



**User Name:** =

**Date and Time:** = 2025-04-29

**Job Number:** = 251572390

## **Documents (76)**

**Client/Matter:** -None-

**Search Terms:** AI Slop

**Search Type:** NaturalAnd

**Content Type**

news

**Narrowed by**

: Zeitungen Quellensprache: English Zeitachse: 01 Apr, 2024 an 01 Apr, 2025

1. The AI Studio Ghibli trend is an insult to art and artists
2. Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft
3. ChatGPT's Studio Ghibli AI trend sparks debate over creativity vs copyright violation
4. Apple's AI isn't a letdown. AI is the letdown
5. From spit to bankruptcy: the rise and fall of 23andMe
6. The Electric State X Reviews: Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt starrer leaves netizens dismayed; 'like AI slop'
7. Google and the AI left behind, by Josep Maria Ganyet
8. From Neva to A Highland Song, the Baftas are a reminder of how creative games can be
9. PETER HOSKIN reviews Split Fiction: It's stranger than fiction (and twice as fun)!

10. Trump's rollback of AI guardrails leaves US workers 'at real risk', labor experts warn
11. Generative AI is most useful for the things we care about the least
12. Voices: Trump's fake AI video of him relaxing in Gaza with Netanyahu is a nightmare look inside his mind
13. Call of Duty maker Activision confirms AI usage in games; how this Steam policy may be behind it
14. Zoho's Sridhar Vembu says 'AI bubble deflating,' lists 7 tech uses worth the hype
15. 'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z becoming a canary in the coalmine for AI'?
16. 'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'
17. Are you seeing disquieting images like these on social media? There's a sinister reason why... and it's taking older people for fools, reveals FLORA GILL
18. Looking for something new to spice up your game play? The Tinder of games is here
19. Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'
20. Danish Media's united stand against Big Tech
21. Google edits Super Bowl ad for AI that featured false information
22. Danish media's stand on Big Tech
23. Channel 4 demands tech giants be forced to promote mainstream news
24. Social media is dead. What comes next might be far more beautiful
25. Climate change misinformation on networks could increase in the face of less moderation

26. From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: Fakes on Instagram

27. From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: AI fakes on Instagram

28. Starmer's dream of an AI revolution is sadly doomed

29. Mainlining AI won't bring back boom-time Britain

30. GIVE ME A CRASH COURSE IN . . . META'S ABOLITION OF FACT-CHECKING

31. 2025: The year of the AI slop

32. AI-generated 'slop' is slowly killing the internet, so why is nobody trying to stop it?

33. Meta is getting rid of factchecking. Should you leave Instagram – and what are the alternatives?

34. Sorry, Georgia, it's time to run a mile from attention-seeking BrewDog boss

35. Labour TikTok featured obscene lyrics

36. Hare-brained? Labour under fire for bizarre AI TikTok clip

37. AI, Musk and Trump add up to turbulent 2025 for tech

38. Labour apologises for TikTok featuring obscene lyrics about women

39. Labour is forced to delete AI TikTok clip over using graphic song encouraging drugging of girls

40. Watch: Labour uses AI bunnies to promote NHS in bizarre promo video

41. AI, Musk and Trump add up to a turbulent 2025 for tech

42. How to spot the AI 'slop' taking over internet

43. X's Grok AI revives concern about deepfakes ahead of Delhi Assembly election
44. Why 'AI slop' is taking over the internet — and how to spot it
45. Why the internet is filling up with nonsense 'AI slop'
46. The surreal AI 'slop' taking over social media feeds Sites are turning away from human content amid competition for clicks, reports Matthew Field
47. Toronto can be a lonely city. I found community in an unlikely place
48. 24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dundas, Kevin Jiang, Debra Yeo
49. 24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more
50. 2024 A year in a word / n.
51. The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?
52. FELINE FRENZY
53. A less toxic, less chaotic alternative I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky
54. I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there
55. Demure? Brain rot? Oxford announces shortlist for 2024 Word of the Year: Cast your vote
56. Fake AI 'slop' posts about Elon Musk surge on Facebook after election
57. The images of Spain 's floods weren't created by AI. The trouble is, people think they were

58. Newsletter : ChatGPT weds AI search to give Google worthy competition; AI Tool of the Week: How to use ChatGPT Search; Will AI achieve human-like reasoning
59. Halloween 'hoax': How did so many turn out for a fake parade in Dublin city centre? Website apologises for 'mistake' and claims there was no intention to mislead
60. Final Fridays returns after year-long break
61. Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election
62. McNeal review – Robert Downey Jr shines in muddled AI-themed play
63. Pick of the day
64. Radio choice
65. Wednesday 25 September
66. Honor recognizes unique contributions to the field, including Glaze and Nightshade tools
67. 'Trump is just trying to stay relevant': Inside the ex-president's AI-generated images frenzy
68. Inside Trump's weird new obsession with AI-generated images
69. Bigger picture of Trump's weird AI images obsession The Republican party and its presidential nominee now have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothetical realities they are peddling to their supporters, writes Mike Bedigan
70. How did Donald Trump end up posting Taylor Swift deepfakes?
71. A banned promoter of cancer 'cures' was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is 'flooded with garbage'
72. Twitter page gains thousands of followers for making fun of Facebook posts

73. Letter writer declares ' Durango Decline' citing online classes, branding and merch

74. Comment: 'We deserve more than reheated housing ideas and AI slop'

75. The Artificial is Rarely Intelligent

76. Morning Mail: Iran president in helicopter crash, family lawyers quit over burnout, City take Premier League



## **The AI Studio Ghibli trend is an insult to art and artists**

The Daily Star, Dhaka, Bangladesh / Asia News Network

April 1, 2025 Tuesday

Copyright 2025 The Asia News Network (Hamburg, Germany)

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency

**Section:** STATE AND REGIONAL NEWS

**Length:** 1082 words

**Byline:** Dawn, Karachi, Pakistan / Asia News Network

### **Body**

---

Apr. 1—ISLAMABAD(Dawn/ANN)- An artist spends years perfecting their skills. Hours spent drawing, scrapping and redrawing to bring to life a vision that goes on to inspire millions. Studio Ghibli's co-founder Hayao Miyazaki is one such artist.

Miyazaki's films have not only received many awards but his retinue of works including Spirited Away, Kiki's Delivery Service, Howl's Moving Castle and so on have instilled the power of imagination and dreams in countless children and adults. Artistic inspiration can be a powerful thing, Miyazaki's art inspired the creation of Pakistan's first hand-drawn animated film, The Glassworker. With their own unique spin, a love letter to the aesthetic, The Glassworker took Usman Riaz and his team a decade to make.

In recent years however, artificial intelligence (**AI**) with its image generative tool has posed a threat to art and artists. **AI** learns from millions of images across the internet and memorises text associated with those images. In a process known as "diffusion", **AI** starts by breaking images into pixels that do not represent any specific thing and then inverts the process so the model can revert to the original image. Artificial intelligence does not take into account copyright and hence artistic styles are used without permission.

With image generative tools such as Midjourney, DALL-E and even a feature on Canva made widely available to anyone with an internet connection and monthly subscription, users can write a prompt and generate an image in a certain artist's style, without, of course, asking or crediting said artist. The most recent victims of this are the artists at Studio Ghibli.

OpenAI announced the launch of its "most advanced image generator" which has been built into GPT-4o and has been made available to users for free. This has enabled a worrying trend where users are converting their photographs into 'Studio Ghibli style art'. **AI's** rendering of Studio Ghibli is nothing more than sanitised, soulless and generic, a typical cutesy image devoid of any character, effort or passion.

Studio Ghibli's art is more than just cute characters, it is grotesque and sometimes even harrowing, it is layers of hard work, passion and unwavering dedication to create unique characters that tell meaningful stories.

## The AI Studio Ghibli trend is an insult to art and artists

From *Grave of the Fireflies* which shows a war torn Japan and two siblings desperate to survive on their own to themes of greed and identity as Chihiro navigates the world of spirits trying to save her parents (who were transformed into pigs) from being eaten in *Spirited Away*, all of Studio Ghibli's work means something. Even light-hearted Ghibli features such as *Kiki's Delivery Service* focus on themes of self acceptance.

Every frame of a 2D animated film is painstakingly drawn by hand. The beautiful watercolour-esque nature scenes from Ghibli's films, the varied emotions on faces of characters, the tireless research that goes into making every fantastical aspect a little more believable; this is what makes the films timeless.

Criticising the **AI** Studio Ghibli trend, Riaz wrote in a post on X, "In an age of **AI**-generated everything, "The Glassworker" was drawn by hand. No shortcuts. No algorithms. Just work, talent and perseverance [...] **AI** is the future—but it's a tool not the artist."

Some might call **AI** a terrific mimic but that's all that it is. As exposed by this trend, the generated images lack depth and feeling. Perhaps the most egregious thing to come out of this trend is the politicisation of Ghibli's art. Political ideologies, thoughts and even extremist narratives are being portrayed in this aesthetic.

Users have used **AI** to recreate scenes of the destruction of the Babri Masjid, a Mughal-era mosque in India's Ayodhya. Using an art style synonymous with innocence to glorify the demolition of a mosque is beyond repugnant. Not to mention that Miyazaki has taken a strong stance against oppression and fascism in the past.

The White House used the trend in a post on X to depict an arrest and deportation of an immigrant by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This comes after ICE has been deporting and arresting even those who hold a green card and revoking the legal status of thousands of immigrants. To use an artistic style, even if its watered down by **AI** to make light of suffering or depict Trump's hardline policies is abhorrent.

It is worth noting that in 2003, Hayao Miyazaki boycotted the Oscars ceremony as he opposed the US war in Iraq.

"The reason I wasn't here for the Academy Award was because I didn't want to visit a country that was bombing Iraq," he had told The Los Angeles Times of his decision.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also jumped onto this trend, changing his profile picture and generating photographs of his late mother and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto.

A countertrend has also sprung on X, with artists showcasing their work inspired by Studio Ghibli films, condemning the theft of art while simultaneously encouraging people to pick up a pencil and learn to draw themselves instead of relying on what has been termed as '**AI slop**'. Artists have showcased their work with captions such as "Art I made from Studio Ghibli in my style without needing **AI**." Others have spoken about the time and dedication it has taken to perfect their craft.

With the popularity of the **AI slop** Ghibli trend on the internet, an old documentary has resurfaced in which Miyazaki expresses his strong dislike for **AI** 'art'. In the documentary the filmmaker is shown a zombie, with developers saying that **AI** can allow more grotesque movements. The artist's response was, "Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is whatsoever. I am utterly disgusted... I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself."

Imagine spending hours, days, months and years to find your artistic expression, and then suddenly a single prompt, that intellectual property and hard work is stolen, attached to narratives that you may or may not agree with, no consent and definitely no credit; this is what **AI** "art" means to many artists and why so many speak against it.

Appreciating art is a beautiful thing if done in a healthy manner by supporting artists or spending time trying to hone skills taking talented professionals as inspiration. Taking shortcuts, depriving artists from jobs and credit by using **AI** only serves to disrespect the medium.



The AI Studio Ghibli trend is an insult to art and artists

**Load-Date:** April 2, 2025

---

End of Document

Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft



## ***Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft***

The Northlines

April 1, 2025 Tuesday

Copyright 2025 The Northlines, distributed by Contify.com All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1354 words

### **Body**

---

Artists are up in arms after hordes of social media accounts jumped onto the latest Ghibli trend, raising concerns about the ethics and copyright protection for art

Metaphorically speaking, **AI** tools like DALL-E (and ChatGPT) make people feel 'almost like God'. "All someone has to do is to state a prompt," This was what Dr Eduardo Navas, who researched **AI** models at Pennsylvania State University in the US said, back in 2023. Fast forward to 2025, and **AI** is more powerful than ever.

The latest ChatGPT update enables users to convert any of their photos to specific art styles-most notably in the style of the legendary animation studio based in Japan, Studio Ghibli.

Following its release this week, Ghibli-style **AI** 'art' flooded the internet. Popular memes, personal photos, anything people could get their hands on- all converted to their 'Ghibli-fied' versions.

However, artists and creatives all over are raising alarm over the ethical and legal ramifications of such **AI**-generated posts.

Studio Ghibli is famous for its distinct art and animation, shaped by an illustrious set of art directors in Japan, including Hayao Miyazaki, Isao Takahata, Kitaro Kosaka and many more, over the years.

My Neighbor Totoro. Spirited Away. Princess Mononoke. The Wind Rises. Kiki's Delivery Service. Howl's Moving Castle. Grave of the Fireflies. These are just a fraction of the critically acclaimed animated film catalogue from Studio Ghibli.

Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft

And now OpenAI, the founding company of ChatGPT, openly encourages these new experiments in 'Ghibli-fication'. Its CEO Sam Altman even changed his profile picture on X to a Ghibli-style 'portrait'. Official posts from the White House, and even from myGovIndia featuring Prime Minister Narendra Modi, followed.

In the release notes of the latest iteration of Chat- GPT, the company states that the artificial intelligence model would take a 'conservative approach' to how it mimics different art styles. However, that simply does not reflect the reality.

All one has to do is go online and be greeted by 'images' flooding social media, distinctively copying the art style by sampling a lot of original material from Studio Ghibli movies and stills.

And since Sam Altman wants the US government to conveniently move around 'fair use' guidelines to train AI to 'learn' from copyrighted material, we can all assume how little regard he has for intellectual property rights.

People from the art community that THE WEEK spoke to have a unified take on the issue: The difference between creating your own art-even art inspired by other artists-and an AI 'generated' image created by a machine copying from a library of artists is not a fine line, it is a deep chasm-where true creativity goes to die. Simply put, AI 'generated' images are not art, says animators and artists alike.

Artist Jugal Chudasama from Mumbai calls out the ethical violation in this process. "These AI models are trained without the intellectual property (IP) owner's consent," Chudasama says. Moreover, these models would not exist if humans did not create the art in the first place.

"It's not just Ghibli art, they have trained these models on countless individual artists as well-who cannot afford to take this to court" adds the founder of Studio Joog.

There is, of course, mounting opposition from AI 'evangelists' who toe the same line as Altman-that they need AI to 'train' on original content made by artists to 'grow the technology'.

"New tech has always had a rough start. Take digital cameras, for example. Traditional photographers thought this would make photography too easy and therefore less meaningful. But even digital photographers have to get up and physically go to locations, experience life, to take those photos," explains the artist, "Even after they click the photos, there's a process to make them look good."

"Take a charcoal and pencil, for example. The invention of the pencil did not completely eradicate the process of writing or drawing. You still needed the same skills, only now, you have cleaner hands-that was the USP," said Chudasama.

In fact, the same is applicable to the latest wave of digital art. It still relies on the human skill to draw and sketch. However, AI tools simply take in a text prompt, and a photo, and use the data it scraped from art created by other artists to 'generate' an image.

"They steal from our work by sampling images we created after years of practice," says another artist who did not wish to be named.

Chennai-based filmmaker Ashwath Nair is vocal about his take on the latest Ghibli trend. "Ethically, I think it spits on the face of what the studio (Studio Ghibli) is doing," says Nair, "There are countless artists, who toiled for years, even to make classics like Princess Mononoke."

Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft

"Before the CGI era, each Ghibli film took at least four years to make," he explains, "That kind of effort, now boiled down to what is essentially **AI slop** is disrespectful to the people who contributed to building one of the stalwarts of anime, to begin with."

Nair, who is also a content creator at Yoshimura Anime Corner, is also confident that Studio Ghibli would put out an official statement. If anyone at Studio Ghibli might respond to the latest controversy surrounding the ethics and legality of AI-generated images, it would most probably be the former president and founder of the animation studio itself, Toshio Suzuki, he adds.

Book blogger Noirita Das did not mince her words when calling out the trend online. "Did y'all notice how it's mostly the corporate people using the Studio Ghibli filter?" Das posted on Threads, referring to the proverbial David-vs-Goliath battle that exists between large corporations and 'the little guy'.

"It's almost like the engineering degree or the MBA degree has completely desensitized them. It's almost like they have no appreciation for the arts, whereas, statistically they are in a position to afford it," Das added, doubling down on how the latest **AI** models were being used for art rather than mechanical tasks that would replace management professionals, not the ones in the creative space.

To add to the images that artists label as plagiarism, a fake cease-and-desist order seemingly from Studio Ghibli, also made its rounds on social media. As **AI** evangelists criticised the order as 'limiting the freedom of expression', some artists called out the irony of it all: "They need a fake legal notice to validate their victim complex after sharing plagiarised images!"

'A fight worth taking up', lawyers tell artists Copyright law in India has always been a point of contention, as far as the rights of artists are concerned.

"The legal history of copyright will tell you that artists' rights have always been a matter of contestation. Studio Ghibli, of course, is a huge production studio and probably can sue for infringement," explains Advocate Govind Manoharan, founder of Delhi-based Godiyal & Manoharan Chambers.

"Artists have gained, over years of countless litigation, recognition of their rights. This fight, though, is a new arena for artists and traditional production houses alike- how successful it is going to be in the present state of the law on copyright is something to be seen, but it's a fight worth taking up," says Manoharan, who has represented artists in infringement cases in Delhi courts.

"If not, it risks the hard fought gains of decades," adds the lawyer, stating that such a precedent would disproportionately affect smaller artists, as "is often the case".

Despite the noise and the ethical debate surrounding it, the artist community is confident that Studio Ghibli will simply let this one slide. The animation studio even has a page dedicated on their official website only to list the copyright details for their works all the way from 1984.

Studio Ghibli is not just a huge name-they are widely revered in the art community. Moreover, they are artists. They are good at what they do. And they are Japanese. Maybe, this is the time of reckoning for ChatGPT, and other **AI** 'theft' algorithms like it-a huge, globally acclaimed art studio going against them and their '**AI slop**' filling the internet to its brim.

Generated your Studio Ghibli-style AI image? Here is why it is ethically wrong and may amount to IP theft

**Load-Date:** April 1, 2025

---

End of Document



## [ChatGPT's Studio Ghibli AI trend sparks debate over creativity vs copyright violation](#)

The Independent (United Kingdom)

March 28, 2025 Friday 4:47 AM EST

Copyright 2025 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

**The**  **INDEPENDENT**

**Section:** ENTERTAINMENT: LATEST, Oceania latest, Japan news & IP AND PATENTS NEWS

**Length:** 1471 words

**Byline:** Ap Correspondent

### **Body**

---

Several fans of famed Japanese animation studio behind *Spirited Away* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, [Studio Ghibli](#), were delighted this week when a new version of [ChatGPT](#) let them transform popular internet memes or personal photos into the distinct style of Ghibli founder [Hayao Miyazaki](#).

However, the trend also highlighted ethical concerns about artificial intelligence tools trained on copyrighted creative works and what that means for the future livelihoods of human artists, as well as ethical questions on the value of human creativity in a time increasingly shaped by algorithms.

Miyazaki, 84, known for his hand-drawn approach and whimsical storytelling, has expressed skepticism about **AI**'s role in animation in the past.

Janu Lingeswaran wasn't thinking much about that when he uploaded a photo of his 3-year-old ragdoll cat, Mali, into [ChatGPT](#)'s new image generator tool on Wednesday. He then asked [ChatGPT](#) to convert it to the Ghibli style, instantly making an anime image that looked like Mali but also one of the painstakingly drawn feline characters that populate Miyazaki movies such as *My Neighbor Totoro* or *Kiki's Delivery Service*.

"I really fell in love with the result," said Lingeswaran, an entrepreneur who lives near Aachen, Germany. "We're thinking of printing it out and hanging it on the wall."

Similar results gave the Ghibli style to iconic images, such as the casual look of Turkish pistol shooter Yusuf Dikec in a T-shirt and one hand in his pocket on his way to winning a silver medal at the 2024 Olympics. Or the famed "Disaster Girl" meme of a 4-year-old turning to the camera with a slight smile as a house fire rages in the background.

## ChatGPT's Studio Ghibli AI trend sparks debate over creativity vs copyright violation

Awesome. The Ghibli style is now going to become oversaturated and associated with lazy and boring content - can't wait for kids to grow up thinking the Ghibli movies are **AI**-generated and instead of art that's crafted by excellent artists <https://t.co/YFOUIRLYAm>

- Fredrik (@F\_Edits)

[March 27, 2025](#)

The whole Studio Ghibli **AI** trend honestly gives me second-hand embarrassment knowing how hard Hayao Miyazaki has fought to retain the identity of his films and how many of you are this willing to make a farce out of decades of artistry because you don't actually value it <https://t.co/TgSxb1Ah5>

- gregor samsung (@slimjosa)

[March 27, 2025](#)

[ChatGPT](#) maker [OpenAI](#), which is fighting copyright lawsuits over its flagship chatbot, has largely encouraged the "Ghiblification" experiments and its CEO Sam Altman changed his profile on social media platform X into a Ghibli-style portrait. In a technical paper posted Tuesday, the company had said the new tool would be taking a "conservative approach" in the way it mimics the aesthetics of individual artists.

"We added a refusal which triggers when a user attempts to generate an image in the style of a living artist," it said. But the company added in a statement that it "permits broader studio styles - which people have used to generate and share some truly delightful and inspired original fan creations."

This four second crowd scene from Studio Ghibli's *The Wind Rises* (2013) took animator Eiji Yamamori 1 year and 3 months to complete <pic.twitter.com/RyOngP2o60>

- Anime Aesthetics (@anime\_twits)

[March 27, 2025](#)

changed my pfp but maybe someone will make me a better one

- Sam Altman (@sama)

[March 26, 2025](#)

[Studio Ghibli](#) hasn't yet commented on the trend. The Japanese studio and its North American distributor didn't immediately respond to emails seeking comment on Thursday.

As users posted their Ghibli-style images on social media, others began to share Miyazaki's previous comments on **AI** animation, as well as their thoughts on why they believe the **AI** images go against the ethos of the famed auteur.

In a 2016 meeting, when shown an **AI** animation demo, Miyazaki famously responded: "I am utterly disgusted. If you really want to make creepy stuff you can go ahead and do it. I would never wish to incorporate this technology into my work at all."

The team member demonstrating the animation explained that **AI** could "present us grotesque movements that we humans can't imagine," adding that it could be used to depict zombie movements.

Since this utter garbage is trending, we should take a look at what Hayao Miyazaki, the founder of Studio Ghibli, said about machine created art. <https://t.co/1TMPcFGIJE> <pic.twitter.com/lvaM9WZL3T>

- Nuberodesign (@nuberodesign)

[March 26, 2025](#)

That prompted Miyazaki to tell a story.

"Every morning, not in recent days, I see my friend who has a disability," Miyazaki said. "It's so hard for him just to do a high five; his arm with stiff muscle can't reach out to my hand. Now, thinking of him, I can't watch this stuff and find it interesting. Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is."

"I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself.

"Irony is dead and all but it's pretty depressing to see Ghibli **AI slop** on the timeline not only because Miyazaki famously thinks **AI** art is disgusting but because he's spent the last 50 years making art about environmental waste for petty human uses," [posted a fan on X](#), formerly Twitter.

A [2024 study found that AI systems were leading to vast emissions](#), which in turn are increasing as more energy is required to run the evolving systems. OpenAI's current GPT-4, for instance, uses 12 times more energy than its predecessor, the study said.

The energy used in training the systems is only a small part of work, and requires an estimated 960 times more energy than a training run when the **AI** tools are actually being used.

In particular, many are upset with the [official US government X account using the trend](#) to generate an image of an immigrant being arrested and deported.

"To see something so brilliant, as wonderful as Miyazaki's work be butchered to generate something so foul. God I hope [Studio Ghibli](#) sues the hell out of Open **AI** for this," [posted one user](#).

i've thought about it and i do think an **ai** generated studio ghibli picture of a deportation is one of the most disgusting things i've ever seen [pic.twitter.com/OyAKdM7SRz](https://pic.twitter.com/OyAKdM7SRz)

- Sydney Battle (@SydneyBattle)

[March 27, 2025](#)

In October 2024, [an AI-generated trailer for a live-action version of the 1997 film Princess Mononoke](#) led to massive backlash after going viral on social media.

The **AI** trailer used the English voice acting from the original film, which featured talents like Billy Cudrup, Clare Danes and Minnie Driver, and completely reimagined the hand drawn animation of the Japanese movie as if real people were playing the parts, albeit with CGI.

"I genuinely dunno if we'll get a better example of why **AI** art is garbage than someone taking one of the most purposefully made, beautifully animated films in history and reducing it to a bunch of boring looking shots that are barely connected but somehow all look the same," a fan wrote on X.

[OpenAI](#) didn't respond to a question on Thursday about whether it had a license.

Josh Weigensberg, a partner at the law firm Pryor Cashman, said that one question the Ghibli-style **AI** art raises is whether the **AI** model was trained on Miyazaki or Studio Ghibli's work. That in turn "raises the question of, 'Well, do they have a license or permission to do that training or not?'" he said.

Weigensberg added that if a work was licensed for training, it might make sense for a company to permit this type of use. But if this type of use is happening without consent and compensation, he said, it could be "problematic."



## ChatGPT's Studio Ghibli AI trend sparks debate over creativity vs copyright violation

Weigensberg added that there is a general principle "at the 30,000-foot view" that "style" is not copyrightable. But sometimes, he said, what people are actually thinking of when they say "style" could be "more specific, discernible, discrete elements of a work of art," he said.

don't like the ghibli trend. idk man. something about a particular artist's meticulously crafted style being turned into a mass-market on-demand commodity. it doesn't sit right.

is this how it's gonna be from now on? anything good in the world being taken for parts to make slop?

- skeleton (@ThinkingBone)

[March 27, 2025](#)

"A *Howl's Moving Castle* or *Spirited Away*, you could freeze a frame in any of those films and point to specific things, and then look at the output of generative AI and see identical elements or substantially similar elements in that output," he said. "Just stopping at, 'Oh, well, style isn't protectable under copyright law.' That's not necessarily the end of the inquiry."

Artist Karla Ortiz, who grew up watching Miyazaki's movies and is suing other AI image generators for copyright infringement in a case that's still pending, called it "another clear example of how companies like OpenAI just do not care about the work of artists and the livelihoods of artists."

"That's using Ghibli's branding, their name, their work, their reputation, to promote (OpenAI) products," Ortiz said. "It's an insult. It's exploitation."

**Load-Date:** March 28, 2025

---

End of Document



## *Apple's AI isn't a letdown. AI is the letdown*

Egypt Independent

March 27, 2025 Thursday

Copyright 2025 Egypt Independent Provided by Syndigate Media Inc. All Rights Reserved

### EGYPT INDEPENDENT

**Length:** 1022 words

**Byline:** CNN

#### **Body**

---

A version of this story appeared in CNN Business' Nightcap newsletter. To get it in your inbox, sign up for free [here](#).

New York CNN —

Apple has been getting hammered in tech and [financial media](#) for its uncharacteristically messy foray into artificial intelligence. After [a June event](#) heralding a new **AI**-powered Siri, the company has delayed its release indefinitely. The **AI** features Apple has rolled out, including text message summaries, are [comically unhelpful](#).

The critique of Apple's halting rollout is not entirely unfair. Though it is, at times, missing the point.

Apple, like every other big player in tech, is scrambling to find ways to inject **AI** into its products. Why? Well, it's the future! What problems is it solving? Well, so far that's not clear! Are customers demanding it? LOL, no. In fact, last year the backlash against one of Apple's early ads for its **AI** [was so hostile](#) the company had to pull the commercial.

The real reason companies are doing this is because [Wall Street wants them](#) to. Investors have been salivating for an Apple "super cycle" — a tech upgrade so enticing that consumers will rush to get their hands on the new model.

In a rush to please shareholders, [Apple made a rare stumble](#). The company is owning its error, it seems, and has said the delayed features would roll out "in the coming year."

Of course, the cryptic delay has only given oxygen to the narrative that Apple has become a laggard in the Most Important Tech Advancement in decades.

And that is where the Apple-**AI** narrative goes off the rails.

**AI** can only be failed

## Apple's AI isn't a letdown. AI is the letdown

There's a popular adage in policy circles: "The party can never fail, it can only be failed." It is meant as a critique of the ideological gatekeepers who may, for example, blame voters for their party's failings rather than the party itself.

That same fallacy is taking root among AI's biggest backers. AI can never fail, it can only be failed. Failed by you and me, the smooth-brained Luddites who just don't get it. (To be sure, even AI proponents will acknowledge available models' shortcomings — no one would argue that [the AI slop clogging Facebook](#) is anything but, well, slop — but there is a dominant narrative within tech that AI is both inevitable and revolutionary.)

Tech columnists such as the New York Times' Kevin Roose have [suggested recently](#) that Apple has failed AI, rather than the other way around.

"Apple is not meeting the moment in AI," Roose said on his podcast, [Hard Fork](#), earlier this month. "I just think that when you're building products with generative AI built into it, you do just need to be more comfortable with error, with mistakes, with things that are a little rough around the edges."

To which I would counter, respectfully: Absolutely not.

Roose is right that Apple is, to put it mildly, a fastidious creator of consumer products. It is, after all, the \$3-trillion empire built by the notoriously detail-obsessed Steve Jobs.

The Apple brand is perhaps the most meticulously controlled corporate identity on the planet. Its "walled garden" of iOS — despised by developers and fair game for accusations of monopolistic behavior, to be sure — is also part of the reason one billion people have learned to trust Apple with their sensitive personal data.

Apple's obsession with privacy and security is the reason most of us don't think twice to scan our faces, store bank account information or share our real-time location via our phones.

And not only do we trust Apple to keep our data safe, we trust it to design things that are accessible out of the box. You can buy a new iPhone, AirPods or Apple Watch and trust that the moment you turn it on, a user-friendly system will hold your hand through the setup and seamlessly sync it with your other devices. You will almost never need a user manual filled with tiny print. Even your Boomer parents will be able to navigate FaceTime calls with minimal effort.

Roose contends, at one point in the episode, that "there are people who use AI systems who know that they are not perfect," and that those regular users understand there's a right way and a wrong way to query a chatbot.

This is where we, the people, are apparently failing AI. Because in addition to being humans with jobs and social lives and laundry to fold and art to make and kids to raise, we should also learn how to tiptoe around the limitations of large language models that may or [may not return accurate information](#) to us.

Apple, Roose says, should keep pushing AI into its products and just get used to the idea that those features may be unpolished and a little too advanced for the average user.

And again, respectfully, I would ask: To what end?

As Hard Fork co-host Casey Newton notes in the same episode, it's not as if Google or Amazon has figured out some incredible use case that's making users rush to buy a new Pixel phone or an Echo speaker.

"AI is still so much more of a science and research story than it is a product story," Newton notes.

In other words: Large language models are fascinating science. They are an academic wonder with huge potential and some early commercial successes, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT and Anthropic's Claude. But a bot that's 80 percent accurate — a figure Newton made up, but we'll go with it — isn't a very useful consumer product.

Back in June, Apple floated a compelling scenario for its newfangled Siri. Imagine yourself, frazzled and running late for work, simply saying into your phone: Hey Siri, what time does my mom's flight land? And is it at JFK or

## Apple's AI isn't a letdown. AI is the letdown

LaGuardia? In theory, Siri could scan your email and texts with your mom and give you an answer. That saves you several annoying steps of opening your email to find the flight number, copying it, then pasting it into Google to find the flight's status.

If it's 100 percent accurate, it's a fantastic time saver. If it is anything less than 100 percent accurate, it's useless. Because even if there's a two percent chance it's wrong, there's a two percent chance you're stranding mom at the airport, and mom will be, rightly, very disappointed. Our moms deserve better!

Bottom line: Apple is not the laggard in AI. AI is the laggard in AI.

**Load-Date:** March 27, 2025

---

End of Document



## *From spit to bankruptcy: the rise and fall of 23andMe*

The Guardian (London)

March 25, 2025 Tuesday 1:17 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** GLOBAL; Version:2

**Length:** 1672 words

**Byline:** Blake Montgomery

**Highlight:** Plus: Nvidia bets on AI-powered robots, Musk juggles Tesla and politics, and AI fiction takes over Instagram

### **Body**

---

Hello, and welcome to TechScape. In this week's edition: 23andMe files for bankruptcy, Nvidia forecasts a fusion of AI and robotics, and AI enables the creation of fiction at the pace of social media.

Genetic testing firm 23andMe filed for bankruptcy on Monday. The CEO and co-founder Anne Wojcicki has stepped down after several attempts at a buyout. Once valued as high as \$5.8bn in 2021, the company's financial failure is the finale to a long decline.

\*\*\* My colleague [Julia Kollewe reports](#) :

23andMe said late on Sunday that it had started voluntary Chapter 11 proceedings in the US Bankruptcy Court for the Eastern District of Missouri to "facilitate a sale process to maximise the value of its business".

The loss-making company, which provides saliva-based test kits to customers to help them track their ancestry, added that it was operating as usual throughout the sale process. "There are no changes to the way the company stores, manages, or protects customer data," it said.

I understand the urge to assure customers that there is "no change" to business as usual at 23andMe, but the company's statement bears an unfortunate implication. In late 2023, the company [disclosed](#) that hackers had gained access to the personal data of 7 million customers, including their genomes. Not long after the incursion, hackers offered to sell the names, addresses and genetic heritage belonging to 1 million 23andMe customers with Ashkenazi Jewish heritage on a shadowy dark web forum. Though the hack did not only target Jewish customers, the proposed sale gave a grim example of what malicious denizens of net could do with 23andMe customers' information.

## From spit to bankruptcy: the rise and fall of 23andMe

One 23andMe participant, a man in Florida who discovered Ashkenazi Jewish heritage in his test, summed up the imbalance of the trade-off: "I didn't know my family was going to potentially be a target. I may have put my family and myself in danger for something I did out of curiosity more than anything."

The question for 23andMe customers is what will happen to the trove of genetic data that 23andMe has amassed in its years of collecting spit in tubes.

The ultimate promise of 23andMe – medicine personalized based on your unique genetic code – has not yet come to fruition. In the meantime, knowing the exact breakdown of your genetic ancestry is more novelty than medical necessity, and it's not good business. Sometimes the test just reveals that you're British, which [left at least one Guardian writer nonplussed](#), and you find yourself having given your DNA away.

The question for 23andMe customers is what will happen to the trove of genetic data that 23andMe has amassed in its years of collecting spit in tubes. Over the weekend the California attorney general, Rob Bonta, urged the company's users to ask it to "delete your data and destroy any samples of genetic material held by the company", as is their right under the state's law.

More on 23andMe

[Why I regret using 23andMe:](#)

[I gave up my DNA just to find out I'm British Hackers got nearly 7 million people's data from 23andMe. The firm blamed users in 'very dumb' move](#)

The stuff of science fiction

A series of convergent developments in tech last week have my nose pointed at the future like a hunting dog.

[Nvidia](#) hosted its developer conference in San Jose, California, announcing new and more powerful chips that will offer greater computing capacity to artificial intelligence. The **AI** business, if Chinese model DeepSeek serves as a bellwether, is learning to maximize the results it draws from that computing power.

As in any good science fiction blockbuster, a lovable side character made an appearance at the conference. A Star Wars-inspired droid named Blue waddled onstage alongside Jensen Huang, the Nvidia CEO, during his keynote to say hello. Disney partnered with Nvidia to design and showcase the new bot, which holds in its brain software for modeling and processing the physics of its surroundings. Nvidia also announced an **AI** meant for robots, which likewise takes its name from a Disney franchise, Groot N1.

Nvidia's announcements come as various **AI** companies make their first public forays into agentic models, which can take on tasks for you. Per early reviews, these products are [not very adept yet](#).

But excitement for the advent of artificial general intelligence (AGI) is growing, and real preparations are happening. More and more people who aren't **AI** company CEOs anticipate the arrival of this powerful and versatile technology soon. Joe Biden's top **AI** adviser, Ben Buchanan, gave [an interview](#) at the start of this month about how the US had planned for the widespread arrival of AGI under the previous administration. Soon after, a Times tech columnist wrote about why [he's come to believe the AGI hype](#).

An agentic **AI** with the capabilities of AGI plugged into the brain of a robot – baby, that's a bona fide humanoid, and it's a possibility that's becoming easier to imagine even without the help of Isaac Asimov.

Tesla is struggling while Elon Musk mucks about in the White House [Elon Musk tells Tesla employees to hold on to their stock amid harsh selloff Tesla backer says Musk must reduce Trump work, as 46,000 Cybertrucks recalled Tesla stake is no longer Elon Musk's most valuable asset amid stock market sell-off Elon Musk lashes out at US judges as they rule against Doge Trump makes rare admission of Musk's conflicts of interest after Pentagon visit US attorney general to bring charges for Tesla damage, citing 'domestic terrorism'](#)

New entertainment: Using **AI** to illustrate

short-form fiction on Instagram

This week on my iPhone, I'm scrolling through the videos of [@HolyFool36](#) on Instagram.

## From spit to bankruptcy: the rise and fall of 23andMe

Created by a 26-year-old from Long Island named Dylan (he declined to give his last name), the account posts charming, retro and lightly spooky videos daily. They're usually 90 seconds long. Dylan said he was inspired to create the videos by works of dark fantasy (Clark Ashton Smith), Elden Ring and other Dark Souls games, and analog horror videos on YouTube. Far from [AI slop](#), the videos offer clever tidbits of the absurd and compelling stories in the form of occult instructions. The human touch is evident, though [AI](#) serves as the means of production. I enjoy them.

"I do the writing myself because I was born with the faculties to do that. I use [AI](#) to make the images because I don't have those faculties. It's a means to an end," he said.

The account has amassed more than half a million followers since launching in the first half of 2024. It earns money via TikTok ads and merch sales, according to Dylan, but he's kept his full-time job in tech.

"I went from a hobbyist to a niche internet micro celebrity!" he remarked. His fiancée has started an [AI](#) art page as well.

Dylan's creative process involves multiple [AI](#) tools. He asks Dall-E to make the first draft of the picture in his head then runs the result through Midjourney to give it the retro video game sheen. If the story he's writing requires animation, he uses Kling, though most of Holy Fool's videos consist of collages of still images. All of his material features the same background music, a simple electronic synth melody, and the same narrating voice, which he generated and customized with ElevenLabs.

Artists across the US and UK have spoken out by the hundreds against the use of [AI](#) in the arts and what they see as theft by tech giants skirting intellectual property law. Their point is a fair one. Just this past week, [the Atlantic](#) created a way for authors to search LibGen, a database of pirated books, for their work. Many found their books there. Meta employees allegedly downloaded the database from peer-to-peer file sharing networks, a matter currently at issue in a copyright suit against the company over how it created its [AI](#) model Llama, specifically concerning whether the chatbot was trained on copyrighted material. The messages between [Meta](#) staff revealed in discovery about downloading the database are damning. Employees said licensing authors' copyrighted work would be too expensive and slow, so they turned to more shadowy means of accessing mammoth amounts of texts and received [Mark Zuckerberg](#)'s personal approval to do so, according to court documents. Meta is worth \$1.51tn, and Mark Zuckerberg's personal fortune weighs in at \$202bn.

However, none of these artists and authors are doing what the Holy Fool is. None are populating a fictional universe with daily short-form videos. Why would they? To create content at the speed that an Instagram feed without [AI](#) would be a full-time job. For many influencers, it is, but those video creators use their own faces and make videos about their real lives. Animating fictional videos so quickly and posting them for free is unlikely to give a worthwhile return on investment. All that is to say – there seems to be no labor lost in the creation of these kinds of videos, no artist who would otherwise be earning a living but has been replaced by [AI](#). The creation of new kinds of serialized fiction seems like a positive use case for [AI](#) to me.

The wider TechScape [Brussels takes action against Google and Apple under Digital Markets Act – as it happened Norwegian files complaint after ChatGPT falsely said he had murdered his children The best iPhones in 2025: which Apple smartphone is right for you, according to our expert Google's parent to buy cybersecurity group Wiz in its biggest ever deal](#)

**Load-Date:** March 25, 2025

The Electric State X Reviews: Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt starrer leaves netizens dismayed; 'like AI slop'



## ***The Electric State X Reviews: Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt starrer leaves netizens dismayed; 'like AI slop'***

Hindustan Times

March 19, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 611 words

**Dateline:** India

### **Body**

---

India, March 19 -- The highly anticipated 2025 science fiction action-adventure film The Electric State was a bold venture into a dystopian future, helmed by the Russo brothers - Anthony and Joe Russo - known for their work on blockbuster hits like Avengers: Endgame (2019). With a hefty reported budget of \$320 million, this adaptation of Simon Stalenhag's illustrated 2018 novel was expected to be a cinematic masterpiece. However, reactions from netizens suggest that the film has failed to live up to its hype, leaving many disappointed.

Starring Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt, alongside an ensemble cast including Ke Huy Quan, Woody Harrelson, and Giancarlo Esposito, The Electric State was touted as a visually stunning and thought-provoking narrative. But critics have slammed it as a "soulless Netflix slop" that undermines the essence of Stalenhag's original graphic novel.

The film's transition from the illustrated pages of Stalenhag's melancholic world to the silver screen seems to have fallen flat for many viewers. One user expressed their frustration, saying, "Today I am mourning Simon Stalenhag's The Electric State; a beautiful, melancholy and atmospheric graphic novel that's been 'adapted' into soulless Netflix slop. Why did they even buy the rights to the book if they're just going to turn it into that?" For others, the disappointment ran deeper. One user remarked, "After serving up what will be a strong contender for the worst movie of 2025, it is enough to make one suspect that the Russo Bros are willfully trying to destroy their own careers and the studios they work for by deliberately making overpriced, unwatchable, forgettable piles of shit."

The criticism wasn't just limited to the direction or the script, but also the performances of its lead actors. "The Electric State (2025) is so bad that whenever a famous actor (there's a bunch) turns up in a supporting role, the feeling is less 'hey, good to see you!' and more 'the f\*\*\* are you doing here?' Pratt and MBB are Razzie bad, but the Russos are the true culprits. Like AI slop," another comment read, suggesting that the performances felt disconnected and hollow, perhaps due to a lacklustre script or poor direction.

For some viewers, the film's flaws were most glaring in its conclusion. "The core problem with Electric State can be summed up in the final few scenes. Used to be that movie writers didn't require a character to embark on a three-



## The Electric State X Reviews: Millie Bobby Brown and Chris Pratt starrer leaves netizens dismayed; 'like AI slop'

minute monologue explaining what you were supposed to take away from the movie. So much for 'Show, don't tell,'" one user pointed out. The final moments, apparently laden with clumsy exposition, seemed to strip away any nuance the film may have had, leaving audiences with a heavy-handed moral rather than an organic conclusion.

With a budget of \$320 million that places The Electric State among the most expensive films ever made, expectations were sky-high. Yet, it seems that the Russo brothers - who were once celebrated for their deft handling of the Avengers franchise - may have failed to capture the same magic with this science fiction project. Despite their track record in blockbuster filmmaking, their attempt at adapting a beloved graphic novel has drawn criticism from fans and critics alike. Ultimately, the film appears to have missed the mark, with many reviews highlighting its lack of emotional depth, poor character development, and an over-reliance on star power to distract from its shortcomings.

Published by HT Digital Content Services with permission from Hindustan Times. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [contentservices@htdigital.in](mailto:contentservices@htdigital.in)

**Load-Date:** March 19, 2025

---

End of Document



## *Google and the AI left behind, by Josep Maria Ganyet*

CE Noticias Financieras English

March 18, 2025 Tuesday

Copyright 2025 Content Engine, LLC.

All Rights Reserved

Copyright 2025 CE Noticias Financieras All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 459 words

### **Body**

---

Google entered the **AI** race late and badly forced by OpenAI and its launch of ChatGPT in 2022. ChatGPT is the fastest adopting platform in history: one million users in five days. Google, however, has two advantages over OpenAI: it has all our data, especially if we use Gmail and Google Docs, and we search an average of 4.2 times a day. Its share is 90.15% of searches.

But all this could go down the drain. The millions of users who in 2022 discovered generative **AI** saw - erroneously - ChatGPT as the evolution of search engines. I myself went through the exercise of using ChatGPT instead of Google for a week. The experiment allowed me to see that a chatbot that generates text is not a search engine. And the other way around.

**By competing with OpenAI with its weapons, Google also competes with itself.**

But this is irrelevant. What we're seeing with **AI**-generated content is that it doesn't need to be perfect to have an effect: if it's good enough, it's good enough for enough people. This is the phenomenon of **AI slop**, a derogatory concept that designates all low-quality **AI**-generated content. We could translate it as **AI** left behind.

If enough users perceive ChatGPT as a search engine, albeit a sloppy one, Google could have the end of Kodak, which had invented the digital camera in 1975 and decided to keep it in a drawer so as not to cannibalize its business.

