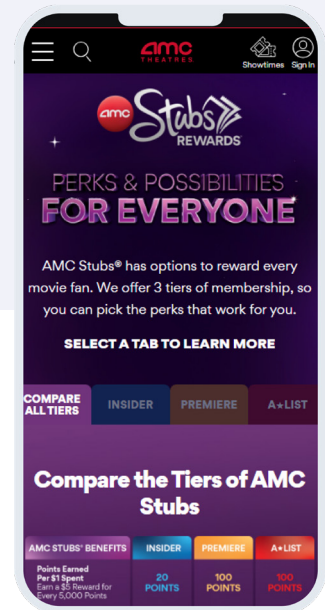
90% time savings via automated image transformations

AMC, the world's largest movie chain, uses Cloudinary to ensure movie fans always have a smooth visual-first experience, whether they're using the app to buy tickets or opening an email to learn more about the newest blockbuster. And when customer excitement for two highly anticipated blockbusters led to the cultural phenomenon known as "Barbenheimer," Cloudinary made sure that eager AMC customers had the best possible experience from the start.

ABOUT

A Consistent History of Moviegoing 'Firsts'

With approximately 900 theaters, 10,000 screens across the globe, and roughly \$4 billion in revenue, AMC is the world's largest movie exhibition company. With roots stretching back to 1920, AMC has been a consistent pioneer in great customer experience. It opened the first multiplex in 1962



and megaplex in 1995, as well as power-recliner seats, offering premium large format experiences and playing not only the latest Hollywood releases but also independent programming. In the last few decades, AMC has also been a sector leader in generating greater guest engagement through innovative loyalty and subscription programs, an engaging website, and mobile apps.

THE CHALLENGE

A More Media-Intensive, Mobile-First Website

In 2016 AMC initiated a complete redesign of its main AMC website, aiming to make the design more responsive and offer a better mobile experience.

Those goals prompted Travis Maddox, AMC's senior director of application development - consumer, and his team to find a solution for ensuring that its more than 7 million images looked captivating and performed optimally on all mobile devices. This was particularly important for movie images, which are so key to attracting customers into theaters.

According to Maddox, mobile images needed to look and perform well with the smallest possible footprint. "Originally, we were looking for ways to better serve images on the site versus a self-hosted or standard CDN," recalls Maddox. "Cloudinary emerged as the obvious choice when we realized our media-intensive website needed to serve up images much faster than an out-of-the-box solution could support — especially on mobile, which was getting bigger and bigger for us every day."

Two epic-scale cinema events recently tested this approach. The first was the Barbenheimer cultural phenomenon that saw movie lovers choosing to view two highly-anticipated movie releases, "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer," on the same opening weekend in July 2023. Excitement for and sales of the movie openings trended online and in the media, driving ticket sales to the stratosphere. In fact, four days before their release, AMC had already seen more than 40,000 moviegoers booking seats for both.

But the initial load wasn't to let up immediately. In the 30 days surrounding Barbenheimer's release, AMC's web and mobile sites had 22 million total users and 57 million active sessions, and took in \$100 million in revenue. Most brands would envy such high numbers, and AMC was delighted — but the priority was ensuring both web and mobile platforms didn't buckle under the pressure.

The second epic-scale event came just a few months later when AMC confirmed it was to broadcast the Taylor Swift Eras Tour concert film — taking the artist's five-continent stadium tour to the masses. As soon as the announcement broke, fans shattered AMC's advance ticket sales records with \$26 million in online bookings by the end of first day, making it the highest advance sales revenue day in the company's entire history.

THE CLOUDINARY SOLUTION

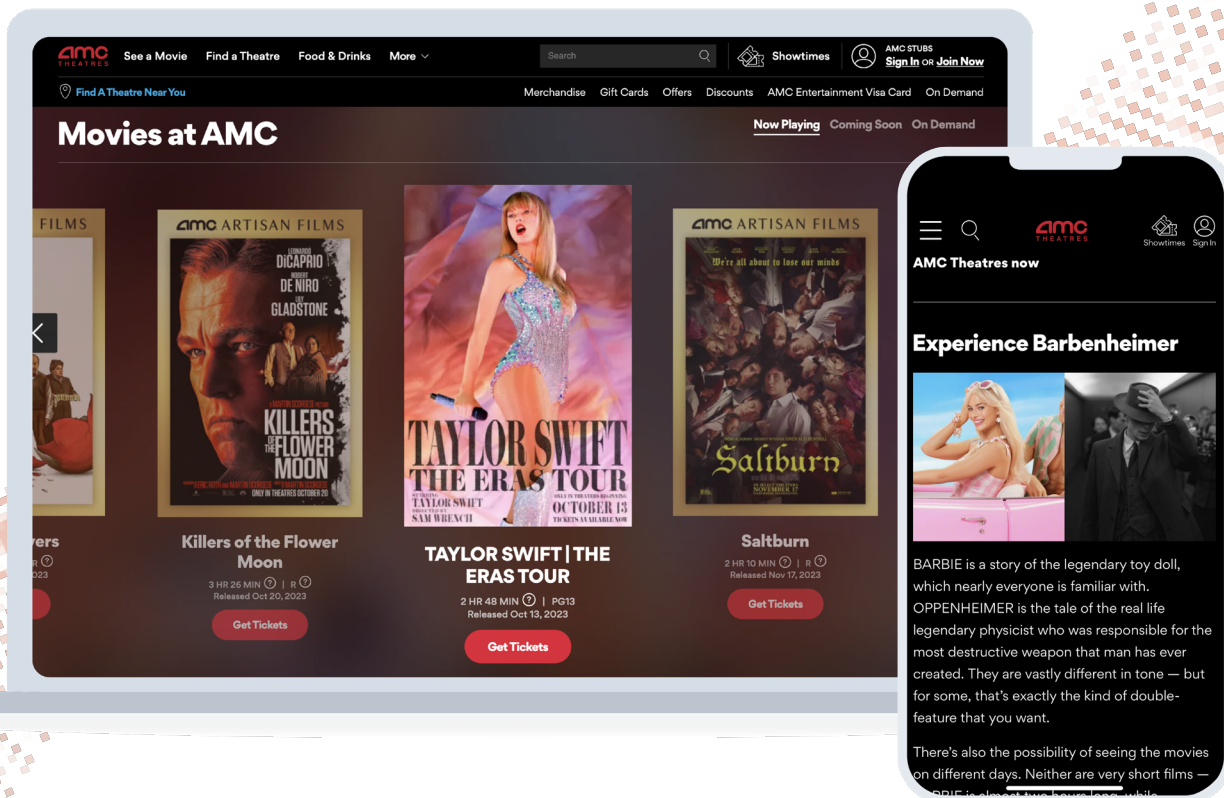
A Scalable and Responsive Platform, Transformations on Tap