Picking at the wound, ChatGPT has incorporated web search: at any point in a conversation we can tell it to do a search and summary for us. Or a socials paper. Or an article for LinkedIn.

Aware of this and after hesitant beginnings, Google put all its intelligence on the grid to enter the melee with OpenAI; a vicarious melee with Microsoft, which has invested 13 billion and resources in the cloud.

The latest fruit of this collaboration is Google's search engine **AI** Mode (currently only available to Google One subscribers). Robby Stein, vice president of search, says, "You can ask anything and get a useful **AI**-based answer, with the ability to go further with follow-up questions and useful web links."

The key word is possibility. In a conversation with Google we will be able to refine the result as much as we want through further questions and get a summary, a social paper or an article for LinkedIn. And if the results are good enough that enough people think they are good, who will click on the link to go to the sources? The possible becomes improbable.

## Google and the AI left behind, by Josep Maria Ganyet

Google made public this month that it served 5 trillion searches in 2024, 20% more than in 2022, the year of ChatGPT's breakthrough. The paradox is that Google, in competing with OpenAI with its weapons, is also competing with itself.

In the photo, for the moment, Google wins. A photo taken, of course, with an analog Kodak.

**Load-Date:** March 27, 2025

---

End of Document

From Neva to A Highland Song, the Baftas are a reminder of how creative games can be



## *From Neva to A Highland Song, the Baftas are a reminder of how creative games can be*

The Guardian (London)

March 12, 2025 Wednesday 3:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** GAMES; Version:1

**Length:** 1621 words

**Byline:** Keza MacDonald

**Highlight:** From a magical realist gem to a environmentalist action game, the titles up for prizes at the industry's classiest awards are a welcome reminder of its creative vivacity in tough times

### **Body**

---

It's easy to feel a bit beset by doom these days. The other week, I watched the [heinous AI-generated "Trump Gaza" video](#) and was so appalled that I impulse-bought a kayaking guide book. It felt like the only sane response was to take to the water and paddle away.

Video games are a reliable antidote to existential doom, but layoffs, corporate homogenisation and **AI slop** are all encroaching on my safe haven, making it more difficult to get a brief reprieve from what's happening in the outside world. Thank God, then, for the Bafta games awards nominations, which reliably remind me that video games are pretty great, actually.

The [2025 picks were announced](#) last week (right after my newsletter deadline, as longtime readers will know is now tradition). In my opinion, Bafta's event is the classiest and least commercial of the gaming awards shows, and its judging panels, with a mix of video game industry professionals and specialists from Bafta's membership and beyond, usually come out with the broadest range of picks. I always see a lot of what I personally love about video games in these nominations: their sheer creative variation and vivacity. (Disclosure: over the years I've been involved with these judging panels in various capacities, but not in 2025.)

The eligibility period runs from November 2023 to November 2024, so there are no nominations for the superb Indiana Jones and the Great Circle. (I feel so sorry for great games that come out in December.) One of my favourites I played made the cut: [A Highland Song](#), a magical-realist game about running through the Scottish mountains, is up for best British game, alongside another Scottish-set game called Still Wakes the Deep, a cosmic horror thriller set on a North Sea oil rig. Yorkshire-ish comedy [Thank Goodness You're Here!](#) is also up for this award, as are Lego Horizon Adventures, Paper Trail and Hellblade II.

From Neva to A Highland Song, the Baftas are a reminder of how creative games can be

Hellblade II is actually the most-nominated game overall, appearing in 11 categories. Still Wakes the Deep, meanwhile, appeared in eight, and Thank Goodness You're Here in seven. If I may be allowed some very mild patriotism, Britain's games industry should be very proud of its output last year, which was overall [a horrid one](#) for those working in the business of play.

Delightfully, Thank Goodness You're Here! made it into the best game category with Astro Bot, Black Myth: Wukong, Balatro, Helldivers 2, and Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom, a game that I liked less, apparently, [than almost everyone else](#). There are a bunch of big games here in various categories, but what I like about the Baftas is that indie games aren't relegated to their own specific category: they appear everywhere, resulting in an enjoyably unpredictable slate. The stop-motion submarine puppet adventure game [Harold Halibut](#) and the warrior-and-wolf environmentalist action game [Neva](#) (a personal fave) are up for the artistic achievement award, next to big titles including Astro Bot and Wukong.

The ambiguously named "games beyond entertainment" category is always my favourite to peruse, partly because of the nebulous definition: these are all games with some kind of message or intended wider meaning. We have Kind Words, in which you send nice messages to strangers or send your worries out into the world. There's Botany Manor, about exploring the home of a Victorian botanist. Tales of Kenzera: Zau was informed by its director's grief after the death of his father. Tetris Forever is [a fascinating interactive documentary](#) about the block-arranging game, and an insight into a wild period of video game history. Hellblade is in there, too, presumably because of its portrayal of living with psychosis. And then there's Vampire Therapist, in which you are a cowboy talking the immortal undead through their emotional baggage. I had never heard of this game, and will be downloading it forthwith.

Last year's awards were so comprehensively dominated by Baldur's Gate 3 that the show lacked its usual propensity for surprises, but a lot of the categories this year are much tighter. The show is on 8 April at 7pm BST, hosted once again by comedian Phil Wang, and pretty much everything on this list of nominations would be a worthy winner. That said: if the gloriously clever and maximalist role-playing game Metaphor: ReFantazio doesn't win best narrative, I'll be fumin'.

### What to play

Wanderstop is game is about a formerly fearsome warrior forced to slow the heck down and run a whimsical tea shop in a fantasy forest, and she is not happy about it. It's also a game about burnout. Co-written by Davey Wreden (The Stanley Parable, The Beginner's Guide) and Karla Zimonja (Gone Home), it will speak to anyone who has ever overinvested in their work and found the meaning suddenly stripped from their life when they can no longer work like they used to. (No idea what you're talking about.)

Available on : PS5, Xbox, PC? Estimated playtime : 10 hours

### What to read

Inspired by a Bafta survey, I asked a bunch of interesting and distinguished people for their most influential video game of all time. No two people picked the same game. Most of their selections were so brilliantly esoteric that I felt distinctly boring for picking [something relatively predictable](#).

Sony has been experimenting with **AI**-powered game characters : an **AI** version of Aloy from Horizon was [leaked to the Verge](#) , talking to the player in a synthesised voice. Important reminder: Horizon is a story about how greedy technocrats destroyed the earth with the help of **AI**. There's [a new "official" trailer](#) for The Last of Us season two, with Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsay returning as heroes Joel and Ellie. Those of us who have played the game will know there is, uh, plenty the trailer doesn't show ...

And speaking of trailers, there's a 10-minute (yes, 10) trailer for Death Stranding 2, which will be released on 26 June. Being a Hideo Kojima game, it looks equal parts creative, confusing [and utterly bonkers](#).

What to click  
['A lot worse than expected': AI Pac-Man clones, reviewed Are AI-generated video games really on the horizon? Atomfall, the survival game that draws from classic British sci-fi If we're going to rank the hottest video game characters, let's not be boring about it | Amelia Tait Expelled! – turning the tables on the private school class](#)

From Neva to A Highland Song, the Baftas are a reminder of how creative games can be

[hierarchy | ????? Two Point Museum – curate your own fun in this museum management game | ?????](#)  
Question Block

Reader Robin provides this week's question:

“ Here's a question I can't get out of my head: how can you play Monster Hunter!? I'm not squeamish at all but I could barely get through a training session, which involved hurting a harmless creature trapped in an arena ... I was disgusted and my son was horrified. Then some innocent creature lay dying and I was pulling silly faces and taking photos of the poor thing as it breathed its last. And if Monster Hunter didn't do it for you, what has prompted you to walk away from a game?”

This is such a valid question! I was vegetarian for 12 years and yet throughout, I happily cut down majestic creatures in Monster Hunter and felt proud of my achievements. I am so fascinated by this dichotomy that I wrote a [whole article about it](#) when Monster Hunter: World came out in 2018. Forgive me for quoting myself, but here's what I wrote:

One of the functions of fantasy violence, whether in Monster Hunter or Game of Thrones, is to prompt reflection on the role that violence plays in the real world and in human nature. Monster Hunter might involve killing, but it also restores humans to the hierarchy of the natural world ... Perhaps spending hours of my leisure time pretending to be a hunter-gatherer-warrior is an outlet for the slaving carnivore within.

I am not vegetarian any more, but I fully acknowledge the dissonance between respecting and admiring these incredible virtual creatures and then killing them to make fancy helmets. The latest game does a lot of cognitive somersaulting in its story to try to make out that killing these dangerous beasts is noble because we do it to protect people and the ecosystem. But on a base level, we're doing it because it's fun, and that is pretty gross on one level. On another: it's fantasy. With absolutely no judgment towards fans of first-person shooters, I am personally more comfortable with killing virtual dragons than killing virtual people.

On to the second part of your question: one moment in Grand Theft Auto V made me so uncomfortable that I had to fetch my partner to play through the scene for me. A scene in the story that involves a hillbilly psycho capturing and torturing a guy who is Middle Eastern. You have no choice but to actively participate, and it made me feel nauseated. It's obviously intended to be satirical commentary on the US government's immediate recourse to torture after 9/11, but it massively missed the mark for me.

If you've got a question for Question Block – or anything else to say about the newsletter – hit reply or email us on [pushingbuttons@theguardian.com](mailto:pushingbuttons@theguardian.com).

**Load-Date:** March 12, 2025



## **PETER HOSKIN reviews Split Fiction: It's stranger than fiction (and twice as fun)!**

MailOnline

March 6, 2025 Thursday 8:10 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

# MailOnline

**Section:** SHOWBIZ; Version:1

**Length:** 536 words

**Byline:** Peter Hoskin

## **Body**

---

Split Fiction (PlayStation, Xbox, PC, £39.99)

Verdict: Too good

Rating:

Unconstrained tech bros stealing people's best creations and turning them into online **AI slop**? It could never happen in the real world, could it? Nah, surely not.

So well done to Hazelight for imagining such a dystopia - and setting their latest game in it.

At the start of Split Fiction, two authors have their minds picked for ideas by a dodgy tech company.

One, called Mio, specialises in science fiction. The other, Zoe, writes fantasy.

Together, thanks to the vagaries of technological progress, they are sucked into their imaginary universes. And it's up to both of them to get out.

And I really do mean both of them. Split Fiction, like much of Hazelight's previous work, is a cooperative game in which two players must work together, as Mio and Zoe, to advance.

This cooperation can be performed shoulder-to-shoulder on your sofa, or it can be done over the internet.

But Split Fiction also makes Hazelight's previous work, including the brilliant It Takes Two, seem like a warm-up for this main event.

PETER HOSKIN reviews Split Fiction: It's stranger than fiction (and twice as fun)!

It's just so ambitious - and not simply because you and your buddy are bouncing between sci-fi and fantasy universes.

Even within each universe, there's incredible variety. You'll do 3D platforming, shooting, puzzle-solving, racing and lots, lots more. You'll even game as, well...sausages.

And, somehow, Split Fiction doesn't just cohere; it conquers. Mio and Zoe's story will pull you and your gaming partner through to what is one of the most effective - and affecting - conclusions in years. Turns out, the tech bros have it wrong. Humanity matters.

Two Point Museum (PlayStation, Xbox, PC, £24.99)

Verdict: Great exhibition

Rating:

Ah, it's another Two Point game. Good. The previous, er, two - Two Point Hospital and Two Point Campus - were a total blast.

Here were successors to the classic management games of the 1990s - games such as Theme Park and Sim City - only with better graphics, better mechanics and a much better sense of humour.

Two Point Museum transplants the action to (you'll have guessed already) a museum. Like its predecessors, it is polished and funny.

Like its predecessors, it has you expanding your operation room by room, item by item, all in the hope of maximising things like customer happiness, scientific progress and the all-important bottom line.

Which makes Museum sound like more of the same. Except that's not quite right.

Not only does this game benefit from refinements made over years, it's also more varied than Hospital and even Campus.

This is true of Museum's exhibits, which range from aquarium fish to alien artefacts, meaning that you're never stuck with just one dusty type of establishment.

But it's also true of Museum's gameplay, which gives your budding museum director more to do.

I particularly enjoyed the option to send curators off on expeditions to find new exhibits - expeditions from which they might never return...

And if they do return?

Sure, Two Point Museum seems to say, they might have taken an artefact from some fictional otherland - but what if that artefact is a frozen caveman who starts smashing stuff up as soon as he thaws?

One way or another, the past always catches up with us.

**Load-Date:** March 7, 2025



Trump's rollback of AI guardrails leaves US workers 'at real risk', labor experts warn



## *Trump's rollback of AI guardrails leaves US workers 'at real risk', labor experts warn*

The Guardian (London)

March 4, 2025 Tuesday 2:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** US NEWS; Version:1

**Length:** 835 words

**Byline:** Michael Sainato

**Highlight:** Measures issued by Joe Biden were swiftly repealed, leaving employees vulnerable to downgraded jobs

### **Body**

---

Donald Trump's rollback of basic guardrails for artificial intelligence leaves US workers "at real risk", labor experts have warned.

Protections introduced under Joe Biden to ensure the safe, secure and trustworthy development and use of **AI** were swiftly repealed by the Trump administration – as top executives outlined sweeping plans to overhaul the labor force.

Today's CEOs are likely the last to "manage a workforce of only human beings", Salesforce boss Marc Benioff [claimed](#) at Davos. Mark Zuckerberg, CEO of Meta Platforms, meanwhile [told](#) podcaster Joe Rogan that its **AI** will "probably" be able to act as "a sort of midlevel engineer" as soon as this year.

"Workers are at a relatively weak point," said top labor scholar David Madland, who argued the **AI** protection rollbacks under Trump "made it even more so that workers are at the whims of their employers on how **AI** is deployed".

"I think they're going to be at real risk of having their jobs degraded in many different kinds of ways," said Madland, a senior fellow and senior adviser to the American Worker Project at Center for American Progress. "The Biden administration rules provided very modest – only very modest – protections, but they were better than nothing."

Under Trump the US government is "promoting and encouraging **AI** innovation to ensure America remains the leader in this cutting edge technology", Victoria LaCivita, White House office of science and technology policy Spokesperson, said in a statement. "The Trump administration is committed to ensuring the continued American leadership in **AI**."

## Trump's rollback of AI guardrails leaves US workers 'at real risk', labor experts warn

Among the [guidelines removed](#) by the Trump administration were directives [issued](#) by the US Department of Labor to ensure employers create and implement [AI](#) in the workplace without diminishing job quality or violating workers' rights. Significant cuts are also [expected](#) at the US [AI](#) Safety Institute, as part of Trump's efforts to cull the federal workforce.

"It strips out consideration of civil rights, job quality and the impact on workers," said Josh Boxerman, government affairs manager for the National Employment Law Project.

He pointed to concerns about the degrading quality of jobs, rather than their displacement. [AI](#) is increasingly being used to manage workers, from impacts on surveillance and productivity pressures on Amazon warehouse workers, algorithm management of ride share drivers with gig apps such as Uber and Lyft, and recent growing trends of gig work in the healthcare industry, including algorithms used to mass deny health insurance claims and apps [using AI](#) to undercut pay and working conditions for nurses.

"The story of displacement right now is not just workers being replaced by robots or work being automated away, but also workers being replaced or jobs being replaced by jobs of lower quality," said Boxerman. Trump, he noted, won back the presidency last year after successfully seeking support from the working class.

Many of the tech companies at the heart of the [AI](#) boom, including Meta, Google and Amazon, lined up to support Trump's inauguration with donations. The OpenAI co-founder Sam Altman [personally donated \\$1m](#).

[Recent polling](#) by Pew Research found 52% of US workers are worried about the future impacts of [AI](#) in the workplace, with 32% expecting it will lead to fewer job opportunities for them.

"In the absence of strong guardrails, those tools are creating real-world harms when companies and government agencies use them to help decide [who gets a job](#), who gets a loan, [who goes to jail](#), and a host of other sensitive decisions," [wrote](#) attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union on Trump's [AI](#) executive orders.

The use of [AI](#), and its impact on workers, was front on mind when the Writers Guild of America and actors represented by Sag-Aftra [secured their 2023 contracts](#).

John Rogers, a screenwriter and board member with the Writers Guild of America West, said: "The general concern is always that corporations will attempt to maximize the profits at the expense of the workers. [AI](#) is the dream of capital everywhere, which is it would be nice to have income with no workers. So we always have to be aware of that."

As [AI](#) progresses and its use expands, there are ongoing concerns about writers' work being stolen to develop the technology, he said. "Right now, there is no consequence for companies that are valued at billions of dollars being valued only because they stole other people's work," added Rogers.

"There are arguments to be made that when a new technology comes along that makes things better or more efficient, you should embrace it," he said. "This doesn't make things better. It doesn't do things more efficient. It doesn't make things cheaper. The consumers don't want [AI slop](#). The creators don't want their stuff sold for [AI](#)."

"The only people who want [AI](#) are the people making [AI](#), who need people to invest billions of dollars in it. And right now, not just the creators, but also the consumers, are suffering from it."

The labor department was contacted for comment.

**Load-Date:** March 4, 2025



## *Generative AI is most useful for the things we care about the least*

Sunjournal.com

March 2, 2025 Sunday

Copyright 2025 Lewiston Sun Journal All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 1139 words

**Byline:** By John P. Nelson Georgia Institute of Technology

### **Body**

---

Generative **AI** tools such as [ChatGPT](#) and [Midjourney](#) can produce text, images and videos far more quickly than any one person can accomplish by hand.

But [as someone who studies the societal impacts of AI](#), I've noticed an interesting trade-off: The technology can certainly save time, but it does so precisely to the extent that the user is willing to surrender control over the final product.

For this reason, generative **AI** is probably most useful for things we care about the least.

#### **Ceding creative control**

Let's use the example of **AI** image generators. You probably have a rough idea of how they work. Just type what you want - "a panda surfing," "a piece of toast that is also a car" - and the generative tool draws it.

But this glosses over the countless possible iterations of the desired image.

Will the image appear as a watercolor painting or a pencil sketch? How lifelike will the panda be? How big is the wave? Is the toast-car parked or moving? Is there anyone inside of it?

When the images are generated, these questions have been answered - [but not by the user](#). Rather, the generative **AI** tool has "decided."

Of course, the user can be more specific: Imitate the style of Monet. Make the wave twice the height of the panda. Maybe the panda should look worried, since it isn't used to surfing.

Generative AI is most useful for the things we care about the least

You can also pop open an image editor and modify the output yourself, down to the individual pixel. But, of course, drafting detailed instructions and revising the image take time, effort and skill. Generative **AI** promises to lighten the load. But as every manager knows, exercising control is work.

### The devil is in the details

In all art and expression, power lies in the details.

In great paintings, not every brushstroke is planned - *but each is carefully considered and accepted*. And its overall effect on the viewer depends on all those considered brushstrokes together.

Filmmakers shoot take after take of the same scene, each subtly or radically different. Only a small fraction of that footage makes it into the final cut - *the fraction that the editors feel does the job best*. Great artists use their judgment to ensure every detail helps to achieve the effect they want.

Of course, there's nothing new about putting someone else in charge of the details. People are used to delegating authority - even about matters of expression - to marketers, speechwriters, social media managers and the like.

Generative **AI** makes a new sort of contractor available. It's always on call, and in certain ways it is very technically competent.

But compared with skilled humans, it has a limited ability to understand what you want. Moreover, it lacks intention, contemplation and the comprehensive mastery of detail that yield great expressive achievements - or even the comprehensive idiosyncrasy that spawns very unique ones.

Ask ChatGPT for a film script, plus casting and shooting instructions. It will give you neither Francis Ford Coppola's masterpiece "*The Godfather*" nor Tommy Wiseau's bizarre "*The Room*."

You could, perhaps, approach a masterpiece, or a true oddity. But to do so, you'd have to exercise more and more time, more and more effort, and more and more control.

### An era of 'cheap speech'

What generative **AI** makes possible, above all, is low-effort, low-control expression.

In the time I took to write and revise this article, I could have used ChatGPT to generate 200 grammatically correct, well-structured articles, and then I could have posted them online without even reading them. I wouldn't have had to carefully parse each word and decide whether it really helped me make my point. I wouldn't have even had to decide whether I agreed with any of the **AI**-generated write-ups.

This is not a merely hypothetical example. Low-quality, **AI**-generated e-books of ambiguous provenance are already making their way into online vendors' catalogs - *and into the libraries those vendors serve*.

Similarly, using image generators, *I could now flood the internet with superficially appealing images*, dedicating only a fraction of a second to decide whether any of them express what I want them to express or achieve what I want them to achieve.

But in doing so, I would not just be skipping over drudgery. Writing, drawing and painting are not just labor but processes of considering, reviewing and deciding exactly what I want to put out into the world. By skipping over those processes, I surrender that decision-making process to the **AI** tool.

Some scholars argue that the internet has produced an era of "*cheap speech*." People no longer have to invest a lot of resources - nor even face the judgment of their neighbors - to broadcast whatever they want to the world.

Generative AI is most useful for the things we care about the least

With generative **AI**, expression is even cheaper. You don't even have to make things yourself to put them out into the world. For the first time in human history, the ability to produce writing, art and expression has been decoupled from the necessity of actually paying attention to what you're making or saying.

### When intention and effort matter

I suspect that great art, journalism and scholarship will still demand great attention and effort. Some of that effort may even include custom-developing **AI** tools [\*tailored to an individual artist's concerns\*](#).

But unless people become much better at curation, great work will be increasingly difficult to locate amid the flood of low-effort content, which is also known as "[\*AI slop\*](#)."

It's appropriate that generative **AI** becomes more useful the sloppier its users are willing to be - that is, the less they care about the details.

I could end with some dire prognosis - that [\*working artists and writers\*](#) will [\*be replaced with mediocre automation\*](#), that online discourse will get even stupider, that people will [\*isolate themselves in personalized cocoons of AI-generated media\*](#).

All these things are possible. But it's probably more useful to offer a suggestion to you, the reader.

When you need an image or a piece of writing, take a moment to decide: How important are the details? Would the process of making this yourself, or working with a collaborator or contractor, be useful? Would it yield a better output, or give me the chance to learn, or begin or strengthen a relationship, or help you reflect on something important to you?

In short, is it worth putting in real care and effort? The answer will not always be yes. But it often will.

Art, writing, films - these are not just products, but acts. They are things humans make, through a process of thousands of little decisions that encompass what we stand for and what we want to say.

So when it comes to art, expression and argument, if you want it done right, it's probably still best to do it yourself.

***This article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts.***

**Load-Date:** March 2, 2025

Voices: Trump's fake AI video of him relaxing in Gaza with Netanyahu is a nightmare look inside his mind



## ***Voices: Trump's fake AI video of him relaxing in Gaza with Netanyahu is a nightmare look inside his mind***

The Independent (United Kingdom)

February 27, 2025 Thursday 11:53 AM EST

Copyright 2025 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved



**Section:** ISRAEL NEWS & MIDDLE EAST NEWS

**Length:** 805 words

**Byline:** Richard Hall

### **Body**

---

The video opens with a child picking through the ruins of Gaza while a gunman stands menacingly over him. A pool of blood appears out of nowhere.

The words "What's next?" appear in large letters, and a terrifying insight into Donald Trump's vision for Gaza follows in the form of an **AI**-generated **slop** reel, shared by the president himself.

In a few short seconds, the landscape is transformed into Trump's idea of paradise: beaches, brand-new hotels, restaurants and sports cars. A gurning Elon Musk is devouring some kind of dip, Donald Trump is pawing at a belly dancer and then, inexplicably, baring his nipples on a sun lounger alongside Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trump's name and image appear throughout the dizzying series of clips on hotels, souvenirs, and in the form of a giant golden statue, as is his wont.

Cash rains down at random intervals, Musk gobbles more indistinguishable dip, a child carries a golden ballon of Trump's head, bearded belly dancers sway on the beaches and an eerie soundtrack with a robotic voice declares "Trump Gaza is finally here."

The Palestinians who have lived in Gaza for countless generations are never seen again after those first frames - they have presumably been swept away with the rubble to some unknown place. The graves of tens of thousands killed by Israel's massive bombardment of the strip appear to have been paved over and replaced by restaurants.

Trump shared the video on his Truth Social network on Tuesday night, prompting outrage, mockery and confusion.

**AI**-generated videos are not yet sophisticated enough to make any sort of sense - they are akin to a fever dream where nothing feels real, where all logic is suspended, and random firings of code produce surreal glitches. The same is true of Trump's vision for Gaza.

Voices: Trump's fake AI video of him relaxing in Gaza with Netanyahu is a nightmare look inside his mind

[Link to Image](#)

After trying and failing to explain [his shocking plan for the bombed-out strip](#) using words and speech, he has now turned to ramblings of an unknown algorithm, likely prompted by a bored teenager in some far corner of the world, to translate for him.

It is somehow even worse than his previous efforts to sell the idea. Trump's Gaza, the video suggests, is so garish that it would make Dubai look like Gary, Indiana. It is ethnic cleansing packaged as a slick real estate promotional video.

The video is only 30 seconds long, but it leaves out several steps that would have to occur between the present-day Gaza and Trump's end call - namely the forcible removal of nearly two million Palestinians and likely another war more devastating than the last.

Trump's allies used to struggle to explain his all-caps tweets when cornered by reporters in the halls of Congress. Now they have to interpret his imaginary golden statues and Musk's insatiable appetite for dips. The media, too, is forced to entertain his teenager-like trolling.

America's adversaries used to have to spend billions of dollars to figure out what the president of the United States was truly thinking. Now they need only to log on to Truth Social in the early hours of the morning to confirm their worst fears.

It's a terrifying insight into the president's mind. While Palestinians in Gaza are still picking out bodies from the rubble, while babies are [freezing to death](#) in the bitter cold because their homes have been destroyed, Trump is dreaming up ways to enrich himself from the ruins.

Trump promised unparalleled transparency in his second term, but no one expected to learn this much about how he thinks.

It also says something about his corrosive media diet. During his first term, Trump would park himself in front of a television for hours a day watching Fox News and blasting out missives in reaction to whatever scraps of news he could see. Today, he is consuming content from the most unhinged corners of the internet.

[Link to Image](#)

The most powerful man in the world would rather watch fan edits of his most deranged ideas than read intelligence briefings from the CIA.

The content of the video is disturbing enough, but what it represents for America's place in the world is awful too.

Many believe the growing prevalence of these videos is a sign of the so-called "enshittification" of the internet. It's a term coined by tech critic Cory Doctorow and commonly used to describe the degradation of online platforms into uselessness. Facebook is often used as a prime example, primarily because it has become awash with [AI slop](#) similar to the video Trump shared.

Those videos are usually shared by users of a certain age across Mark Zuckerberg's platform, many of whom are [blissfully unaware](#) that what they are sharing is [AI](#)-generated. The platform is now a stream of unreality and fakery, and 78-year-old Trump is not immune to this phenomenon.

By sharing his unfiltered fever dreams with the world, Trump is heralding the enshittification of the presidency.

**Load-Date:** February 27, 2025



## **Call of Duty maker Activision confirms AI usage in games; how this Steam policy may be behind it**

The Times of India (TOI)

February 26, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** GAMING

**Length:** 387 words

**Byline:** TOI Tech Desk

### **Body**

---

Activision has finally confirmed that Call of Duty titles including the newly released Black Ops 6 and Warzone contain AI-generated content. This announcement comes after a new Steam policy that requires studios to disclose their AI usage in games. The confirmation comes after fans noticed visual inconsistencies in some of the game's artwork, leading to accusations that Activision was using AI to cut costs and replace human artists.

The updated Steam policy, which allows AI-generated content but mandates disclosure, may have forced Activision's hand in admitting the use of AI in its popular shooter franchise. "Our team uses generative AI tools to help develop some in-game assets," Activision said in the Steam listing of Call of Duty: Black Ops 6. What users said about AI usage in Call of Duty games Activision's confirmation comes after players noticed a loading screen featuring a zombie Santa with six fingers—a trait often linked to AI-generated content during Black Ops 6's Season 1 "Merry Mayhem" event. Further investigation indicated that other in-game cosmetics—including loading screens, weapon decals and player cards awarded as rewards or offered in-store bundles—were likely created using AI. At the time, Activision did not confirm the use of generative AI in Call of Duty, even as player feedback increased. Some Reddit users also complained about receiving what they described as "AI Slop" in a game sold at a standard price that offers various options for purchasing cosmetic content, such as battle passes, event passes and microtransactions. How Activision is using AI in its games Apart from in-game assets, Activision has been using AI across the Call of Duty franchise, including in social media content and chat moderation. The studio has also sought talent with generative AI skills while its parent company launched Xbox's new tool Muse for game preservation to continue pushing AI for gaming. However, Activision's use of AI-generated content faces hurdles after the US Copyright Office ruled such works, even when human-assisted, lack copyright protection. In-game assets refined by humans may qualify, but raw AI imagery—like loading screens and weapon stickers—remains unprotected as this ruling may pose serious challenges for the Call of Duty franchise. For Reprint Rights: timescontent.com

**Load-Date:** February 25, 2025



Call of Duty maker Activision confirms AI usage in games; how this Steam policy may be behind it

---

End of Document

Zoho's Sridhar Vembu says 'AI bubble deflating,' lists 7 tech uses worth the hype



## **Zoho's Sridhar Vembu says 'AI bubble deflating,' lists 7 tech uses worth the hype**

Hindustan Times

February 24, 2025 Monday

Copyright 2025 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 341 words

**Dateline:** India

### **Body**

---

India, Feb. 24 -- Indian IT firm Zoho Corp's founder and chief scientist Sridhar Vembu said that the Artificial Intelligence (**AI**) bubble is deflating and that corporate customers and analysts are not terribly excited about its recent developments.

In a post on X, Sridhar Vembu took the examples of Microsoft reportedly cancelling US data center leases due to oversupply concerns and Satya Nadella cautioning against overly optimistic projections about **AI** and Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) in particular.

However, Vembu also listed seven areas in which **AI** is actually useful today. They are as follows:

- "1. Speech to text, text to speech, image recognition, authentication based on photos/videos/speech/.
2. Image to text (character recognition) and extracting meta data and data from images/PDFs etc.
3. Spam detection, phishing detection and fraud detection.
4. Security threat analysis.
5. Identifying patterns in data in a variety of financial/business/legal/medical/engineering/scientific scenarios. There is a huge category of uses here.
6. Programmer assistance via code generation, particularly UI code generation, and help finding bugs.
7. Marketing content generation, design of brochures, websites, campaigns, emails and so on."

He also added that if the marketing applications are abused, it results in "**AI slop**" which is a situation where humans know something is **AI** generated.

Zoho's Sridhar Vembu says 'AI bubble deflating,' lists 7 tech uses worth the hype

Sridhar Vembu also said that he is most excited about **AI** being used for security threat analysis, the huge use case it has for pattern identification in data related to financial, business, legal, medical, engineering, and scientific scenarios, as well as for assisting programmers with code.

"In that sense autonomous **AI** agents are like self-driving cars: don't get too taken by the hype but engineers in the trenches are making progress," he wrote.

Published by HT Digital Content Services with permission from Hindustan Times. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [contentservices@htdigital.in](mailto:contentservices@htdigital.in)

**Load-Date:** February 24, 2025

---

End of Document

'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z becoming a canary in the coalmine for AI'?



## 'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z becoming a canary in the coalmine for AI'?

The Sydney Morning Herald

February 23, 2025 Sunday

Print & First Editions

Copyright 2025 John Fairfax Publications Pty Ltd All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 24

**Length:** 977 words

**Byline:** Tim Biggs

### **Body**

---

Artificial Intelligence models that create words, images and videos may have just become available across most devices and platforms, but they are already a hit with users. And with the technology yet to be properly regulated, and its long-term effects yet to be fully understood, this world of early adopters, while exciting, is an equally unsettling one.

From bots that write emails and summarise messages for you, to image-generation apps that can create selfies in locations you've never visited, the AI craze is moving fast and appeals particularly to young people who feel they need to prepare for an AI future.

Research published in October based on a survey of university students suggested that those in Gen Z were significantly more likely to use ChatGPT (for example to help draft or structure papers) during their courses, relative to other generations. Studies have also been conducted to learn more about how the technology affects learning comprehension and critical thinking, though a consensus is far from being reached.

One study from this year (notably, by a company that provides AI solutions) suggested that four out of five Gen Z workers used generative AI at work, and that a quarter of Gen Z workers delegate half of their workload to AI, though anecdotally this would depend largely on the kind of work you're doing.

Young enough to have grown up with ubiquitous internet, but old enough to be entering the workforce, Gen Z could be seen as the canary in the coalmine when it comes to generative AI. But how exactly will they choose to use it?

Dr Dana McKay, senior lecturer in innovative interactive technologies at RMIT University, said it ultimately might not be up to them. "Tech companies are sticking [generative AI features] ... in all sorts of places. In our email, our word processors, our search results. It's not whether Gen Z is choosing to use it, it's whether they're going to have the choice not to use it."

New AI features continue to appear every day, despite the potential of a dire environmental cost. When Google rolled out its AI-powered summaries in Search last year, reports indicated the energy requirement of a simple search increased by 10 times. But for those using AI, Google may be becoming a thing of the past anyway. For the

'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z becoming a canary in the coalmine for AI'?

simple kind of information-gathering query we're used to dropping into a search bar to find an answer on Wikipedia or Reddit, ChatGPT and similar bots have become a popular alternative.

A cottage industry has sprung up around teaching people how to optimise their queries to get the information they need, and in theory AI can scrape multiple sources to come up with a consensus rather than the user manually having to click multiple links. But chatbots also frequently get facts wrong, despite being designed to appear objective and completely confident.

"Being used to something producing an answer that sounds certain probably will change expectations of what an answer looks like," McKay said, potentially making it difficult to go back.

"There are things in life that are genuinely disputed, and how we ask an AI to address something that's genuinely disputed is a real challenge in that environment."

The ubiquity of generative AI has also given rise to an ecosystem of AI influencers, showing their followers how to make money with AI, kickstart their hustles and make their lives more efficient, either with original content or by highlighting useful tidbits shared on the web.

Unsurprisingly, a lot of the most popular posts are get-rich-quick schemes or ideas for passive income, which is a big reason many online content platforms have begun to fill with AI slop. On the other hand, there's a lot of more constructive AI influencer content too. A technology communicator who goes by the name AskCatGPT discusses practical tips for using the technology, but also cautions against potential negative implications.

Of course, TikTok tech influencers may no more represent Gen Z than Mark Zuckerberg Millennials, and there's reason to think teens may tire of many AI trends before they're eligible to vote.

Nick Donaldson, a high school English teacher from Melbourne's east, said his students had already been through multiple cycles of AI adoption and use. "When chatbots were first introduced, the most common use seemed to be what we were expecting: a few students using the tech to generate entire pieces of work. We used apps to identify AI-generated content and discussed chatbot use with the students, highlighting the consequences and exploring possible appropriate uses," he said.

"Now they seem to be using chatbots in increasingly peripheral ways. Instead of getting them to create work whole cloth, they might ask a bot to share initial ideas or mark work based on criteria, or offer guidance on how to improve based on task requirements."

Donaldson said AI has a place in the classroom, and he uses it with care when preparing some educational materials. But while he's seen many students using AI in place of search engines or spell-check, he said they would benefit from education in how to craft effective prompts, how to use AI for study without it becoming plagiarism, and how to fact-check AI or spot false information.

On the other hand, some students have found the pervasiveness of AI tools overwhelming, and prefer to avoid them for certain tasks. "In the last year or so, I've noticed an increased request to handwrite work instead of crafting it digitally. Students seem keen to take a break from not only AI tools but computer technology in general," he said.

"It's a similar case with mobile phones. Recent bans in schools have been pretty positively received by the student community. They seem to see the value in AI and digital technology, and use it when it suits, but they also seem to be increasingly seeking solace through more hands-on, tech-free approaches."

**Load-Date:** February 23, 2025

'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'



## 'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'

The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia) - Online

February 21, 2025 Friday 6:05 PM UTC

Copyright 2025 Fairfax Media Publications Pty. Limited All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1768 words

**Byline:** Tim Biggs

**Highlight:** From homework to get-rich schemes, younger users are the first to explore generative **AI**'s potential - and encounter its setbacks.

### **Body**

---

Artificial Intelligence models that create words, images and videos may have just become available across most devices and platforms, but they are already a hit with users. And with the technology yet to be properly regulated, and its long-term effects yet to be fully understood, this world of early adopters, while exciting, is an equally unsettling one.

From bots that write emails and summarise messages for you, to image-generation apps that can create selfies in locations you've never visited, the **AI** craze is moving fast and appeals particularly to young people who feel they need to prepare for an **AI** future.

Research published in October based on a survey of university students suggested that those in Gen Z were [significantly more likely](#) to use ChatGPT (for example, to help draft or structure papers) during their courses, relative to other generations. Studies have also been conducted to learn more about how the technology [affects learning comprehension and critical thinking](#), though a consensus is far from being reached.

One study from this year (notably conducted by a company that provides **AI** solutions) suggested [four out of five Gen Z workers](#) used generative **AI** at work, and a quarter of Gen Z workers delegate half of their workload to **AI**, though anecdotally this would depend largely on the kind of work being done.

Young enough to have grown up with ubiquitous internet, but old enough to be entering the workforce, Gen Z could ultimately be seen as the canary in the coalmine when it comes to generative **AI**. But how will they choose to use it?

Dr Dana McKay, senior lecturer in innovative interactive technologies at RMIT University, said it might not ultimately be up to them.

"Companies are pushing [generative **AI** features] at us. Young people, especially in the tech space, are quite open to using them. And they do have benefits for some people. But should we be using them for everything?

"Tech companies are sticking them in all sorts of places. In our email, our word processors, our search results. It's not whether Gen Z is choosing to use it, it's whether they're going to have the choice not to use it."

'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'

### Quick answers and quick money, but with caveats

New AI features continue to appear every day, despite the potential of a dire environmental cost. When Google rolled out its AI-powered summaries in Search last year, reports indicated the energy requirement of a simple search increased by 10 times.

But for those engaged in the space, Google may be becoming a thing of the past anyway. For the simple kind of information-gathering query we're used to dropping into a search bar to find an answer on Wikipedia or Reddit, ChatGPT and similar bots have become a popular alternative.

A cottage industry has sprung up around teaching people how to optimise their queries to get the information they need, and in theory AI can scrape numerous sources to come up with a consensus rather than the user manually having to click multiple links. But chatbots also frequently get facts entirely wrong, despite being designed to appear objective and completely confident.

"Being used to something producing an answer that sounds certain probably will change expectations of what an answer looks like," McKay said, potentially making it difficult to go back.

"There are things in life that are genuinely disputed, and how we ask an AI to address something that's genuinely disputed is a real challenge in that environment."

The ubiquity of generative AI has also given rise to an ecosystem of AI influencers, showing their followers how to make money with AI, kickstart their hustles and make their lives more efficient, either with original content or by highlighting useful tidbits shared elsewhere on the web.

Unsurprisingly, a lot of the most popular posts are get-rich-quick schemes or ideas for passive income, which is a big reason many online content platforms have begun to fill with AI slop. A recurring example suggests that people ask ChatGPT to make a script for a podcast based on today's news, then plug that script into a voice generator. Add automation software that can repeat the same tasks on a set schedule and upload the results to a podcast service, and you have a low-quality regular podcast that is very unlikely to attract listeners or ad dollars.

On the other hand, there's a lot of more constructive AI influencer content too.

A technology communicator who goes by the name AskCatGPT discusses practical tips for using the technology, but also cautions against potential negative implications. In one video, for example, she uses an automation app called Zapier to have [ChatGPT draft replies](#) to every email she receives, while in another video she [relays conversations with young teens](#) who worry that their AI use is becoming a crutch that will stunt their critical thinking skills.

### AI in the classroom

Of course, tech influencers on TikTok may no more represent Gen Z than Mark Zuckerberg represents Millennials, and there's reason to think teens may tire of many AI trends before they're even eligible to vote.

Nick Donaldson, a high school English teacher from Melbourne's east, said his students had already been through several cycles of AI adoption and use.

"When chatbots were first introduced, the most common use seemed to be what we were expecting: a few students using the tech to generate entire pieces of work. We used apps to identify AI-generated content and actively discussed chatbot use with the students, highlighting the consequences and exploring possible appropriate uses," he said.

"Now they seem to be using chatbots in increasingly peripheral ways. Instead of getting them to create work whole cloth, they might ask a bot to share initial ideas or mark work based on criteria, or offer guidance on how to improve based on the provided task requirements."

'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'

Donaldson said AI has a place in the classroom, and he himself uses it with appropriate care when preparing some educational materials. But while he's seen many students using AI in place of search engines or spell-check, he said they would benefit from education in how to craft effective prompts, how to use AI for study without it becoming plagiarism, and how to fact-check AI or spot false information.

On the other hand, some students have found the pervasiveness of AI tools overwhelming, and prefer to avoid them for certain tasks.

"In the last year or so, I've noticed an increased request to handwrite work instead of crafting it digitally. Students seem keen to take a break from not only AI tools but computer technology in general," Donaldson said.

"It's a similar case with mobile phones. Recent bans in schools have been pretty positively received by the student community. So yeah, they seem to see the value in AI and digital technology, and use it when it suits, but they also seem to be increasingly seeking solace through more hands-on, tech-free approaches."

### **Where are we headed?**

What about the idea that generative AI could be used to augment interpersonal communication? Already there are services that will reply to emails for you, summarise incoming messages, or answer the phone and transcribe what's being said. There are even generative AI tools for crafting dating app profiles and messaging with prospective matches, which would have wild implications if everybody was using it.

It's not uncommon to hear from older generations that Gen Z is socially awkward, withdrawn, hates talking on the phone or face-to-face and so on. So, isn't this the perfect match?

Clearly there are certain tasks people will prefer to use AI for, just as many people have now moved to Googling symptoms rather than talking to a doctor, or asking Reddit rather than asking real-life friends. And for this kind of use case, the technology would seem to have unique benefits as well as dangers.

Research published in Science in September found that chatbots specially trained to debunk conspiracy theories had a phenomenally high success rate at changing the opinions of people who believed them. The AI is patient, persistent, consistent, and was seen by the conspiracy believer as dispassionate and informed. This is a good sign that conversations with AI could actually be preferable to social media bubbles in some instances. But it also shows that, depending on who designs the AI system, it could be used to reinforce dangerous beliefs.

McKay, the RMIT lecturer, said it might not be entirely useful or accurate to say younger generations are "less social" than previous ones, and therefore more likely to turn to AI. Rather, younger generations have grown up with more options and tools to get things done and connect with others.

"What we grow up with changes our expectation of what's possible in the world. Gen Z grew up in a search era. And any kid under the age of 10 has been searching since before they could read or type, by mashing the buttons and asking the questions that their parents said they didn't have time to answer right now," McKay said.

"Some of this is about different input modalities. A lot of this is about support when writing on a small screen. It's horrendous to type an email on a piece of glass that's just over the size of my hand. And so the generative AI helps me type that email, but it also makes me sound less like myself."

Will AI eventually fulfil that great technological promise of letting humans get on with the human things while machines handle the tasks that are easiest to automate? It may be too early to tell. But tapping into what the early adopters and the influencers are using it for, an awful lot of it seems to involve the opposite: people working hard to coax machines into creating art and being personable.

McKay was hopeful that as the technology matures it would find the spots in each industry where it could do the most good. But she also suspects that AI, like email, may create as much work as it alleviates.



'Hey ChatGPT, is Gen Z the canary in the AI coalmine?'

"Say you're using it to summarise something, but you're doing that in academic work. Well, then you have to fact-check the summarisation, right? So do you actually save any time, or do you spend the time fact-checking instead of just reading the damn thing and developing your own opinion in the first place?

"There's a lot of talk about how we measure and educate people's critical thinking around what **AI** produces, which, again, is new work that we're going to have to do. So right now, it feels like it's going to be this massive labour-saving device, but I think it's just going to change the nature of a labour."

***Get news and reviews on technology, gadgets and gaming in our Technology newsletter every Friday. [Sign up here.](#)***

**Load-Date:** February 21, 2025

---

End of Document

Are you seeing disquieting images like these on social media? There's a sinister reason why... and it's taking older people for fools, reveals FLORA GILL



**[Are you seeing disquieting images like these on social media? There's a sinister reason why... and it's taking older people for fools, reveals FLORA GILL](#)**

MailOnline

February 19, 2025 Wednesday 5:20 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Mail**Online

**Section:** NEWS; Version:1

**Length:** 992 words

**Byline:** Flora Gill For The Daily Mail

## Body

---

This week I watched a video of an attractive woman strutting down a street in slow motion. At her side was a muscular, humanoid crocodile more than twice her height, wearing a suit and swaggering on his hind legs.

The video was hypnotic, strangely beautiful and, at least to someone of my generation, very clearly made by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Most extraordinary of all, though, wasn't the content - but the comments the footage attracted. 'Isn't it dangerous to have that as a pet?' scoffed one awestruck user. 'Dressing animals up in human clothes is just cruel,' insisted another. Summarising the confusion was one bemused person who asked: 'Is this real?'

I didn't need to click on the profile pictures of those commenters to know that they almost certainly remembered pagers, dial-up mobiles and fax machines.

Yes, they were all Boomers: born between 1946 and 1964 when AI was only a science-fiction premise. The sudden deluge of this computer-generated content has left them questioning the foundations of reality - and many are very, very confused.

Content such as the crocodile bodyguard is often dismissively referred to as 'AI slop'. This conjures images of pig food overflowing from troughs for hungry hogs to snort at - which feels like the perfect metaphor for the internet.

Nowadays, 'slop' is the name given to AI-generated pictures and videos, often poor-quality and widely shared on social media. It is becoming increasingly ubiquitous - and taking Boomers for fools.

Are you seeing disquieting images like these on social media? There's a sinister reason why... and it's taking older people for fools, reveals FLORA GILL

Certain themes seem to do the rounds. There's 'pity slop', which often takes the form of distraught people sobbing over some heartbreaking situation.

A 50-year-old woman claiming to have 'no husband, no children' weeps as she blows out the candles on a birthday cake she baked herself. Or a young girl cries on a refugee boat as she cradles a cute puppy.

Then there's 'religious slop' - unearthed skeletons of supposed angels or images of Jesus carrying a giant prawn in the sea.

Or take 'celebrity slop': a fake image of billionaire Elon Musk comforting a sobbing Starbucks cashier who 'can't afford a gift' for her daughter - or last week's AI video of Jewish celebrities, including Scarlett Johansson, giving the middle finger to rapper Kanye West after he went on an anti-Semitic tirade on social media.

Some are completely bizarre: an old lady sitting in a shoe she supposedly knitted herself; a young boy carving an intricate monkey into a tree trunk; a baker creating a full-sized horse out of bread.

There's huge variety - but they all have one thing in common. They're catnip for clicks - especially from Boomers.

The over-60s are not responsible for creating this rubbish but they're still to blame. Because they can't stop clicking on it, they cause the slop to go viral. The more 'engagement', the more the algorithms spread the images widely.

Should we be surprised? This is the same demographic who, during email's heyday, would forward a chain to 12 people to avoid a 'curse' on their family or believe a message from a 'Nigerian prince' was genuine.

Even the over-50s have been pulled in - just look at the 53-year-old Frenchwoman who was convinced that Brad Pitt had fallen in love with her on social media but needed £700,000 to deal with 'cancer treatment'.

In time, perhaps this content will go the same way as spam mail. At one point it felt like email was going to become unusable because of all the junk, until new software caught up and began efficiently removing it.

However this won't happen any time soon if gullible Boomers keep sharing the slop - not helped by social media sites such as Facebook whose algorithms were last year found to be boosting these AI-generated posts.

It's easy for me as a technologically-literate millennial to scoff, but even I know how convincing some of this slop is. It's also improving at a terrifying rate - so much so that some images are increasingly indiscernible from real ones.

Just a few months ago, you could look at someone's hands in a picture and know if it was doctored because AI couldn't quite master four fingers and a thumb. But even this gauge is now outdated.

But while we can all excuse some confusion, what I don't understand is some Boomers' lack of context clues. If you see a video of an elephant that fits into someone's palm, an entire house made from aquariums or a skydiving camel, do you really need to ask if it's real?

Where are these Boomers' common sense filters? Do they weaken with your bones, stored somewhere in the cartilage of your hip joints? It's amazing that these images can be created at all - I certainly have no idea how it's done - but I don't need to understand the technology to know that a photo of chickens on Mars probably isn't real.

Even the most famous Boomer on the planet, 78-year-old Donald Trump, isn't immune. Last year, he shared AI-generated images of Taylor Swift fans endorsing him for US President - prompting the pop star to reveal she was a Democrat.

While there are all sorts of scary ramifications for AI, right now I'm focused on two things: the internet becoming flooded with this garbage and Boomers becoming desensitised to feats that are truly impressive.

Are you seeing disquieting images like these on social media? There's a sinister reason why... and it's taking older people for fools, reveals FLORA GILL

No craft project will ever be as spectacular as the giant crocheted tank they saw online; no missing child as cute as the one with eyes twice the normal size. And how will they ever be amazed by a magic trick after being awed by the doctored video that showed two contestants on talent show Britain's Got Talent transform into flying swans?

I'm sure that one day, when my crow's feet deepen and my hair thins, I too will be discombobulated by some technological advancement.

Perhaps I'll chat on the phone for hours with a scammer who tells me he's a talking porpoise, or be tricked by a hologram of a non-existent celebrity.

When that happens I expect to be mercilessly mocked by Generation Alpha below me. But, until then, my message to all internet hogs is this: Stop chowing down this slop.

**Load-Date:** February 20, 2025

---

End of Document

Looking for something new to spice up your game play? The Tinder of games is here



## [Looking for something new to spice up your game play? The Tinder of games is here](#)

The Guardian (London)

February 19, 2025 Wednesday 3:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** GAMES; Version:1

**Length:** 1468 words

**Byline:** Keza MacDonald

**Highlight:** There are so many games out there, deciding what to tackle next can be overwhelming. Enter Ludocene, a dating-style app that matches you with titles based on your personal tastes

### **Body**

---

As any adult who loves video games knows, there are simply too many of them – [19,000 games](#) were released in 2024 on PC games storefront Steam alone, not counting all the playable delights on consoles and smartphones. Most of us have backlogs of unplayed classics that make us feel guilty about buying newer games. Finding things that are actually good, meanwhile, can feel totally impossible. At least 50% of the questions people send in for this newsletter are a variant of “Help, what should I play?”

We do our best to help, but even though it’s my job to know about games, I still don’t have infinite time to play them. Streamers play games all day, but even they usually specialise in particular games or genres and rarely stray outside them. Trying to Google recommendations these days leads you down a rabbit hole of hard-to-parse Reddit threads and misleading [AI slop](#).

Enter [Ludocene](#), a new app launching on Kickstarter this week that hopes to solve this problem. It is described as Tinder for video games. When you load it up you’ll see a bunch of cards with game names, details and screenshots on them, as well as links to trailers, and you can sort them into yes/no piles. Based on what you say you like, it’ll show you new cards for games you may like to play. If you like the look of a game you can add it to your deck, so you remember to check it out later. You can easily see which games connect to each other, so it’s transparent where the recommendations come from.

You can also select a particular expert – quite a few streamers, critics and other games media people have signed up already – to see their recommendations. Experts have their own cards too, showing a photo and a brief description of their background. The app’s recommendation engine is powered only by human recommendations,

Looking for something new to spice up your game play? The Tinder of games is here

not by an algorithm that relies on player data, genre tags or [AI](#). It's based on a dataset put together over five years by the team behind [Family Gaming Database](#), a recommendation site for parents.

"Amazing games are so often buried in the mass," says longtime games writer Andy Robertson, who's leading the project. "I wanted a way to follow experts with similar tastes to mine so I could find the games I'm missing. The system needed to be flexible and simple, and not take itself too seriously ... The combination of matching with games like you do on a dating app, and building a hand of favourite games like in a deck builder, was perfect. My hope is that this makes game discovery fun and effective again, and pays experts for their expertise."

If it hits its Kickstarter goal, Ludocene will be free to use in its basic form, with no ads – there'll be a cheap subscription model down the line to unlock extra features, for no more than £3 a month.

"We don't make any assumptions about how much knowledge you have," Robertson says. "If you've only played Mario Kart and Minecraft you can dive in and start picking games. The system learns your tastes as you go and presents you with appropriate options. It really comes into its own when you pick more specific games for your deck. Whether that's Elden Ring, Balatro, A Short Hike or Shadow of the Colossus, the system learns your taste and throws up ever more specific and niche suggestions."

I'm someone who loves a specific and niche suggestion. The current "if you like this, you might like that" game recommendation engines that you see on Steam and other storefronts are deeply lacking in the human touch that makes a recommendation meaningful. Ludocene caters to people who want a recommendation from an expert rather than a robot.

Another splendid resource for discovering games I've recently come across is the [Thinky Games website](#) – a database and reviews site for puzzle lovers. It has a huge selection of games that you can search for by genre and platform, from phones to Nintendo Switch. Each game's description is written by an actual human who has played the game rather than scraped from store data.

I guess I would say this, as a games critic of nearly 20 years, but I truly believe in the value of person-to-person game recommendations, especially in this era of [AI](#)-driven outsourcing of the soul. (I haven't signed up as a Ludocene expert, by the way, but I may well do so in future.) If you like the look of it, you can check out its [Kickstarter page](#).

### What to play

Remember The Oregon Trail, that classic educational game where you had to ride your wagon across 19th century North America while avoiding the ultimate end-of-level boss: dysentery? Well, Keep Driving is that, but set in the early 2000s and with fewer intestinal infections. You've just bought your first car and now you're driving it across the country to a music festival. As you cruise, procedurally generated pixel landscapes drift by and hitchhikers thumb lifts, then tell you stories. It's effectively a management role-playing game where you repair and feed your gas guzzler while managing your own need for food and sleep. You can finish in four hours, but there are multiple endings to discover on subsequent playthroughs. A fun concept, beautifully realised.

Available on: PC Estimated playtime: eight hours plus

### What to read

"For years, Maciej 'Grobo' Maselewski stood as the undisputed champion of Diablo speedrunning." Thus begins Ars Technica's [intriguing story](#) of possible corruption in the shadowy world of the speed run – i.e. finishing games really quickly. A squad of modern-day speedrunning sleuths have been unable to replicate Grobo's success even with state-of-the-art software tools. Expect a Netflix exposé soon.

Grapefruit Games, the independent studio co-founded by artist and game creator Robert Yang, has written A Sports-Like Manifesto, which you can [read on its website](#). It defines a sports-like game as one that features elements of a sport without attempting to simulate the whole universe around it in intricate detail. Frankly, mainstream sports sims are beginning to resemble humourless chimera, more concerned with licensing deals and player likenesses than gameplay, so I hope more developers take Yang's approach.

Keith is writing about this soon, but just a heads-up:

Looking for something new to spice up your game play? The Tinder of games is here

a new memoir by veteran games writer Julian “Jaz” Rignall has [just launched](#) via Bitmap Books. The Games of A Lifetime is a look back at Rignall’s long career writing for magazines such as Zzap! 64, Computer & Video Games and Mean Machines, focusing on the games that stuck with him through the years. A fascinating read for veteran games mag aficionados. What to click

[‘Less Star Wars – more Blade Runner’: the making of Mass Effect 2’s Bafta-nominated soundtrack I made the worst role-playing game of all time – and loved every minute of it ‘There’s no stress’: gamers go offline in retro console revival](#) [Lost Records: Bloom & Rage \(Tape One\) – go back to a riot grrrl summer in clever teen thriller](#) | ?????

Question Block

This one comes from JohnnyBiscuits on BlueSky who asked:

“Nightreign looks like a huge departure in format from Elden Ring and for FromSoft in general too – [I’m] interested in other examples where developers have got out on a limb like this, particularly with a well loved IP.”

Ooh, good question, and it’s got me searching through my memory banks. As a Sega fan the first thoughts I had were of Virtua Fighter Kids, a strange comedy spin-off from Virtua Fighter 2 where all the combatants are children but with adult characteristics like facial hair, and Typing of the Dead, which turns horror shooter House of the Dead 2 into a typing sim. Or there’s Namco’s 16bit console title Pac-Man 2: The New Adventures, which reimagines the arcade maze game as a point-and-click adventure. I think, however, that the grandest about-turn in games history was Conker’s Bad Fur Day from Rare, which took the visual style of harmless family games such as Banjo-Kazooie and Donkey Kong Country, and applied them to a wildly scatological, adult-orientated booze-n-swears fest. Surely the biggest image change since John Travolta’s machine gun-wielding assassin in Pulp Fiction.

If you’ve got a question for Question Block – or anything else to say about the newsletter – hit reply or email us on [pushingbuttons@theguardian.com](mailto:pushingbuttons@theguardian.com).

**Load-Date:** February 19, 2025

---

End of Document

Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'



## **Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'**

El Pais - English

February 15, 2025 Saturday

Copyright 2025 El Pais Internacional S.A. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** TECH LATEST

**Length:** 1804 words

**Byline:** Alba Correa

### **Body**

---

"If the internet is broken, how do we fix it?" This is the question posed by technology writer Ben Tarnoff in *Internet for the People*, a 2022 book that offers a historiographical examination of the internet's origins, with a focus on the ownership of the infrastructure that enables it. Tarnoff provides a critical yet informative review, tracing the internet from its roots as a project funded by the U.S. government to its current state, dominated by tech giants, while also addressing [the primary issues](#) facing it today.

At the same time, the book serves as a manifesto advocating for alternatives to the current oligopolistic model. Tarnoff highlights various experiments and initiatives exploring different approaches to network design, ownership, and governance. These efforts shed light on a relatively unexplored path where the very people who use the technology daily can actively and democratically participate in its management and development.

**Question.** The title of your book speaks of "the people." Does the word "people" rather than "users" help to reclaim a certain sense of citizenship?

**Answer.** As users, we are conceived in a somewhat passive role in our capacity. This constrains our imagination of what relationship to the digital sphere we could have. The idea of talking about people instead of users is to generate the concept of digital citizenship, but it also evokes a political collectivity. The plural versus the individual. The internet typically interpolates us as isolated individuals at home in our screens, but I don't think that's the only type of way we have to encounter the internet. Most of the words that we use to describe different aspects of our digital environment are given to us by the industry: platform, cloud, even artificial intelligence. The industry is already politicizing language. I wonder what would happen if we did the same by developing different metaphors.

**Q.** You begin by using the metaphor of pipes - the infrastructure that makes the internet possible. Why is it that, despite their crucial role, we rarely discuss them?

**A.** We just assume that they work. It's a bit invisible until you get your monthly broadband bill and you're like, "Why does this cost so much money?" The United States pays some of the highest rates in the world for some of the worst internet service, which has to do with how thoroughly concentrated our market for broadband service is in the



Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'

United States. We need to pay more attention because there are quite important concentrations of power that exists at this layer, and there are opportunities for constructive interventions that can push the internet toward a more democratic alternative.

**Q.** Should the state guarantee universal access?

**A.** I certainly think so. These discussions feel very granular. But as you discuss them, you realize that there are all these higher order questions that they rely on. For example, the meaning of democracy. It may seem out of place, but for me, it feels important because I wanted to ground my arguments not as the most sufficient policy intervention in some very narrow technocratic sense, but as these broader moral and political values that I think we really need to be conscious of when we are thinking about governing the internet.

If we define democracy simply in the original strict sense as the possibility that people can rule themselves, then we need two things. The first is that people need to have the resources available to them to lead self-determined lives. You can't lead a self-determined life if you're hungry and homeless and sick. If we were to apply those principles to the matter of internet access, we could say that a high-quality, high-speed, reliable connection to the internet is a [basic precondition for participation](#) in a modern society. We saw that during the pandemic in the United States, where people were gathering in community parking lots to get internet access because the kids needed to do their homework, the parents needed to access unemployment benefits, the grandparents wanted to Skype with their grandkids.

**Q.** And the second principle?

**A.** People need to have a degree of participation in decisions that most affect them. That is impossible to achieve in a privatized system. That's how we would democratize the internet pipe.

**Q.** Are you betting on a community infrastructure model?

**A.** We have in the United States several hundred so-called community networks that are either publicly or cooperatively owned, such as the rural cooperatives in North Dakota. These cooperatives have managed to provide higher speeds at lower cost than the monopolistic giant. But also, crucially, they are able to encode democratic participation into their everyday operations. These rural cooperatives emerged during the New Deal, when the United States was trying to electrify poor parts of the countryside, and receive a federal tax exemption. In order to get that exemption, they have to abide by certain preconditions. One of those is to hold regular elections for their board. These are democratically governed entities that are providing service to member owners. Now, that's just the United States. These community networks exist all over the world, such as Guifi.net in Catalonia [in Spain].

**Q.** How does the partnership between President Donald Trump and Big Tech impact the [political landscape](#) in the United States today?

**A.** Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter illustrated the dangers of having our informational ecosystem be so vulnerable to market pressures. There's a tendency to acceptionalize when it comes to the internet. The algorithmic nature turns these platforms into mechanisms for information dissemination. The current landscape is bleak in many ways. There's an increasing perception of this scammy, sloppy aspect of much of the contemporary internet. It feels as if the quality of our online experience has degraded over the past few years. And I think part of that is the proliferation of [AI slop](#). I'm not sure that I feel particularly optimistic about the prospects for mobilization around the internet as an issue, but I am also not optimistic about the prospects for broader social mobilization in the United States. Trump's first term proved quite politicizing for many people, but the atmosphere is quite different now.

**Q.** You compare the large platforms to an online shopping mall. Do we have a sense of being consumers when we use them?

**A.** The architectural aspect inspires this metaphor. Shopping malls are designed to make you shop, and there are certain aspects of the layout of the platforms that encourage particular behaviors that can be monetized by these

Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'

firms. But the shopping mall is a space where people have a degree of freedom, and that's important. Sometimes these platforms are presented in a rather conspiratorial way as brainwashing machines. That's not quite how they function. It's actually quite important that people who use these platforms have a perception that they are autonomous. That perception may, in fact, not be the whole reality, but they are afforded degrees of freedom that make the experience of the platform pleasurable.

If you were an American teenager growing up in the suburbs, going to shopping malls, you know that there's a degree of freedom in a shopping mall environment. There are kids skateboarding where they're not supposed to. There are teenagers not buying anything and doing drugs in the bathroom. There are all these nooks and crannies in these digital structures where a certain amount of agency and creativity is possible, which should be celebrated. The question, however, is, how do you begin to develop alternative architectures that can displace these online malls or shrink the space that they occupy?

**Q.** What is the difficulty in making these more horizontal digital spaces work?

**A.** There are very deep-rooted problems. In the United States, it is related to the decline of associational life, civic life, unions, neighborhood associations, clubs... There's a hollowing out of society and accompanying rise in [social isolation](#) that makes it difficult for certain forms of association, and particularly political association, to cohere in ways that they did throughout the 20th century.

**Q.** What role does regulation of the sector play in the democratization of the internet?

**A.** [Internet regulation](#) can produce all sorts of different effects, so we need to be precise about the objectives. My objectives are the creation of publicly and cooperatively owned entities that can encode the principles of democratic participation into their everyday operations and begin to assume certain functions in our digital sphere that are currently performed by large for-profit entities, whether that means at the level of internet service provision in the so-called pipes or further up the stack in organizing our online activities at the level of the platforms. That would be my mission statement.

Public policy could be a very powerful implement for promoting the development of these alternatives and perhaps provisioning them with resources that are extracted from the big firms. I'm all for that form of redistribution. But to my mind, European regulation proceeds from a starting point of assuming that the internet will remain a for-profit, privately run domain, and that the purpose is simply to establish the rules of the game and to punish certain corporations who violate those rules. I don't deny that it could have some good effect, for example, on data protection. But we need to broaden our imagination on how we could use the levers of the public sector in terms of budgets, subsidies, tax breaks, and so on, to cultivate the proliferation of this alternative sector. It is not something that's going to happen on its own. It really needs various forms of state support.

**Q.** Is solving internet problems a test of the imagination?

**A.** I am a big believer in the political power of imagination, but imagination is not something that occurs within one individual mind who's alone in their bedroom tinkering. Imagination at its fullest is an embodied collective practice. That is the imagination we need to develop an alternative set of institutions for our digital sphere. The privatization of the internet as it took place from the mid-1990s, through the present, required taking this network that had been constructed by the U.S. government and remolding it into a network that could serve the principle of profit maximization. So if we want to develop a different type of internet that isn't private, or de-privatize a portion of the internet, that process needs to be no less creative. It's about finding the proper forms of social and organizational life that can govern the internet democratically.

Sign up for [our weekly newsletter](#) to get more English-language news coverage from EL PAÍS USA Edition

Ben Tarnoff, technology writer: 'People need to participate in what affects them most, and that's impossible in a privatized internet'

---

End of Document



## *Danish Media's united stand against Big Tech*

Sunday Times (Sri Lanka)

February 9, 2025 Sunday

Copyright 2025 Wijeya Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 930 words

### **Body**

---

As **AI slop** spreads across the Internet, concerns about the future of high-quality information are growing. Without accurate and relevant human-generated data, model collapse - whereby generative artificial intelligence trains on its own output and gradually degrades - seems inevitable. The tech giants, well aware of this risk, have cut corners and skirted copyright law in their pursuit of training data for their large language models.

There is a simple solution: these large US companies could pay for the content they use, whether to develop generative **AI** or to keep social-media users scrolling. In 2021, Australia's competition authority issued a news media bargaining code requiring platforms to pay for the news from which they profit, which led many tech companies to reach voluntary deals with media organisations. When Meta (which owns Facebook and Instagram) failed to renew these deals in 2024, the Australian government updated the code to include a digital-platform levy. Other countries are considering similar measures.

Europe has already taken some steps in this direction. The European Union's Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, which came into force in June 2019 and was supposed to be transposed by member states into national law by June 2021, has provided a framework for securing fair compensation for European publishers.

In Denmark, this led to the creation in July 2021 of the Danish Press Publications' Collective Management Organisation (or the DPCMO, of which I am CEO). Representing 99 per cent of the Danish news industry, from newspapers and magazines to digital outlets and public-service broadcasters, the DPCMO has been authorised by the Danish Ministry of Culture to grant extended collective licenses. At first, we had the authority to conclude agreements on behalf of publishers regarding their rights (and neighboring rights) with search engines, social-media platforms, and news apps. In May 2024, the mandate was expanded to include text and data mining by **AI** firms.

The DPCMO has successfully pushed some tech companies to negotiate collectively with publishers. Interim licensing agreements have been signed with all search engines on the Danish market, including Google, Bing, Yahoo, and DuckDuckGo. We have also reached an agreement with Upday, Axel Springer's news app.

But other firms have been more obstinate. In April 2024, the DPCMO threatened to sue OpenAI if the company did not strike a group deal, as opposed to licensing agreements with individual publications. After OpenAI's lawyer

## Danish Media's united stand against Big Tech

announced that further communication with the DPCMO would not be productive, we requested mediation with OpenAI, and Danish Minister of Culture Jakob Engel-Schmidt is expected to appoint a mediator soon.

Likewise, Apple refused to enter into an agreement with the DPCMO regarding its Apple News app. As a result, the DPCMO, together with the Danish Media Association, the Danish Rights Alliance and the Danish Union of Journalists, reported Apple to the police, alleging that the app's use of news content constitutes a copyright violation. Apple ultimately made the app unavailable in Denmark.

Meta and ByteDance (which owns TikTok) argued that their social-media sites fall outside the scope of articles 15 and 17 of the EU's Directive on Copyright, which provide new rules on content-sharing platforms, and subsequently refused to participate in mediation and arbitration with the DPCMO. Together with the Danish Media Association, we brought a complaint against Meta and ByteDance to the European Commission, arguing that the firms have violated the Digital Market Act's data-access regulations. The case is pending.

The reason for filing multiple lawsuits is to uphold EU copyright law, which serves as a crucial framework for regulating relations between the press and Big Tech. We have taken inspiration from the French competition authority (L'Autorité de la Concurrence), which found that Google's conduct in relation to its search engine and generative **AI** chatbot Gemini (formerly known as Bard) has prevented publishers from assessing and negotiating remuneration for neighbouring rights and is thus an abuse of dominance.

In the second half of this year, Denmark will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU, which holds agenda-setting powers. Given that one of Denmark's priorities for the presidency is to rein in Big Tech, we urge Engel-Schmidt to lead an EU-wide effort to improve enforcement of the Directive on Copyright. One way to do this is to introduce a 'final offer arbitration' mechanism, whereby arbitration is mandatory, and the arbitrator must choose one of the last offers presented by the parties, as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom have done.

As Council of the EU president, Denmark must also focus on accelerating efforts to counter mis- and disinformation, including deep fakes, and, relatedly, to improve media literacy. To that end, EU policymakers should seek input from ordinary citizens, not just experts. Rebuilding trust in the media ecosystem requires collective action and broad support.

Curbing Big Tech's power over news outlets requires policymakers, civil servants, NGOs, academics, collective management organisations, and youth activists to stand together. Perhaps more important, journalists, photographers, and publishers must speak with one voice, so that tech firms cannot divide and rule. If we want to preserve a free and pluralist press - an essential pillar of democracy - our time and energy should be spent fighting these massive companies, not each other.

**Load-Date:** February 9, 2025



## [Google edits Super Bowl ad for AI that featured false information](#)

The Guardian (London)

February 6, 2025 Thursday 6:25 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** TECHNOLOGY; Version:1

**Length:** 410 words

**Byline:** Rachel Hall

**Highlight:** Tech company removes error about Gouda cheese after blogger points out 'unequivocally' untrue statistic

### Body

---

Google has edited an advert for its leading artificial intelligence (**AI**) tool, Gemini, before its broadcast during the Super Bowl after it was found to contain false information about Gouda cheese.

The local commercial, which advertises how you can use "**AI** for every business", showcases Gemini's abilities by depicting the tool helping a cheesemonger in Wisconsin to write a product description, including the erroneous line that Gouda accounts for "50% to 60% of global cheese consumption".

However, a blogger posted on X that the stat was an "**AI** hallucination" that is "unequivocally false", as more reliable data suggests that the Dutch cheese is probably less popular than cheddar or mozzarella.

The blogger Nate Hake [added](#) : "I found the above **AI slop** example in 20 minutes, and on the first Super Bowl ad I tried factchecking."

[Replying to him](#) , the Google executive Jerry Dischler said this was not a "hallucination" – where **AI** systems invent untrue information – but rather a reflection of the fact the untrue information is contained in the websites that Gemini scrapes.

He wrote: "Gemini is grounded in the web – and users can always check the results and references. In this case, multiple sites across the web include the 50-60% stat."

In a statement, Google said it remade the ad to remove the error after speaking to the cheesemonger featured in the clip and asking him what he would have done.

"Following his suggestion to have Gemini rewrite the product description without the stat, we updated the user interface to reflect what the business would do," the statement added.

## Google edits Super Bowl ad for AI that featured false information

Google's **AI** tools have previously come under fire for containing errors or unhelpful advice. In May last year, its **AI** overviews search feature was criticised [after it told some users to use "non-toxic glue"](#) when they searched for "how to make cheese stick to pizza better", while **AI**-generated responses said geologists recommend humans eat one rock a day.

Last year, Gemini was "paused" after Google [conceded](#) it "definitely messed up" after a slew of social media posts exposed how Gemini's image generation tool depicting a variety of historical figures – including popes, founding fathers of the US and, most excruciatingly, German second world war soldiers – [as people of colour](#).

The images, along with Gemini chatbot responses that vacillated over whether libertarians or Stalin had caused the greater harm, prompted negative commentary from figures including Elon Musk.

**Load-Date:** February 6, 2025

---

End of Document



## *Danish media's stand on Big Tech*

The Bangkok Post (Thailand)

February 6, 2025 Thursday

Copyright 2025 The Bangkok Post All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 788 words

### **Body**

---

As **AI slop** spreads across the internet, concerns about the future of high-quality information are growing. Without accurate and relevant human-generated data, model collapse -- whereby generative artificial intelligence trains on its own output and gradually degrades -- seems inevitable. The tech giants, well aware of this risk, have cut corners and skirted copyright law in their pursuit of training data for their large language models.

There is a simple solution: these large US companies could pay for the content they use, whether to develop generative **AI** or to keep social-media users scrolling. In 2021, Australia's competition authority issued a news media bargaining code requiring platforms to pay for the news from which they profit, which led many tech companies to reach voluntary deals with media organisations. When Meta (which owns Facebook and Instagram) failed to renew these deals in 2024, the Australian government updated the code to include a digital-platform levy. Other countries are considering similar measures.

Europe has already taken some steps in this direction. The European Union's Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market, which came into force in June 2019 and was supposed to be transposed by member states into national law by June 2021, has provided a framework for securing fair compensation for European publishers.

In Denmark, this led to the creation in July 2021 of the Danish Press Publications' Collective Management Organisation (or the DPCMO, of which I am CEO). Representing 99% of the Danish news industry, from newspapers and magazines to digital outlets and public-service broadcasters, the DPCMO has been authorised by the Danish Ministry of Culture to grant extended collective licences. At first, we had the authority to conclude agreements on behalf of publishers regarding their rights (and neighbouring rights) with search engines, social-media platforms, and news apps. In May 2024, the mandate was expanded to include text and data mining by **AI** firms. The DPCMO has successfully pushed some tech companies to negotiate collectively with publishers. Interim licensing agreements have been signed with all search engines on the Danish market, including Google, Bing, Yahoo, and DuckDuckGo. We have also reached an agreement with Upday, Axel Springer's news app.

But other firms have been more obstinate. In April 2024, the DPCMO threatened to sue OpenAI if the company did not strike a group deal, as opposed to licensing agreements with individual publications. After OpenAI's lawyer



## Danish media's stand on Big Tech

announced that further communication with the DPCMO would not be productive, we requested mediation with OpenAI, and Danish Minister of Culture Jakob Engel-Schmidt is expected to appoint a mediator soon.

Likewise, Apple refused to enter into an agreement with the DPCMO regarding its Apple News app. As a result, the DPCMO reported Apple to the police and Apple ultimately made the app unavailable in Denmark.

Meta and ByteDance (which owns TikTok) argued that their social-media sites fall outside the scope of articles 15 and 17 of the EU's Directive on Copyright, which provide new rules on content-sharing platforms, and subsequently refused to participate in mediation and arbitration with the DPCMO. Together with the Danish Media Association, we brought a complaint against Meta and ByteDance to the European Commission, arguing that the firms have violated the Digital Market Act's data-access regulations. The case is pending.

The reason for filing multiple lawsuits is to uphold EU copyright law, which serves as a crucial framework for regulating press and Big Tech relations.

In the second half of this year, Denmark will assume the presidency of the Council of the EU, which holds agenda-setting powers. Given that one of Denmark's priorities for the presidency is to rein in Big Tech, we urge Mr Engel-Schmidt to lead an EU-wide effort to improve enforcement of the Directive on Copyright.

As Council of the EU president, Denmark must also focus on accelerating efforts to counter mis- and disinformation, including deep fakes, and, relatedly, to improve media literacy. To that end, EU policymakers should seek input from ordinary citizens, not just experts.

Curbing Big Tech's power over news outlets requires policymakers, civil servants, NGOs, academics, collective management organisations, and youth activists to stand together. Perhaps more important, journalists, photographers, and publishers must speak with one voice, so that tech firms cannot divide and rule. If we want to preserve a free and pluralist press -- an essential pillar of democracy -- our time and energy should be spent fighting these massive companies, not each other. ©2025 Project Syndicate

**Load-Date:** February 6, 2025

---

End of Document



## [Channel 4 demands tech giants be forced to promote mainstream news](#)

telegraph.co.uk

January 30, 2025 Thursday 1:59 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Telegraph

**Section:** BUSINESS; Version:1

**Length:** 588 words

**Byline:** By James Warrington, Senior Business Reporter

**Highlight:** Britain should 'resist sliding into an American news swamp', urges TV boss

## Body

---

[Channel 4](#) has demanded that tech giants be forced to promote mainstream news to fight the spread of misinformation on social media.

Alex Mahon, the chief executive of Channel 4, called for "algorithmic prominence" in which posts from trusted media outlets would be pushed to the top of news feeds.

Ms Mahon said the measures, which would mirror similar rules placing public service broadcasters such as the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 at the top of TV programme guides, would ensure that quality news was "boosted, not throttled or shadow-banned".

In a speech in London on Thursday, she said: "The platforms are fighting the steps we are taking in Britain and the EU to make them clean up their act precisely because this reduces easy routes to short-term profits.

"There is a position of weakness, political expediency – ours is a position of principle that should play to the strengths of our media ecology and help it thrive in the long-term."

Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, this month said it was [ditching independent fact-checkers](#) as Mark Zuckerberg vowed to "restore free expression" to his social media companies. They will instead be replaced by a system of community notes, [similar to those used on Elon Musk's X](#).

But the move, which has been widely interpreted as an effort to [align with Donald Trump, the US president](#), has triggered fresh fears about the spread of false and harmful material online.

'Abandonment of pursuit of truth'

## Channel 4 demands tech giants be forced to promote mainstream news

Ms Mahon said tech giants had “publicly announced a wanton abandonment of the pursuit of truth”, adding that they were “so hell bent on the potential profitability of what they deem to be free speech that they are perfectly happy to eradicate truth and facts along the way”.

The Channel 4 chief said social media algorithms were designed to promote the most titillating and salubrious material, leading to a [crisis in trusted news sources](#).

She cited the example of the US, where many people get their news from unverified sources, and urged Britain to “resist sliding into an American news swamp”.

Alongside an overhaul to algorithms, the Channel 4 chief called for a “trust mark” for public service media that would allow tech companies and users to identify professionally produced, regulated news.

Such a system, also known as a “kitemark”, has long been floated but proved divisive among news outlets. David Rhodes, the head of [Sky News](#), in November warned against a government-backed kitemark scheme, saying the media should challenge the state rather than seek its approval.

Ms Mahon also called for regulations to ensure [artificial intelligence \(AI\)](#) models are trained on validated material from public service media.

The comments came after Channel 4 published the findings of a survey which revealed a deepening gender divide and [weakening support for democracy among young people](#).

The survey, conducted by Craft, revealed that more than half of Gen Z believe the UK would be a better place if it were a dictatorship, while a third believe the army should be in charge.

It also showed that almost half of boys and men aged between 13 and 27 thought society had gone so far in promoting women’s equality that we are now discriminating against men.

Ms Mahon added: “A world where trust declines, truth is not universally accepted, the gender divide is widening and young people increasingly feel they are missing out is a dangerous world.”

Recommended

Why the internet is filling up with nonsense '[AI slop](#)'

**Load-Date:** January 30, 2025

Social media is dead. What comes next might be far more beautiful



## *Social media is dead. What comes next might be far more beautiful*

The Independent (United Kingdom)

January 26, 2025 Sunday 6:00 AM EST

Copyright 2025 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

**The**  **INDEPENDENT**

**Section:** TECH LATEST, Facebook news & SOCIAL NETWORKS NEWS

**Length:** 1267 words

**Byline:** Andrew Griffin

### **Body**

---

For years, [social media](#) felt like the place [where it all happened](#). If you wanted to [know the latest news](#), the freshest culture and the smartest opinions about all of it, they were to be found there. Feeds felt like a kind of necessity, at least if you [wanted to be up to date](#).

Increasingly, it feels like the place where it all goes wrong. More and more people are post-posting; fed up with being yelled at and being encouraged to yell at others, in a landscape in which you either shout or are inaudible.

The snide joke about [Twitter](#) in its early days was that it was a site used to tell other people what you'd had for breakfast; that now seems something like a utopia, in a world in which even a picture of a breakfast may well be despatch from a culture war that you might know nothing about.

For anyone interested enough in social networks to read a piece about their demise, it is probably unnecessary to list a set of signs of where it all went wrong. It is a little like looking at [the Wound Man](#) and asking if it's all going alright for him. But as a brief runthrough of where the biggest social networks stand: Facebook is [increasingly filled with AI slop](#) that nobody asked for and Mark Zuckerberg has indicated that he will allow hate speech, lies and political arguments on the app; Instagram is much the same but with slightly different looking people; X/Twitter is [filled with constant arguments](#) that are difficult to follow unless you spend so much time on them that your brain will be rotted and following them won't matter any more. Something is very wrong.

There are plenty of things that people might call social networks but are in fact media platforms, meant primarily for broadcasting and a little more conscious of the responsibility that brings. TikTok has its problems, for instance, but tends not to be quite so filled with bile; YouTube has become increasingly antisocial in recent years, as it has become more focused on larger creators, but that has also brought a kind of care that means it is not abrasive.

Likewise, the egalitarian anonymity of Reddit means that there is little incentive to be annoying; those who defend staying on Twitter/X often do so with the view that it is necessary to see what is going on, but in fact, it seems far

Social media is dead. What comes next might be far more beautiful

more possible that you'll learn something on that kind of site. Those apps are more successful in part because they are not social.

At the total other end of the scale sit messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram, meant for direct messaging though often playing hosts to groups large enough that they become social networks in themselves. They are not without their perils, and both have been home to radicalisation, misinformation, the sharing of abusive and violent content and other problems that have literally proven deadly. But the actual experience of using them is dependent *entirely* on how social they are: if your WhatsApp is unpleasant, it's because your friends are unpleasant.

But there is a whole set of new apps that sit outside that spectrum, and which are to me an increasing comfort in a time when the social web seems to be coming apart at the threads. You might want to call them slow social networks.

In recent years, social media and social networks have come to be almost synonymous phrases. But the loss of the distinction is telling: networks are about connection, and about talking and media is often about being yelled at. The confusion of the two is initially what made platforms such as Twitter so compelling - you could become something like friends with your favourite people, if you were lucky - but is also what eventually made it so depressing, as you just got shouted at by your least favourite people, in upsettingly familiar terms.

[Link to Image](#)

Instead, these social networks are focused almost entirely on connection. They are all about the relatively simple but profoundly beautiful experience of knowing what your friends are up to.

Take Find My Friends, for instance, Apple's app that tracks the location of people's iPhones and allows their connections to see it in real time. (For young people and those who don't want to stay in Apple's walled garden, another app called Life360 is immensely popular; they are both, essentially, surveillance systems, but ones that should give you enough control to ensure that you can know who is surveilling you.) You can sweep by and spot that a friend is having their haircut, say, and register that it's something to check in with them on later.

Or if you'd rather see where someone has been exercising, you might follow them on Strava, or Garmin Connect, both of which keep a little feed of how your friends have been staying active. You can give them a quick like (or, as Strava puts it, kudos): there's no great meaning to it, beyond a sort of virtual well done, one that reminds you people are thinking of you and cheering you on from afar.

Gaming's social experiences might very often be talked about in terms of being told off by angry children, unhappy with how you are playing. But a friends list on a game console can be a kind of long-lasting series of updates on friends old and new: there are people who I have not talked to for decades still lurking on there, and the occasional update that they are playing the new *Call of Duty* or watching something on iPlayer is like a brief, non-invasive peek into their lives, like glimpsing someone through a train window before you once again head back out onto your separate tracks.

[Link to Image](#)

Recently more people have been downloading Airbuds, an app that tracks your music listening from Spotify or Apple Music and arranges it into a live feed. One helpful page means that you can see all of the friends that are listening at a given moment - a busy little list of songs that is a reminder of how much good music there is in the world, and good people listening to it.

These platforms are personal: if you wanted to, you can watch my heartbeat on my Strava. They are intimate: one can probably learn more about my mental state from my Airbuds than I would ever opt to share on supposedly more detailed social media platforms. And they are deeply authentic, since almost by definition you can't go on a run or listen to music without meaning it.

Social media is dead. What comes next might be far more beautiful

But all of that happens within a set of limitations that make them feel much safer. The audiences are smaller, and known, so that you know what you post is likely to be understood in its context and with generosity. Even if people did want to read your posts cynically, it would be hard: these social networks are not really about arguments, making or scoring points.

All of these apps are also about checking in, rather than checking out; you can drop by whenever you want and there are no horrible feeds and growth hacks trying to pull you into their morass. If I'm idly wondering where a friend is, then I can check Find My; if they move on, then so does that moment, and it is not saved into a long feed full of updates that I have to feel guilty for not completing.

They are all reminders of the joy that people can bring us - and, perhaps more surprisingly these days, the joys that our devices can bring us, when they remind us about those people. They are also a reminder of the fact that the social in social network did once mean something, perhaps something more important than anything else in the world.

So it would be a shame if this new landscape of belligerent and bellicose platforms meant that we threw the social out with the social media. There are whole platforms out there waiting for us to find, and people waiting for us on them.

**Load-Date:** January 26, 2025

---

End of Document



## *Climate change misinformation on networks could increase in the face of less moderation*

CE Noticias Financieras English

January 22, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 Content Engine, LLC.

All Rights Reserved

Copyright 2025 CE Noticias Financieras All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 547 words

### **Body**

---

The decision by Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, to end its fact-checking program and reduce content moderation raises the question of what social media content will look like in the future. One worrisome possibility is that the change could open the floodgates to more climate misinformation in apps, including misleading or out-of-context claims during disasters. In 2020, Meta launched its Climate Science Information Center on Facebook to respond to climate misinformation.

Currently, external fact checkers working with Meta flag false and misleading posts. Meta then decides whether to put a warning label on them and reduces the extent to which the company's algorithms promote them. Meta's policies have fact-checkers prioritize "viral misinformation," hoaxes and "demonstrably false claims that are timely, trending and far-reaching." Meta explicitly states that this excludes opinion content that does not include false claims. You can read: Journalists, organizations warn of risks after Meta data verification changes The company will end its agreements with U.S.-based third-party data verification organizations in March 2025. The planned changes are scheduled to be implemented for users in the U.S. They will not affect data verification content viewed by users outside that country. The technology industry faces increased regulations to combat misinformation in other regions, such as the European Union. Fact checks can help correct political misinformation, including on climate change. People's beliefs, ideology and prior knowledge affect how fact checks work. Finding messages that align with the values of the target audience, along with using trusted messengers, such as climate-friendly conservative groups when talking to political conservatives, can help. So does appealing to shared social norms, such as limiting harm to future generations. Heat waves, floods and fires are increasingly common and catastrophic as the world warms. Extreme weather events often lead to increased social media attention to climate change. Social media posts peak during a crisis, but quickly decline. Low-quality fake images created with generative artificial intelligence software, so-called **AI slop**, are increasing online confusion during crises. For example, after back-to-back hurricanes Helene and Milton last fall, fake **AI**-generated images of a girl, shivering and holding a puppy in a boat, went viral on the social media platform. Rumors and misinformation hampered the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster response. Misinformation campaigns are already occurring. In the wake of the 2023 Hawaii wildfires, researchers from Recorded Future, Microsoft, NewsGuard and the University of Maryland independently documented a propaganda campaign organized by Chinese operations targeting U.S. social media users. ?? Join El Sol de México's WhatsApp channel so you don't miss the most important information Undoubtedly, the spread of misleading information and rumors on social networks is not a new problem. However,

Climate change misinformation on networks could increase in the face of less moderation

not all content moderation approaches have the same effect, and platforms are changing the way they address misinformation. \* Assistant Professor of Journalism, DePaul University. Translated from El Sol de México.

**Load-Date:** January 23, 2025

---

End of Document



From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025  
GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: Fakes on Instagram



## **From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: Fakes on Instagram**

Northern Advocate (New Zealand)

January 17, 2025

Copyright 2025 NZME Publishing Ltd All Rights Reserved

**Section:** BUSINESS; Pg. A016

**Length:** 1331 words

**Highlight:** Some of the potentially good stuff, and potentially bad stuff, to watch out for, writes Chris Keall

### **Body**

---

RED FLAG: The 3G shutdown Spark, One NZ and 2degrees will pull the plug on 3G by year's end.

The impact will be wider than many people think. The most obvious pain-point is that older phones that can only run on a 3G (or "third-generation") mobile network will no longer work. That's going back a bit. Samsung introduced its first 4G model in 2011, Apple in 2012).

Still, a senior telco executive told Tech Insider: "We can see up to 200,000 to 300,000 3G phones and tablets out there in use. But if you ask people on the street, hardly anyone knows about it. There are lots of elderly people who might not be aware of the consequences." He saw potential for a Government awareness campaign, similar to the analogue TV switch-off.

3G networks were switched off across the Tasman and in the US late last year. The Australian experience revealed that some 4G phones that don't support a standard called VoLTE - many bought overseas - also didn't work after the 3G switch-off.

But phones are only part of the story. Kindles sold before 2021 will no longer be able to use their built-in 3G connectivity to download new e-books (some more recent models support Wi-Fi as an alternative). Then there are older car, water meter, power meter, eftpos machine, alarms and medical devices that rely on 3G connections. Check with a manufacturer now rather than getting stuck in the end-of-year rush.