The good news is that some smart platform choices during big redesign time mean AMC's infrastructure is as scalable and resilient as any Marvel superhero team would need it to be.

Maddox explains, "We have a lot of integration points with Cloudinary, where people, through our CMS, go in and select the movie they want. They say, 'I want Barbie,' and then it presents them with creative assets like movie stills, posters, various versions of posters; every new movie created has probably between 15 and 20 images, so as movies are created, the more we have to work with.

All that's attached to a bunch of metadata and APIs on our back end, and those integration points where we automate uploads directly to Cloudinary through your APIs is now very efficient."

AMC reaps big benefits from using Cloudinary's transformations. These all get used in operations, such as when adding watermarks and other prompts on movie promotion images for use on social media. For example, when a user shares a movie ticket, it must be delivered with appropriate wording. That entire banner and all the associated copy is a Cloudinary transformation that AMC overlays the image on as it's shared.



“We have several points of automation in our pipeline where image assets delivered from our partner studios get auto-uploaded to Cloudinary and associated with the appropriate metadata on the AMC side. We love the simplicity of being able to apply transformations in the URL to any image, and we have also used a number of the tool’s features beyond that. Our team of content admins who manage media assets for our consumer-facing properties are always telling us how impressed they are with Cloudinary.”

—Travis Maddox, Senior Director, Application Development - Consumer, AMC Theatres

Working alongside Cloudinary, AMC also uses React and GraphQL for web development, and Google Flutter as its mobile app development engine.

THE RESULTS

Transforming the Mobile Experience and Email Marketing

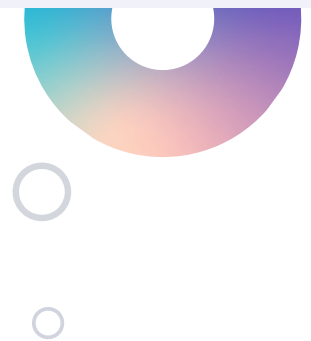
When asked to sum up the benefits, Maddox gives “two enthusiastic thumbs up” to Cloudinary’s image transformations. He shares, “Being able to apply transforms to rapidly optimize images from a sizing, quality, and format perspective — especially to people on mobile devices — is immensely valuable to us. We use `f_auto` to always give the newest and best image format, which is a great feature. Overall we’re seeing at least 90% savings here for us in terms of image optimization.”

Cloudinary also benefits AMC’s email campaigns, complementing Salesforce Marketing Cloud. As Maddox explains, “Our email campaigns use the same posters we use on the website. By using Cloudinary transforms yet again, we can keep that email size down drastically and cram way more media into the email. It definitely helps our ability to deliver media-heavy emails without people ever complaining that they consume too much inbox space.”

“If we hadn’t found a way to guarantee that customers were viewing the right-sized images for their phone’s display and their bandwidth connection, we would have had to sacrifice features of our app for everyone just to ensure that some users didn’t experience slow loading times. It’s a huge boon that Cloudinary allows our app experience to be both media-intensive and high-performing.”

—Travis Maddox, Senior Director, Application Development - Consumer, AMC Theatres

And what about the experience of being a Cloudinary customer? Here Maddox is unequivocal: “I know people keep saying this — but ‘it just works!’ From mine and my team’s perspective, Cloudinary is a 10/10 in terms of ease of use. And when it’s on our shoulders to make sure that ticket sales for the world’s biggest box office events like Barbenheimer and Taylor Swift’s ‘The Eras’ tour runs smoothly, this really matters.”



About Cloudinary

Cloudinary is the image and video technology platform that enables the world’s most engaging brands to deliver transformative visual experiences at global scale. More than 1.5 million users and 10,000 customers, including Apartment Therapy, Bleacher Report, Bombas, Grubhub, Hinge, NBC, Mediavine, Minted, Paul Smith and Peloton, rely on Cloudinary to bring their campaigns, apps and sites to life. With the world’s most powerful image and video APIs backed by industry-leading artificial intelligence and patented technology, Cloudinary offers a single source of truth for brands to manage, transform, optimize, and deliver visual experiences at scale. As a result, the most engaging brands across all industries are seeing [up to a 203% ROI](#) using Cloudinary with benefits including faster time to market, higher user satisfaction and increased engagement and conversions.