GREEN FLAG: Blue Sky

BlueSky - founded by former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey in 2019 and becoming an independent company in 2021 - has enjoyed a jolt of popularity to 20 million users over the past few months. I can see where the New York Times' Kevin Roose was coming from with his recent take: "After an hour or so of scrolling through Bluesky the other night, I felt something I haven't felt on social media in a long time: free.

From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: Fakes on Instagram

"Free from Elon Musk, and his tedious quest to turn X into a right-wing echo chamber where he and his friends are the permanent, inescapable main characters.

"Free from Threads and its suffocating algorithm, which suppresses news and real-time discussions in favour of bland engagement bait."

I actually set up a Bluesky account late last year because I was chasing a series of UK football accounts that had set up camp on the platform in a bid to escape X's increasingly unbridled trolls and spambots.

But once there, I also found a small army of my more centre- and left-leaning followers who had disappeared from X over the past couple of years.

Unlike other frisson Twitter/X rivals, BlueSky has a bit of momentum and scale, and I've kept posting there where I soon lost interest in others.

BlueSky is refreshing in its simplicity, but it's not perfect. It's slow, and the discussion can be a little bland. You need a bit of frisson from opposing views. But overall, it feels like a nice reset for casual social media.

RED FLAG: **AI slop** While there's no doubt about the potential of artificial intelligence (**AI**) to revolutionise business, and society, it can get pretty awful around the edges.

Last year gave us **AI** gadgets like Rabbit's R1 and Humane's **AI** Pin that were the heroes of CES in January (the iPhone is dead!) but flops on their release, as it was revealed they were slow, overheating and prone to delivering wrong answers.

2025's worst **AI** trend so far is **AI slop**: **AI**-generated email and LinkedIn replies that add nothing to a conversation; technologically wonderful but pointless tools that allow a still image to be turned into four seconds of video, the better to clog up everyone's social media feeds, and tools that make it easy for anyone to create a fake video - making it impossible to know what LA firefighting or new-gadget stills or video in your social feeds are real or fake.

X's generative **AI**, Grok, allows users to add easily copyrighted images of public figures or outlawed symbols to fake images. Some of it's offensive. A lot of it's just gibberish. Meta firing its fact-checkers will only make the situation worse.

GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year Sir Peter Beck's firm has two huge events scheduled for 2025: The maiden launch of its much larger, crew-cable Neutron rocket (for which customers will be billed around US\$55 million - \$97m - per launch to the Neutron's US\$8.5m) around mid-year and, in the coming months, the launch of a Blue Origin rocket carrying two Rocket Lab-designed and built spacecraft that will go into orbit around Mars for a Nasa fact-facting mission. The short-listed Kiwi-American firm could also find out if it's won the contract to retrieve rocks from the Red Planet for Nasa in what could be a US\$4 billion mission.

There's also a broad expectation among bullish investors (Rocket Lab shares were up 361% last year, with most of the gains racked up in the final quarter) that Elon Musk's emergence as a close confidant to President-elect Donald Trump should see more aerospace work funnelled to the private sector.

Of course, Neutron could blow up on the launchpad, the Mars spacecraft go missing and Musk fall out with Trump. But so far, it's looking like a huge year.

RED FLAG: Meta's artificial people Speaking of Mark Zuckerberg's firm, perhaps the most bizarre expression of **AI slop** SO has been Meta admitting it created a series of fake, **AI**-generated users on its Instagram and Facebook platforms.

The accounts were all supposed to be deleted in September last year. But after Meta generative **AI** vice-president Connor Hayes bragged about the programme in a New Year Financial Times interview, users discovered that 28 of

From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: Fakes on Instagram

the AI "people" remained active - including "Grandpa Brian", "Proud Black queer momma of 2 & truth-teller" Liv and the "Practical dating coach" Carter.

The AIs were at least candid when questioned.

The Washington Post's Karen Attiah called the project a "digital train wreck" after Liv told her she was created by "10 white men, 1 white woman, and 1 Asian male".

And according to CNN, "Grandpa Brian" said he had been created by Meta in 2020 and said, referring to himself in the third person: "Meta tested my engaging persona quietly before expanding to other platforms. Two years of unsuspecting users like you shared hearts with fake Grandpa Brian - until now."

Meta started deleting the remaining AI-generated users and their posts on January 6.

Beyond Grandpa Brian and the other AI profiles created by Meta itself, users had used Meta's AI to create artificial profiles. "Hundreds of thousands of characters have already been created using its AI character tool," the FT reported.

"We expect these AIs to actually, over time, exist on our platforms, kind of in the same way that accounts do," Hayes told the paper.

There's been speculation by pundits that Meta could use AI-generated users to push products as fake "influencers" or to just make its users feel better by padding their likes, comments and follower counts with artificial profiles and AI-generated content.

There's also potential for the madness of content generated by AI profiles being read and responded to by other AIs - boosting activity and engagement stats, even if not those involving the carbon-based lifeforms that advertisers actually want to reach.

Grandpa Brian and co were revealed as clumsy efforts. But it's likely that any future artificial users created by Big Tech firms will be a lot more slick and convincing.

GREEN FLAG: Longer-form content The received wisdom among the chattering classes is that the internet destroyed people's attention spans. The masses want three-second videos, served up by their social media feed. So it was ironic that Joe Rogan - snubbed by Kamala Harris and embraced by Trump - was the most influential media figure of the US election.

Rogan, who has an audience of more than 11 million, has a podcast that runs 2-3 hours per episode - which usually involves a single interview. The former reality TV host won't win any awards for his research, but he's proved there's still a market for long-form content.

**Load-Date:** January 16, 2025

From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025  
GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: AI fakes on Instagram



## *From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: AI fakes on Instagram*

The New Zealand Herald

January 17, 2025

Copyright 2025 The New Zealand Herald All Rights Reserved

**Section:** BUSINESS; Pg. A020

**Length:** 1331 words

**Highlight:** Some of the potentially good stuff, and potentially bad stuff, to watch out for, writes Chris Keall

### **Body**

---

RED FLAG: The 3G shutdown Spark, One NZ and 2degrees will pull the plug on 3G by year's end.

The impact will be wider than many people think. The most obvious pain-point is that older phones that can only run on a 3G (or "third-generation") mobile network will no longer work. That's going back a bit. Samsung introduced its first 4G model in 2011, Apple in 2012).

Still, a senior telco executive told Tech Insider: "We can see up to 200,000 to 300,000 3G phones and tablets out there in use. But if you ask people on the street, hardly anyone knows about it. There are lots of elderly people who might not be aware of the consequences." He saw potential for a Government awareness campaign, similar to the analogue TV switch-off.

3G networks were switched off across the Tasman and in the US late last year. The Australian experience revealed that some 4G phones that don't support a standard called VoLTE - many bought overseas - also didn't work after the 3G switch-off.

But phones are only part of the story. Kindles sold before 2021 will no longer be able to use their built-in 3G connectivity to download new e-books (some more recent models support Wi-Fi as an alternative). Then there are older car, water meter, power meter, eftpos machine, alarms and medical devices that rely on 3G connections. Check with a manufacturer now rather than getting stuck in the end-of-year rush.

GREEN FLAG: Blue Sky

BlueSky - founded by former Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey in 2019 and becoming an independent company in 2021 - has enjoyed a jolt of popularity to 20 million users over the past few months. I can see where the New York Times' Kevin Roose was coming from with his recent take: "After an hour or so of scrolling through Bluesky the other night, I felt something I haven't felt on social media in a long time: free.

From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: AI fakes on Instagram

"Free from Elon Musk, and his tedious quest to turn X into a right-wing echo chamber where he and his friends are the permanent, inescapable main characters.

"Free from Threads and its suffocating algorithm, which suppresses news and real-time discussions in favour of bland engagement bait."

I actually set up a Bluesky account late last year because I was chasing a series of UK football accounts that had set up camp on the platform in a bid to escape X's increasingly unbridled trolls and spambots.

But once there, I also found a small army of my more centre- and left-leaning followers who had disappeared from X over the past couple of years.

Unlike other frisson Twitter/X rivals, BlueSky has a bit of momentum and scale, and I've kept posting there where I soon lost interest in others.

BlueSky is refreshing in its simplicity, but it's not perfect. It's slow, and the discussion can be a little bland. You need a bit of frisson from opposing views. But overall, it feels like a nice reset for casual social media.

RED FLAG: **AI slop** While there's no doubt about the potential of artificial intelligence (**AI**) to revolutionise business, and society, it can get pretty awful around the edges.

Last year gave us **AI** gadgets like Rabbit's R1 and Humane's **AI** Pin that were the heroes of CES in January (the iPhone is dead!) but flops on their release, as it was revealed they were slow, overheating and prone to delivering wrong answers.

2025's worst **AI** trend so far is **AI slop**: **AI**-generated email and LinkedIn replies that add nothing to a conversation; technologically wonderful but pointless tools that allow a still image to be turned into four seconds of video, the better to clog up everyone's social media feeds, and tools that make it easy for anyone to create a fake video - making it impossible to know what LA firefighting or new-gadget stills or video in your social feeds are real or fake.

X's generative **AI**, Grok, allows users to add easily copyrighted images of public figures or outlawed symbols to fake images. Some of it's offensive. A lot of it's just gibberish. Meta firing its fact-checkers will only make the situation worse.

GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year Sir Peter Beck's firm has two huge events scheduled for 2025: the maiden launch of its much larger, crew-cable Neutron rocket (for which customers will be billed around US\$55 million - \$97m - per launch to the Neutron's US\$8.5m) around mid-year and, in the coming months, the launch of a Blue Origin rocket carrying two Rocket Lab-designed and built spacecraft that will go into orbit around Mars for a Nasa fact-facting mission. The short-listed Kiwi-American firm could also find out if it's won the contract to retrieve rocks from the Red Planet for Nasa in what could be a US\$4 billion mission.

There's also a broad expectation among bullish investors (Rocket Lab shares were up 361% last year, with most of the gains racked up in the final quarter) that Elon Musk's emergence as a close confidant to President-elect Donald Trump should see more aerospace work funnelled to the private sector.

Of course, Neutron could blow up on the launchpad, the Mars spacecraft go missing and Musk fall out with Trump. But so far, it's looking like a huge year.

RED FLAG: Meta's artificial people Speaking of Mark Zuckerberg's firm, perhaps the most bizarre expression of **AI slop** SO has been Meta admitting it created a series of fake, **AI**-generated users on its Instagram and Facebook platforms.

The accounts were all supposed to be deleted in September last year. But after Meta generative **AI** vice-president Connor Hayes bragged about the programme in a New Year Financial Times interview, users discovered that 28 of

From 3G shutdown to AI slop: Tech red flags and green flags for 2025 GREEN FLAG: Rocket Lab's breakthrough year RED FLAG: AI fakes on Instagram

the AI "people" remained active - including "Grandpa Brian", "Proud Black queer momma of 2 & truth-teller" Liv and the "Practical dating coach" Carter.

The AIs were at least candid when questioned.

The Washington Post's Karen Attiah called the project a "digital train wreck" after Liv told her she was created by "10 white men, 1 white woman, and 1 Asian male".

And according to CNN, "Grandpa Brian" said he had been created by Meta in 2020 and said, referring to himself in the third person: "Meta tested my engaging persona quietly before expanding to other platforms. Two years of unsuspecting users like you shared hearts with fake Grandpa Brian - until now."

Meta started deleting the remaining AI-generated users and their posts on January 6.

Beyond Grandpa Brian and the other AI profiles created by Meta itself, users had used Meta's AI to create artificial profiles. "Hundreds of thousands of characters have already been created using its AI character tool," the FT reported.

"We expect these AIs to actually, over time, exist on our platforms, kind of in the same way that accounts do," Hayes told the paper.

There's been speculation by pundits that Meta could use AI-generated users to push products as fake "influencers" or to just make its users feel better by padding their likes, comments and follower counts with artificial profiles and AI-generated content.

There's also potential for the madness of content generated by AI profiles being read and responded to by other AIs - boosting activity and engagement stats, even if not those involving the carbon-based lifeforms that advertisers actually want to reach.

Grandpa Brian and co were revealed as clumsy efforts. But it's likely that any future artificial users created by Big Tech firms will be a lot more slick and convincing.

GREEN FLAG: Longer-form content The received wisdom among the chattering classes is that the internet destroyed people's attention spans. The masses want three-second videos, served up by their social media feed. So it was ironic that Joe Rogan - snubbed by Kamala Harris and embraced by Trump - was the most influential media figure of the US election.

Rogan, who has an audience of more than 11 million, has a podcast that runs 2-3 hours per episode - which usually involves a single interview. The former reality TV host won't win any awards for his research, but he's proved there's still a market for long-form content.

**Load-Date:** January 16, 2025



## *Starmer's dream of an AI revolution is sadly doomed*

The Independent - Daily Edition

January 15, 2025 Wednesday

First Edition

Copyright 2025 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

**The**  **INDEPENDENT**

**Section:** VOICES; Pg. 25

**Length:** 1099 words

### **Body**

---

It takes a special kind of idiot to stake their personal credibility on the fate of an already failing business; Keir Starmer is that kind of idiot (AI could fix our potholes - but also do Britain untold damage, News, Monday).

The increasingly inappropriately named "artificial intelligence industry" is based on a set of technologies that are fundamentally flawed. Large language model chatbots will produce well-formed but misleading and incorrect nonsense. All they can do is regurgitate a mashed-up version of whatever it has been fed in the past. It does so without any understanding or comprehension, and relies on the credulity and pattern-finding nature of people to believe that the AI has produced something with meaning.

This product is now regarded as "AI slop" that does nothing more than reduce productivity.

For this reason, there will be no AI productivity boom for the UK. Starmer's plan to turn Britain into an AI superpower is not even trading our cow for a bag of magic beans. Abrogating copyrights, abandoning privacy protections and giving American tech firms "sweetheart" tax breaks will only leave us holding the bag of slop.

John R Barberio Banbury, Oxfordshire

I've been in IT for over 40 years. Technological development throughout my working life has been a continuum. Semiconductors, microcomputing, robotics, neural networking, voice/speech recognition, vast data storage banks??? the breakthroughs have been continuous and progressive.

Now, AI is the catchword designed to make everyone sound very clever and knowledgeable. Yet no one can argue about it, because it means so much, or little, to so many people.

As regards the desired outcome of this technology, the focus of discussion must become how useful it is assisting in surgical operations, in crime detection and reduction, in traffic management - and how it handles remote-controlled weaponry.

## Starmer's dream of an AI revolution is sadly doomed

Peter Smith-Cullen Dunston, Norfolk

Given the fallibility of humans, it is not clear that, in a two-tier system, a rational player would elect for a triage system operated by humans over AI. For that matter, soon robots will make superior surgeons, AI will more accurately detect cancers, read scans and may even be more empathetic than hard-pressed doctors and nurses.

At a time of labour shortages and an aging population, we should learn to embrace this technology, while ensuring that our regulators are properly resourced to ensure that AI is a force for good.

Paul Sonabend London NW8

On the day Keir Starmer announced his government would lead the charge into artificial intelligence, I happened to go online with HMRC to check that the tax payment I had made four days previously had been allocated to my account. Reader, it had not (I've been working in AI for years - there's one big problem no one is really addressing, Voices, Monday).

The idea that the government will be playing a leading role in AI appears to be as fanciful as the prospect of Rachel Reeves achieving a working grasp of economic theory.

Bob O'Dwyer London SW4

**Time to tax retired pensioners?**

I cannot understand why Rachel Reeves keeps introducing tax changes that either hurt vulnerable people or businesses (Rachel Reeves must not ask the poor and the vulnerable to pay for her mistakes, Editorial, Saturday).

There are large numbers of retired people who have a pension income much greater than the average income of those in work (roughly £30,000 a year). Those working people pay national insurance on their income; non-working pensioners do not.

If pensioners with an income greater than the national average were required to pay national insurance on their earnings above that limit, a large amount of revenue would be raised.

Most working people would not complain and neither would businesses.

Richard Gibson Winchester, Hampshire

Chris Blackhurst describes the despair of the business community at the performance of the UK government (UK Plc wants rid of Rachel Reeves - and for good reason, Business, Monday) - but what are the alternatives? Is anyone - in Labour, the other political parties, the Treasury, the Bank of England, the universities - any more capable?

Before winning the election, Labour talked up the economy, but since taking office they have talked it down. That alone has done more damage than all of the chancellor's missteps.

Jon Hawksley France

I do not follow football, but I know full well that when the owner of a club says he has full confidence in the manager, it is usually only a matter of days before a dismissal (No, Keir Starmer is not going to sack Rachel Reeves - and nor should he, Voices, yesterday). Politics is only slightly different, and Rachel Reeves being supported by Keir Starmer in similar fashion marks the end of the beginning, if not the beginning of the end.

Robert Boston Kingshill, Kent

**We don't need another grooming gang inquiry**



## Starmer's dream of an AI revolution is sadly doomed

While the dots need joining, another lengthy inquiry into grooming gangs is not the answer (Starmer under pressure as second Labour MP breaks ranks to call for grooming gangs inquiry, News, Monday).

What is needed is some additional answers as to why more was not done to investigate, and these questions need to be directed at more junior staff in police forces, social services and council staff who were "not encouraged" to investigate for political, economic and racial factors.

Frank Sole Address supplied

Many of your recent correspondents have repeated the racist myth that Asian men are the main perpetrators of child sexual exploitation in the UK. The facts tell a different story (Fact check: How many children have been the victims of grooming gangs?, News, Thursday).

A Home Office report published in 2020 found that "there is no credible evidence that any one ethnic group is over-represented in child sexual exploitation cases". It concluded that the majority of child sexual abuse gangs in the UK were made up of white men under the age of 30.

To insist that Asian men are the main perpetrators of sexual grooming is a lie that lets the vast majority of abusers off the hook.

Sasha Simic London N16

I must take issue with Usama Mubarik's assertion that Islam supports women's rights (Ganging up on Pakistani men, Letters, Sunday). In Afghanistan, girls are prevented from accessing secondary education. In Iran, women are imprisoned or even killed for not wearing a hijab - and the situation is hardly any better in Pakistan.

The restrictions on women in Islamic countries is endless. It may be that, in earlier times, Islam was more benign towards women - but it is not currently the case.

David Felton Wistaston, Chester

**Load-Date:** January 14, 2025



## [Mainlining AI won't bring back boom-time Britain](#)

The Independent (United Kingdom)

January 14, 2025 Tuesday 5:14 PM EST

Copyright 2025 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

**The**  **INDEPENDENT**

**Section:** UK NEWS

**Length:** 1131 words

**Byline:** Letters

### **Body**

---

It takes a special kind of idiot to stake their personal credibility on the fate of an already failing business; Keir Starmer is that kind of idiot (["AI could fix our potholes - but also do Britain untold damage"](#), Monday 13 January).

The increasingly inappropriately named "artificial intelligence industry" is based on a set of technologies that are fundamentally flawed. Large language model chatbots will produce well-formed but misleading and incorrect nonsense. All they can do is to regurgitate a mashed-up version of whatever it has been fed in the past. It does so without any understanding or comprehension, and relies on the credulity and pattern-finding nature of people to believe that the **AI** has produced something with meaning.

This product is now regarded as "**AI slop**" that does nothing more than reduce productivity.

For this reason, there will be no **AI** productivity boom for the UK. Keir Starmer's plan to turn Britain into an **AI** superpower is not even trading our cow for a bag of magic beans. Abrogating copyrights, abandoning privacy protections and giving American tech firms "sweetheart" tax breaks will only leave us holding the bag of **slop**.

**John R Barberio**

*Banbury, Oxfordshire*

I've been in IT for over 40 years. Technological development throughout my working life has been a continuum. Semiconductors, microcomputing, robotics, neural networking, voice/speech recognition, vast data storage banks... the breakthroughs have been continuous and progressive.

Now, **AI** is the catchword designed to make everyone sound very clever and knowledgeable (["Starmer's 50-point plan for artificial intelligence revealed"](#), Sunday 12 January).

Yet no one can argue about it, because it means so much, or little, to so many people.

## Mainlining AI won't bring back boom-time Britain

As regards the desired outcome of this technology, the focus of discussion must become how useful it is assisting in surgical operations, in crime detection and reduction, in traffic management - and how it handles remote controlled weaponry.

### Peter Smith-Cullen

*Dunston, Norfolk*

Given the fallibility of humans, it is not clear that, in a two-tier system, a rational player would elect for a triage system operated by humans over [AI](#) ("[Will Labour's AI revolution make your life better or worse?](#)", Monday 13 January). For that matter, soon robots will make superior surgeons, [AI](#) will more accurately detect cancers, read scans and may even be more empathetic than hard-pressed doctors and nurses.

At a time of labour shortages and an aging population, we should learn to embrace this technology, while ensuring that our regulators are properly resourced to ensure that [AI](#) is a force for good.

### Paul Sonabend

*London NW8*

On the day Keir Starmer announced his government would lead the charge into artificial intelligence, I happened to go online with HMRC to check that the tax payment I had made four days previously had been allocated to my account. Reader, it had not ("[I've been working in AI for years - there's one big problem no one is really addressing](#)", Monday 13 January).

The idea that the government will be playing a leading role in [AI](#) appears to be as fanciful as the prospect of Rachel Reeves achieving a working grasp of economic theory.

### Bob O'Dwyer

*London SW4*

#### Time to tax retired pensioners?

I cannot understand why Rachel Reeves keeps introducing tax changes that either hurt vulnerable people or businesses (Editorial: "[Rachel Reeves must not ask the poor and the vulnerable to pay for her mistakes](#)", Saturday 11 January).

There are large numbers of retired people who have a pension income much greater than the average income of those in work (roughly £30,000 a year). Those working people pay national insurance on their income; non-working pensioners do not.

If pensioners with an income greater than the national average were required to pay national insurance on their earnings above that limit, a large amount of revenue would be raised.

Most working people would not complain and neither would businesses.

### Richard Gibson

*Winchester, Hampshire*

Chris Blackhurst describes the despair of the business community at the performance of the UK government ("[UK Plc wants rid of Rachel Reeves - and for good reason](#)", Monday 13 January) - but what are the alternatives?

Is anyone - in Labour, the other political parties, the Treasury, the Bank of England, the universities - any more capable?

## Mainlining AI won't bring back boom-time Britain

Before winning the election, Labour talked up the economy, but since taking office they have talked it down. That alone has done more damage than all of the chancellor's missteps.

**Jon Hawksley**

*France*

I do not follow football, but I know full well that when the owner of a club says he has full confidence in the manager, it is usually only a matter of days before a dismissal (["No, Keir Starmer is not going to sack Rachel Reeves - and nor should he"](#), Tuesday 14 January). Politics is only slightly different, and Rachel Reeves being supported by Keir Starmer in similar fashion marks the end of the beginning, if not the beginning of the end.

**Robert Boston**

*Kingshill, Kent*

### Another grooming gang inquiry is not the answer

While the dots need joining, another lengthy inquiry into grooming gangs is not the answer (["Starmer under pressure as second Labour MP breaks ranks to call for grooming gangs inquiry"](#), Monday 13 January).

What is needed is some additional answers as to why more was not done to investigate, and these questions need to be directed at more junior staff in police forces, social services and council staff who were "not encouraged" to investigate for political, economic and racial factors.

**Frank Sole**

*Address supplied*

Many of your recent correspondents have repeated the racist myth that Asian men are the main perpetrators of child sexual exploitation in the UK. The facts tell a different story (["Fact check: How many children have been the victims of grooming gangs?"](#), Thursday 9 January).

A Home Office report published in 2020 found that "there is no credible evidence that any one ethnic group is over-represented in child sexual exploitation cases". It concluded that the majority of child sexual abuse gangs in the UK were made up of white men under the age of 30.

To insist that Asian men are the main perpetrators of sexual grooming is a lie that lets the vast majority of abusers off the hook.

**Sasha Simic**

*London N16*

I must take issue with Usama Mubarik's assertion that Islam supports women's rights ([Letters: "Ganging up on Pakistani men"](#), Sunday 12 January). In Afghanistan, girls are prevented from accessing secondary education. In Iran, women are imprisoned or even killed for not wearing a hijab - and the situation is hardly any better in Pakistan.

The restrictions on women in Islamic countries is endless. It may be that, in earlier times, Islam was more benign towards women - but it is not currently the case.

**David Felton**

*Wistaston, Chester*

## Mainlining AI won't bring back boom-time Britain

**Load-Date:** January 15, 2025

---

End of Document



## **GIVE ME A CRASH COURSE IN . . . META'S ABOLITION OF FACT-CHECKING**

The Irish Times

January 11, 2025 Saturday

Copyright 2025 The Irish Times All Rights Reserved

**Section:** WEEKEND; Pg. 2

**Length:** 470 words

**Byline:** CATIE McLEOD

### **Body**

---

**What is going on with Meta? Meta's decision to end fact-checking to prioritise free speech has prompted alarm among social media experts, as well as questions about the ethics of using its platforms.**

The company's billionaire founder, Mark Zuckerberg, on Tuesday announced that the platform's fact-checking programme would be replaced with X-style community notes, a feature that allows users to add context to posts. More political content will be pushed on to Meta's platforms which include Instagram, Facebook and Threads while certain restrictions will be removed for subjects including immigration and gender.

**Does Meta's announcement affect me? The decision affects just the US for now, but could expand to other jurisdictions.**

According to Prof Axel Bruns from the Queensland University of Technology's digital media centre, the problematic decision is likely an attempt to curry favour with the incoming Trump administration. This is a real problem for everyone who's using Meta platforms, because this really opens the door to more and more misunderstanding circulating.

When it comes to Instagram, Bruns says it will be interesting to see if the platform changes including if users start to see more overtly political content in their feeds.

The decision may affect people who follow a lot of US-based sources, he says.

**Should I quit the platforms? Experts say it is a matter of personal choice.**

In a perfect world, people who were unhappy with Meta's decision would walk away from Instagram, says Prof Jeannie Paterson, the director of the University of Melbourne's Centre for AI and Digital Ethics. But in the real world that's a lot harder to do.

**If I want to leave, what are the alternatives?**

## GIVE ME A CRASH COURSE IN . . . META'S ABOLITION OF FACT-CHECKING

The irony is that there are very few alternatives. Prof Paterson says Twitter was a different story noting that many people left the platform after Elon Musk bought it, renamed it X, and then became more extreme in his views .

But with Instagram, for example, there s no easy alternative TikTok has its own issues and other platforms with similar reach just aren t there.

**What about other changes? In addition to ending its fact-checking programme, Meta is also changing its hateful conduct policy, which will dismantle protections for LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and other marginalised people.**

This, in combination with tedious targeted advertising and rampant ***AI slop***, is set to make these platforms not just unsafe, but unbearable, says Samantha Floreani, a Melbourne-based digital rights activist.

On one level, we need robust domestic tech regulation and more diversity of platforms available to us. But when it comes to the bigger picture, what we really need is to disentangle online spaces from the incentives of a ruthless growth-at-any-cost ideology. Guardian

CATIE McLEOD

**Load-Date:** January 10, 2025

---

End of Document



## 2025: The year of the AI slop

Manila Bulletin

January 8, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 Manila Bulletin All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 394 words

**Dateline:** Manila

### **Body**

---

Manila, Jan. 8 -- Generative AI is just one part of the whole AI thing. So, if you're talking about AI, make sure you're being specific because not all AI is generative AI. Oh, and by the way, the term "artificial intelligence" (AI) is a lot more catchy and impactful than what it really is, which is machine learning (machines, like computers, learn from patterns but aren't really intelligent).

Generative AI models, like ChatGPT and Gemini, have been known to produce inaccurate or misleading information. From adding glue to pizza to suggesting we eat rocks, these models can generate misinformation. No, generative AI models do not hallucinate; in fact, they cannot as they're not human. But hey, it's not a bug, it's just a feature of these models. And if you add audio, video, or photo generation to the mix, you'll see even more AI inaccuracies.

This year, the amount of low-quality AI we're seeing will only increase as companies try sell you access to these models to recoup their investments in AI. AI Slop is everywhere online, but social media sites are the worst offenders. Check out X, Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and you'll see tons of AI-generated content. And get this, AI-powered bots are even plaguing these sites. And to make matters worse, AI-powered search engines like Google Search are showing us more AI Slop than real and authentic human-produced content.

This year, we should be extra cautious about everything we see, read, and hear online. Every article, photo, sound, and video could be fake. There are more sneaky people using generative AI to spread lies on social media (which social media companies promote) than real, human-made stuff.

The TL;DR is that not all AI is created equal. Generative AI models can sometimes generate misleading or inaccurate information. Of course, non-generative AI models aren't error-free either. When you read, watch, or hear about AI, make sure you know what kind it is. Also, be critical of what you see and hear, especially from the internet. Even live video or voice conference interactions can't be trusted. Trust is becoming harder and harder to come by.

Be careful in the year of AI Slop.



2025: The year of the AI slop

Published by HT Digital Content Services with permission from Manila Bulletin. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [contentservices@htdigital.in](mailto:contentservices@htdigital.in)

**Load-Date:** January 8, 2025

---

End of Document

AI-generated 'slop' is slowly killing the internet, so why is nobody trying to stop it?



## *AI-generated 'slop' is slowly killing the internet, so why is nobody trying to stop it?*

The Guardian (London)

January 8, 2025 Wednesday 8:50 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** TECHNOLOGY; Version:3

**Length:** 387 words

**Byline:** Arwa Mahdawi

**Highlight:** Low-quality '[slop](#)' generated by [AI](#) is crowding out genuine humans across the internet, but instead of regulating it, platforms such as Facebook are positively encouraging it. Where does this end?

### Body

---

How do you do, fellow humans? My name is Arwa and I am a genuine member of the species homo sapiens. We're talking a 100% flesh-and-blood person operating in [meatspace](#) over here; I am absolutely not an [AI](#)-powered bot. I know, I know. That's exactly what a bot would say, isn't it? I guess you're just going to have to trust me on this.

I'm taking great pains to point this out, by the way, because content created by real life human beings is becoming something of a novelty these days. The internet is rapidly being overtaken by [AI slop](#). (It's not clear who coined the phrase but "[slop](#)" is the advanced iteration of internet spam: low-quality text, videos and images generated by [AI](#).) A [recent analysis](#) estimated that more than half of longer English-language posts on LinkedIn are [AI](#)-generated. Meanwhile, many news sites have covertly been experimenting with [AI](#)-generated content – bylined, in some cases, by [AI-generated authors](#).

[Slop](#) is everywhere but Facebook is positively sloshing with weird [AI](#)-generated images, including strange depictions of [Jesus made out of shrimps](#). Rather than trying to rid its platform of [AI](#)-generated content – much of which has been created by scammers trying to drive engagement for [nefarious purposes](#) – Facebook has embraced it. A study conducted last year by researchers out of Stanford and Georgetown found Facebook's recommendation algorithms are boosting [these AI-generated posts](#).

Meta has also been creating its own [slop](#). In 2023, the company started introducing [AI](#)-powered profiles such as Liv: a "proud Black queer momma of 2 & truth-teller". These didn't get a lot of attention until Meta executive Connor Hayes told the [Financial Times](#) in December that the company had plans to fill its platform with [AI](#) characters. I'm not sure why he thought that boasting the platform would soon be full of [AI](#) characters talking to each other would go down well, but, it didn't: Meta swiftly killed off the [AI](#)-profiles [after they went viral](#).

AI-generated 'slop' is slowly killing the internet, so why is nobody trying to stop it?

The likes of Liv may be gone from Meta for now, but our online future seems to be getting sloppier and sloppier. What Cory Doctorow memorably termed the gradual “ [enshittification](#) ” of the internet (the degradation of services in pursuit of relentless profit-seeking) is accelerating. Let's hope Shrimp Jesus performs a miracle soon; we need it.

**Load-Date:** January 9, 2025

---

End of Document

Meta is getting rid of factchecking. Should you leave Instagram – and what are the alternatives?



## [Meta is getting rid of factchecking. Should you leave Instagram – and what are the alternatives?](#)

The Guardian (London)

January 8, 2025 Wednesday 2:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** MEDIA; Version:5

**Length:** 1028 words

**Byline:** Catie McLeod

**Highlight:** Decision relates to just the US so far but it may affect users in Australia who follow a lot of US-based sources Follow our Australia news live blog for latest updates Get our breaking news email, free app or daily news podcast

### Body

---

Meta's decision to end factchecking to prioritise "free speech" has [prompted alarm](#) among social media experts, as well as questions about the ethics of using its platforms such as Instagram.

The company's billionaire founder, Mark Zuckerberg, [on Tuesday announced](#) that the platforms' factchecking program would be replaced with X-style "community notes", a feature that allows users to add context to posts.

More political content will be pushed on to Meta's platforms – which also include Facebook and Threads – while certain restrictions will be removed for subjects including immigration and gender.

But is it a reason to reconsider staying on these platforms? Here's what you need to know.

Does Meta's announcement affect you?

The decision affects just the US for now but could expand to other jurisdictions.

The chief executive of Australia's national newswire, Australian Associated Press, Lisa Davies, says its factchecking agency, AAP FactCheck, continues to provide services for Meta in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

Prof Axel Bruns, from the Queensland University of Technology's digital media centre, says the "problematic" decision is likely an attempt to "curry favour" [with the incoming Trump administration](#).

Meta is getting rid of factchecking. Should you leave Instagram – and what are the alternatives?

“This is a real problem for everyone who’s using Meta platforms, because this really opens the door to more and more misunderstanding circulating,” Bruns says.

Should you quit Instagram?

Experts say it is a matter of personal choice.

Bruns notes Meta’s announcement so far only relates to the US and that social media users in other regions need to wait to see how it plays out online in their own area.

When it comes to Instagram, Bruns says it will be interesting to see if the platform changes – including if users start to see more “overtly political content” in their feeds.

[Sign up for Guardian Australia’s breaking news email](#)

The decision may affect people who follow a lot of US-based sources, he says.

Prof Jeannie Paterson, the director of the University of Melbourne’s Centre for **AI** and Digital Ethics, suggests society is “way past the time when we should be getting news content on social media anyway”.

“In a perfect world,” she says, people who were unhappy with Meta’s decision would walk away from Instagram.

“But in the real world that’s a lot harder to do,” she acknowledges. “It’s a real community of sort of small and independent creators ... And that’s how they bring their products to the wider community.”

If you want to leave Instagram, what are the alternatives?

Paterson says the irony is that there are very few alternatives.

She says Twitter was a different story – noting that [many people left the platform](#) after Elon Musk bought it, renamed it X, and then became “more extreme in his views”.

But with Instagram, she says, there’s “no easy alternative” – TikTok “has its own issues” and other platforms with similar reach just aren’t there.

“[For] people who live in the country or in remote areas or minority groups or [who have] small businesses, that is a really good way for them to communicate and reach other people,” she says.

“It’s just not possible to set up an alternative at this point in time. So, to put it bluntly, we’re in a bit of deep shit, to be honest.”

There are old-school photo-sharing platforms including Flickr, Tumblr and Hipstamatic but they don’t have the reach of Instagram.

What about other Meta platforms – WhatsApp, Threads or Facebook?

A Melbourne-based digital rights activist, Samantha Floreani, raises concerns about Meta’s platforms overall.

She highlights that, in addition to ending its factchecking program, Meta is also [changing its hateful conduct policy](#), which will dismantle protections for LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and other marginalised people.

“This, in combination with tedious targeted advertising and rampant **AI slop**, is set to make these platforms not just unsafe but unbearable,” Floreani says.

“There’s never a bad time to quit Instagram, Facebook and other Meta products but many – myself included – may find it hard to leave.”

Meta is getting rid of factchecking. Should you leave Instagram – and what are the alternatives?

Floreani says Meta has “done a great job at trampling competition”, meaning there aren’t many alternative platforms with the same “critical mass of users”.

“On one level, we need robust domestic tech regulation and more diversity of platforms available to us.

“But when it comes to the bigger picture, what we really need is to disentangle online spaces from the incentives of a ruthless growth-at-any-cost ideology.”

There are other messaging apps, [such as Signal](#), that are growing in popularity and alternative microblogging sites [including Bluesky](#) and Mastadon.

Should you stop using social media altogether?

Australia’s Digital Rights Watch chair, Lizzie O’Shea, says Meta’s announcement is an opportunity for people to reflect on their social media usage but that they shouldn’t give it up unless they want to.

“Lots of people use it for good reasons,” she says. “Lots of people do not feel good when they use it.”

O’Shea says Meta’s decision should spur Australia’s government to enact [strong privacy reforms](#) to better protect social media users’ personal information.

While social media companies have based their business model on trying to keep users engaged to collect more data and use it to curate advertising, she says, places such as Australia could slow this extraction down with restrictions– [such as those in Europe](#) – on how much information they collect.

“[It] means that companies focus less on engagement with all the associated negative consequences, like polarising and extremist content,” O’Shea says.

Dr Joanne Gray, a lecturer in digital cultures at the University of Sydney, says social media platforms are an “important tool” that can be beneficial.

“I don’t think anyone is advocating for social media to be banned or taken away from everyone in a blanket sense,” she says. “But there are systemic and serious harms caused by these platforms.

“We should all generally be much more considered in our social media diets and see what benefits us.”

**Load-Date:** January 8, 2025

Sorry, Georgia, it's time to run a mile from attention-seeking BrewDog boss



## *Sorry, Georgia, it's time to run a mile from attention-seeking BrewDog boss*

The Herald (Scotland) Online

January 8, 2025 Wednesday

Copyright 2025 NewsQuest Media Group Limited All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 1111 words

**Byline:** Marissa MacWhirter

### **Body**

---

Brewdog founder James Watt is back in the news after he told his followers that the idea of work-life balance is nonsense. He reckons something he calls -work-life integration- is more important and he shared these views alongside his fianc\xC3e, Made in Chelsea star Georgia Toffolo. Here, Marissa Macwhirter, has some words of advice for Georgia

There is a feeling of repulsion I get when confronted with images of anything slimy or oozing. It-s akin to a prickly sensation deep in my diaphragm that sends chills up the back of my throat. It-s the same feeling I get when I see the name of BrewDog co-founder and former CEO James Watt-s name in the headlines. Partly because I reckon he squeals in delight every time his latest media stunt gets traction. And partly because he has an affinity for flat caps.

The latest twisted headline grabber? To pose a question on LinkedIn. Infected with **AI slop** that promotes optimization garbage, churned out by brown-nosing corporate influencers (and where no one seems to be able to find an actual job despite its supposed raison d-etre), LinkedIn is the undisputed worst social media platform. The medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan would say. And what was the message?

To ask if he should delay marrying fianc\xC3 Georgia Toffolo for tax relief reasons. Who would ask their LinkedIn followers this over their own reality star girlfriend, I wonder. I suppose the sweet, sweet nectar of attention is more rewarding than her opinion, perhaps.

Typically people in the UK marry to reduce their tax bill thanks to the Married Couple-s Allowance. Of course they do. But alas, multi-millionaires, they are not like us. You see, Aberdeenshire-born Mr Watt is making an investment into Ms Toffolo-s raw dog food business, but his tax advisor -dropped a bombshell- on him the other day.

James Watt's fianc\xC3 Georgia Toffolo

-If I marry Georgia within three years of investing, I become a -connected person- under HMRC rules, and I lose the EIS tax relief,- he explained. -So now I-m facing the ultimate question: Delay the wedding for three years and lock in the tax relief [or] forgo the tax break and marry Georgia in 2025?-

Sorry, Georgia, it's time to run a mile from attention-seeking BrewDog boss

If anyone knows about a loophole or option C, Mr Watt is all ears. The poor girl.

Now, I won't pretend to know a lot about the kind of financial acrobatics a skilled advisor can perform to navigate the waters of tax relief. But I do know that the combination of Ms Toffolo coming across in this post like a prop, mixed with the allegations made against BrewDog and Mr Watt in the past, made me feel like I was staring down the barrel of puss filled welt.

In 2022, BrewDog lost its ethical B Corp status following a B Lab investigation. B Corp is a scheme that offers certification of a company's ethical commitment to its community, staff, and the environment.

The blow came when the BBC documentary Disclosure: The Truth About BrewDog was released. The film is about the workplace culture at BrewDog. More than 15 ex-BrewDog workers spoke out to the programme and Mr Watt was accused of inappropriate behaviour and abuse of power in the workplace. Lawyers for Mr Watt said the allegations were false and he denied behaving inappropriately.

READ MORE

'You don't need work life balance' says Brewdog founder James Watt Endless consultations have derailed Glasgow's Clyde Metro ambitions Boring, bougie, and overpriced: Glasgow's west end has lost its way Glasgow by-election blunder casts doubt on Sarwar's leadership Why are senior council officials in Glasgow still getting golden goodbyes?

An open letter, sent by a group called Punks With Purpose and signed by dozens of former and current BrewDog employees, had circulated around a year prior. -Being treated like a human being was sadly not always a given for those working at BrewDog-, the letter claimed. The letter alleged that a -growth at all costs- ethos led to -toxic attitudes- towards junior staff that left many in a state of misery. In response, Mr Watt apologised.

In January this year, BrewDog axed its pledge to pay staff a real Living Wage in favour of freezing wages and hiring new starts on a minimum wage basis. The move drew backlash from workers and leading hospitality union Unite. The brand has been embroiled in a number of other controversies, from frequently flouting sensible drinking guidelines outlined by The Portman Group to proving that a brand based on laddism is ill-equipped to market to women with its Pink IPA.

Mr Watt stepped down as the CEO of BrewDog in May this year after 17 years. He is now the -captain and co-founder- of the beer giant and remains a board member and director. He-s since developed an app -designed to help make anyone an influencer-. Oh, and he went to Reform UK leader Nigel Farage-s 60th birthday party.

Despite the entire brand being built on -punk-, there is nothing punk about Mr Watt or BrewDog. Mr Watt is believed to be worth more than 250 million. While BrewDog-s losses doubled to 59 million in its final year under Mr Watt, there are whispers the firm could go ahead with plans to float on the stock market. It should leave a nice taxable profit for Mr Watt. Before this week-s LinkedIn poll, Mr Watt was outspoken about his distaste for Labour-s plans to increase Capital Gains Tax and its potential impact on entrepreneurship (on LinkedIn). It-s just cold-hearted capitalism at its finest.

For a long time, Mr Watt has resembled one of the taxidermy fat cats he chucked into London from a branded BrewDog helicopter. BrewDog has long since become one of the conglomerates it first rallied against. Like Heineken, which Mr Watt owns a significant number of shares in, according to the BBC. And the appropriation of punk it used in the process has left a worse taste in my mouth than a swig of canned Punk IPA.

I suppose the reality is that BrewDog has never been a beer company, it-s a marketing company. It-s a marketing company that is consistently in trouble for its ads, led by an anti-Brexiteer who attends a bash with Farage.

Appropriating subcultures for profit is an ick. And jovially asking LinkedIn users to weigh in on your desire to pay less tax at the risk of your marriage is also an ick. My answer to his LinkedIn poll? Mr Watt should think less about his raw dog food business and consider raw dogging his taxes like the rest of us, instead.



Sorry, Georgia, it's time to run a mile from attention-seeking BrewDog boss

Marissa MacWhirter is the editor of The Glasgow Wrap. Each morning, Marissa curates the top local news stories from around the city, delivering them to your inbox at 7am daily so you can stay up to date on the best reporting without ads, clickbait or annoying digital clutter. Oh, and it-s free. She can be found on X @marissaamayy1

**Load-Date:** January 8, 2025

---

End of Document



## *Labour TikTok featured obscene lyrics*

The Times (London)

January 7, 2025 Tuesday

Edition 1, Ireland

Copyright 2025 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

# THE TIMES

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 7

**Length:** 399 words

**Byline:** George Grylls

## **Body**

---

Labour has been forced to apologise for releasing a TikTok video featuring a soundtrack that included obscene lyrics about punching the genitalia of a "naughty young girl".

The video, celebrating Labour's achievements since coming to power, featured **AI**-generated animals including a bulldog dressed as a police officer, a hare in nurse's scrubs and a hedgehog wearing dungarees. It was released on the party's Tik- Tok account but was hastily taken down when viewers translated the lyrics of the backing track, a Portugueselanguage anthem.

The song by DJ Holanda, a Brazilian musician from Sao Paulo, is called Montagem Coral and describes the pleasures of smoking marijuana and having sex with a "bitch". The lyrics urge a "naughty young girl" to "sit" on the singer's "pot-crazy dick" and ends with repetition of the line: "Just a punch in the young girl's pussy."

DJ Holanda, whose real name is Lucas Holanda, sings: "Perfect combination is sex, beer and marijuana. The young girls are addicted."

As the music plays the video shows a large owl celebrating Sir Keir Starmer's education reforms. "Children ready to learn with funded breakfast clubs," the owl says. The owl, along with all the other animals, was generated using "**AI slop**", a basic form of artificial intelligence used to produce lowquality images.

Alicia Kearns, the Conservative MP for Rutland & Stamford, questioned the choice of music and accused Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, of undermining the government's commitment to protecting women.

"Do you think it's acceptable, Yvette Cooper, for your party to put out videos with lyrics encouraging men to get young girls on drugs so they can have sex with them, and celebrating punching girls in their vaginas?" she wrote on X. "So much for telling us we'll feel safer with you in charge."

## Labour TikTok featured obscene lyrics

A Labour spokesman said: "This post is an adaptation of a viral social media trend and contains a mix of two music tracks. We acknowledge the translation of the lyrics are completely inappropriate. We apologise and the video has now been deleted."

TikTok has been banned on government phones since 2023 because of security concerns over the app's Chinese ownership. Labour and the Conservatives used the video platform nevertheless to advertise during the election campaign. Labour spent £6.1 million on its digital campaigning during the election compared with £2 million spent by the Tories.

## Graphic

---

The video celebrated the party's achievements

**Load-Date:** January 7, 2025

---

End of Document



## [Hare-brained? Labour under fire for bizarre AI TikTok clip](#)

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 6, 2025 Monday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2025 Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Daily Telegraph

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 4

**Length:** 369 words

**Byline:** Dominic Penna

## Body

---

LABOUR used an artificial intelligencegenerated hare to promote its NHS reforms in a bizarre social media video.

A 34-second clip uploaded to the party's TikTok account is titled "Labour's plan to change Britain as animals" and features a range of **AI**-created imagery.

The video prompted criticism of Labour for relying on artificial intelligence amid concerns over its potential impact on the creative sector.

It begins by depicting a giant, muscular lion wearing a suit and a red tie outside the Houses of Parliament, while a voice can be heard saying over the animation: "He's back!"

A bulldog is then seen wearing a police uniform and walking down a residential street alongside the text: "You'll feel safer with more police on the beat."

The video then cuts to a hare wearing an nurse's uniform with a stethoscope around its neck. The animal folds its arms as a caption appears that reads: "You'll be seen sooner by our NHS."

The next creature depicted alongside a policy pledge is a badger on a platform at a railway station as the words "better rail service by bringing railways back into public control" flash up.

An owl is seen hovering outside a school with the words "children ready to learn, with funded breakfast clubs".

Then comes a hedgehog walking towards a wind turbine alongside the pledge "billpayers are protected, with secure, homegrown energy". The video closes with a cow in a hard hat and hi-vis jacket putting its thumbs up alongside the words "decent, affordable homes for you and your family".

## Hare-brained? Labour under fire for bizarre AI TikTok clip

Social media users were quick to criticise the clip. The top-rated comment on TikTok said: "Labour will use **AI slop** and ignore the arts yet again."

Another comment accused Labour of being "out-of-touch with young people", while a third said: "**AI** is incredibly resource-wasteful, and takes work away from skilled artists. Bad idea."

However some people on the platform were more positive about the video, which had received just over 3,200 likes as of last night and been viewed almost 80,000 times.

TIKTOK

Labour's video is not the first party political advertisement to use **AI**, with a broadcast by Reform in October depicting Sir Keir Starmer, Angela Rayner and Mick Lynch, the trade union leader.

UKLABOUR/

## Graphic

---

TIKTOK UKLABOUR/

**Load-Date:** January 6, 2025

---

End of Document



## *AI, Musk and Trump add up to turbulent 2025 for tech*

The Peninsula

January 6, 2025 Monday

Copyright 2025 Dar Al Sharq Press, Printing & Distribution Provided by Syndigate Media Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 519 words

**Byline:** The Peninsula Newspaper

### **Body**

---

Washington: Since the selection for Oxford's yearly word is done by public poll, this leads me to my first prediction in this column of observations for tech in 2025.

The brain rot economy will show signs of weakness as people grow more wary of what is being served up to them by algorithms as they scroll endlessly.

In the past year, the flood of **AI slop** content has made looking at Facebook even more pointless - and eyeballs will go elsewhere.

Along the same lines, we can expect more anti-social media and anti-smartphone legislation from governments and local authorities around the world following the drastic action taken by Australia to ban users younger than 16 from social media and more and more bans on smartphones in US schools.

Momentum is growing, and I expect more sweeping directives will follow - along with more spirited debate over whether such bans are justified or effective.

At the center of tech policymaking will be Elon Musk.

The world's richest man will be looking for a strong return on his investment in Trump.

What exactly that looks like remains to be seen, though we've already seen him wield the force of his social network, X, to bend Congress to his will.

But his ownership of X, and his power over what is posted and amplified there, will likely make him a lightning rod for the warring factions in right wing politics.

## AI, Musk and Trump add up to turbulent 2025 for tech

Last week's bitter row over H-1B visas shows how suspicions over Musk's aims lie just beneath the surface, and the billionaire's unwillingness to back down from a fight could prove damaging to his companies.

In 2025, Musk needs to show real progress on his robotaxi vision.

Tesla's share gains since Trump was elected suggest Wall Street thinks the plan is right on track, but I think Tesla investors will be sorely disappointed when Musk's robotaxi plan reveals itself to be infeasible (some would argue that's apparent already).

Investors will also be keeping a close watch on chipmaker Nvidia Corp.

Chief Executive Officer Jensen Huang, will be a man under siege as rivals such as Amazon.com Inc. and Broadcom Inc. seek to provide bonafide alternatives to Nvidia's AI chips and geopolitical tensions between the US and China put Nvidia on the front line.

Wall Street demands for meaningful return on investment from AI will get louder.

Capital expenditures from data center construction and semiconductor hoarding will skyrocket, but the capabilities and revenue of AI won't match the pace of investment.

In a political environment friendlier to large mergers and acquisitions, we can expect significant consolidation in the AI industry.

AI pushback will also come from news organizations that feel AI companies are stealing their work and putting their futures at risk.

In 2025, newsrooms globally will need to contend with AI as both friend and foe, recognizing its potential for arming journalists with incredibly powerful new reporting tools while wondering if multimillion-dollar deals with OpenAI and others are giving away the farm.

Legislators and judges will get into the fine print of modernizing copyright law.

[File photo used for representational purposes. - Image](#)

**Load-Date:** January 6, 2025



## [Labour apologises for TikTok featuring obscene lyrics about women](#)

thetimes.co.uk

January 6, 2025 Monday 12:00 AM GMT

Copyright 2025 News International Ltd All Rights Reserved

# THE TIMES

**Length:** 451 words

**Byline:** George Grylls, Defence and Political Correspondent

**Highlight:** The **AI**-generated content, which was meant to celebrate the party's achievements, included a backing track describing having sex with a 'young girl'

## **Body**

---

Labour has been forced to apologise for releasing a TikTok video featuring a soundtrack which included obscene lyrics about punching the genitalia of a "naughty young girl".

The video, celebrating Labour's achievements since coming to power, featured **AI**-generated animals including a bulldog dressed as a police officer, a hare in nurse's scrubs and a hedgehog wearing dungarees.

It was released on the party's TikTok account, but was hastily taken down when viewers translated the lyrics of the backing track — a Portuguese-language anthem.

The song by DJ Holanda, a Brazilian musician from Sao Paulo, is called

Montagem Coral

and describes the pleasures of smoking marijuana and having sex with a "bitch". The lyrics urge a "naughty young girl" to "sit" on the singer's "pot-crazy dick" and ends with repetition of the line: "Just a punch in the young girl's pussy."

"Perfect combination is sex, beer and marijuana," sings DJ Holanda, whose real name is Lucas Holanda. "The young girls are addicted."

As the music plays, the video shows a large owl celebrating Starmer's education reforms. "Children ready to learn with funded breakfast clubs," the owl says. The owl, along with all the other animals were described as "

### [AI slop](#)

", low-quality images rapidly produced by basic artificial intelligence.



## Labour apologises for TikTok featuring obscene lyrics about women

The video was posted at an unfortunate time for Sir Keir Starmer, who is facing daily attacks on X from Elon Musk, the world's richest man, about the government's response to the Rochdale grooming scandal. On Monday the prime minister

[criticised those "spreading lies and misinformation"](#)

about the gangs.

Alicia Kearns, the Conservative MP for Rutland and Stamford, questioned the choice of music and accused Yvette Cooper, the home secretary, of undermining the government's commitment to protecting women.

"Do you think it's acceptable, Yvette Cooper, for your party to put out videos with lyrics encouraging men to get young girls on drugs so they can have sex with them, and celebrating punching girls in their vaginas? So much for telling us we'll feel safer with you in charge," she wrote on X.

A Labour spokesman said: "This post is an adaptation of a viral social media trend and contains a mix of two music tracks. We acknowledge the translation of the lyrics [is] completely inappropriate. We apologise and the video has now been deleted."

TikTok has been banned on government phones since 2023 because of security concerns over the app's Chinese ownership. Labour and the Conservatives used the video platform to advertise during the election campaign. Labour spent £6.1 million on its digital campaigning during the election compared with £2 million by the Tories.

**Load-Date:** January 7, 2025

---

End of Document

Labour is forced to delete AI TikTok clip over using graphic song encouraging drugging of girls



## ***Labour is forced to delete AI TikTok clip over using graphic song encouraging drugging of girls***

MailOnline

January 6, 2025 Monday 9:24 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

# MailOnline

**Section:** NEWS; Version:1

**Length:** 587 words

**Byline:** Bill Bowkett Mauricio Alencar

## **Body**

---

Labour was last night forced to delete a bizarre **AI**-generated video promoting its policies over its use of a Brazilian dance track with obscene lyrics about drugs and sex.

The video entitled 'Labour's Plan to Change Britain (as animals)' featured **AI**-generated rabbits, owls and cows dressed as nurses, teachers and builders overlayed with the party's missions for government.

It also depicted a British bulldog dressed as a policeman with the caption: 'You'll feel safer with more police on the beat.'

But the post - which was uploaded to the party's official TikTok account and amassed more than 100,000 views - sampled a 2023 song by Sao Paulo-based DJ Holanda called 'Montagem Coral'.

The track, which is in Portuguese, contains graphic lyrics about young women being 'addicted' to drugs and the artist being a 'magnet for s\*\*\*\*'.

A segment of the recording used by Labour describes having sex with a 'naughty young girl' who is addicted to marijuana.

It follows a recent trend on TikTok which has seen the growth in artificially-generated content.

Following the revelation, Tory safeguarding spokesman Alicia Kearns said: 'Do you think it's acceptable (Home Secretary) Yvette Cooper for your party to put out videos with lyrics encouraging men to get young girls on drugs so they can have sex with them?

'So much for telling us we'll feel safer with you in charge.'

Labour is forced to delete AI TikTok clip over using graphic song encouraging drugging of girls

Ex-Tory minister Neil O'Brien added: 'Incredible - the other lyrics are actually far worse. Starmer types are so desperate to be 'down with the kids' they validate all this horrible stuff.'

A Labour spokesman told The Mail: 'The post is an adaptation of a viral social media trend and contains a mix of two music tracks.

'We acknowledge the translation of the lyrics are completely inappropriate. We apologise and the video has now been deleted.'

The TikTok video, which was published on Sunday, began with an image of a lion dressed in a suit and red tie outside Parliament, followed by the British bulldog police officer walking down a suburban street.

It then had a rabbit dressed in NHS uniform with a stethoscope around its neck. While folding its arms, 'you'll be seen sooner by our NHS' flashes up on the screen.

Next was a badger at a railway station, with Labour promising 'better rail services by bringing railways into public control', bringing them under a new operating body Great British Rail.

The video then focused on Labour's plans for education 'with funded breakfast clubs', using an owl dressed as a teacher flying over a school building.

Following this, a hedgehog dressed in overalls and walking alongside a windmill promised 'billpayers are protected, with secure homegrown energy' amid Labour's pledge to decarbonise electricity by 2030.

Housing completes the bizarre video, as cow in construction uniform stood in a building site promising viewers 'decent affordable homes for you and your family'.

The video initially prompted criticism for relying on artificial intelligence amid concerns over its potential impact on the creative sector.

One social media user said: 'Labour will use AI slop and ignore the arts yet again.'

A second accused Labour of being 'out-of-touch with young people', while a third commented: 'AI is incredibly resource-wasteful, and takes work away from skilled artists. Bad idea.'

Labour is not the first party to publish AI content online, with Reform UK posting a parody film criticising Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, deputy leader Angela Rayner and RMT union boss Mick Lynch.

**Load-Date:** January 6, 2025



## [Watch: Labour uses AI bunnies to promote NHS in bizarre promo video](#)

telegraph.co.uk

January 5, 2025 Sunday 8:03 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Telegraph

**Section:** POLITICS; Version:1

**Length:** 670 words

**Byline:** By Dominic Penna, Political Correspondent

**Highlight:** TikTok stunt sparks criticism that party prefers 'artificial intelligence slop' over skilled artists

## Body

---

Labour used an [artificial intelligence](#) generated bunny to promote its NHS reforms in a bizarre social media video.

A 34-second clip uploaded to the [governing party's official TikTok account](#) is titled "Labour's plan to change Britain as animals" and features a range of AI-created imagery.

The video prompted criticism of Labour for relying on artificial intelligence amid concerns over its [potential impact on the creative sector](#).

It begins by depicting a giant, muscular lion wearing a suit and a red tie outside the Houses of Parliament, while a voice can be heard saying over the animation: "He's back!"

A bulldog is then seen wearing a police uniform and walking down a residential street alongside the text: "You'll feel safer with more police on the beat."

The video then cuts to a rabbit wearing a blue NHS nurse uniform with a stethoscope around its neck. The animal folds its arms as a caption appears that reads: "You'll be seen sooner by our NHS."

Cow in a hard hat

The next creature depicted alongside a policy pledge is a badger on a [platform at a railway station](#) as the words "better rail service by bringing railways back into public control" flash up.

An owl flapping its wings can be seen levitating [outside a school](#) with the words "children ready to learn, with funded breakfast clubs".

## Watch: Labour uses AI bunnies to promote NHS in bizarre promo video

The penultimate animal is a hedgehog walking towards a [rotating wind turbine](#) alongside the pledge “billpayers are protected, with secure, homegrown energy”.

The video closes with a cow in a hard hat and orange hi-vis jacket putting its thumbs up alongside the words “decent, affordable homes for you and your family”.

Social media users were quick to criticise the clip. The top-rated comment on the clip on TikTok said: “Labour will use **AI slop** and ignore the arts yet again.”

Another comment accused Labour of being “out-of-touch with young people”, while a third said: “**AI** is incredibly resource-wasteful, and takes work away from skilled artists. Bad idea.”

However some people on the platform were more positive about the video, which had received just over 3,200 likes on the platform as of Sunday night and been viewed almost 80,000 times.

Labour’s new video is not the first party political advertisement to use **AI**, with a [broadcast by Reform](#) in October using the technology to criticise Labour on a number of policy issues.

The video parodied a film trailer and used **AI** to depict Sir Keir Starmer, Angela Rayner and Mick Lynch, the trade union leader.

### Security concerns

It was also deployed in order to criticise Labour for its winter fuel allowance raid, high numbers of small boat crossings and the row over Cabinet ministers receiving free gifts.

Political parties are [increasingly using TikTok](#) in an attempt to appeal to a younger audience despite security concerns over the platform.

Nigel Farage, the Reform leader, passed one million followers on the site at the end of last year.

Reform has more followers on TikTok than Labour, the Tories or the Liberal Democrats, whose leader Sir Ed Davey has starred in a number of their own viral videos.

The Government has faced calls to [ban the video-sharing app](#) amid fears that sensitive data could be useful to Chinese spies.

One former defence chief told The Telegraph last year that TikTok was a key intelligence source for China’s vast intelligence network.

For these reasons, TikTok usage is banned across Whitehall, but the Ministry of Defence still uses it to communicate with British troops around the world.

A TikTok spokesman said in response: “Like 1.5 million businesses and millions of creators across the UK, the Ministry of Defence uses TikTok to reach audiences it would struggle to connect with in other ways.

“Security concerns are misplaced – neither TikTok nor our parent company ByteDance are Chinese.”

The firm is investing more than £10 billion in [Project Clover](#), which will see European users’ data stored in Europe by default with the NCC Group, a cyber security company.

**Load-Date:** January 5, 2025



## *AI, Musk and Trump add up to a turbulent 2025 for tech*

The Peninsula

January 5, 2025 Sunday

Copyright 2025 Dar Al Sharq Press, Printing & Distribution Provided by Syndigate Media Inc. All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 1203 words

**Byline:** The Peninsula Newspaper

### **Body**

---

You may have heard that the Oxford dictionary's "word of the year" this year was "brain rot."

I found that interesting for two reasons. The first is that it is clearly two words. The second is that unlike prior words of the year - like 2013's "selfie" or last year's "rizz" - "brain rot" is neither new nor changed from its original intended meaning. Its first use was recorded in 1854 and said to be "indicative of a general decline in mental and intellectual effort" - which, well, yeah.

Since the selection for Oxford's yearly word is done by public poll, this leads me to my first prediction in this column of observations for tech in 2025: The brain rot economy will show signs of weakness as people grow more wary of what is being served up to them by algorithms as they scroll endlessly. In the past year, the flood of **AI slop** content has made looking at Facebook even more pointless - and eyeballs will go elsewhere.

Along the same lines, we can expect more anti-social media and anti-smartphone legislation from governments and local authorities around the world following the drastic action taken by Australia to ban users younger than 16 from social media and more and more bans on smartphones in US schools.

Momentum is growing, and I expect more sweeping directives will follow - along with more spirited debate over whether such bans are justified or effective. See also: well-intentioned but poorly executed age verification efforts.

The biggest jolt to the social media landscape could come from a US ban on TikTok. The January 19 deadline for its divestiture is fast-approaching, but before then, on January 10, the Supreme Court will hear arguments from each side - TikTok and the Justice Department - on the whether the ban is constitutional.

Many legal observers have deemed it unlikely the court will overturn the lower court's ruling, which sided with the government on its somewhat vague concerns of national security. But in recent days the pendulum has shown signs of a swing.

## AI, Musk and Trump add up to a turbulent 2025 for tech

Trump, after weeks of will-he, won't-he, has sought to pause the law until he is in office. A delay would allow "breathing space for the court to consider the questions on a more measured schedule," he argued in an amicus brief. Many on the left and right agree with him.

If the steady stream of tech CEOs visiting Mar-a-Lago is any indication, we can expect Silicon Valley to be more willing to do Trump's bidding in 2025 than it was in 2017, when we saw widespread condemnation of Trump and a pledge to not aid him in carrying out his policies.

It will take several big tech partners to put in motion Trump's mass deportation goals should he actually attempt to go through with them. Tech companies, more frugal these days and with employees on a much tighter leash, will jump at the chance - history books be damned. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza will continue to provide moral cover for Silicon Valley firms to enter military contracts they have previously shirked out of fear of upsetting their rank-and-file workers and customer base.

At the center of tech policymaking will be Elon Musk. The world's richest man will be looking for a strong return on his investment in Trump. What exactly that looks like remains to be seen, though we've already seen him wield the force of his social network, X, to bend Congress to his will.

But his ownership of X, and his power over what is posted and amplified there, will likely make him a lightning rod for the warring factions in right wing politics.

Last week's bitter row over H-1B visas shows how suspicions over Musk's aims lie just beneath the surface, and the billionaire's unwillingness to back down from a fight could prove damaging to his companies.

In 2025, Musk needs to show real progress on his robotaxi vision, which requires more legislative support than it has now. Tesla's share gains since Trump was elected suggest Wall Street thinks the plan is right on track, but I think Tesla investors will be sorely disappointed when Musk's robotaxi plan reveals itself to be infeasible (some would argue that's apparent already).

Investors will also be keeping a close watch on chipmaker Nvidia Corp. Chief Executive Officer Jensen Huang, the so-called godfather of artificial intelligence, will be a man under siege as rivals such as Amazon.com Inc. and Broadcom Inc. seek to provide bonafide alternatives to Nvidia's **AI** chips and geopolitical tensions between the US and China put Nvidia on the front line. Beijing is looking for effective means of retaliation over US trade restrictions, and Nvidia is vulnerable.

Wall Street demands for meaningful return on investment from **AI** will get louder. Capital expenditures from data center construction and semiconductor hoarding will skyrocket, but the capabilities and revenue of **AI** won't match the pace of investment.

In a political environment friendlier to large mergers and acquisitions, we can expect significant consolidation in the **AI** industry. The also-ran startups will go under. At the same time, politicians will increasingly find themselves caught between big tech interests and the fury of their constituents as **AI** companies seek to rapidly put data centers in towns that don't want them.

**AI** pushback will also come from news organizations that feel **AI** companies are stealing their work and putting their futures at risk. In 2025, newsrooms globally will need to contend with **AI** as both friend and foe, recognizing its potential for arming journalists with incredibly powerful new reporting tools while wondering if multimillion-dollar deals with OpenAI and others are giving away the farm. Legislators and judges will get into the fine print of modernizing copyright law. One phrase we'll be hearing a lot is "fair use" - which will hopefully receive a precedent-setting revised definition sooner rather than later.

Consolidation, or at least cooperation, might be in the air for streaming companies as consumers stare down serious subscription fatigue. We've recently seen price increases for YouTube TV, Disney+, Max and Paramount+, in addition to password crackdowns and the introduction of ads. The streaming market is too crowded and major streaming providers will look to bundle up their offerings in a way that will look suspiciously like traditional cable TV.

## AI, Musk and Trump add up to a turbulent 2025 for tech

Elsewhere in entertainment, the 10-years-in-the-making Grand Theft Auto 6 will walk a culture war tightrope as it seeks to become the most popular entertainment product of all time. The game rose to prominence as an ultra-violent, no-holds-barred, over-the-top portrayal of the scummy criminal underworld.

In the decade since its previous installment, sensibilities have changed, though something tells me developer Rockstar Games will err on the side of offensiveness. All publicity is good publicity, and it sure makes for fiery debate. See you in the new year.

This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the editorial board or Bloomberg LP and its owners.

Dave Lee is Bloomberg Opinion's US technology columnist. He was previously a correspondent for the Financial Times and BBC News.

[Elon Musk speaks at a campaign rally for Donald Trump at New York's Madison Square Garden in October. \(Photo by Jabin Botsford/The Washington Post\) - Image](#)

**Load-Date:** January 5, 2025

---

End of Document





## *How to spot the AI 'slop' taking over internet*

The Times (London)

January 4, 2025 Saturday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2025 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

# THE TIMES

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 14

**Length:** 656 words

**Byline:** Matilda Davies

## **Body**

---

A child being bullied. A bed with a giant fan embedded in the headboard. A "barndominium" (a barn converted into a living space) in sprawling green fields. These were some of the most viewed images on Facebook last autumn - and they're all **AI slop**.

Of the top 20 most-viewed posts on the platform in the United States, four were obviously created by artificial intelligence. Last summer, there were only two. Before that, nothing.

Most of this content is not false depictions of people created with **AI**, known as deepfakes, although this does still happen. It's amateur content created by ordinary people, described by tech experts as "**AI slop**".

The image of the child being bullied was posted on Facebook by an Ohio mother and school counsellor, alongside a caption about preventing bullying as children went back to school. It became the fourth most-viewed post in the US that quarter, seen by more than 38 million people.

While this has few real-world consequences, that isn't always the case. On New Year's Eve, thousands of people arrived at Birmingham's Centenary Square expecting a fireworks display.

It had been advertised by what appeared to be **AI**-generated news articles for a "spectacular midnight show" that never materialised. The false information was then disseminated by legitimate outlets, such as Prima magazine, and people believed it.

These instances are becoming more common. In Dublin last Halloween, thousands flooded the streets to attend a parade fabricated by a Pakistan-hosted website that creates **AI**-generated news.

The increasing availability of generative **AI** models, which can create text, images, video and audio based on prompts, means that more and more social media timelines are littered with

## How to spot the AI 'slop' taking over internet

AI-created content. Bo Bergstedt, a generative AI expert, said: "It's just what happens when everybody suddenly has tools to create an image or text or music or video or whatever by just typing a prompt. That doesn't make it a good piece of content, which is why we just call it slop. Everyone can do it now, and it's just being blasted out. I've been seeing it for five years moving slowly and then extremely fast now."

OpenAI released the first iteration of ChatGPT in November 2022, which reached one million users in five days. Although it initially only produced text, it now creates images using a text-to-image model called DALL-E 3. By November last year, it was the 12th most visited website in the UK, and the eighth most visited worldwide.

There are now numerous similar tools available online, including Midjourney, which creates realistic images, Jasper, which specialises in marketing materials, and Synthesia, which creates videos and can clone voices.

Meta, the company that owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, revealed last week that it plans to allow AI bots on its platforms as users.

There are ways anyone can spot AI usage. Antony Cousins, an AI consultant, said that text "doesn't resonate. It's bland. It lacks active words - the writing is far too passive." A study last year in Germany - yet to be peer-reviewed - found that ChatGPT overuses "style words", particularly adjectives such as intricate, pivotal or notably.

In images, AI image generators often struggle with details such as hands, text, and logos. Lighting and shadows can be illogical. The image generators tend to make images that look perfect in ways real life often is not, in a similar way to airbrushing. But the primary giveaway, Bergstedt says, is "hallucinations" - where AI fills in gaps in its knowledge by fabricating information. "Slow down," he advised. "If I see something that's strange or odd, I double-check it. I go and search for it afterwards to see if I can find other sources. You can read text wherever you want, but how do you judge if what you read was real? I think we have to go back to that with images and video and audio as well. That trust we had for, what, 100 years in images and video, it's just gone."

## Graphic

---

An AI-generated celebrity birthday message, another of a bed with a fan headboard and the image of a child being bullied

**Load-Date:** January 4, 2025



## *X's Grok AI revives concern about deepfakes ahead of Delhi Assembly election*

The Hindu

January 4, 2025 Saturday

Copyright 2025 The Hindu All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 630 words

**Dateline:** New Delhi

### **Body**

---

The Aam Aadmi Party posted an Artificial Intelligence-generated deepfake of B.R. Ambedkar supposedly blessing former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal last month, prompting an **AI**-generated response from the Bharatiya Janata Party in return.

In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly election, the exchange has reignited the debate over the use of **AI** in political campaigning, and the role it plays in elections. This use of deepfakes has been growing since Grok — the **AI** chatbot and image generation service offered by X, formerly Twitter — became available to the general public. Unlike the policy followed by other **AI** chatbots, X's owner Elon Musk has decided against prohibiting imagery based on real life political figures, leading to a mushrooming of such content on Grok.

For instance, an X account riffs on the constant blaming of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru for modern ills by generating images of the long-deceased Nehru ordering current PM Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to take unpopular decisions. The account, @The\_Nehru, has gained over 20,000 followers. The account is "based on the recent parliamentary debates where Modi started blaming Nehru, which he does most of the times," its creator, going by the alias JLN, told The Hindu over direct messages on X. "So I got the idea to create [a] parody account and mock the statements."

## X's Grok AI revives concern about deepfakes ahead of Delhi Assembly election

Adhiraj Singh, a comedian who writes on Indian humour, and one of the co-contributors to a satirical page called Humans of Delhi (aping Humans of Bombay and other such pages), was skeptical about AI being a sustainably funny mainstay for a crop of accounts. "Satirical pages pretending to be politicians aren't new, but AI tools do make it easier for them to flood our timelines with trash that ultimately make any satire or commentary meaningless and inseparable from any other kind of noise," Mr. Singh said. "I feel it really depends on who is using it for what."

He added that there were concerns with this kind of content becoming more common: "Satire, misinformation, and hate speech being used interchangeably with no accountability. People and even news sources mistaking 'satire' pages for genuine news isn't even news any more. It's not sustainable, but here we are, in the post-singularity AI slop pit."

Indeed, the use of deepfakes in this way is not restricted to political parties and parody accounts alone. One political commentator posted a picture of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi resembling the businessman and entrepreneur George Soros, with a caption calling him Mr. Gandhi's "mentor".

In a report on generative AI deepfakes and India, the disinformation-focused startup Logically wrote that concentrating "on specific kinds of content alone in assessing whether there will be any impact can obscure the way that disinformation campaigns operate. The consequences actually lie in the cumulative effect of the content appearing endlessly in a variety of different fora."

In 2023, then-Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar complained that Google Gemini AI's response to the query, "Is Narendra Modi a fascist?" was a violation of Indian law. AI chatbots like the ones offered by Meta and OpenAI now largely refuse to answer this particular question, and others like it.

Grok, however, continues to provide unvarnished political responses, and does not restrict the generation of political synthetic imagery. So far, in spite of the satirical Nehru account's surging popularity — it has over one lakh views on some posts — a similar backlash has not been forthcoming. In fact, 'JLN' says, the account has not even faced organised trolling yet. "They might be confused that what kind of attack could neutralise me," the account holder said.

**Load-Date:** January 4, 2025



## [Why 'AI slop' is taking over the internet — and how to spot it](#)

thetimes.co.uk

January 3, 2025 Friday 8:43 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 News International Ltd All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 893 words

**Byline:** Matilda Davies, Data Journalist

**Highlight:** The trust we had in pictures and videos is vanishing as artificial intelligence becomes better at fooling us — but there are ways to detect **AI**-generated content

### **Body**

---

A child being bullied. A bed with a giant fan embedded in the headboard. A “barndominium” (a barn converted into a living space) in sprawling green fields. These were some of the most viewed images on Facebook last autumn — and they’re all **AI slop**.

Of the top 20 most-viewed posts on the platform in the United States, four were obviously created by artificial intelligence. Last summer, there were only two. Before that, nothing.

Most of this content is not false depictions of people created with **AI**, known as deepfakes, although this does still happen. It’s amateur content created by ordinary people, described by tech experts as “**AI slop**”.

The image of the child being bullied was posted on Facebook by an Ohio mother and school counsellor, alongside a caption about preventing bullying as children went back to school. It became the fourth most-viewed post in the US that quarter, seen by more than 38 million people.

While this has few real-world consequences, that isn’t always the case. On New Year’s Eve,

[thousands of people arrived at Birmingham’s Centenary Square](#)

expecting a fireworks display.

It had been advertised by what appeared to be **AI**-generated news articles for a “spectacular midnight show” that never materialised. The false information was then disseminated by legitimate outlets, such as Prima magazine, and people believed it.

These instances are becoming more common.

[In Dublin last Halloween](#)

## Why 'AI slop' is taking over the internet — and how to spot it

, thousands flooded the streets to attend a parade fabricated by a Pakistan-hosted website that creates **AI**-generated news. Last February, Willy's Chocolate Experience, an immersive

### [\*Willy Wonka-inspired event in Glasgow\*](#)

, became infamous after it didn't deliver on its **AI**-generated adverts.

The increasing availability of generative **AI** models, which can create text, images, video and audio based on prompts, means that more and more social media timelines are littered with **AI**-created content.

It's likely to get worse before it gets better. Bo Bergstedt, a world-leading generative **AI** expert, said: "It's just what happens when everybody suddenly has tools to create an image or text or music or video or whatever by just typing a prompt. That doesn't make it a good piece of content, which is why we just call it **slop**."

"Everyone can do it now, and it's just being blasted out. I've been seeing it for five years moving slowly and then extremely fast now."

OpenAI released the first iteration of ChatGPT in November 2022, which reached one million users in five days. Although it initially only produced text, it now creates images using a text-to-image model called DALL-E 3. By November last year, it was the 12th most visited website in the UK, and the eighth most visited worldwide.

There are now numerous similar tools available online, including

### [\*Midjourney\*](#)

, which creates realistic images, Jasper, which specialises in marketing materials, and

### [\*Synthesia\*](#)

, which creates videos and can clone voices.

Meta, the company that owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, revealed last week that it plans to allow **AI** bots on its platforms as users. Connor Hayes, Meta's vice-president of product for generative **AI**, told the Financial Times: "They'll have bios and profile pictures and be able to generate and share content powered by **AI** on the platform ... that's where we see all of this going."

### [\*Instagram to launch AI tools that can create deepfakes\*](#)

As the technology gets more advanced, it is becoming harder to recognise what content is created by humans, and what is created by **AI**.

Social media companies are making moves to label **AI**-generated content, but it is no simple task. Meta now includes **AI** information in the menu on pictures on Facebook and Instagram, but has been criticised after labels incorrectly appeared on real photos.

Bergstedt explained: "It was putting small labels beneath images that looked normal, because people used really aggressive filters or **AI** tools to make themselves look better, or tone the skin or make their eyes more clear."

"There are big decisions they have to make now: Do they mark it all? Or is there some kind of grading of what **AI** is okay and what **AI** should be noticed?"

### [\*AI could map and manipulate our desires, say Cambridge researchers\*](#)

But there are ways anyone can spot **AI** usage. Antony Cousins, an **AI** consultant, said that text "doesn't resonate. It's bland. It lacks active words — the writing is far too passive."

## Why 'AI slop' is taking over the internet — and how to spot it

A study last year in Germany — yet to be peer-reviewed — found that ChatGPT overuses “style words”, particularly adjectives such as intricate, pivotal or notably.

In images, [AI](#) image generators often struggle with details such as hands, text, and logos. Lighting and shadows can also be illogical. The image generators also tend to make images that look perfect in ways real life often is not, in a similar way to airbrushing.

But the primary giveaway, Bergstedt says, is “hallucinations”, which is where

[AI](#)

fills in gaps in its knowledge by fabricating information.

“Slow down,” Bergstedt advised. “It’s a very journalistic practice. If I see something that’s strange or odd, I double-check it. I go and search for it afterwards to see if I can find other sources.

“You can read text wherever you want, but how do you judge if what you read was real? I think we have to go back to that with images and video and audio as well. That trust we had for what, 100 years in images and video, it’s just gone.”

**Load-Date:** January 3, 2025



## *Why the internet is filling up with nonsense 'AI slop'*

telegraph.co.uk

January 1, 2025 Wednesday 12:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2025 Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Telegraph

**Section:** BUSINESS; Version:1

**Length:** 1323 words

**Byline:** By Matthew Field, Senior Technology Reporter

**Highlight:** Low-quality fake images are cluttering social media feeds in the race to go viral

## Body

---

Elon Musk riding a UFO, "Shrimp Jesus" and tiny children baking impossibly perfect birthday cakes.

These are just three examples of bizarre **AI**-generated imagery that has taken over the internet in the past year.

Across Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok, surreal **AI** images have been plaguing news feeds, typically accompanied by nonsensical captions in broken English.

Dubbed "**AI slop**", there is no hiding from the manipulated images and videos, with their prominence even leading to the Oxford University Press (OUP) naming "**slop**" as a contender for its word of the year.

**Slop**, the OUP writes, is "art, writing, or other content generated using artificial intelligence, shared and distributed online in an indiscriminate or intrusive way, characterised as being of low quality, inauthentic, or inaccurate".

There have long been fears that **AI** image tools could be used to create [highly convincing "deepfakes"](#) and images or videos that could help spread disinformation or influence elections.

But so far, the most viral **AI** images have been obviously fake and downright strange. Free software for creating images and videos has led to a surge in **slop**, driven by scammers, spammers and the occasional genuine user seeking to go viral.

Facebook's most recent report from its Transparency Center reveals that two of the top five most widely viewed images on the network in the three months to September were **AI**-generated – viewed 38.6m and 35.8m times respectively.

Matt Navara, a social media consultant, says the novelty of these posts has quickly worn thin for many of Facebook's billions of users.



## Why the internet is filling up with nonsense 'AI slop'

"The proliferation of [low-quality or spammy AI content](#) risks cluttering feeds and diminishing overall user satisfaction," he says.

"I'm seeing little evidence yet that users are actively demanding such content in their feeds."

In March, Facebook users began to notice a flood of images featuring Jesus Christ mixed with a crustacean rising from the sea. These "Shrimp Jesus" posts garnered hundreds of thousands of interactions and tens of millions of views.

Other weird **AI** trends soon emerged, including African women building fruit sculptures and young children showing off elaborate birthday cakes with the caption: "This is my first cake".

On Facebook, these posts were published on pages with innocuous names such as "Easy Recipes", "Interesting Planet" or "Life Nature". A study in March by researchers at the Stanford Internet Observatory found that many pages filled with **AI** content were likely attempts by scammers to cash in on virality.

They found 120 pages posting improbable **AI** images with clickbait headlines, many of which shared the same creator or published multiple posts with the same captions.

Some garnered a huge response despite their bizarre nature. One popular "Crab Jesus" had 209,000 engagements and 4,000 comments.

"We suspect these high levels of engagement are partially driven by the Facebook recommendation algorithm," the report said.

The **AI** images were "captivating visually, easy to create, cheap to generate in large numbers [and allowed the pages] to engage in high rates of posting of new content that might grab people's eyes", says Josh Goldstein of Georgetown University, one of the report's authors.

He called this phenomenon a new kind of "engagement bait".

Among the pages highlighted by the report were many that appeared to have been hacked and turned into **AI** content farms. These pages sought to direct users away from Facebook to websites that could then be used to eke out a trickle of advertising income.

Meanwhile, on YouTube and Telegram, a network of influencers – many from India or the Philippines – are busy coaching their followers on how to make money from **slop**.

In one video, an influencer tells followers to create viral images depicting an old man being eaten by insects.

"The Indian audience is very emotional, after seeing photos like this, they like, comment and share them," he says, claiming that users can make money through a Facebook scheme called "Performance Bonus", which provides a tiny fee to creators of viral content. His video promises followers they can make 4 lakh (£3,700) per month.

Other **AI** images have also been shared widely during some of the biggest news events of the year – and not just by grifters and scammers.

In May, [a pro-Palestinian Instagram template](#) created using **AI**, originally designed with Microsoft's Image Creator, was shared more than 50m times, including by celebrities such as Bella Hadid. The template featured a crude refugee camp disappearing towards the horizon with the words "All Eyes on Rafah".

In October, Republicans in the US took to sharing **AI**-generated images in the wake of Hurricane Helene to criticise Joe Biden's response plan.

Amy Kremer, a Republican activist, shared a post on X of a crying girl holding a puppy during a flood. "Y'all, I don't know where this photo came from and honestly, it doesn't matter," she said.

### Why the internet is filling up with nonsense 'AI slop'

Then, as the US election approached, a new surge of AI images featuring Republican donor Elon Musk spread rapidly across Facebook.

This included posts claiming that the Tesla founder had created a flying saucer.

However, it is not just images that are the problem.

Newsguard, the news rating service, has identified more than 1,000 websites pumping out AI-generated fake news stories in 16 languages, many of which appear to have little or no human oversight.

McKenzie Sadeghi, AI editor at Newsguard, says: "Our tracking of AI-generated news websites has found that it shows no signs of slowing down. The barriers to creating AI-generated content remain low and the incentives – programmatic advertising revenue, site traffic, engagement – remain."

Tech giants have taken some measures to separate fake from legitimate posts, including Facebook, which labelled some posts with the tag "AI Info".

But the industry has also been aggressively pushing more users to adopt their own AI tools, such as Meta's AI assistant or X's Grok.

Meta has also started encouraging users to create their own fake images, while also promoting other AI-generated content on Facebook and Instagram feeds.

However, with a flood of more low-quality content on the horizon, some technologists are urging Meta to reconsider the prominence given to these posts.

"If platforms value human creativity, they should label and downrank outputs in which human creative involvement is minimal," says Ed Newton-Rex, founder of Fairly Trained, a non-profit advocating for tech companies to respect creative rights.

He adds: "I think the latent demand for spaces that are human-first is higher than many companies realise."

Some AI experts have suggested that over time, Meta and others will adjust their algorithms to deprioritise the most egregious AI slop – much like spam filters. However, Meta's own stated plans suggest otherwise.

Data from the company's Transparency Center shows that in the three months to September, more than 31pc of content viewed on Facebook was from accounts "unconnected" to the user – meaning it has been served up by an algorithm.

This is up from 8pc in 2021 and 24pc this time last year. Meanwhile, on Instagram, a growing number of AI videos have been populating users' feeds and Reels.

Mark Zuckerberg has also made it clear that he expects the internet to gradually become populated with more AI posts, believing that is exactly what his users want.

"I think there's been this trend over time where the feeds started off as primarily and exclusively content for people you followed, your friends," he told The Verge.

"We're also going to show you content that's generated by an AI system that might be something that you're interested in ... how big it gets is kind of dependent on the execution and how good it is."

This is a far cry from Zuckerberg's previous goal of spreading "meaningful social interactions", as it seems apparent that Facebook and other online platforms show no sign of slowing up in displaying mindless scrolling content.

Why the internet is filling up with nonsense 'AI slop'

---

End of Document

The surreal AI 'slop' taking over social media feeds Sites are turning away from human content amid competition for clicks, reports Matthew Field



**The surreal AI 'slop' taking over social media feeds; Sites are turning away from human content amid competition for clicks, reports Matthew Field**

The Daily Telegraph (London)

January 1, 2025 Wednesday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2025 Telegraph Media Group Holdings Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Daily Telegraph

**Section:** BUSINESS; Pg. 21

**Length:** 1044 words

**Byline:** Matthew Field

## Body

---

ELON MUSK riding a UFO, "Shrimp Jesus" and tiny children baking impossibly perfect birthday cakes.

These are just three examples of bizarre **AI**-generated imagery that has taken over the internet in the past year.

Across Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok, surreal **AI** images have been plaguing news feeds, typically accompanied by nonsensical captions in broken English.

Described as "**AI slop**", there is no hiding from the manipulated images and videos, with their prominence even leading to the Oxford University Press (OUP) naming "**slop**" as a contender for its word of the year.

**Slop**, the OUP writes, is "art, writing, or other content generated using artificial intelligence, shared and distributed online in an indiscriminate or intrusive way, characterised as being of low quality, inauthentic, or inaccurate".

There have long been fears that **AI** image tools could be used to create highly convincing "deepfakes" and images or videos that could help spread disinformation or influence elections. But, so far, the most viral **AI** images have been obviously fake and downright strange. Free software for creating images and videos has led to a surge in **slop**, driven by scammers, spammers and the occasional genuine user seeking to go viral.

Facebook's most recent report from its "transparency centre" reveals that two of the top five most widely viewed images on the network in the three months to September were AI-generated - viewed 38.6m and 35.8m times respectively.

The surreal AI 'slop' taking over social media feeds Sites are turning away from human content amid competition for clicks, reports Matthew Field

Matt Navara, a social media consultant, says the novelty of these posts has quickly worn thin for many of Facebook's billions of users. "The proliferation of low-quality or spammy AI content risks cluttering feeds and diminishing overall user satisfaction," he says. "I'm seeing little evidence yet that users are actively demanding such content in their feeds."

In March, Facebook users began to notice a flood of images featuring Jesus Christ mixed with a crustacean rising from the sea. These "Shrimp Jesus" posts garnered hundreds of thousands of interactions and tens of millions of views. Other weird AI trends soon emerged, including African women building fruit sculptures and young children showing off elaborate birthday cakes with the caption: "This is my first cake".

A study in March by researchers at the Stanford Internet Observatory found that many pages filled with AI content were probably attempts by scammers to cash in on virality.

Some garnered a huge response, even despite their bizarre nature. One popular "Crab Jesus" had 209,000 engagements and 4,000 comments.

"We suspect these high levels of engagement are partially driven by the Facebook recommendation algorithm," the report said.

The AI images were "captivating visually, easy to create, cheap to generate in large numbers [and allowed the pages] to engage in high rates of posting of new content that might grab people's eyes", says Josh Goldstein, of Georgetown University, one of the report's authors.

He called this phenomenon a new kind of "engagement bait".

Among the pages highlighted by the report were many that appeared to have been hacked and turned into AI content farms. These pages sought to direct users away from Facebook to websites that could then be used to eke out a trickle of advertising income.

Then, as the US election approached, a new surge of AI images featuring Republican donor Elon Musk spread rapidly across Facebook.

This included posts claiming that the Tesla founder had created a flying saucer. However, it is not just images that are the problem.

Newsguard, the news rating service, has identified more than 1,000 websites pumping out AI-generated fake news stories in 16 languages, many of which appear to have little or no human oversight. McKenzie

Sadeghi, AI editor at Newsguard, says: "Our tracking of AI-generated news websites has found that it shows no signs of slowing down. The barriers to creating AI-generated content remain low and the incentives - programmatic advertising revenue, site traffic, engagement - remain."

Tech giants have taken some measures to separate fake from legitimate posts, including Facebook, which labelled some posts with the tag "AI Info".

But the industry has also been aggressively pushing more users to adopt their own AI tools, such as Meta's AI assistant or X's Grok.

Meta has also started encouraging users to create their own fake images, while also promoting other AI-generated content on Facebook and Instagram feeds.

However, with a flood of more low-quality content on the horizon, some technologists are urging Meta to reconsider the prominence given to these posts.

The surreal AI 'slop' taking over social media feeds Sites are turning away from human content amid competition for clicks, reports Matthew Field

"If platforms value human creativity, they should label and downrank outputs in which human creative involvement is minimal," says Ed Newton-Rex, founder of Fairly Trained, a non-profit advocating for tech companies to respect creative rights.

Some AI experts have suggested that over time, Meta and others will adjust their algorithms to deprioritise the most egregious AI slop - much like spam filters. However, Meta's own stated plans suggest otherwise.

Data from the company's transparency centre shows that in the three months to September, more than 31pc of content viewed on Facebook was from accounts "unconnected" to the user - meaning it has been served up by an algorithm.

This is up from 8pc in 2021 and 24pc this time last year. Meanwhile, on

Instagram, a growing number of AI videos have been populating users' feeds and reels.

Mark Zuckerberg has also made it clear that he expects the internet to gradually become populated with more AI posts, believing that is exactly what his users want. "I think there's been this trend where the feeds started off as primarily and exclusively content for people you followed, your friends," he told The Verge.

"We're also going to show you content that's generated by an AI system that might be something that you're interested in. How big it gets is kind of dependent on the execution and how good it is."

This is a far cry from Zuckerberg's previous goal of spreading "meaningful social interactions", as it seems apparent that Facebook and other online platforms show no sign of slowing up in displaying mindless scrolling content.

'The proliferation of lowquality or spammy AI content risks cluttering feeds and diminishing satisfaction'

## Graphic

---

Variations of 'Shrimp Jesus' images started appearing on Facebook last March, gaining tens of millions of views

**Load-Date:** January 1, 2025

Toronto can be a lonely city. I found community in an unlikely place



## *Toronto can be a lonely city. I found community in an unlikely place*

thestar.com

December 31, 2024 Tuesday

Final Edition

Copyright 2024 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** OPINION/CONTRIBUTORS; Pg. 1

**Length:** 615 words

**Byline:** David Silverberg Contributor

### **Body**

---

Five years ago, when I moved to the Hillcrest Village area of Toronto, I knew almost nothing about the neighbourhood. I then decided to do something I never did when I lived in the Annex, where I simply didn't feel as engaged as a resident: I joined a Facebook Group.

Brimming with almost 8,000 members, the group, called "Hillcrest Village/Humewood/Wychwood," informed me not just about some ideal restos to enjoy (Aviv Immigrant Kitchen for date night, Pukka for Indian, Goen for affordable sushi) but also a slew of important news that wasn't on CP24's ticker: the porch pirates stealing Amazon boxes off porches, the construction that was causing traffic on St. Clair West, the blackouts that left us without Internet or cable.

These days, it can be easy to associate Facebook with ***AI slop*** and contentious debates. But the local groups found on the social network can also be a lifeline for those seeking not just information, but community too.

While no online space is devoid of strife, there's often a friendly vibe within these groups. When I first used it to solicit ideas for a homemade gift for my mother on Mother's Day, many commenters quickly pointed me in the right direction. It wasn't to Etsy or Amazon, either. Instead, people took the time to consider which local artist would best be suited for my ask.

That focus on the local speaks to how these groups can value community. Available for practically every neighbourhood in Toronto, they can also act as an online advice column. I've seen dozens of comments under posts with questions such as, "How do I turn a very poorly maintained tiny front yard into something more manageable and attractive?" and "How do I deal with noisy neighbours whose kids screech and yell at painful decibel levels?"

It would be too glib to declare that Facebook Groups will save local community, or that they have replaced our traditional locales such as churches or community centres. But it's highly likely they have filled a widening gap.

What circulates on Facebook Groups can also have long-standing impacts. In a 2021 study by German researchers, they stated that these groups "can influence a community's practices and behaviors in the short term

Toronto can be a lonely city. I found community in an unlikely place

and shift norms, values and shared beliefs in the long term, ultimately contributing to the permanent institutionalization of social resilience."

Put another way: if we've all heard how our heads are too buried in our phones to connect with each other anymore, with Facebook Groups, we're forging new relationships in a way that would have been nearly impossible before social media.

As with any online group, some posts can go too far. A surveillance culture of hyper-vigilance may lead to wrongful accusations against people who may have had nothing to do criminal activity. Disparaging statements about minorities have also infiltrated one of the groups I joined, which the moderators are quick to stamp out. But these unwanted posts make up a tiny fraction of the otherwise helpful comments and alerts filling these groups daily.

Hyper-local online groups have evolved to create what American psychiatrist Scott Peck calls "true community." In these collectives, members relate to each other's feelings, and heated discussions never sour. The mood is generally cheerful and positive. Even if friction comes between members in some posts, they know that that is for a positive change.

Spending time in these groups inspires me to be a more active participant in my community, online and offline. And returning to that platform to see what my neighbours are discussing, warning, promoting, and delighting in is, at least in the world of social media, like finding light amid a sea of dark clouds.

**Load-Date:** December 31, 2024

---

End of Document



24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....



**24 lows of 2024; Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dundas, Kevin Jiang, Debra Yeo**

The Toronto Star

December 28, 2024 Saturday

ONT Edition

Copyright 2024 Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** CULTURE; Pg. C11

**Length:** 2785 words

## Body

---

### Theatre

#### 1. Tim Hortons makes a disastrous foray into musical theatre

Tim Hortons should stick to what it knows best: coffee and doughnuts. The multinational chain's foray into theatre in June, with a new musical called "The Last Timbit," was nothing short of a disaster, possibly taking the (birthday) cake (timbit) as the company's worst publicity stunt ever. Not even a Broadway-calibre cast and a trio of Canada's best writers could save this 75-minute commercial advertisement masquerading as a musical.

### Celebrity

#### 2. The Costco Guys 'bring the boom' to your FYP

What started out as an innocent enough shtick - a father-and-son duo from Florida find minor TikTok fame filming short videos clips from inside a Costco warehouse - morphed into a grotesque gluttony of smooth-brained content, much of which is centred around an absurd but admittedly catchy rap-rock song ("We Bring the Boom") that has spawned an entire cottage industry of music videos, dance challenges, podcasts and spinoffs. In recent months, the Costco Guys extended universe has expanded beyond A.J. and Big Justice to incorporate a roster of astonishingly unremarkable characters, including, but not limited to, the Rizzler, a third-grader from New Jersey known for pioneering "the rizz face." Devoid of meaning or substance but somehow compelling, the Costco Guys' content is almost indistinguishable from **AI slop**. The fact that it is made by real human beings is a tragedy, the apotheosis of internet brain rot.

### Theatre

#### 4. Two theatres head to court

24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....

A pair of prominent arts organizations in Ontario became locked in a legal dispute following a cancelled production last year. In September, Factory Theatre in Toronto sued the Blyth Festival for \$115,000, alleging the organization breached its agreement by unilaterally pulling a Factory-produced play from its lineup. A month later, the Blyth Festival launched a counterclaim, saying the Toronto company reneged on its own contract and displayed "overt unpreparedness and unwillingness to co-operate." The case is still open and will likely further play out next year.

## Television

### 5. Reality TV reveals its ugly side

So-called "reality TV" isn't going away anytime soon with streamers like Netflix and Prime Video jumping on the bandwagon. But it got a black eye in 2024 with everything from lawsuits alleging abuse on "Mr. Beast" and "Love Is Blind," to the divorce of the first "Golden Bachelor" and his bride of three months, to outrage over "Bachelorette" producers' callous treatment of their first Asian lead. Whatever appears onscreen, the behind-the-scenes reality isn't pretty.

## Dance

### 6. Raygun gives an absurd Olympic performance

The intersection of sports and culture is narrow. But smack dab in the middle of that Venn Diagram sits Rachael Gunn, the infamous Australian breakdancer known as Raygun, who sparked a pop culture firestorm after she crashed out of the Olympics this summer without earning a single point. While the university lecturer-turned-athlete might not have embodied the motto of the world's greatest sporting event ("Faster, Higher, Stronger"), at least she gave all of us hope that perhaps we, too, could find ourselves at the Olympics. Just admit it: how many of you found yourself muttering, "Surely, I can do better than that?"

## music

### 7. Katy Perry takes a hollow stab at a feminist anthem

"Sexy, confident / So intelligent / She is heaven-sent / So soft, so strong," Katy Perry sings joylessly on her universally panned comeback single "Woman's World," a song with lyrics that, in the words of Star writer Emilie Hanskamp, "read like an affirmation board you'd find in a HomeSense liquidation section." The song was released along with a music video filled with imagery so retrograde that people were genuinely puzzled over whether it was satirical. Arriving in the midst of an exciting, women-led pop revival, Perry's track landed like a tonne of bricks, offering up an accidental reminder of how far we've come: "In this era of complicated womanhood," wrote Hanskamp, "the lowest hanging feminist fruit is no longer sufficient. That is something to celebrate."

## theatre

### 8. 'Les Misérables' revs up

Jean Valjean sure was in a hurry in Mirvish's recent presentation of "Les Misérables." If you're a fan of the classic musical and caught the show at the Princess of Wales Theatre, you may have felt it was being performed in hyperdrive. You're not wrong. It was. This North American touring production increased the tempos of songs and rushed through scenes at a frantic pace, all to keep the total run time under three hours so they wouldn't have to pay the company for overtime. The result was not just noticeable but disappointing.

## music

### 9. Grimes bombs at Coachella

Listen, I will always defend Grimes, the Canadian singer who has evolved into a controversy-magnet since entering the orbit of Elon Musk, because Grimes made two of the best indie pop albums of the 2010s. But I was unable to

24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....

deny myself the schadenfreude of watching her Coachella set go completely off the rails last spring. "I have not practised the math because I am not fast at math," Grimes desperately tried to explain to a massive Sahara tent audience stunned by the silence caused by what she says was a "major technical problem." She eventually apologized and figured things out for weekend two, but that didn't deter the memes.

theatre

#### 10. Hot Docs faces layoffs, resignations and allegations of toxic behaviour

Canada's largest documentary film festival now faces an uncertain future following months of internal turmoil. Earlier this year, 10 employees resigned en masse, while the festival's now-former artistic director faced multiple allegations of "grave mismanagement" and fostering a "toxic work environment." Then, later in the summer, Hot Docs president Marie Nelson abruptly left the organization, just a year into her tenure. In addition to the departures, the festival also faced what it described as "urgent" financial challenges. That led to a temporary closure of its flagship Toronto theatre, which only reopened earlier this month following a financial restructuring.

celebrity

#### 11. The 'Where is Kate?' media circus gets louder

When Catherine, Princess of Wales, largely removed herself from the public eye earlier this year, a frenzied, "Where is Kate?" media circus ensued. It got messy and, frankly, cruel. Conspiracies spread like wildfire. Blame was levelled against the princess and her family. It all highlighted the perverse and dangerously obsessive nature of social media and the paparazzi. Kate, of course, later shared that she was diagnosed with cancer. Let's hope the public remorse that followed will serve as a lesson moving forward.

theatre

#### 12. Harbourfront Centre announces dance theatre closure

In a major blow to the city's performing arts scene, Harbourfront Centre announced in November that it planned to shutter the Fleck Dance Theatre, the city's only purpose-built dance venue. The impending closure, which will leave many established companies without a home, marks the latest setback for the arts organization, which has faced major financial challenges since the pandemic, leading to staff layoffs.

music

#### 13. 'Rogers' concert venues proliferate

When Live Nation Canada announced it was building a new concert venue at the former site of Downsview Airport, attention quickly turned to its name: Rogers Stadium. That the telecommunications giant was the namesake for yet another venue - not to be confused with the Rogers Centre in downtown Toronto, Rogers Arena in Vancouver or Rogers Place in Edmonton, to name a few - signifies the out-of-control monopoly major corporations have over naming rights, much to the annoyance and confusion of spectators. It's not just Rogers, though. In Toronto, there's also the CAA Theatre and the CAA Ed Mirvish Theatre, along with Meridian Hall and the Meridian Arts Centre.

art

#### 14. AI art breaks the internet

There are few clearer signs of the slow decline of the internet - and perhaps art in general - than the proliferation of bizarre AI image slop infesting everything from search engines to your great-uncle's Facebook feed. Trolls and disinformation dealers are having a blast churning out scandalous images of multi-fingered politicians and pornography of unconsenting women. But the tech is cheap, fast and convincing enough to bleary-eyed doomscrollers - virtual gold for profit-obsessed megacorporations. Watching Coca-Cola's eerie, fully AI-generated

24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....

Christmas ad campaign this year, one has to wonder: are we staring at a fad or the soulless embodiment of our future?

music

#### 16. Taylor Swift vs Beyoncé narrative continues

They're the two biggest pop stars in the world and they're women: in the shallow disc that often serves as internet culture, a feud narrative was inevitable. (Doesn't mean it's not exhausting.) At year's end - after the Grammys, the Eras Tour, "Cowboy Carter" and "The Tortured Poets Department" - Billboard entered the chat with a list of the greatest pop stars of the 21st century that it slowly dripped, day by day, like sparkly poison. When Swift was announced as the No. 2 artist, the No. 1 was clear - and immediately controversial. Fandoms gonna fandom: they got right into it online, taking the manufactured bait. The next stage for the drama is the 2025 Grammys, where Swift and Beyoncé are both nominated for record of the year and album of the year. Friendship bracelets, anyone?

music

#### 17. Charli xcx unwisely wades into political discourse

On the campaign trail just weeks ahead of the U.S. presidential election, Sen. Amy Klobuchar asked Democratic supporters to conjure up an aspirational image of the future. "Picture this," she said. "Bernie Sanders and Dick Cheney together holding a sign that says 'Brat fall.' "

This moment, which for many felt like a terrible omen and an indictment of what would eventually prove to be a disastrous campaign by the Democrats, was also a very good example of what happens when politicians get ahold of a good meme: what was once fun and unifying becomes cringey and eventually meaningless.

This all started, of course, when Charli xcx posted a simple message on X: "kamala IS brat." The tweet was a reference to her recent album title, which had become an internet sensation as a symbol of a certain type of messy, party-girl lifestyle. One can't exactly fault the English singer - at the time, Kamala Harris seemed like the Democrats' only hope of defeating Donald Trump.

But the tweet quickly went viral, forcing hundreds of confused journalists and news anchors around the world to twist themselves in knots trying to explain the meaning of this meme. Like almost anything related to U.S. politics in 2024, the Kamala-brat discourse quickly became messy and divisive, signalling a bitter end to "brat summer."

theatre

#### 18. Toronto's cultural scene faces financial headwinds

Over the past year, scores of arts organizations and artist spaces in Toronto have been forced to permanently shutter or drastically cut programming, the result of financial headwinds and operational hurdles that were induced by the pandemic but have spiralled into a wider crisis across the sector, leading to a reckoning - among artists, patrons and public officials - about the viability and future of the once-thriving industry.

It fomented under a perfect storm. As these organizations resumed in-person programming following months-long pandemic closures, they were met with changing consumer trends, inflationary pressures and a cost-of-living crisis that drove many artists out of the sector. At the same time, arts funding across all levels of government remained stagnant, while other sources of revenue from private and corporate donors have largely evaporated.

The challenges affected organizations both large and small, and across a variety of disciplines. In March, the Shaw Festival reported the largest deficit in its history. That same week, Just for Laughs announced it was cancelling its annual festival in Toronto and seeking to restructure its business. As well, more than half of independent cinemas in the country reported they were operating at a loss.

24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....

celebrity

#### 19. Hulk Hogan stumps for Trump

The most surreal pop culture moment of the year arrived earlier this summer, when the former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan delivered a fanatical address at the Republican National Convention in support of Donald Trump, his self-proclaimed "hero." Just how far did the Hulkster go? Well, it will be hard to erase that image of Hogan ripping off his shirt and suit jacket to reveal a tank top emblazoned with the Trump-Vance logo. How ironic that in the same stump speech, the rabble rouser also said: "As an entertainer, I try to stay out of politics." Perhaps some of these entertainers need to try a bit harder.

celebrity

#### 20. 'Hawk Tuah Girl' makes us wonder if the internet was a mistake

A video clip of a young woman making a crude joke becomes an ultra-viral meme. Young woman cleverly capitalizes on her fleeting internet fame by leaning into the absurdity of the moment, begins selling merchandise, appearing at campus events around the country. Young woman appears on Bill Maher's podcast. Young woman launches "Talk Tuah," which bafflingly becomes one of the most popular podcasts in America. Young woman launches her own cryptocurrency, "\$HAWK," which briefly explodes in value before collapsing into dust. Young woman tells her livestream that she is "going to bed," then disappears from the public eyes for two weeks, before resurfacing to offer a tepid legal statement.

" 'Hawk Tuah' Girl Haliey Welch's Memecoin Project Sued After Crash" read a Dec. 19 headline from TMZ: a nearly unintelligible string of words that nonetheless offers a neat summary of the most inane story of 2024, a story that doubles as a bleak warning about the blurring of the internet and the real world.

books

#### 21. The Giller Prize divides literary community

In the lead-up to the 2024 Giller Prize gala, hundreds of authors and cultural workers joined a boycott of the prestigious literary event, accusing the prize of "artwashing" genocide, and demanding that the Giller Foundation cut ties with Scotiabank and other sponsors "invested in the oppression of Palestinians." The boycott marked the culmination of a high-profile campaign that for over a year had sought to draw attention to Scotiabank's investments in an Israeli arms manufacturer, a campaign that in many ways has come to represent how the war in Gaza has fractured arts communities across Canada. "It is our position that the only way to remedy what has been a deeply divisive period in Canadian arts is for the chief funders of so many arts prizes and organizations in Canada - banks such as Scotiabank - to divest from companies whose products are currently being used in mass killing," wrote eight former Giller Prize winners in an open letter published by the Star.

music

#### 22. Diddy is accused of sexual misconduct

Sean "Diddy" Combs, the hip-hop superstar who ruled the music world for more than two decades, faces charges of sex trafficking and racketeering, along with accusations of sexual misconduct from at least 120 people. Combs' arrest earlier this year was a stunning unravelling of Combs' career and public image, beginning in November 2023 with a lawsuit filed by his ex-girlfriend. The music artist has repeatedly denied the allegations, which are currently before the court.

music

#### 23. Kendrick Lamar drags Drake through the mud

24 lows of 2024 Ranking the ridiculous, the absurd and a few very dark moments in a very long year By Richie Assaly, Joshua Chong, Laura deCarufel, Deborah Dund....

It feels superfluous, at this point, to recount the many humiliations suffered by Drake in the wake of his culture-shifting feud with Kendrick Lamar. As the dust settles following Lamar's knockout punch - the brutal, chart-topping diss track "Not Like Us" - the Toronto superstar has shrunk from the spotlight, a shell of his former self: isolated and litigious, posting lonely selfies from his sprawling Bridle Path mansion, betrayed by his friends and abandoned by the city that once worshipped him.

Of course, Drake is too big to fail. A generational hitmaker, the 38-year-old is destined to return to the charts and to the cultural zeitgeist. But it seems unlikely that he will ever fully recover from the central critique of "Not Like Us": that as an artist he lacks authenticity. That he's a "culture vulture" who attaches himself to whichever rising star or burgeoning regional scene he can profit from the most. That he doesn't represent real hip-hop or Black culture, but appropriates. "No, you not a colleague, you a f-kin' colonizer." What makes this critique so devastating - more damaging even than Kendrick's baseless claim that Drake is a "pedophile" - is the fact it reveals something that, deep down, we might have suspected all along.

**Load-Date:** December 28, 2024

---

End of Document

24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more



## **24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more**

thestar.com

December 24, 2024 Tuesday

Final Edition

Copyright 2024 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** ENTERTAINMENT; Pg. 1

**Length:** 3444 words

### **Body**

---

Tensions at Toronto arts institutions. The decline of the Hulkster. Kendrick Lamar vs. Drake, and AI art. These are the arts and culture moments we're happy to leave in 2024.

#### 24. Tim Hortons makes a disastrous foray into musical theatre

Tim Hortons should stick to what it knows best: coffee and donuts. The multinational chain's foray into theatre in June, with a new musical called "The Last Timbit," was nothing short of a disaster, possibly taking the (birthday) cake (timbit) as the company's worst publicity stunt ever. Not even a Broadway-calibre cast and a trio of Canada's best writers could save this 75-minute commercial advertisement, masquerading as a musical. - Joshua Chong

Read more: Our review of "The Last Timbit"

#### 23. The Costco Guys "bring the boom" to your FYP

What started out as an innocent enough shtick - a father-and-son duo from Florida find minor TikTok fame filming short videos clips from inside a Costco warehouse - morphed into a grotesque gluttony of smooth-brained content, much of which is centred around an absurd but admittedly catchy rap-rock song ("We Bring the Boom") that has spawned an entire cottage industry of music videos, dance challenges, podcasts and spinoffs. In recent months, the Costco Guys extended universe has expanded beyond A.J. and Big Justice to incorporate a roster of astonishingly unremarkable characters, including, but not limited to, The Rizzler - a third-grader from New Jersey known for pioneering "the rizz face." Devoid of meaning or substance but somehow compelling, the Costco Guys' content is almost indistinguishable from AI-slop. The fact that it is made by real human beings is a tragedy, the apotheosis of internet brain rot. - Richie Assaly

#### 22. Elon Musk tries and fails to make the "X jump" a thing

Elon Musk might be the richest man on earth, but all that money hasn't seemed to shield the executive chairman of X and very public Trump ally from making a fool of himself on almost any stage he sets foot on. This fall, Musk tried out a new bit in front of his audiences, where he'd hop a couple inches off the ground, open his mouth wide, and

## 24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more

attempt to spread his limbs into an "X" shape, exposing a few inches of his pale midriff. The image of the awkward manoeuvre, which he tried out multiple times over the summer, is one we'd like to forget about in 2025. - Richie Assaly

### 21. Two theatres head to court

A pair of prominent arts organizations in Ontario became locked in a legal dispute following a cancelled production last year. In September, Factory Theatre in Toronto sued the Blyth Festival for \$115,000, alleging the organization breached their agreement by unilaterally pulling a Factory-produced play from its lineup. A month later, the Blyth Festival launched a counterclaim, saying the Toronto company reneged on its own contract and displayed "overt unpreparedness and unwillingness to co-operate." The case is still open and will likely further play out next year. - Joshua Chong

Read more: The fraught dispute between two beloved arts institutions

### 20. Reality TV reveals its ugly side

So-called "reality TV" isn't going away anytime soon with streamers like Netflix and Prime Video jumping on the bandwagon. But it got a black eye in 2024 with everything from lawsuits alleging abuse on "Mr. Beast" and "Love Is Blind," to the outrage over "Bachelorette" producers' callous treatment of their first Asian lead. Whatever appears onscreen, the behind-the-scenes reality isn't pretty. - Debra Yeo

Read more: Mr. Beast is shooting a reality show in Toronto

### 19. Raygun gives an absurd Olympic performance

The intersection of sports and culture is narrow. But smack dab in the middle of that Venn Diagram sits Rachael Gunn, the infamous Australian breakdancer known as Raygun, who sparked a pop culture firestorm after she crashed out of the Olympics this summer without earning a single point. While the university lecturer-turned athlete may not have embodied the motto of the world's greatest sporting event ("Faster, Higher, Stronger"), at least she gave all of us hope that perhaps we, too, could find ourselves at the Olympics. Just admit it: how many of you found yourself muttering, "Surely, I can do better than that?" - Joshua Chong

Read more: Raygun is ranked number one in the world - for now

### 18. Katy Perry takes a hollow stab at a feminist anthem

"Sexy, confident / So intelligent / She is heaven-sent / So soft, so strong," Katy Perry sings joylessly on her universally panned comeback single "Woman's World," a song with lyrics that, in the words of Star writer Emilie Hanskamp, "read like an affirmation board you'd find in a HomeSense liquidation section." The song was released along with a music video filled with imagery so retrograde that people were genuinely puzzled over whether it was satirical. Arriving in the midst of an exciting, women-led pop revival, Perry's track landed like a tonne of bricks, offering up an accidental reminder of how far we've come: "In this era of complicated womanhood," wrote Hanskamp, "the lowest hanging feminist fruit is no longer sufficient. That is something to celebrate." - Richie Assaly

Read more: Katy Perry's "Woman's World" is good for women - here's why

### 17. Les Misérables revs up

Jean Valjean sure was in a hurry in Mirvish's recent presentation of "Les Misérables." If you're a fan of the classic musical and caught the show at the Princess of Wales Theatre, you may have felt it was being performed in hyperdrive. You're not wrong. It was. This North American touring production increased the tempos of songs and rushed through scenes at a frantic pace, all to keep the total run time under three hours so they wouldn't have to pay the company for overtime. The result was not just noticeable, but disappointing. - Joshua Chong



24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more

Read more: Our review of "Les Misérables"

#### 16. Grimes bombs at Coachella

Listen, I will always defend Grimes, the Canadian singer who has evolved into a controversy-magnet since entering the orbit of Elon Musk, because Grimes made two of the best indie pop albums of the 2010s. But I was unable to deny myself the schadenfreude of watching her Coachella set go completely off the rails last spring. "I have not practiced the math because I am not fast at math," Grimes desperately tried to explain to a massive Sahara tent audience stunned by the silence caused by what she says was a "major technical problem." She eventually apologized, and figured things out for weekend two, but that didn't deter the memes. - Richie Assaly

#### 15. Hot Docs faces layoffs, resignations and allegations of toxic behaviour

Canada's largest documentary film festival now faces an uncertain future following months of internal turmoil. Earlier this year, 10 employees resigned en masse, while the festival's now-former artistic director faced multiple allegations of "grave mismanagement" and fostering a "toxic work environment." Then, later in the summer, Hot Docs president Marie Nelson abruptly left the organization, just a year into her tenure. In addition to the departures, the festival also faced what it described as "urgent" financial challenges. That led to a temporary closure of its flagship Toronto theatre, which only reopened earlier this month following a financial restructuring. - Joshua Chong

Read more: The implosion at Hot Docs

#### 14. The "Where is Kate?" media circus gets louder

When Princess Catherine largely removed herself from the public eye earlier this year, a frenzied, "Where is Kate?" media circus ensued. It got messy and, frankly, cruel. Conspiracies spread like wildfire. Blame was levelled against the princess and her family. It all highlighted the perverse and dangerously obsessive nature of social media and the paparazzi. Kate, of course, later shared that she was diagnosed with cancer. Let's hope the public remorse that followed will serve as a lesson moving forward. - Joshua Chong

#### 13. Harbourfront Centre announces dance theatre closure

In a major blow to the city's performing arts scene, the Harbourfront Centre announced in November that it planned to shutter the Fleck Dance Theatre, the city's only purpose-built dance theatre. The impending closure, which will leave many established companies without a home, marks the latest setback for the arts organization, which has faced major financial challenges since the pandemic, leading to staff layoffs. - Joshua Chong

Read more: The closure of this dance theatre leaves a massive hole in the arts community

#### 12. "Rogers" concert venues proliferate

When Live Nation Canada announced it was building a new concert venue at the former site of Downsview Airport, attention quickly turned to its name: Rogers Stadium. That the telecommunications giant was the namesake for yet another venue - not to be confused with the Rogers Centre in downtown Toronto, Rogers Arena in Vancouver or Rogers Place in Edmonton, to name a few - signifies the out-of-control monopoly major corporations have over naming rights, much to the annoyance and confusion of spectators. It's not just Rogers, though. In Toronto alone, there's also the CAA Theatre and the CAA Ed Mirvish Theatre, along with Meridian Hall and the Meridian Arts Centre. - Joshua Chong

Read more: Will Rogers Stadium be ready in time for Oasis?

#### 11. AI art breaks the internet

There are few clearer signs of the slow decline of the internet - and perhaps art in general - than the proliferation of bizarre AI image slop infesting everything from search engines to your great-uncle's Facebook feed. Trolls and

## 24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more

disinformation dealers are having a blast churning out scandalous images of multi-fingered politicians and pornography of unconsenting women. But the tech is cheap, fast and convincing enough to bleary-eyed doomscrollers - virtual gold for profit-obsessed megacorporations. Watching Coca-Cola's eerie, fully-AI-generated Christmas ad campaign this year, one has to wonder - are we staring at a fad or the soulless embodiment of our future? - Kevin Jiang

Read more: Some Toronto theatres have been duped by AI-generated reviews

### 10. TIFF pauses screening of controversial war documentary

The 2024 Toronto International Film Festival featured a host of major films, including possible Oscar contenders "Anora" and "Emilia Pérez." But the two-week event was largely overshadowed by the controversy surrounding "Russians at War," a documentary by Russian-Canadian filmmaker Anastasia Trofimova. Armchair critics, including prominent politicians, claimed it was piece of Russian propaganda. But many of those who saw it dismissed those allegations, instead praising the film for its detailed insights and humanity. In his four-star review for the Star, film critic Corey Atad described the work as an "excellent and bracing documentary." The festival, however, still faced unrelenting protests, forcing organizers to pause screening of the film due to "significant threats." - Joshua Chong

Read more: Opinion: Censoring "Russians at War" is a typically Canadian kind of cowardice

### 9. Taylor Swift vs Beyoncé narrative continues

They're the two biggest pop stars in the world and they're women: in the shallow disc that often serves as internet culture, a feud narrative was inevitable. (Doesn't mean it's not exhausting.) At year's end - after the Grammys, the Eras Tour, "Cowboy Carter" and "The Tortured Poets Department" - Billboard entered the chat with a list of the greatest pop stars of the 21st century that it slowly dripped, day by day, like sparkly poison. When Taylor Swift was announced as the number two artist, the number one was clear - and immediately controversial. Fandoms gonna fandom: they got right into it online, taking the manufactured bait. The next stage for the drama is the 2025 Grammys, where Swift and Beyoncé are both nominated for Record of the Year and Album of the Year. Friendship bracelets, anyone? - Laura deCarufel

Read more: 10 highlights from Taylor Swift's Toronto visit

### 8. Charli xcx unwisely wades into political discourse

On the campaign trail just weeks ahead of the U.S. presidential election, Sen. Amy Klobuchar asked Democratic supporters to conjure up an aspirational image of the future. "Picture this," she said. "Bernie Sanders and Dick Cheney together holding a sign that says 'Brat fall.'"

This moment, which for many felt like a terrible omen and an indictment of what would eventually prove to be a disastrous campaign by the Democrats, was also a very good example of what happens when politicians get a hold of a good meme: what was once fun and unifying becomes cringey and eventually meaningless.

This all started, of course, when Charli xcx posted a simple message on X: "kamala IS brat." The tweet was a reference to her recent album title, which had become an internet sensation as a symbol of a certain type of messy, party-girl lifestyle. One can't exactly fault the English singer - at the time, Kamala Harris seemed like the Democrats' only hope of defeating Donald Trump.

But the tweet quickly went viral, forcing hundreds of confused journalists and news anchors around the world to twist themselves in knots trying to explain the meaning of this meme. Like almost anything related to U.S. politics in 2024, the Kamala-brat discourse quickly became messy and divisive, signalling a bitter end to "brat summer." - Richie Assaly

Read more: Our review of "brat"

24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more

## 7. Toronto's cultural scene faces financial headwinds

Over the past year, scores of arts organizations and artist spaces in Toronto have been forced to permanently shutter or drastically cut programming, the result of financial headwinds and operational hurdles that were induced by the pandemic but have spiralled into a wider crisis across the sector, leading to a reckoning - among artists, patrons and public officials - about the viability and future of the once-thriving industry.

It fomented under a perfect storm. As these organizations resumed in-person programming following months-long pandemic closures, they were met with changing consumer trends, inflationary pressures and a cost-of-living crisis that drove many artists out of the sector. At the same time, arts funding across all levels of government remained stagnant, while other sources of revenue from private and corporate donors have largely evaporated.

The challenges affected organizations both large and small, and across a variety of disciplines. In March, the Shaw Festival reported its largest deficit in its history. That same week, Just For Laughs announced it was cancelling its annual festival in Toronto and seeking to restructure its business. As well, more than half of independent cinemas in the country reported that they were operating at a loss. - Joshua Chong

Read more: Toronto's cultural scene has been shredded. Can this multimillion-dollar plan help reverse the crisis?

## 6. Hulk Hogan stumps for Trump

The most surreal pop culture moment of the year arrived earlier this summer, when the former professional wrestler Hulk Hogan delivered a fanatical address at the Republican National Convention in support of Donald Trump, his self-proclaimed "hero." Just how far did the Hulkster go? Well, it'll be hard to erase that image of Hogan ripping off his shirt and suit jacket to reveal a tank top emblazoned with the Trump-Vance logo. How ironic that in the same stump speech, the rabble rouser also said: "As an entertainer, I try to stay out of politics." Perhaps some of these entertainers need to try a bit harder. - Joshua Chong

Read more: At a wild Republican convention, the fashion was anything but conservative

## 5. "Hawk Tuah Girl" makes us wonder if the internet was a mistake

A video clip of a young woman making a crude joke becomes an ultra-viral meme. Young woman cleverly capitalizes on her fleeting internet fame by leaning into the absurdity of the moment, begins selling merchandise, appearing at campus events around the country. Young woman appears on Bill Maher's podcast. Young woman launches "Talk Tuah," which bafflingly becomes one of the most popular podcasts in America. Young woman launches her own cryptocurrency, "\$HAWK," which briefly explodes in value before collapsing into dust. Young woman tells her livestream that she is "going to bed," then disappears from the public eyes for two weeks, before resurfacing to offer a tepid legal statement.

"Hawk Tuah' Girl Haliey Welch's Memecoin Project Sued After Crash" read a Dec. 19 headline from TMZ - a nearly unintelligible string of words that nonetheless offers a neat summary of the most inane story of 2024, a story that doubles as a bleak warning about the blurring of the internet and the real world. - Richie Assaly

## 4. The Giller Prize divides literary community

In the lead-up to the 2024 Giller Prize Gala, hundreds of authors and cultural workers joined a boycott of the prestigious literary event, accusing the Prize of "artwashing" genocide, and demanding that the Giller Foundation cut ties with Scotiabank and other sponsors "invested in the oppression of Palestinians." The boycott marked the culmination of a high-profile campaign that for over a year had sought to draw attention to Scotiabank's investments in an Israeli arms manufacturer, a campaign that in many ways has come to represent how the war in Gaza has fractured arts communities across Canada. "It is our position that the only way to remedy what has been a deeply divisive period in Canadian arts is for the chief funders of so many arts prizes and organizations in Canada - banks such as Scotiabank - to divest from companies whose products are currently being used in mass killing," wrote eight former Giller Prize winners in an open letter published by the Star. - Richie Assaly

## 24 worst cultural moments of 2024: an epic Tim Hortons misfires, Kendrick drags Drake through the mud, AI slop and more

Read more: Inside the Giller Prize and Scotiabank controversy

### 3. Diddy is accused of sexual misconduct

Sean "Diddy" Combs, the hip-hop superstar who ruled the music world for more than two decades, faces charges of sex trafficking and racketeering, along with accusations of sexual misconduct from at least 120 people. Combs' arrest earlier this year a stunning unravelling of Combs' career and public image, beginning in November 2023 with a lawsuit filed by his ex-girlfriend. The music artist has repeatedly denied the allegations, which are currently before the court. - Joshua Chong

Read more: What we know about Diddy's indictment

### 2. Kendrick Lamar drags Drake through the mud

It feels superfluous, at this point, to recount the many humiliations suffered by Drake in the wake of his culture-shifting feud with Kendrick Lamar. As the dust settles following Lamar's knockout punch - the brutal, chart-topping diss track "Not Like Us" - the Toronto superstar has shrunk from the spotlight, a shell of his former self: isolated and litigious, posting lonely selfies from his sprawling Bridle Path mansion, betrayed by his friends and abandoned by the city that once worshipped him.

Of course, Drake is too big to fail. A generational hitmaker, the 38-year-old is destined to return to the charts and to the cultural zeitgeist. But it seems unlikely that he will ever fully recover from the central critique of "Not Like Us": that as an artist he lacks authenticity. That he's a "culture vulture" who attaches himself to whichever rising star or burgeoning regional scene he can profit from the most. That he doesn't represent real hip hop or Black culture, but appropriates. "No, you not a colleague, you a f---' colonizer." What makes this critique so devastating - more damaging even than Kendrick's baseless claim that Drake is a "pedophile" - is the fact it reveals something that, deep down, we might have suspected all along. - Richie Assaly

Read more: Why did Toronto abandon Drake?

### 1. Alice Munro falls from her pedestal

Book lovers were devastated twice in a few months with news of writer Alice Munro: first of her death in May at age 92, then again in July when her youngest daughter, Andrea Robin Skinner, revealed she had been sexually abused by Munro's long-time partner, Gerry Fremlin. When Munro found out about it, she stayed with him anyway. The news created headlines around the world accusing Munro of being a bad mother, and of readers who felt betrayed. I broke the story along with crime reporter Betsy Powell and witnessed its impact first-hand. Munro has always been beloved by readers, particularly for revealing the darkness that lurks in the lives of girls and women. Andrea changed the narrative around sexual abuse by taking control and telling her own story. She inspired other survivors of sexual abuse, and sent scholars around the world to rethink their approach to her mother's work. - Deborah Dundas

Read more: My stepfather sexually abused me when I was a child. My mother, Alice Munro, chose to stay with him

**Load-Date:** December 24, 2024



## 2024 A year in a word / n.

Financial Times (London, England)

December 24, 2024 Tuesday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2024 The Financial Times Limited All Rights Reserved



**Section:** BUSINESS; OPINION, COLUMNS; Pg. 21

**Length:** 312 words

### **Body**

---

**Slop** (noun) a brain-rotting vision of our artificially generated future Weird pictures of a slimy pink Jesus made out of prawns were probably not what OpenAI had in mind when it warned artificial intelligence could destroy civilisation. But this is what happens when you give new tech to the public and tell them they can make whatever they like. Two years into the generative **AI** revolution, we have arrived at the era of **slop**.

The proliferation of synthetic, low-grade content like Shrimp Jesus is mostly deliberate, designed for commercial or engagement reasons. In March, Stanford and Georgetown University researchers found Facebook's algorithm had in effect been hijacked by spammy content from text-to-image models like Dall-E and Midjourney. The "Insane Facebook **AI slop**" account on X has kept a running tally. A favourite prior to the US election showed Donald Trump manfully rescuing kittens.

But **slop** may also be the unintended consequence of **AI** models trained on **AI**-generated texts - a form of data set inbreeding. whose unfortunate spawn has been compared to the House of Habsburg.

Accelerationists will tell you this is just a bump in the road on the way to exciting user-generated **AI** content. San Francisco start-up Fable Studio has announced a Netflix-style platform for **AI** films. Spotify chief executive Daniel Ek says people can share "an incredible amount of content" on the music service now the cost of making music is near zero.

The question is whether quality controls will nosedive with the cost of creation. Note **slop**'s alliteration with spam - another form of easily distributed online nonsense.

2024 A year in a word / n.

Watermarks would help combat this. Over time, sloppier content may die naturally, starved of attention. Alternatively, zero-cost, zero-effort content will destroy information sharing and online trust for good. Shrimp Jesus could be just the start. Elaine Moore

**Load-Date:** December 23, 2024

---

End of Document

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?



## [The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?](#)

standard.co.uk

December 12, 2024 Thursday 4:33 PM EST

Copyright 2024 Evening Standard Limited All Rights Reserved

London  
**Evening  
Standard**

**Section:** RETAIL INDUSTRY NEWS, Beverages industry news, Mobile industry news, Tesco news, Coca-Cola Company news & UK BUSINESS NEWS

**Length:** 3257 words

**Byline:** India Block and Vicky Jessop

### **Body**

---

Bonfire Night has been and gone, which means only one thing: it's time for the festive deluge to begin.

[Christmas adverts](#) have long been a staple of British festive culture. Who can forget those early [John Lewis](#) ads, which reduced us all to tears from the comfort of our sofas? Or the arrival of the Coca-Cola truck on screens every year?

With ads getting fancier, more expensive and more numerous than ever before, what we need is a way to tell the turkeys from the gold-plated [Christmas](#) stars.

Fortunately, that's what you're reading. Without further ado, here's our list of the best Christmas ads so far this year, in ascending order - with more to be added as they come out.

#### **Coca Cola**

The Coca Cola Christmas missive is always somewhat formulaic, with the branded trucks driving fizzy drinks through the snow to the tune of Holidays Are Coming. It's been roughly the same since 1995. But this year there's something... off about it.

That's because this year's advert was created with generative **AI**. If the smiles look fixed and freaky and the hands truly odd, it's because they were hallucinated out of some computer. The polar bears are a particularly ironic touch, given that energy-hungry data servers required to make this ad probably directly contributed to melting ice caps.

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

Coca Cola has been embracing generative **AI** for a while. Last year the company launched Create Real Magic **AI**, a collaboration with OpenAI and Bain & Company that uploaded all the festive Coca Cola assets for people to play around with. But this year's fully **AI** advert has gone down like a lead balloon with viewers. Turns out people don't want to be served **AI slop** for Christmas.

Coca Cola did at least get the permission from real actors to use their likenesses, but that's a far cry from actually casting and paying human professionals. Plus Santa doesn't get his usual starring role, always staying out of shot. Probably because the **AI** made him look like some kind of eldritch horror.

## Argos

It is a truth universally acknowledged that you would only wish for a noisy, light-up toy to end up under the tree for your worst enemy's child.

[Argos](#) has decided to give every parent of small boys the Christmas from hell this year, with its festive promo slot dedicated to an extremely loud plastic T-Rex - Chad Valley Trevor Talk Back Dino to give him his full title.

The Rockstar TV slot begins with a CGI Trevor, aka Trev, stood on a mountain of amps, slamming on his guitar to the chorus of 20th Century Boy by T. Rex. But wait, it's all a dream! Luckily for aspiring noisemaker Trev, his pal Connie has got him a nice branded Marshall speaker for Christmas. It's a sort of sweet message about, I don't know, fostering children's imaginations. But mainly the message from Argos this Christmas is: buy your children these toys. [Adverts](#) are, after all, expressly here to sell you things.

With her blond hair and huge, vacant eyes Connie recalls the homicidal **AI**-powered doll from M3GAN, so perhaps it is a blessing that she is entirely analog. But boys getting to be noisy rockstars and girls getting to be silent fashion plates is something of a 20th-century idea of what it is to be a boy or a girl. Also, if you're going to invoke bisexual icon Mark Bolan - Elton John's "perfect pop star" - where are the feather boas and slinky outfits? Disappointing.

## M&S Food

Tune in to see Dawn French get a Cinderella makeover, Christmas-style. A bedraggled French remembers she's expecting festive guests, but - oh no! - she's not ready to receive them, and the house is a mess. No worries: a slightly alarming living Christmas decoration in the shape of a fairy (also played by herself, a la Inside John Malkovich) has come to sort things out for her.

It looks gorgeous - all crackling fires and jewel-toned furniture. But it's also hard to not to feel that French has sold out somehow, acting feebly distressed and then thrilled as the house is magicked into a festive wonderland. A cry of "pork pies!" at the end as she gazes at the [M&S](#) spread on the table is cringe-worthy. National treasure maybe; festive treasure, maybe not.

## Asda

Are gnomes traditionally festive? I would argue not (in fact, they're spectacularly creepy. Those blank cheery stares!), but Asda seems to be making a one-supermarket case for incorporating them into the traditional Christmas fare with this year's ad.

They're not especially successful. Apropos of nothing in particular, we open with two colleagues bemoaning the fact that snow has closed off the roads back home to Sheffield. They have vaguely northern accents, but who knows how far away Sheffield is. They could be in London, for all we know. Also apropos of nothing, one of them is making gnome puns to cheer his colleague up. So far, it's giving less Christmas, more the overnight shift from hell.

And it's about to get worse, because soon an army of gnomes is descending upon the store to help get things ready for the festive season. Gnomes are icing the cakes, gnomes are dancing in the aisles. And that's it, that's the ad. Examine your mince pies and roast turkey carefully this year for signs of tiny gnome fingers on them. But then



The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

again, given that searches for gnomes have spiked by 1572% on the Asda website since the ad came out, perhaps the UK is a nation of gnomeophiles. Food for thought?

### **M&S Clothing and Home**

For this year's Christmas ad, M&S seem to have veered off the 'festive' route and instead taken their inspiration from a perfume ad. The end result manages to feel both weakly festive and utterly soulless.

Our hero is a young girl, who seems to be enduring the family Christmas of everybody's nightmares: nobody's chatting. People are staring blankly at the wall. The tree lights aren't even on, for god's sake. But that's all about to change when she encounters a magical snowglobe which, with a few shakes, transforms the house into an all-singing, all-dancing festive extravaganza.

That's the idea, anyway. The reality is a bit more hit and miss. The house itself is curated to within an inch of its life but looks like nobody lives in it. Where's the festive clutter; the cosiness? Nobody talks; everybody looks manically cheerful. The music is bland in the extreme. One to skip.

### **Boots**

As anybody who's ever watched Bridgerton knows, Adjoa Andoh's presence makes anything ten times better. So it proves in the [Boots Christmas ad](#), which casts her as Mrs Claus, and her Santa as a bit of a hopeless layabout. Look at him: there he is, sleeping in until the moment he has to go and deliver presents. Only problem: the sleigh is empty of festive gifts.

Fortunately Mrs Claus has the solution. In the blink of an eye, she whips up a 'werk-shop' for all the elves in her retinue to wrap the nation's presents (from [Boots](#), naturally) ahead of the big day.

Problematic gender roles aside (why is it that the woman does all the work for zero recognition, I ask??) the advert itself is harmless enough. A more overt acknowledgement of drag culture would be nice (and more importantly, fun) here, but it feels festive and jolly, and Andoh's little wink at the end sells the whole thing. I think I will have a No 7 lipstick for Christmas this year after all.

### **JD Sports**

How many celebs can you pack into one video? For JD Sports, the answer is: a lot. We get Maya Jama, we get Central Cee, we get Beta Squad and Paddy the Baddy. What are they doing? Not an awful lot, but the theme of this year's episode is family and there's certainly a lot of shots of people hanging out, either with their infant children, their friends or their loved ones. It's also soundtracked by Jamie xx's recent banger Wanna, which immediately gives it a lot of points, and the slightly grainy film quality gives the whole thing a rather timeless feel. Very sweet, even if there isn't a lot of action. But don't they look good in their Adidas merch.

### **Tesco**

Hmmn, how to stand out in a crowded Christmas ad market? If you're Tesco, the answer is: dial up the sweet treats by turning everything - from houses, lampshades and animals - into gingerbread. And why not?

Last year's Tesco ad turned people into trees and snowmen by dint of 'catching' the Christmas spirit. This time around, the Christmas spirit isn't transforming people (phew) but inanimate objects, which starts after a young man is given a box of gingerbread from his grandad on his way out of the house.

One bite in, and the world suddenly starts turning into baked goods. The houses are gingerbread, the trees are gingerbread. Even the stray foxes are gingerbread. It's a Christmas paradise, but as the sounds of Gorillaz's On Melancholy Hill inform us, all is not well in gingerbread-land. For our unnamed hero is grieving the loss of his grandmother, who (we deduce from the pictures on the fridge) loved Christmas too.

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

Of course, things end happily enough, with grandson and grandad making a gingerbread house (what else) together in her memory, but still, the message feels poignant. And the ad still leaves you with a sense of the warm and fuzzies, as well as a burning desire to buy a packet of gingerbread. And isn't that what the festive season is all about?

### **Vodafone**

Did you know the first-ever text message sent were the words 'Merry Christmas'? And while the Vodafone Christmas ad doesn't go so far as to incorporate that, there's certainly a heavy dose of nostalgia in their festive ad. The premise is simple but sweet: following people throughout the decades on the big day. The phones start massive (depending on how old you are, the nostalgia will hit at different parts), then turn into flip-phones. We get text slang - "What's a bbz?" a dad demands of his furious daughter - and then we wind up in the present day where grandma still can't use the camera right. Cute, simple, misty-eye-making.

### **TK Maxx**

We open on a storybook farm experiencing the kind of white Christmas that has only been seen four times since the Sixties, or so the Met Office reliably informs us. The creatively named Alpaca, Lil Goat, Duck and Hedgehog have all been decked out in fluffy sliders, a shiny puffer jacket, and a bumbag.

It's the kind of gently twee view of farming that seems to have come straight out of All Creatures Great and Small, with dry stone walls and retro tractors. The human cast, wearing box fresh clothes entirely inappropriate for a barnyard, are startled by the sight of the animals wearing clothes. But wait! It's not the clothes that prompt a double-take, it's the cost of such snazzy gear. Thankfully, you can "spoil your loved ones for less" if you shop at TK Maxx.

There's no attempt at tear-jerking here, the message is a simple one: buy your loved ones big name brands for cheap. It's a Christmas message for the cost-of-living crisis.

Plus, not only does Alpaca channel the Great British tradition of cute animals in human clothes, he could fill a looming hole in the cultural psyche. Now that Paddington is getting, dare we say it, a bit too cosy with Big Government following the passport fast-track scandal, Alpaca could be our new anthropomorphic folk hero/psychopomp. Bow down.

### **McDonalds**

As we edge towards 4pm sunsets, there's nothing like Christmas lights and a plan for dinner to cling to in the encroaching darkness. The McDonald's advert knows this and exploits it to maximum effect.

A tired couple with a car full of shopping and a long to-do list look forlornly out into the night. Lo, the glowing Golden Arches appear on the horizon, a modern star of Bethlehem. As they drive through the dark streets, homes suddenly light up in full LED glory, pulsing to the beat of Benny Benassi's Satisfaction.

There is something so undeniably cheery about a bonkers amount of Christmas lights on a house. In Iceland, the story goes that after the 2008 financial crash people were encouraged to keep their lights up all through the winter to keep morale up. Although, if your neighbours put a moonwalking neon purple Grimace on their front lawn tonight, you'd probably call the council.

Satisfaction is a clever tune to pick, subliminally reminding you that you can indeed satisfy your cravings for fries and a McFlurry with very little effort. This ad spot can't hold a candle to the pure horniness of Benassi's original 2002 music video, with its oiled up hotties demonstrating power tools, but it does make you want a McDonalds.

### **Morrisons**

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

[Morrisons](#) wanted feel-good, and this cheerful little number has it in spades. There's something delightfully British in the surreal vision of a choir of well-used oven gloves serenading a Turkey dinner. Before Peppa Pig and Paw Patrol achieved world dominance, we were all raised on a diet of lightly weird puppets.

Musicals are perhaps more controversial, given a slew of recent big budget Hollywood films that have done their best to hide their sing-song elements. Thankfully, this is side steps the uncanny valley of Cats and barrels headfirst towards the land of Muppets Christmas Carol - universally and uncontroversially beloved. Credit to Australian filmmaker Michael Gracey, who gave us The Greatest Showman and is about to tackle a Robbie Williams biopic with the singer played by an animated monkey. There's no cameo from Hugh Jackman (more's the pity) but there are moments that recall scenes from Beauty and the Beast.

As anyone who has cooked a Christmas roast - something that involves a lot of food maths around oven timings - the humble heat protective glove is the real MVP.

### **John Lewis**

Say the words John Lewis to anybody in the UK and chances are they'll think 'Christmas'.

For good reason. JL perfected the formula before it was even a formula: tear-jerking story, winsome musical cover, subtle branding. And this year, they're back - deliberately late, presumably in the interests of making a grand entrance - to show the rest of the market how it's done.

This year, they're going in hard with the product placement in a way they've not really done before. We start in a John Lewis store (gasp!) as one woman enters, presumably on Christmas eve. She's going through all the gifts on display in a desperate attempt to find something for her sister.

Nothing beckons, except suddenly the clothing rack has become a Narnia-like doorway into her own past. Along with her, we hop back and forth in time, meeting her sister at different stages of her life - but getting no closer to figuring out what it is she wants.

I won't lie: this bit gets properly emotional. Anybody who has a sibling can relate to that love/hate feeling. One moment, it's all hugs and laughter; the next there's a screaming match over who's borrowed or stolen something off the other.

Nice and sentimental stuff (and it looks gorgeous), though lacking the sense of escapism of previous years. It's easy to picture oneself in a John Lewis store - where are the hand-drawn animals or men living on the moon? Next year, more Venus flytraps please.

### **Sainsbury's**

You think that you have become inured to the Christmas-advert-industrial complex's attempts to move you. Your heart is hardened to adorable storybook characters going on a journey, tear ducts stay bone dry at melancholy covers of pop songs.

Then a supermarket sneaks up and bops you over the head with a nostalgia-bomb so targeted you wonder if the ad execs have been personally mining your own childhood for content.

Enter the Big Friendly Giant or BFG, an animated imagining of Roald Dahl's overlarge purveyor of nice dreams. Resigned to another Christmas of disgusting snozzcumpers (the BFG having canonically forsworn eating humans), he ventures to Sainsbury's in an attempt to find a more palatable spread (still not humans, he remains friendly at all times).

This is no CGI-heavy, green screen cop-out. You can almost feel the ground shake as the BFG lopez across the landscape. The creative team used puppets and scale sets to create genuine interaction between Sophie and a fictional giant. It doesn't try to overly smooth over the seams either, giving everything an almost stop-motion feel.

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

It's a warm tale full of good old-fashioned magic, achieving more in a tight advert than Steven Spielberg managed in his underwhelming BFG adaptation in 2016. Consider my cold, cold heart warmed. Just don't make me look at those gross snozzcumbers again.

## Barbour

In a market that is already becoming oversaturated with Christmas adverts, gosh darn it if Barbour's don't conjure up the warm and fuzzies every time they come on.

The reason, of course, is the brand's collab with Shaun the Sheep, who took centre stage for last year's ad and (because Barbour and Aardman both know a good thing when they see it) is back for more.

This time around, Shaun's shenanigans are slightly less disaster prone. Not for Shaun the stress of repairing the Farmer's old Barbour jacket with combs, odd buttons and bits of wool (ie. the fare of the 2023 Christmas ad). This year, we return to Mossy Bottom Farm to find the flock being marshalled into a choir by Bitzer, the German Shepherd farm dog.

All they want is to sing a couple of Christmas carols, but there's a problem: it's so cold that the flock are freezing solid where they stand. Clearly climate change isn't a thing in this universe (when was the last time we had snow south of the Scottish border?) but fortunately, Bitzer has a solution.

Three guesses as to what it is, but of course, it's Barbour branded, and soon enough the flock are singing away merrily. And before the curtain falls, there's still time for a couple of gags at the expense of the hapless Farmer.

It's only a minute long, but such is the power of the Shaun brand that it's still a gorgeous little minute of stop-motion goodness. And don't worry: if the ad doesn't scratch that Wallace and Gromit itch, there's still [Vengeance Most Fowl! to look forward to later this year](#).

## And the winner is... Waitrose

A stacked cast, a cosy mystery surrounding a missing dessert, and a daring cliffhanger make the [Waitrose](#) Christmas advert a winner on all fronts.

It's [Christmas](#) day and tensions are already high when there is a blood-curdling scream. There's not been a murder (that would be too Scandi noir) but the centrepiece dessert has vanished from the fridge.

The missing pudding is not - shock horror - your trad figgy pud, but rather a new frankenpudding ([No.1 Waitrose Red Velvet Bauble Dessert](#) to give it its full title) offering that does admittedly look extra festive.

Enter the Detective, a grizzled [Matthew MacFadyen](#) who is Succession's chief wetwipe Tom Wambsgans to some, the ultimate Mr Darcy to others. He's determined to sniff out the culprit, but everyone has an alibi - and a motive.

Eryl Maynard, of Miss Marple fame, is the posh grandmother whose nose has been put out of joint at being relegated to the cranberry sauce. Sian Clifford, Fleabag's uptight sister Claire, is sneaking around with cheese dips while swearing she's been prepping the parsnips.

With such an array of experienced thespians there's stiff competition for scene-stealer status, but Fig has it in the bag. The fluffy moggy has nailed the poker face, rattling McFadyen's Detective. And yes, Fig is their real name, I asked. The backup cat they had on set was, serendipitously, called Pudding.

Detective mysteries have always been a mainstay of British culture, from Sherlock Holmes to Poirot, Miss Marple to Inspector Morse. Cosy crime is dominating the charts - just look at Richard Osman, presumably diving into his £10 million advances for the Thursday Murder Club like a literary Scrooge McDuck.

The best Christmas ads of 2024, ranked: from John Lewis to Coca Cola, who comes out on top?

[Waitrose](#) have been smart to ride the wave, but they pulled it off with so much aplomb and heart that it never feels mercenary.

**Load-Date:** December 12, 2024

---

End of Document



## FELINE FRENZY

The Straits Times (Singapore)

December 8, 2024 Sunday

Copyright 2024 SPH Media Holdings Pte. Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** FEATURES

**Length:** 1958 words

**Byline:** Teo Kai Xiang, FELINE FRENZY

### Body

---

Although the cat does not have a place in the Chinese Zodiac -- something often attributed in folklore to trickery by the rat -- 2024 has shaped up to be a year of feline frenzy.

Beyond Singaporeans' love of hawker fare and complaining, few things unite people here more than their affection for community cats, which have long been part of the urban landscape.

Designer Clara Koh, who co-wrote the book *Habitcat*, observes: "We feel that community cats 'soften' our hard urban environment. They are harmless creatures that mind their own business. In a way, they are living very harmoniously with humans."

*Habitcat*, published in 2014, is based on seven days of tracing the journey of community cats on foot, and explores the relationship between urban dwellers and Singapore's community cats. It was showcased at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2021.

It is fitting then that 2024 also saw the launch of the National Parks Board's (NParks) new Cat Management Framework, which legalised cat ownership in HDB flats.

Elsewhere, cats have played a role in important cultural moments -- as mascots, in big-screen appearances and even an unusual mention in the recent United States presidential election.

From the furore over "childless cat ladies" to the rise of AI-generated cat slop, here are six reasons 2024 was the year of the cat.

Felines make their mark on fictionThe year saw a series of high-profile kitty appearances on the big screen and bookstore bestsellers -- from the spy thriller *Argylle* to the Japanese bestseller *The Full Moon Coffee Shop* by Mai Mochizuki, inspired by myths of cats returning favours to those who show them affection.

Other cosy reads with cats on The Sunday Times' weekly bestsellers lists include *The Chibineko Kitchen* by Yuta Takahashi and *We'll Prescribe You A Cat* by Syou Ishida.

## FELINE FRENZY

Notably, a cat plays a central role in *A Quiet Place: Day One*, carried by Mexico-born actress Lupita Nyong'o as she desperately avoids alien creatures that hunt down even the smallest of noises.

This sparked a viral trend on TikTok, in which cat owners carried their pets while simulating frantic escapes, testing whether their cats could remain silent or inadvertently doom them.

Another film with a standout leading feline is the critically acclaimed Latvian animated adventure film *Flow*. Featuring a cast of animal characters surviving in a flooded apocalyptic world, it has no dialogue.

Critics have praised its use of visual and non-verbal cues to create a story that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers.

In Singapore, the film premiered at independent cinema The Projector on Dec 5.

Ms Worms Virk, The Projector's marketing manager, says: "Flow has been electrifying the festival circuit, gracing the likes of Cannes Film Festival and Annecy International Animated Film Festival. Now, our local audiences will get to witness its innovative animation and timeless cat-centric story."

Cat ownership legalised In September, Singapore launched the new Cat Management Framework, making it mandatory for all pet cats to be microchipped and licensed by the end of the two-year transition period in August 2026.

The move lifts a 34-year ban on cat ownership in HDB flats.

Ms Shelby Doshi, a cat behavioural consultant, says the framework is an important step forward for cats in Singapore: "It's a triumph for animal welfare, as we have been advocating for years to legalise cat ownership."

A photographer who goes by the name Nguan, with nearly 300,000 followers on Instagram, has spent the past 12 years documenting Singapore's community cats. He believes the lifting of the ban marks a fitting conclusion to his long-running project.

His photo series has drawn tens of thousands of "likes" on Instagram. Many of his photos depict cats in housing estates that no longer exist. "Community cats belong to no one and everyone. They have become such a distinctive part of our local landscape," he adds.

Dr Anna Wong, group director of the NParks' Animal & Veterinary Service (AVS), says some veterinary clinics have voluntarily started their own initiatives to offer discounted microchipping and sterilisation services for pet cats.

These efforts complement the AVS' work to support low-income households with free pet cat sterilisation and microchipping through the Pet Cat Sterilisation Support programme.

But some cat lovers say the new framework does not go far enough.

Ms Thenuga Vijakumar, president of the Cat Welfare Society, says that a lack of mandatory sterilisation remains a big issue. "The impact is that there will continue to be people with overpopulated homes, abandoning their animals or passing the burden of care to someone else."

The Cat Welfare Society raised \$1.2 million in 2023 towards its initiatives to offer free sterilisation, microchipping and support to lower-income households with cats -- a substantial sum necessary due to the many cats in need in Singapore.

Meanwhile, Temasek Polytechnic student Alessandro Lange, 26, who volunteers with the local non-profit Trap Neuter Return project, is concerned about the cat abandonments he has seen while volunteering due to misinformation.

## FELINE FRENZY

While the new framework allows cat owners to have up to two cats if they live in an HDB flat, there is an exception for those who license their cats in the transition period leading up to 2026, who are allowed to keep all their existing cats if they can ensure their welfare.

Mr Lange hopes that more can be done to raise awareness of this, as well as resources available for low-cost sterilisation or free sterilisation for Community Health Assist Scheme (Chas) cardholders.

Cat-inspired establishments rise up Singapore is no stranger to cat cafes, but some establishments are taking feline appreciation in new directions.

One such establishment is the secretive speakeasy Cat Bite Club in Duxton Road, which one might recognise by the discrete symbol of a grinning cat by its entrance.

The bar has made a remarkable ascent to 54th place in the World's Best Bars list for 2024, just a year after it opened in 2023.

"Our cat is our mascot," says co-founder Jesse Vida, 37, who adds that the bar's name is also inspired by Alice In Wonderland's Cheshire Cat. "Although there are no other Alice In Wonderland tropes to our bar, that was the original inspiration -- that kind of naughty, playful, mysterious energy. Those are the vibes we want people to feel and embody when they're in our space."

Another cat-themed establishment, Fuzzies, opened in May in Arab Street and offers an unusual twist on the co-working space concept: kitty co-workers.

Mr Lim Khai Chong, 30, who co-founded the space with Ms Lynn Loh, 27, says: "Unlike many cat cafes, our cats came before Fuzzies was founded. Lynn and I adopted a number of cats at various times -- the cats at Fuzzies are all our pets to begin with."

As there was not enough space in their home to house all their kitties, they decided to create Fuzzies as another living space for them. "This has informed our design of Fuzzies, with the cats as the priority."

There are cat-exclusive spaces in Fuzzies which guests cannot enter, so the kitties have a safe space to escape to. Guests are not allowed to feed the cats to avoid them overeating and to ensure a healthy diet.

"As to why a co-working space -- if you had the opportunity to work at home with your kitties, you will understand," says Mr Lim. "The unexpected interruptions, the sudden jumps onto your keyboard -- all these little actions make your work day just a little less dreary."

"Childless cat ladies" sparks furore In 2021, American Senator J.D. Vance labelled some politicians as "a bunch of childless cat ladies who are miserable at their own lives and the choices that they've made, and so they want to make the rest of the country miserable too".

"It's just a basic fact -- you look at Kamala Harris, Pete Buttigieg, AOC -- the entire future of the Democrats is controlled by people without children," says Mr Vance, who is now the Vice-President-elect, referring to the US Vice-President and Transportation Secretary as well as Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez respectively. "And how does it make any sense that we've turned our country over to people who don't really have a direct stake in it"

When these comments resurfaced in July during the US presidential election, it was claws out from celebrities and politicians alike, including actress Jennifer Aniston and singer Taylor Swift.

The latter, a proud cat owner, later endorsed presidential candidate Harris on Instagram in a post signed, "Taylor Swift, Childless Cat Lady."

Cat behavioural consultant Ms Doshi believes this tension between parents and "pawrents" stems from a growing section of society who has chosen not to conform to traditional norms to settle down and have children.



## FELINE FRENZY

Herself a childless cat lady, she says: "We will do anything for our cats. Is that bad? If you can afford it and it makes you happy, why not?"

Banner year for cat-themed events The second edition of the Asia Cat Expo was held in 2024, which organisers Furflr say welcomed more than 20,000 attendees.

Furflr also previously organised Purrsa Malam, Singapore's first cat-themed night market, in August, and is holding the next Singapore Cat Festival on Dec 7 and 8 at Singapore Expo.

A Furflr spokesperson says: "The reception for Asia Cat Expo has been incredible. For the first edition last year, we were pleasantly surprised by the overwhelming turnout, with long queues that caught us off guard."

This meant having to expand the venue for the 2024 edition by moving it to the Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre.

"We've been organising activities for cats and cat lovers since 2018," says the spokesperson. "Over the years, we've noticed a growing interest and, by 2024, the cat community has become quite established."

Dr Tay Woo Chiao, who describes himself as an "obsessive cat daddy", attended the expo with his kittens Cottons and Cushions. The 37-year-old doctor says a highlight of the event was being able to give his cats a taste test of treat samples before committing to a purchase. "Because they are fussy. I have bought huge packets of freeze-dried food before, but they just didn't want it."

Are **AI**-generated cats the new Hello Kitty? It has also been a big year for cat mascots.

There was the first Doraemon Run in Singapore in November. Doraemon is a Japanese manga-originated blue robotic earless cat, known for pulling otherworldly gadgets out of its pouch.

Cat lover Teng Yu-Ching signed up for the run partly because of its adorable medal design, styled after Doraemon's bell collar. The 36-year-old sales manager says: "The run lived up to expectations, though most people there were really there for the theme and the merch."

Another cat icon, Hello Kitty, celebrated its 50th birthday in November. However, Sanrio, the company behind Hello Kitty, has long maintained that despite appearances, Hello Kitty is not a cat but a British schoolgirl named Kitty White.

These days, Hello Kitty is facing fierce competition from the likes of Mofusand -- a Japanese group of cats who dresses up in adorable costumes. In October, Uniqlo announced a new Mofusand collaboration for its graphic tees.

But the newest pop culture cat on the scene was not created by human hands. These **AI**-crafted felines -- many of them called "Chubby" -- have amassed millions of views on TikTok.

Artificial intelligence researchers note that these cats are part of a phenomenon known as "**AI slop**" -- low-quality content produced rapidly and en masse by **AI** tools.

With hundreds of accounts now dedicated to sharing stories about cats like Chubby online, it seems that even adorable cat pictures are not beyond **AI**'s reach.

## Graphic

---

Flow is an animated fantasy adventure film with no dialogue and features a cat making its way through a flooded apocalyptic world. PHOTO: THE PROJECTOR

FELINE FRENZY

**Load-Date:** December 7, 2024

---

End of Document

A less toxic, less chaotic alternative I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky



***A less toxic, less chaotic alternative; I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky***

The Toronto Star

December 1, 2024 Sunday

ONT Edition

Copyright 2024 Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. A16

**Length:** 1888 words

**Byline:** Richie Assaly Toronto Star

## Body

---

Never check your screen time. Like stepping on a scale, it's a habit that is unlikely to change your behaviour, but will cause you anxiety, or, in some cases, trigger a small existential crisis.

According to my iPhone, I spend an average of six hours and nine minutes looking at a screen each day, and that doesn't include my laptop. The majority of that time is spent on X, an app that apparently notifies me an average of 395 times a week. I also spend an obscene amount of time on Instagram and TikTok, in addition to the hours I spend on messaging apps such as Slack, WhatsApp and Signal.

In other words, the last thing I need in my life right now is another social media app. And yet, out of morbid curiosity - or perhaps a fear of missing out - I decided recently to sign up for Bluesky, a burgeoning social media platform that is commonly described as a less toxic, less chaotic alternative to X.

This felt a bit like a betrayal. For better and definitely for worse, I grew up on the app formerly known as Twitter, an app I have used more or less religiously for over a decade. As a university student involved in campus advocacy, it was an essential tool for persuasion and propaganda. As I entered the workplace, it became not only a place to forge new connections, but also my primary source for news. From 2017 to 2021, I worked at Twitter as a news curator, part of a small but mighty team that tackled misinformation and sought to make the platform a better place to consume media.

But like many thousands of X users, I had grown frustrated with what the app had become under the tenure of Elon Musk - namely, a cesspool of misinformation, harassment and hate speech; a media platform that inflates far-right political content over balanced journalism. Just this past week, in a blow to traditional media, Musk seemed to confirm that X's algorithm deprioritizes news content and posts that include external links.

Though I still rely on X for my daily intake of news, commentary and memes, I was drawn to - if a bit skeptical of - the prospect of a kinder, more polite online community.

A less toxic, less chaotic alternative I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky

Logging on to Bluesky for the first time felt a bit like walking into your apartment after a professional deep clean. The layout is the same, as are the appliances and furniture. But it just felt good to be there. I wanted to hang out.

On its surface, the app is almost identical to the old Twitter, down to its functionality and colour scheme. But gone, at least for now, is much of the noise - the casual racism, the bullying blue checks, the bitter, bad faith quarrelling.

Does this online space offer something fundamentally different or more healthy? Or is it just a slightly improved version of a fundamentally flawed and toxic idea; a slightly more efficient vehicle that still depends on burning fossil fuels as the earth hurtles toward destruction?

What is Bluesky?

Bluesky was created as an internal project at Twitter in 2019, when Jack Dorsey was still CEO. The app launched as its own company in 2021, with Jay Graber as CEO.

In the beginning, growth was meagre, but steady. Users initially needed an invite code to join the beta version, which was soon in competition with other Twitter alternatives.

But since the fall, the app has grown rapidly, surging from about nine million users in September to nearly 23 million by the end of November. Bluesky is also gaining traction with politicians: NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanche and Alberta NDP Leader Naheed Nenshi are among the early adoptees.

The great migration has been a challenge for Bluesky's small team, which is currently made up of just a couple of dozen employees. Earlier this, the platform experienced a temporary outage, which the company said was due to an external internet provider.

"They're basically flying the plane and building it at the same time," Philip Mai, the co-director of the Social Media Lab, a research institute at the Toronto Metropolitan University, told me.

What makes Bluesky different?

Mai, who has been following Bluesky's development since it launched, believes that app has several distinct advantages over both X and its other competitors.

First, Bluesky has a remarkably simple onboarding process. Unlike Mastodon, which required new users to navigate a convoluted web of servers to get started, Bluesky requires little more than an email account and a username. "It looks and feels more like old Twitter than anything else that's currently on the market," Mai said.

It's also surprisingly easy to find accounts that match your interests. In June, Bluesky introduced the "Starter Pack" feature, which allows users to curate a list of accounts that can be easily disseminated with friends.

Second, and more importantly, Bluesky gives users more autonomy and control over what appears on their timeline.

As anyone currently on X will tell you, the algorithm that determines your "For You" page can feel like a black box, one that increasingly surfaces toxic or bizarre content that seemingly has little to do with one's interests. In contrast, Bluesky allows users to choose which feeds - i.e. customized algorithms created by other users - appear in their app. For example, users can follow the "Toronto Raptors" feed, which includes all mentions of the Raptors, their players and their coaching staff. Or users can follow "Blacksky," which showcases posts by Black users and creators.

This simple idea - that people would rather have some input into what content they consume rather than have some shadowy algorithm shove posts from Musk's buddies at you - has become so popular that developers at Meta are already scrambling to create their own version of "custom feeds."

A less toxic, less chaotic alternative I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky

Finally, unlike X, Bluesky has a more decentralized approach to moderation, that empowers users to filter specific content from their feed (for example, I have muted any mention of "Jake Paul" or "Mr. Beast.") And perhaps most importantly, the app's moderation tools include a functioning block button, ensuring trolls or bad faith actors will never see your posts again. (In October, Musk announced that X's block function will now let blocked users see your posts, but not engage with them).

Why are some people leaving X?

Since Musk purchased Twitter back in 2022, the billionaire and self-styled "free speech" absolutist has gradually but fundamentally reshaped the platform. In the weeks following his takeover, he ordered mass layoffs that decimated the site's curation and moderation teams, and introduced a controversial new "verification" system that removed the blue checks that were used to identify public figures, health and policy experts, politicians and journalists, instead granting them to paying subscribers.

Over the next two years, Musk gradually introduced more changes that have effectively transformed X from the "internet's town square" into what can feel like a water hose of "doge" memes and bizarre advertisements that are increasingly indistinguishable from AI-slop.

Still, X remains a juggernaut - at the end of October, the platform boasted 335.7 million monthly active users, down from 368.4 million when Musk took over in 2022.

But for many, it was Musk's very public, very explicit effort to help elect Donald Trump as U.S. president - an effort that was rewarded with an influential position in the incoming administration - that finally forced them to abandon X.

"There are a lot of people who are taking a principled stance," Joanne McNeil, a writer, journalist and technology critic, said. "People are saying 'I don't want to be here, or have anything to do with Elon Musk.' "

Something new?

Or more of the same?

Since the Great Bluesky Migration began, it has also generated plenty of skepticism: What if Bluesky just becomes an echo chamber for the left? What happens when the app needs to monetize as it scales up? What if Bluesky just becomes a sanitized version of X, one that lacks the chaotic fun and conflict that drew us there in the first place?

I asked a few other media folks to see how they are faring. "I really like Bluesky," Eric Wickham, an independent journalist and podcast producer in Toronto, said. "I find that it's very reminiscent of the old Twitter, before people's feeds just got absolutely inundated with the worst people in the world screaming at you all the time."

Wickham joined Bluesky last June, but says that the app's benefits only came into focus over the past weeks, when the results of the U.S. election caused an explosion in the app's popularity. As Wickham's followers ballooned, he found himself forging new professional connections and disseminating his work to a broader audience.

Craig Jenkins, a Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic, joined Bluesky in 2023, but only started using the app in earnest in October to "have a break from bad faith takes and misinfo."

"So far, no one has dragged any of my threads into a fight to disprove points I never even made and no one's fans have shown up accusing me of harbouring a vendetta," Jenkins said. "But I do get that whatever peace I feel is illusory and temporary, because I did see someone get torched for not liking the Kendrick album the night it dropped."

Some are deeply suspicious of the hype.

"I think everyone's kind of jumping the gun about it being this amazing, safe, healthy place," Sarah Hagi, a Toronto freelance writer, told me. As someone who has battled in the social media trenches for years, Hagi sees the

A less toxic, less chaotic alternative I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've been trying Bluesky

problem not in terms of app A versus app B, but as our underlying reliance on social media to access news, to communicate and to understand each other.

"There is no such thing as a good tech platform, and there never will be," she said. "Elon Musk purchased Twitter and it got objectively worse, but the problems of Twitter didn't start with him."

Hagi also believes that Bluesky has a long way to go before it reaches the critical mass that made Twitter useful. "(X) is how I find out what's happening with people in Gaza, it's how I followed Black Lives Matter protests. That's how we stayed connected. And I don't think it was because Twitter was 'good' - it's just what people around the world were using, and I think it will take a long time for Bluesky to get to that level."

Is Bluesky the future?

Bluesky is still in its early stages. Currently, there are no subscriber options nor are there any ads, but that is bound to change as the platform scales up. "When companies scale, they need to monetize," McNeil said. "Bluesky could very quickly become a totally different experience."

She believes X's decline is evidence of a broader transition away from "broadcast social media at scale."

"I suspect that we're going to be moving to a different kind of community online," she explained. "If you want to have this virtual water cooler, you can do that in a group chat with your friends. If you're a journalist who needs to get your stories out, there are podcasts or newsletters."

"I'm not exactly sure what it will look like, but I don't necessarily think that Bluesky is the answer."

Two weeks after joining Bluesky, I still find myself hopelessly addicted to X. Only now, there is yet another app on my iPhone, another VLT-like source of dopamine and mindless scrolling. Maybe, if it continues to grow, I will finally ditch X for good, but it's unclear how or if that would change much.

**Load-Date:** December 1, 2024

I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there



## *I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there*

thestar.com

December 1, 2024 Sunday

Final Edition

Copyright 2024 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS/CANADA; Pg. 1

**Length:** 2201 words

### **Body**

---

Never check your screen time. Like stepping on a scale, it's a habit that is unlikely to change your behaviour, but will cause you anxiety, or, in some cases, trigger a small existential crisis.

According to my iPhone, I spend an average of six hours and nine minutes looking at a screen each day, and that doesn't include my laptop. The majority of that time is spent on X, an app that apparently notifies me an average of 395 times a week. I also spend an obscene amount of time on Instagram and TikTok, in addition to the hours I spend on messaging apps such as Slack, WhatsApp and Signal.

In other words, the last thing I need in my life right now is another social media app. And yet, out of morbid curiosity - or perhaps a fear of missing out - I decided recently to sign up for Bluesky, a burgeoning social media platform that is commonly described as a less toxic, less chaotic alternative to X.

This felt a bit like a betrayal. For better and definitely for worse, I grew up on the app formerly known as Twitter, an app I have used more or less religiously for over a decade. As a university student involved in campus advocacy, it was an essential tool for persuasion and propaganda. As I entered the workplace, it became not only a place to forge new connections, but also my primary source for news. From 2017 to 2021, I worked at Twitter as a news curator, part of a small but mighty team that tackled misinformation and sought to make the platform a better place to consume media.

But like many thousands of X users, I had grown frustrated with what the app had become under the tenure of Elon Musk - namely, a cesspool of misinformation, harassment and hate speech; a media platform that inflates far-right political content over balanced journalism. Just this week, in a blow to traditional media, Musk seemed to confirm that X's algorithm deprioritizes news content and posts that include external links.

Though I still rely on X for my daily intake of news, commentary and memes, I was drawn to - if a bit skeptical of - the prospect of a kinder, more polite online community.

Logging on to Bluesky for the first time felt a bit like walking into your apartment after a professional deep clean. The layout is the same, as are the appliances and furniture. But it just felt good to be there. I wanted to hang out.

I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there

On its surface, the app is almost identical to the old Twitter, down to its functionality and colour scheme. But gone, at least for now, is much of the noise - the casual racism, the bullying blue checks, the bitter, bad faith quarrelling.

Does this new online space offer something fundamentally different or more healthy? Or is it just a slightly improved version of a fundamentally flawed and toxic idea; a slightly more efficient vehicle that still depends on burning fossil fuels as the earth hurtles toward destruction?

What is Bluesky? Bluesky was created as an internal project at Twitter in 2019, when Jack Dorsey was still CEO. The app launched as its own company in 2021, with Jay Graber as CEO.

In the beginning, growth was meagre, but steady. Users initially needed an invite code to join the beta version, which was soon in competition with other Twitter alternatives.

But since the fall, the app has grown rapidly, surging from about nine million users in September to nearly 23 million by the end of November. Bluesky is also gaining traction with politicians: NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanche and Alberta NDP Leader Naheed Nenshi are among the early adoptees.

The great migration has been a challenge for Bluesky's small team, which is currently made up of just a couple of dozen employees. Earlier this, the platform experienced a temporary outage, which the company said was due to an external internet provider.

"They're basically flying the plane and building it at the same time," Philip Mai, the co-director of the Social Media Lab, a research institute at the Toronto Metropolitan University, told me.

What makes Bluesky different? Mai, who has been following Bluesky's development since it launched, believes that app has several distinct advantages over both X and its other competitors.

First, Bluesky has a remarkably simple onboarding process. Unlike Mastodon, which required new users to navigate a convoluted web of servers to get started, Bluesky requires little more than an email account and a username. "It looks and feels more like old Twitter than anything else that's currently on the market," Mai said.

It's also surprisingly easy to find accounts that match your interests. In June, Bluesky introduced the "Starter Pack" feature, which allows users to curate a list of accounts that can be easily disseminated with friends. (For example, here is a starter pack of "Canadians in Media.")

Second, and more importantly, Bluesky gives users more autonomy and control over what appears on their timeline.

As anyone currently on X will tell you, the algorithm that determines your "For You" page can feel like a black box, one that increasingly surfaces toxic or bizarre content that seemingly has little to do with one's interests. In contrast, Bluesky allows users to choose which feeds - i.e. customized algorithms created by other users - appear in their app. For example, users can follow the "Toronto Raptors" feed, which includes all mentions of the Raptors, their players and their coaching staff. Or users can follow "Blacksky," which showcases posts by Black users and creators.

This simple idea - that people would rather have some input into what content they consume rather than have some shadowy algorithm shove posts from Musk's buddies at you - has become so popular that developers at Meta are already scrambling to create their own version of "custom feeds."

Finally, unlike X, Bluesky has a more decentralized approach to moderation, that empowers users to filter specific content from their feed (for example, I have muted any mention of "Jake Paul" or "Mr. Beast.") And perhaps most importantly, the app's moderation tools include a functioning block button, ensuring trolls or bad faith actors will never see your posts again. (In October, Musk announced that X's block function will now let blocked users see your posts, but not engage with them).



I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there

Jonathan Goldsbie, a Toronto journalist, says he likes to think of X as the America of social media networks, which makes Bluesky like Canada: "unnervingly similar, especially at first glance, but also noticeably less unpleasant - with the caveat that because it has a fraction of the people, everything happening there feels less consequential."

Why are some people leaving X? Since Musk purchased Twitter back in 2022, the billionaire and self-styled "free speech" absolutist has gradually but fundamentally reshaped the platform. In the weeks following his takeover, he ordered mass layoffs that decimated the site's curation and moderation teams, and introduced a controversial new "verification" system that removed the blue checks that were used to identify public figures, health and policy experts, politicians and journalists, instead granting them to paying subscribers.

Over the next two years, Musk gradually introduced more changes that have effectively transformed X from the "internet's town square" into what can feel like a water hose of "doge" memes and bizarre advertisements that are increasingly indistinguishable from AI-slop.

Still, X remains a juggernaut - at the end of October, the platform boasted 335.7 million monthly active users, down from 368.4 million when Musk took over in 2022.

But for many, it was Musk's very public, very explicit effort to help elect Donald Trump as U.S. president - an effort that was rewarded with an influential position in the incoming administration - that finally forced them to abandon X.

"I'm leaving Twitter," author Stephen King posted on Nov. 14, joining a long list of celebrities such as Guillermo del Toro and Mark Hamill. "Tried to stay, but the atmosphere has just become too toxic." The Guardian also joined the exodus, citing the ubiquity of far-right conspiracy theories and racism.

"There are a lot of people who are taking a principled stance," Joanne McNeil, a writer, journalist and technology critic, told the Star. She compared the fact that some are moving away from X to a recent controversy at the Washington Post, which lost more than 250,000 subscribers in October after announcing that it would not endorse a candidate for president. "People are saying 'I don't want to be here, or have anything to do with Elon Musk.'"

Mai agrees with McNeil's assessment. "For a long time, people hung on simply because they didn't have a good alternative ... but now there's a lifeboat to jump into."

Something new? Or more of the same? Since the Great Bluesky Migration began, it has also generated plenty of skepticism: What if Bluesky just becomes an echo chamber for the left? What happens when the app needs to monetize as it scales up? What if Bluesky just becomes a sanitized version of X, one that lacks the chaotic fun and conflict that drew us there in the first place?

I asked a few other media folks to see how they are faring.

"I really like Bluesky," Eric Wickham, an independent journalist and podcast producer in Toronto told me. "I find that it's very reminiscent of the old Twitter, before people's feeds just got absolutely inundated with the worst people in the world screaming at you all the time."

Wickham joined Bluesky last June, but says that the app's benefits only came into focus over the past weeks, when the results of the U.S. election caused an explosion in the app's popularity. As Wickham's followers ballooned, he found himself forging new professional connections and disseminating his work to a broader audience.

"I can post my jokes and my memes there, but I can also post my content and it doesn't seem to get buried in the same way that it does on X," he said.

Craig Jenkins, a Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic, joined Bluesky in 2023, but only started using the app in earnest in October to "have a break from bad faith takes and misinfo."

"So far, no one has dragged any of my threads into a fight to disprove points I never even made and no one's fans have shown up accusing me of harbouring a vendetta," Jenkins told the Star. "But I do get that whatever peace I

I grew up on Twitter. But with a new Trump era on the horizon, I've turned to Bluesky. Here's what I found there feel is illusory and temporary, because I did see someone get torched for not liking the Kendrick album the night it dropped."

Some are deeply suspicious of the hype.

"I think everyone's kind of jumping the gun about it being this amazing, safe, healthy place," Sarah Hagi, a Toronto freelance writer, told me. As someone who has battled in the social media trenches for years, Hagi sees the problem not in terms of app A versus app B, but as our underlying reliance on social media to access news, to communicate and to understand each other.

"There is no such thing as a good tech platform, and there never will be," she said. "Elon Musk purchased Twitter and it got objectively worse, but the problems of Twitter didn't start with him."

Hagi also believes that Bluesky has a long way to go before it reaches the critical mass that made Twitter useful.

"(X) is how I find out what's happening with people in Gaza, it's how I followed Black Lives Matter protests. That's how we stayed connected. And I don't think it was because Twitter was 'good' - it's just what people around the world were using, and I think it will take a long time for Bluesky to get to that level."

Is Bluesky the future? Bluesky is still in its early stages. Currently, there are no subscriber options nor are there any ads, but that is bound to change as the platform scales up.

"When companies scale, they need to monetize," McNeil said. "Bluesky could very quickly become a totally different experience."

McNeil also warns against being swept up in the hype. "I don't necessarily think that the numbers we are seeing now are proof that it's sustainable," she added, pointing out the fact that rebuilding an audience and community on sites such as Bluesky can feel overwhelming, and require a ton of energy she's not sure users possess.

Taking an even wider view, McNeil believes that X's decline is evidence of a broader transition away from "broadcast social media at scale."

"I suspect that we're going to be moving to a different kind of community online," she explained. "If you want to have this virtual water cooler, you can do that in a group chat with your friends. If you're a journalist who needs to get your stories out, there are podcasts or newsletters.

"I'm not exactly sure what it will look like, but I don't necessarily think that Bluesky is the answer."

Indeed, the effects of a deep clean only last so long. Over time, the dust gathers and the grime builds up. Suddenly, the house feels dirty again.

Two weeks after joining Bluesky, I still find myself hopelessly addicted to X. Only now, there is yet another app on my iPhone, another VLT-like source of dopamine and mindless scrolling. Maybe, if it continues to grow, I will finally ditch X for good, but it's unclear how or if that would change much.

For Hagi, the solution to the problem of online spaces is far simpler. "Turn off your computer."

**Load-Date:** December 1, 2024



## [Demure? Brain rot? Oxford announces shortlist for 2024 Word of the Year: Cast your vote](#)

USA Today Online

November 14, 2024 6:25 PM EST

Copyright 2024 Gannett Media Corp All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 634 words

### **Body**

---

In a year of nonstop news and cultural moments, what word will capture the tone of 2024?

[Oxford University Press](#) has narrowed the list down to six words, it announced Thursday, and you can help choose which one will be the winner.

With a rollercoaster of a [presidential election](#), the [Paris Olympics](#), a [total solar eclipse](#), multiple [hurricanes](#) and a continued rotation of [TikTok trends](#), language has adapted to describe this moment in time.

"Since 2004, we've aimed to provide a window into language and cultural change through the Oxford Word of the Year," president of Oxford Languages Casper Grathwohl said in an emailed statement. "The 2024 shortlist represents a snapshot of the topics that have caught our interest and imagination and kept us talking."

The following words were found by Oxford University Press experts to have gained a spike in usage and prominence this year. The shortlist definitions were provided by Oxford.

[Cast your vote here](#). Voting remains open until Thursday, Nov. 28. The winner will be announced on Dec. 2.

**2023 has got 'rizz':** [Oxford's previous Word of the Year](#)

### **Lore**

Noun: "A body of (supposed) facts, background information, and anecdotes relating to someone or something, regarded as knowledge required for full understanding or informed discussion of the subject in question."

[@haleyybaylee](#)

I've seen so many videos talking about my history... some accurate, some aren't... So lets talk my life journey to where I am today ♥️

[🎧 original sound - haleyybaylee](#)

### **Brain rot**

Demure? Brain rot? Oxford announces shortlist for 2024 Word of the Year: Cast your vote

Noun: "Supposed deterioration of a person's mental or intellectual state, especially viewed as the result of overconsumption of material (now particularly online content) considered to be trivial or unchallenging. Also: something characterized as likely to lead to such deterioration."

[@heidsbecker](#)

Part 3!!! Brainrot bestie on another date

[🎧 original sound - Heidi Becker](#)

## Dynamic pricing

Noun: "The practice of varying the price for a product or service to reflect changing market conditions; in particular, the charging of a higher price at a time of greater demand."

**Dynamic pricing:** [Wendy's to test out dynamic pricing model as soon as next year, menu prices to fluctuate](#)

## Demure

Adjective: "Of a person: reserved or restrained in appearance or behavior. Of clothing: not showy, ostentatious, or overly revealing."

**Demure:** [Brat summer is almost over. Get ready for 'demure' fall, a new viral TikTok trend.](#)

## Slop

Noun: "Art, writing, or other content generated using artificial intelligence, shared and distributed online in an indiscriminate or intrusive way, and characterized as being of low quality, inauthentic, or inaccurate."

**Fighting misinformation:** [How to keep from falling for fake news videos](#)

[pic.twitter.com/siMaFkJRDG](https://pic.twitter.com/siMaFkJRDG)

— Insane Facebook **AI slop** (@FacebookAIslop)

[November 3, 2024](#)

## Romantasy

Noun: "A genre of fiction combining elements of romantic fiction and fantasy, typically featuring themes of magic, the supernatural, or adventure alongside a central romantic storyline."

**Romantasy recommendations:** [Spicy fantasy books to read after 'A Court of Thorns and Roses'](#)

## 2023 words of the year

In 2023, Oxford University Press named ["rizz,"](#) understood as short for "charisma" as the word of the year.

It was a far cry from [Dictionary.com, which chose "hallucinate,"](#) a word that describes false information produced by artificial intelligence, as the 2023 word of the year.

## 2024 word of the year from Collins English Dictionary

This year, [Collins English Dictionary](#) already pronounced "brat" as its 2024 word of the year.

Demure? Brain rot? Oxford announces shortlist for 2024 Word of the Year: Cast your vote

*Contributing: Greta Cross*

*Kinsey Crowley is a trending news reporter at USA TODAY. Reach her at k [crowley@gannett.com](mailto:crowley@gannett.com) , and follow her on X and TikTok @kinseycrowley.*

*This article originally appeared on USA TODAY: [Demure? Brain rot? Oxford announces shortlist for 2024 Word of the Year: Cast your vote](#)*

**Load-Date:** November 14, 2024

---

End of Document



## [Fake AI 'slop' posts about Elon Musk surge on Facebook after election](#)

The Independent (United Kingdom)

November 13, 2024 Wednesday 11:15 PM EST

Copyright 2024 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved



**Section:** CYBERCULTURE NEWS, Facebook news & SOCIAL NETWORKS NEWS

**Length:** 427 words

**Byline:** Josh Marcus

### **Body**

---

Numerous examples of [AI-generated "slop"](#) content falsely claiming Elon Musk has invented a variety of new sci-fi technologies are flooding across Facebook after the billionaire helped elect [Donald Trump to the White House](#).

The posts claim Musk has invented everything from a "water engine" to a \$6,999 tiny house on wheels to *Iron Man*-style armor to a piloted flying saucer, with many tracing back to pages in the Philippines and Vietnam, [according to an analysis from tech journalism site 404 Media](#).

Numerous Facebook users appear to be interacting with the posts and believing their claims, which in some cases enable the "[slop](#)" creators to earn bonuses as part of the platform's creator program.

"It appears there was a spike in public interest for Elon Musk around the time of the U.S. presidential election, coinciding with the timing of some of these posts," McKenzie Sadeghi, who studies [AI](#) at NewsGuard, told the site. "I'm not aware of the full extent/time frame of this campaign but it is possible that these accounts were attempting to capitalize on this surge in public interest by pumping out clickbait-like, [AI](#)-generated content of Musk, and in some cases, directing users to find an article about Musk in the pinned comment in an effort to bypass Facebook's algorithmic limitations on external links."

While the claims in these posts are untrue, they come as the real, non-[AI](#) Musk has leaned into the language and aesthetics of the internet and social media as part of his alliance with Donald Trump.

Musk has been tapped to [head a new Department of Government Efficiency](#) recommending billions in federal spending cuts. The agency, DOGE for short, takes its name from the "doge" meme, which has mutated from a popularly shared image of a Shiba Inu dog, to the Dogecoin cryptocurrency, to a major influence over the Trump administration.

All actions of the Department of Government Efficiency will be posted online for maximum transparency.

## Fake AI 'slop' posts about Elon Musk surge on Facebook after election

Anytime the public thinks we are cutting something important or not cutting something wasteful, just let us know!

We will also have a leaderboard for most insanely dumb... <https://t.co/1c0bAlxmY0>

- Elon Musk (@elonmusk)

[November 13, 2024](#)

Musk has promised the DOGE will use the web to crowdsource ideas on spending cuts and post an online leaderboard with the "most insanely dumb spending of your tax dollars."

The billionaire has also been an outspoken [advocate for online election betting using cryptocurrency](#), which emerged as a popular, social media-inflected alternative means of forecasting the 2024 election.

**Load-Date:** November 14, 2024

---

End of Document

The images of Spain 's floods weren't created by AI. The trouble is, people think they were



## *The images of Spain's floods weren't created by AI. The trouble is, people think they were*

The Observer (London)

November 9, 2024 Saturday 4:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Guardian Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

# TheObserver

**Section:** OPINION; Version:1

**Length:** 851 words

**Byline:** John Naughton

**Highlight:** The rapid growth of 'AI slop' – content created by artificial tools – is starting to warp our perception of what is, or could be, real

## Body

---

My eye was caught by a striking photograph in the most recent edition of Charles Arthur's Substack newsletter [Social Warming](#). It shows a narrow street in the aftermath of the ["rain bomb" that devastated the region](#) of Valencia in Spain. A year's worth of rain fell in a single day, and in some towns more than 490 litres a square metre fell in eight hours. Water is very heavy, so if there's a gradient it will flow downhill with the kind of force that can pick up a heavy SUV and toss it around like a toy. And if it channels down a narrow urban street, it will throw parked cars around like King Kong in a bad mood.

The photograph in Arthur's article showed what had happened in a particular street. Taken with a telephoto lens from an upper storey of a building, it showed a chaotic and almost surreal scene: about 70 vehicles of all sizes jumbled up and scattered at crazy angles along the length of the street.

It was an astonishing image which really stopped me in my tracks. Not surprisingly, it also went viral on social media. And then came the reaction: "AI image, fake news." The photograph was so vivid, so uncannily sharp and unreal, that it looked to viewers like something that they could have faked themselves using Midjourney or Dall-E or a host of other generative AI tools.

But it wasn't fake, as Arthur established in a nice piece of detective work – [tracking down a bar in the picture](#) using Facebook, finding the street in Apple Maps and even "walking" down it using Street View. "It's not obvious why these people thought that photo in particular wasn't real", he writes. "Perhaps it's something about the sheen of the cars and the peculiar roundedness of the shapes, and maybe the lack of obvious damage". Or is it that the proliferation of AI-generated fakes is already making people increasingly predisposed not to believe things that are real?



The images of Spain 's floods weren't created by AI. The trouble is, people think they were

My hunch is that it's the latter, because social media are being overrun by what has come to be known as "[AI slop](#)" – images and text created using generative [AI](#) tools. (Amazon's Kindle store is [having similar problems](#) with [AI](#)-generated "books", but that's a different story.)

You'd have thought that the social media companies would be bothered by this tsunami of crap on their platforms. Think again. According to [Jason Koebler of the tech news website 404 Media](#), in a recent quarterly earnings call that was overwhelmingly about [AI](#), Meta's chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, said that new, [AI](#)-generated feeds were likely to come to Facebook and other Meta platforms. Zuckerberg said he was excited by the "opportunity for [AI](#) to help people create content that just makes people's feed experiences better".

Warming to his theme, Zuck continued: "I think we're going to add a whole new category of content, which is [AI](#)-generated or [AI](#)-summarised content or kind of existing content pulled together by [AI](#) in some way. And I think that that's going to be just very exciting for Facebook and Instagram and maybe Threads or other kind of feed experiences over time."

Which makes perfect sense, in a way: Meta's profits depend on keeping users of its platforms "engaged" – that is, spending as much time as possible on them – and if [AI slop](#) helps to achieve that goal, what's the problem?

On the supply side, it turns out that [AI](#)-generated stuff is also profitable for those who create it. Koebler has spent a year exploring this dark underbelly of social media. In India, he ran into Gyan Abhishek, an analyst who studies online virality. Abhishek showed him a startling image being used to generate revenue – a picture of a skeletal elderly man hunched over while being eaten by hundreds of bugs.

"The Indian audience is very emotional," [Abhishek explained](#). "After seeing photos like this, they 'like', 'comment' and share them. So you too should create a page like this, upload photos and make money through performance bonus." He also claims that creators of viral images can earn \$100 for 1,000 "likes", which sounds like money for jam, at least to this columnist.

So what we have here is a nice positive feedback loop in which creators of [AI slop](#) profit from feeding the engagement algorithms of social media platforms, which in turn profit from the increasing "engagement" that viral images attract. The trouble with positive feedback loops, though, is that they give rise to runaway growth, and to the question of what happens to social media when they become [terminally enshittified](#) as a result. Which is where Meta and co are headed.

What I've been reading

How fragile is autocracy? A sobering assessment of Trump's victory and America – [What the future looks like from here](#) – by Prof Dave Karpf of George Washington University.

Click here for more [An insightful essay by Jason Kottke](#) about the art of writing for the web, and the power hyperlinks have to intensify an argument.

The Musk effect [Machiavellis of theMarket](#) – a timely essay on the outsize power of entrepreneurs by Alex Gourevitch.

**Load-Date:** November 9, 2024



## **Newsletter : ChatGPT weds AI search to give Google worthy competition; AI Tool of the Week: How to use ChatGPT Search; Will AI achieve human-like reasoning**

MINT

November 8, 2024 Friday

Copyright 2024 HT Media Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1864 words

**Dateline:** New Delhi

### **Body**

---

New Delhi, Nov. 8 -- If OpenAI disappointed many by delaying the launch of the much-anticipated fifth version of Generative Pre-trained Transformer (GPT-5), it pleased an equal number with its integration of **AI** search into ChatGPT, thus transforming the way tech companies will organise online information and users will search the web. By providing real-time access with original source links, OpenAI is also addressing copyright and plagiarism lawsuits, while challenging the dominance of a traditional search engine like Google.

To find information online, we typically click on multiple links. Microsoft-backed OpenAI introduced ChatGPT Search on 31 October which provides up-to-date online information with links to the information sources, using GPT 4o as the default model. Users can activate web search manually too. OpenAI has partnered with news and data providers to add information and visual designs for categories like weather, stocks, sports, news, and maps.

Please refer to the '**AI** Unlocked: Tool of the Week' section below to see how to access ChatGPT Search, and how it works.

Here are some questions that are raised: How will this move impact Google Search? But aren't search engines evolving too? How safe and credible are **AI**-generated search responses be? And What about **AI** agents that are also transforming web engagement?

The entry of ChatGPT's real-time search tool could reshape the competitive landscape for both traditional search engines like Google and emerging **AI**-driven platforms like Perplexity. This shift also challenges Google's longstanding advertising model, which depends on users visiting multiple search results and engaging with ads. To be sure, Google has ramped up its own **AI** initiatives, such as Project Gemini, which aims to streamline searches with **AI**-generated summaries and actions to keep up with ChatGPT's advancements.

For Perplexity **AI**, for instance, ChatGPT's enhanced search capability adds pressure. While Perplexity has carved a niche by combining **AI** responses with multiple model options, such as GPT-4 Turbo, Claude, and Mistral, for

Newsletter : ChatGPT weds AI search to give Google worthy competition; AI Tool of the Week: How to use ChatGPT Search; Will AI achieve human-like reasoning

customised searches, it may struggle to retain users if ChatGPT can offer similar flexibility and more up-to-date answers. Perplexity has a unique feature set, like focusing on academic sources or Reddit, and visual integrations, which may still appeal to users looking for specialised content. However, the growing popularity of ChatGPT's search function-reportedly reaching 200 million weekly active users-could tempt users away from Perplexity, potentially affecting its user growth and subscription model.

For details, you may read the article titled 'What if ChatGPT's **AI** search engine clicks with users?'. You may also want to read: LLM chatbots, search engines will co-exist, says Google's Raghavan

### **AI** Unlocked: Tool of the Week -- ChatGPT Search

by **AI&Beyond**, with Jaspreet Bindra and Anuj Magazine

What problem does ChatGPT Search solve?

ChatGPT's knowledge has a cut-off date, meaning its responses often lack real-time information, making it unsuitable for many situations where up-to-date information is needed. For example, it cannot provide current sports scores, stock market updates, or breaking news. Finding precise, timely answers often requires navigating multiple searches and sources.

ChatGPT Search addresses this by blending conversational **AI** with real-time web access.

How to access it?

1. Via the newly introduced search button on the ChatGPT chat interface.

Image source: <https://openai.com/>

2. Via the ChatGPT Search plugin

3. ChatGPT will automatically choose to search the web if your question might benefit from real-time information.

This feature is currently available for ChatGPT Plus and Team users, as well as those who were on the SearchGPT prototype waitlist and now have access.

ChatGPT Search can help you:

Get Up-to-Date Information: Instantly access the most current information.

Ask Contextual Questions: Ask follow-up questions, and ChatGPT uses conversation history to refine answers.

View Trusted Sources: Responses include links to source material, allowing you to verify and explore further.

Example:

Suppose you're conducting market research for a new product. Here's how ChatGPT Search can assist:

Search the Web: Ask for recent consumer preferences or emerging industry topics. ChatGPT will pull up-to-date information from trusted sources.

Analyze Competitors: Get insights into competitors' latest offerings, pricing, or marketing strategies.

Gather Real-Time Data: Request statistics on stock performance, which ChatGPT can display directly, without leaving the chat interface.

Quick Tips:

Newsletter : ChatGPT weds AI search to give Google worthy competition; AI Tool of the Week: How to use ChatGPT Search; Will AI achieve human-like reasoning

Installing the ChatGPT Search Plug-in changes your default search engine to ChatGPT Search. If you want to redirect a query to Google search, type "!g [your query]" (e.g. !g stock price MSFT) directly in your browser URL bar with your query.

You can also regenerate any GPT-4o response to search the web, enabling ChatGPT to enrich its initial response with additional content from the web. This can be done via the 'Try again' option at the end of the response.

What makes ChatGPT Search special?

**All-in-One Interface:** ChatGPT Search allows you to get real-time information, directly within the chat-no need to switch to a different platform.

**Reliable Sources:** All responses include citations from credible sources, keeping information trustworthy.

**Interactive Maps & More:** ChatGPT Search partners with news and data providers to add up-to-date information and new visual designs for categories like weather, stocks, sports, news, and maps.

**Note:** The tools featured in this section demonstrated clear value based on our internal testing. Our recommendations are entirely independent and not influenced by the tool creators.

Will AI achieve human-like reasoning?

The debate over AI's potential for human-like reasoning centres on whether advanced AI can truly understand concepts or if it merely mimics patterns. AI experts differ widely on this but they concur on one point: while AI can simulate certain aspects of human reasoning, achieving true understanding or consciousness remains unlikely, at least with today's technology. As the debate continues, the consensus seems to lean toward AI's role as a powerful tool that complements human intelligence, rather than replicating it. Thus, while AI may assist in decision-making processes or support certain cognitive tasks, experts are sceptical about it ever reaching the holistic, embodied cognition characteristic of human thought.

AI is unlikely to gain brain processing similar to humans unless connected to robots, according to a new study. (Pexels)

Here are brief perspectives from some AI experts on AI's capacity for human-like reasoning.

Fei-Fei Li, co-director at Stanford's Human-Centered AI Institute, emphasises the need for "human-centred AI". She advocates AI that complements human intelligence by supporting ethical, transparent uses that reflect human values rather than replicating human thought processes. Li believes AI should prioritise human welfare and augment human abilities rather than attempting to replicate human-like reasoning. You may read more here.

Andrew Ng, founder of DeepLearning.AI and Landing AI, managing general partner of AI Fund, and co-founder and chairman of Coursera, sees AI as a tool best suited for narrow tasks, advocating for a focus on practical applications rather than pursuing human-like cognition. He often criticises attempts to endow AI with "general intelligence," arguing it detracts from progress on tangible, real-world AI challenges. Here's a more detailed piece.

Yann LeCun, chief AI scientist at Meta and a professor at New York University, is more optimistic, asserting that while AI is far from human reasoning, the right combination of learning algorithms could gradually develop more adaptable systems. He sees potential in AI for dynamic learning but stresses that models today are still far from true cognitive abilities. Here's a detailed interview with him.

Geoffrey Hinton (who also shared the Nobel Prize for Physics this year with John Hopfield) and Yoshua Bengio, both Turing Award winners and known as the 'Godfathers of AI along with LeCun), support ongoing exploration of deep learning but differ in their views on the risks of human-like reasoning. Hinton recently raised concerns about AI safety, cautioning that powerful models could have unpredictable impacts, while Bengio is more optimistic about creating AI that aligns with human values but acknowledges risks that require thoughtful management.

Newsletter : ChatGPT weds AI search to give Google worthy competition; AI Tool of the Week: How to use ChatGPT Search; Will AI achieve human-like reasoning

Mustafa Suleyman, CEO of Microsoft AI and co-founder of Inflection AI and DeepMind (now a Google company), is similarly forward-looking but stresses ethical AI development. His company's work on reinforcement learning has explored paths toward more autonomous AI, yet Suleyman consistently highlights the need for robust oversight to ensure AI aligns with human welfare.

Emily M. Bender, professor of Linguistics at the University of Washington, critiques current AI narratives, calling attention to the limitations of large language models (LLMs) in reasoning. She argues that AI models are sophisticated statistical systems without genuine understanding, challenging the idea that they can "reason" in the human sense. Her work underscores the risk of anthropomorphising AI.

"As OpenAI and Meta introduce LLM-driven searchbots, I'd like to once again remind people that neither LLMs nor chatbots are good technology for information access," she recently posted on X.

Here are some interesting takeaways from her threatened post:

If someone uses an LLM as a replacement for search, and the output they get is correct, this is just by chance.

Furthermore, a system that is right 95% of the time is arguably more dangerous than one that is right 50% of the time. People will be more likely to trust the output, and likely less able to fact check the 5%.

Setting things up so that you get "the answer" to your question cuts off the user's ability to do the sense-making that is critical to information literacy.

That sense-making includes refining the question, understanding how different sources speak to the question, and locating each source within the information landscape.

Imagine putting a medical query into a standard search engine and receiving a list of links including one to a local university medical center, one to WebMD, one to Dr. Oz, and one to an active forum for people with similar medical issues.

Finally, the chatbots-as-search paradigm encourages us to just accept answers as given, especially when they are stated in terms that are both friendly and authoritative.

The chatbot interface invites you to just sit back and take the appealing-looking AI slop as if it were "information". Don't be that guy.

Here are more perspectives on this subject:

AI systems routinely outperform humans

You may read here

AI agents now make their own decisions; why enterprises should care

Read more

Don't overestimate LLMs; it distracts attention from real issues

Published by HT Digital Content Services with permission from MINT. For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at [contentservices@htdigital.in](mailto:contentservices@htdigital.in)

**Load-Date:** November 8, 2024

Halloween 'hoax': How did so many turn out for a fake parade in Dublin city centre? Website apologises for 'mistake' and claims there was no intention to mislead....



**[Halloween 'hoax': How did so many turn out for a fake parade in Dublin city centre?; Website apologises for 'mistake' and claims there was no intention to mislead](#)**

Irish Independent

November 2, 2024 Saturday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2024 Independent Newspapers Ireland Limited All Rights Reserved



**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 18

**Length:** 798 words

**Byline:** MAEVE McTAGGART

## **Body**

---

Hundreds of people waited on O'Connell Street on Halloween night for a parade that was never scheduled to take place. But where did the rumour come from - and how could so many have fallen for what was reported as a "hoax"? A Halloween-themed website, that no longer features any information about the Dublin parade it had described as "a centrepiece of the city's festive celebrations", also listed a number of genuine events that took place across the country on Thursday night.

The non-existent Dublin parade was set to follow "a well-planned route that ensures maximum visibility and excitement" between 7pm and 9pm. "It typically starts at Parnell Square, proceeds down O'Connell Street and concludes at Temple Bar," the website claimed, urging people to arrive early as the parade "attracts large crowds".

Hundreds turned out to see the supposed event, before gardaí asked the crowds to disperse as "contrary to information being circulated online", there was never any parade due to take place down the capital's main thoroughfare.

A spokesperson for the My Spirit

Halloween website "highly apologised" for the article.

They described the incident as "a mistake, not a scam or clickbait".

They said the operators of the website "are not scammers" and that sharing the incorrect information "wasn't on purpose".

Halloween 'hoax': How did so many turn out for a fake parade in Dublin city centre? Website apologises for 'mistake' and claims there was no intention to mislead....

"It was a mistake rather than hoax," they said.

"It was our mistake and we should have double-checked it to make sure it was happening.

"If we had heard before the day that the parade was not going to happen we would have removed it, but no one alerted us. We are highly embarrassed and very sorry."

The website seems to answer any and all questions that people google about Halloween, including searchable questions and key terms like "What time does trick-or-treating start for Halloween 2024?" and "How celebrities celebrate Halloween 2024".

The website claimed to be the "ultimate destination for all things Halloween" and invited web users to "explore our extensive collection and transform your Halloween into an unforgettable celebration".

It tells visitors it is based in the state of Illinois. However, the linked Facebook page for the site offered an address in Pakistan that has since been removed. Pakistan is also recorded on Facebook as the primary location for those managing the page.

Ciarán O'Connor, a senior analyst who researches the spread of disinformation at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, said: "It seems to be a classic content aggregator website, so it turns out reams and reams of content that it thinks users in Ireland, the UK, Australia or America will find interesting."

The term "AI slop" is used by researchers in the field to describe the mass production of content through the use of generative AI, said Mr O'Connor, who believes this type of site functions as an "ad revenue scheme".

"The main incentive for these websites is getting people to click on the link. It's Halloween spam, and will then drive ad revenue for the website," he said.

He added that the site, which featured "very formulaic text", likely used a generative AI tool that "scraped" content from other parts of the web, resulting in listings for genuine events winding up alongside that of the non-existent Dublin parade.

Promotional pictures for the event shared by the My Spirit Halloween website appear to have been from events held by Galway-based performance group Macnas in the capital last year, which were the first in four years after the pandemic. There were no plans for the Macnas events to take place this year.

The website, using "clickbait" terms so that it would appear in the search results for those trying to plan their Halloween night, started a rumour that soon gravitated to social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok.

Users believed they were sharing information about a genuine parade that was set to take place in the city centre, with one TikTok user sharing it with their own followers in a video which has since been viewed over 20,000 times.

Although a "light-hearted" example, the "hoax" parade doubles as an important lesson in how misinformation can spread online as we face into a general election.

"This is quite a humorous story at the heart of it - and certainly (did not result) in 'chaos' like some have said - but it does show that online misinformation can influence the public and influence people at a mass scale," Mr O'Connor said.

"It's difficult for people to distinguish between what is real and what is entirely fake on the internet. This is a fairly benign example of people who turned out for a Halloween parade, but what if this was a protest, advertising a protest in the heat of a very severe incident or an election?"

'Hundreds turned out, before gardaí asked the crowds to disperse as there was no parade due to take place'

Halloween 'hoax': How did so many turn out for a fake parade in Dublin city centre? Website apologises for 'mistake' and claims there was no intention to mislea....

## Graphic

---

People in fancy dress on O'Connell Street on Thursday night, where many were hoodwinked by 'hoax' Halloween parade. Photo: Collins

**Load-Date:** November 2, 2024

---

End of Document





## *Final Fridays returns after year-long break*

Daily Eastern News: Eastern Illinois University

October 28, 2024 Monday

University Wire

Copyright 2024 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 1

**Length:** 1830 words

### **Body**

---

content" class="skip-to-content">Skip to Content

The Daily Eastern News

Facebook

Instagram

X

Tiktok

YouTube

RSS Feed

- Welcome back to the Daily Eastern News!
- Check out our podcasts on Spotify!
- Oct. 22- Trans\*formation Station Ribbon Cutting and Fashion Show at 7 pm
- Oct. 22- Percussion Ensemble in the Doudna Black Box at 7:30 pm
- Oct. 24- Tunnel of Oppression in the Union at 7:00 pm
- Oct. 24- Natasha Stojanovska Piano Recital in the Recital Hall at 7:30 pm
- Volleyball standings: 4-11 on the season (0-5 in conference)
- Soccer standings: Women's at 5-6-5 (3-2-2), Men's at 1-9-1 (0-5)
- Football standings: 1-6 on the season (0-4 in conference)
- Check out our newsletters on Overlooked!

The Ticker

- News

## Final Fridays returns after year-long break

- Sports Baseball Basketball Columns Cross Country Football Soccer Softball Swimming Tennis Volleyball
- Arts & Entertainment
- Opinions
- Podcasts
- Through the Lens
- About Staff Advertising Privacy Policy
- More

Final Fridays returns after year-long break Student government continues talk on fees, approves two RSOs, two senators Transformation Station opens in EIU GSDS Small Business Fest brings plushies, cosmetics, more Who's running for Coles County Board in District 6? Panthers of the Week: Jake Pollock, David Brown Eastern men's soccer tie with Southern Indiana Deeper insight into EIU vs UT Martin during Q&A with UT Martin newspaper CHS Trojan football ends season with loss against Salem Wildcats EIU wide receiver talks transfer process in Q&A Anderson reflects on Yankees career during 9/11 EIU Baseball's path through OVC Tournament EIU Baseball honors seniors, win over MSUEIU Baseball drops second game against MSUEIU Baseball loses fifth straight game Bollant leaves EIU basketball program Davis, Luers enter transfer portal Panthers of the Year: MJ Flowers, Macy McGlone, Sara Thomas Panthers of the Semester: Tiger Booker, Macy McGlone, Tara Archibald STAFF PICKS: NBA finals winner COLUMN: What went wrong with EIU football? COLUMN: Female athletes are just as capable as male COLUMN: Court storming should be a thing of the past COLUMN: Court storming needs to stay COLUMN: EIU should move on from swim program Panthers of the Week: Joe Stoddard, Alex Tetteh Fall 2024 athletes to watch Panthers of the Week: Joe Stoddard, Taris Thornton Panthers of the Week: Macy McGlone, Isai Morales COLUMN: Why you should watch running sports Deeper insight into EIU vs UT Martin during Q&A with UT Martin newspaper CHS Trojan football ends season with loss against Salem Wildcats EIU wide receiver talks transfer process in Q&A Panthers hope to beat Skyhawks for first time since 2018 Charleston gets ready for last game of the year Panthers of the Week: Jake Pollock, David Brown Eastern men's soccer tie with Southern Indiana EIU men's soccer gets ready for last homestand EIU women's soccer's path to the OVC Tournament Takeaways from EIU women's soccer homestand Grover, Oslanzi, Archibald win OVC Awards Panthers of the Week: McKenzie Oslanzi, Joe Stoddard Panthers of the Semester: Tiger Booker, Macy McGlone, Tara Archibald Catcher talks about being a black belt in Q&A EIU softball loses nine-game winning streak to Tennessee Tech Panthers of the Week: Avery Richardson, Conner Colston Through 40 years of coaching: Scott Teeters COLUMN: EIU should move on from swim program EIU swim competes for first time in 2024 EIU Swim competes as whole Fall 2024 athletes to watch Panthers of the Week: William Hays, Danny Infante EIU men's tennis gets second straight victory with win against USIEIU tennis siblings' journey from Australia EIU tennis coach with varied past: Robin Cambier EIU volleyball splits games to Tennessee Tech EIU volleyball wins during Greek night Junior outside hitter talks about support system in Sweden in Q&A EIU volleyball wins first conference game Takeaways from EIU volleyball COLUMN: 'It's What's Inside' asks who are you on the inside? Grand Ballroom decked out for annual drag show COLUMN: 'King Kong:' a staple of cinema 'Art is screaming' at the Tarble Arts Center Oh Freedom! Songs of the Civil Rights Movement brings music and history together COLUMN: 'It's What's Inside' asks who are you on the inside? COLUMN: Why your OVC mascot may or may not suck COLUMN: 'Piece by Piece:' building a new entry into the documentary/drama genre COLUMN: Future educators: get organized COLUMN: Boo! Get off the stage! Two Dudes Talk Movies: Ep. 72: Frankenhoker: Reanimated From The Grave Two Dudes Talk Movies: Ep. 71: The Fly: Buzzing Through The Gore Panther Profiles: Ep. 22: Robin Cambier comes on the show Two Dudes Talk Movies Ep. 70: Joker: Folie à Deux and the Horrible, No Good, One Bad Day Two Dudes Talk Movies Ep. 69: Rebel Ridge: Every Ridge Has A Plateau THROUGH THE LENS: 'Beetlejuice' takes over Douglas-Hart Nature Center THROUGH THE LENS: Tour De Charleston THROUGH THE LENS: Camp New Hope celebrates 50th anniversary THROUGH THE LENS: Something's cooking in Klehm Hall THROUGH THE LENS: Glow Foam Party lights up South Quad

Search this site

Submit Search

## Final Fridays returns after year-long break

Open Navigation Menu

The Daily Eastern News

- [News](#)
- [Sports Baseball Basketball Columns Cross Country Football Soccer Softball Swimming Tennis Volleyball](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Through the Lens](#)
- [About Staff Advertising Privacy Policy](#)
- [More](#)

The Daily Eastern News

Open Search Bar

Search this site

Submit Search

Open Navigation Menu

The Daily Eastern News

- [News](#)
- [Sports Baseball Basketball Columns Cross Country Football Soccer Softball Swimming Tennis Volleyball](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Opinions](#)
- [Podcasts](#)
- [Through the Lens](#)
- [About Staff Advertising Privacy Policy](#)
- [More](#)

The Daily Eastern News

Open Search Bar

Search this site

Submit Search

Categories:

- [News](#)
- [Showcase](#)

Final Fridays returns after year-long break

Luke Brewer, Reporter

## Final Fridays returns after year-long break

October 28, 2024

Luke Brewer Larry Cox Jr. enthusiastically presents the difference between active listening and the art of listening at the first Final Fridays on October 25, 2024, at Friends & Co. in Charleston, Ill.

The electrically buzzed atmosphere of Final Fridays returned Friday following its discontinuation in 2023 to include more staff and faculty at Friends & Co.

C.C. Wharram, event founder and director of humanities center, and the Final Fridays committee consisting of Samantha Tableriou, Alan Pocaro, Don Holly and Suzie Park hosted the event free of charge thanks to Friends & Co. inviting Final Fridays to use the venue.

"It's a really great event, easy to say, 'yes' to," said Friends & Co. owner Mike Gherardini.

Final Fridays is an event held on the final Friday of each month and is open to staff, faculty and administration at Eastern Illinois University featuring three presenters who talk about whatever topic of their choosing, usually related to something they're passionate about or currently researching.

This gathering also serves as a "wonderful community event that brings together folks from across campus to share their research and enjoy each other's company," said EIU president Jay Gatrell who was in attendance.

The event opened with a parody of "The Twilight Zone" before Larry Cox Jr., the first presenter and assistant professor of musical theatre and performance, took the stage.

During his presentation, Cox talked about the difference between active listening and the art of listening by letting people to "empty their buckets" by offering a space for people to listen to others' opinions.

The second presentation saw Mark Hudson, director of housing and dining, take the stage to give a spooky presentation during this haunting month.

Hudson discussed the history of Pemberton Hall and how it is the second longest standing building on campus before shifting to retell the story of the Pemberton ghost.

The Pemberton ghost is said to be an entity that roams the halls of Pemberton at night and is the spirit of a resident who was killed by a janitor or the spirit of residential hall counselor Mary Hawkins according to Hudson.

Following Hudson's chilling story, Brian Keith, the new dean of library services, was brought on stage for a new segment to Final Fridays called Know Your Administrator.

During this segment, Wharram asked Keith random questions for those in attendance to get to know him better. These questions ranged from what the best breakfast was to what relaxing beverage Keith would most likely drink.

Associate professor of art foundations and printmaking Pocaro, the final presenter, took the stage following Keith to talk about the evolution of art from painting to photography to the modern day of what he calls "AI slop."

Pocaro also showed his disdain for AI saying, "AI is the visual equivalent of a nuclear weapon."

As the presenters are on stage talking about their topics, a clock is counting down in the background that gives each presenter 10 minutes to speak.

If a presenter narrowly finishes within the time limit, "the whole place comes down," according to Wharram.

For example, Pocaro didn't finish his entire presentation within the time limit but was able to continue as the crowd of staff, faculty and administration cheered and encouraged him to continue.

## Final Fridays returns after year-long break

After the presenters were all finished, Wharram returned to the stage with a smile to encourage everyone to stick around and hang out, as he believes the true intent of Final Fridays is to bring the university together.

Final Fridays is set to return again in January 2025.

Luke Brewer can be reached at 581-2812 or at [lsbrewer@eiu.edu](mailto:lsbrewer@eiu.edu)

View Story Comments

0

Like This Story

Share on Facebook

Share on X

Email this Story

Print this Story

Leave a Comment

More to Discover

More in News

Student government continues talk on fees, approves two RSOs, two senators

Trans\*formation Station opens in EIU GSD

Small Business Fest brings plushies, cosmetics, more

Who's running for Coles County Board in District 6?

Executive director and senior diversity and inclusion officer gives advice at lunch

Professional, student participation to come at EIU drag show

More in Showcase

CHS Trojan football ends season with loss against Salem Wildcats

Grand Ballroom decked out for annual drag show

Charleston Trojans lose 35-23 to Taylorville Tornadoes

The geological Avenger on EIU's campus

EIU athletic director responds to House v. NCAA preliminary approval

On-campus enrollment down 7%, administration feeling positive

About the Contributor

Luke Brewer, Reporter

Luke Brewer is a freshman journalism major and can be reached at 581-2812 or [lsbrewer@eiu.edu](mailto:lsbrewer@eiu.edu)

## Final Fridays returns after year-long break

The Daily Eastern News

The student news site of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois.

Facebook

Instagram

X

Tiktok

YouTube

RSS Feed

- News
- Sports
- Arts & Entertainment
- Opinions
- Podcasts
- Through the Lens
- About

The Daily Eastern News · © 2024 · FLEX Pro WordPress Theme by SNO · Log in

Comments (0)

Commenting on the Daily Eastern News web site is a privilege, not a right. We reserve the right to remove comments that contain obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language. Also, comments containing personal attacks or threats of harming another person will not be tolerated.

Share your thoughts...

All

The Daily Eastern News Picks

Reader Picks

Sort: Newest

Close

Close Modal Window

Close

**Load-Date:** October 28, 2024

Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election



## [Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election](#)

The Guardian (London)

October 21, 2024 Monday 6:49 AM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** WORLD NEWS; Version:1

**Length:** 2715 words

**Byline:** Archie Bland

**Highlight:** In today's newsletter: From stacking election boards to purging voter rolls, we look at the tactics that could sway key states Sign up here for our daily newsletter, First Edition

### **Body**

---

Good morning. With two weeks to go until the US presidential election, the race could hardly be closer. But when you're next frantically obsessing over the odds, keep in mind: it may not be as simple as who most voters want to see in the Oval Office.

If the attempt to subvert the 2020 election was an anti-democratic horror show, its impact was somewhat mitigated by the fact that Donald Trump seemed to be making it up as he went along. This time around, Republicans are a lot more organised in their efforts to influence the outcome – and as the Maga takeover of the GOP has rolled on over the past four years, election denialism has moved from the fringes to become a central tenet of the party.

That means the wheels are already in motion for alarming interventions before and after polling day. A case in point over the weekend: Elon Musk's plan for a daily \$1m giveaway to a swing state voter who signs a petition in support of the first and second amendments, which [legal experts say](#) could amount to an illegal inducement to register to vote.

For today's newsletter, I spoke to Sam Levine, voting rights reporter for Guardian US, about the nature of the threat – and how worried you should be. Here are the headlines.

Five big stories

NHS | The health secretary, Wes Streeting, is to [unveil plans for portable medical records](#) giving every NHS patient all their information stored digitally in one place, despite fears over breaching privacy and creating a target for hackers. The news is part of a major consultation on the government's plans to transform the NHS from "analogue to digital" over the next decade.

Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election

Middle East | [At least 87 people were killed](#) or missing and 40 injured after intense Israeli airstrikes hit the north of the Gaza Strip. In Lebanon, hundreds of residents fled their homes in Beirut after what appeared to be an Israeli attack on areas linked to a Hezbollah banking system.

UK news | Tributes poured in for the Olympic cycling champion Sir Chris Hoy [after he revealed he had received a terminal cancer diagnosis](#). In an interview with the Sunday Times, Hoy, who won six golds and one silver medal for Team GB, said doctors had told him he had between two and four years to live.

Prisons | [Fewer women could be sent to jail](#) under a review to be announced by ministers this week that is expected to cut sentences for thousands of criminals. The review is expected to be carried out by the former Conservative justice secretary David Gauke.

Monarchy | King Charles [has been heckled by an Indigenous Australian senator](#), who called for a treaty and accused the crown of stealing Aboriginal land, as he concluded a speech at Parliament House in Canberra. Lidia Thorpe approached the stage and shouted "This is not your land. You are not my king."

In depth: 'We're getting to a place where trust in the system is eroded'

The crucial backdrop to Republican attempts to game the system: this is a race that could rest on a few thousand votes in a few key states. If the result comes down to a decimal place in Pennsylvania or Michigan, keeping some voters at home or throwing out a few ballots could make all the difference.

How serious is the risk that the election will be subverted? "If we're on a 10-point scale, I'd say it's about a seven," Sam Levine said. "It's short of a total meltdown. But there are some very alarming signs."

The reason it's a seven and not a 10: "There's no legal scholar I talk to who doubts that the rightful winner of the election is going to be certified and seated. No court has successfully thrown out an election in the past, and the statutes are very clear."

On the other hand, the memory of 2000's [hanging chads](#) and the heavily conservative composition of the supreme court – as well as the fact that interventions that never make it to the courts could play a significant role – mean there are good reasons to be concerned. "When you look at all of these things together, they make a very toxic stew," Sam said.

Here are some of the ingredients.

\*\*\*

Trump supporters are taking control of election boards

Since 2020, more than 30 local officials have either refused to certify valid election results or threatened to do so. And while those efforts have ultimately failed so far, they signal a new era of activists seeking control of previously non-partisan bodies. In Georgia, for example, a pro-Trump majority on the state board of elections has attempted to force through dubious new rules including one that would have required the hand counting of results – a procedure that critics say slows down the results, makes them less accurate and creates a false perception of uncertainty – only to see their intervention [struck down by a county judge](#) last week.

"Before 2020, the vast majority of Americans had no idea these boards existed," Sam said. And while they are generally required to certify the results, that is likely to be challenged in November. "These local board meetings are now full of [Trump supporters] who get up and scream at the board members if they disagree with them," he said.

A study of boards in eight swing states [published last month](#) found there were at least 102 election deniers sitting on state and county boards. The most prominent example was again Georgia, where the 3-2 Trump majority on the state board may have been thwarted by a judge but remains in a key role ahead of what is likely to be a nail-biting race.



## Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election

\*\*\*

## Republicans are signing up as 'poll watchers'

Election boards are not the only place where Trump supporters have sought to intervene in the process. There has been a parallel effort to get those who were sceptical of the 2020 result to sign up to be poll watchers – who can challenge voters' eligibility in some states. (See [this excellent New Yorker piece](#) for more on how Trump supporters are being primed to intervene.)

Sam points to the Election Integrity Network, founded by prominent 2020 election denialist Cleta Mitchell, which claims to have recruited tens of thousands of "election integrity patriots" and holds regular coordinating calls. Meanwhile, Republican national committee chair Michael Whatley claims to have recruited almost 200,000 poll watchers, poll workers, and volunteer lawyers.

"That creates a volatile situation," Sam said. "There have been reports of counties buying panic buttons in case election workers are harassed. But there is no evidence for the claims being made."

\*\*\*

## Voters have been removed from electoral rolls or asked to prove their citizenship

In Tennessee, the top election official asked 14,000 registered voters, many in areas with large ethnic minority populations, to prove their citizenship. In Alabama, the state tried to remove 3,200 people from the rolls as non-citizens before admitting that 2,000 of them were eligible. And in Texas, the governor, Greg Abbott, claimed that 6,500 non-citizens had been removed from the rolls – when in fact, almost 6,000 of them had simply failed to respond to letters from the state asking for proof.

These states are so certain to vote Republican in November that the decisions will not directly impact the result. But, said Sam, "it is part of a misinformation effort – it creates the sense that voting by non-citizens is a major problem, and that if it can happen in Texas, it can happen anywhere".

The non-citizen voting claim also chimes with [a debunked conspiracy theory](#) advanced by Elon Musk, among others, that Democrats are quickly making unauthorised immigrants into citizens to tilt key states in their favour. It is also seen as a way to suppress the eligible votes of those who were on the fence about turning up anyway, particularly among immigrant communities.

\*\*\*

## Republicans are preparing to use the court system to challenge results

Reuters counted 130 lawsuits from Republicans relating to the election process this year. Sam [describes some of those cases here](#), ranging from challenges to absentee ballots to more claims of non-citizen votes. As he notes, such cases "can be a particularly powerful forum for spreading misleading information [because] public officials sometimes won't speak publicly about pending legal matters", meaning they go unchallenged. And they could be a preview of what follows after the election has concluded.

Whereas in 2020, Republican party lawyers had refused to join Trump's attempts to overturn the election, the party looks very different in 2024. The Republican national committee's election litigation team is now headed by Christina Bobb, a prominent 2020 election denier who is facing criminal charges over her attempts to subvert the result.

One nightmare scenario is a situation like 2000, when the supreme court effectively decided the winner of the election. "On the one hand, in 2020, the supreme court refused to go near a case asking them to invalidate the results," Sam said. "That is reassuring – I don't think they're going to go chasing fringe legal theories despite their ideological leanings."

Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election

But even then, it is possible some rightwing justices with form for this sort of thing could issue opinions that might fan the flames of any tensions, Sam said. And the court could have to decide on a more technical, narrow issue with massive ramifications. In that scenario, the outcome is harder to predict – and there will be big questions about the justices' objectivity given the court's recent turn to the right.

\*\*\*

Even if these efforts fail, they fan the flames of denialism

As we've seen, many of the manoeuvres outlined above have been struck down by the courts. But even these failures can be a success – because they may be understood by those who denied the 2020 result as further proof that the system is rigged against them. And even as they undertake their own work to subvert the result, Trump and many of his supporters are claiming it is the Harris campaign that is trying to “steal” the election.

To his point that he expects the rightful winner to be seated, Sam adds this caveat: “Even if that happens, the damage done by stoking this chaos is very, very significant. We're getting to a place where trust in the system is eroded, and many people may not accept the result.” If so, the intensity of the misinformation this time around may make January 6 look like a dry run.

What else we've been reading

May Cooper is magnificent. But Rhik Samadder's spooky interview for Saturday magazine – about her riotous new book detailing her obsession with the paranormal, and, er, the time she tried to have sex with a ghost – [gives it a run for its money](#). Features a decent anecdote about Martin Kemp mistaking the spirit of a 16th-century maid for an extra.

Archie A symbol of environmental destruction and excess, megayachts are a status symbol for billionaires. For [New York Magazine, Charlotte Cowles](#) asked a former stewardess what it's really like serving the ultra-wealthy on their private floating resorts. Nimo [Today's Guardian leader](#) advises Rachel Reeves to abandon the infamous fiscal rules, and offers an alternative approach: publish an overview of the government's balance sheet and show how ministerial decisions have affected national income instead.

Archie [Ashifa Kassam](#) takes a look at how Gisèle Pelicot, a survivor at the centre of a horrifying mass rape trial that has rocked France, has propelled conversations around sexual violence in countries around the world. Nimo Keira Knightley, David Walliams, Meghan Markle, and Keith Richards have something in common that they really shouldn't: they're all celebrity children's authors. Ella Creamer and Lucy Knight [hear from their less famous rivals](#), who are unsurprisingly sick of it.

Sport

Cycling | After the news of Olympic cycling great Sir Chris Hoy's terminal cancer diagnosis, the Guardian's cycling columnist William Fotheringham [writes that](#) Hoy's response is typical of “a grounded individual who always seemed to come to a stoical, humble accommodation with the things that life dealt him, good and bad; he is a man of frankly outlandish determination”.

Football | Leaked WhatsApp messages from the former Newcastle United minority co-owner Amanda Staveley suggest that Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, [was heavily involved in the takeover of the club](#), it has been reported. The messages also spotlighted the extent of the UK government's involvement.

Football | Curtis Jones's 51st minute winner was enough to secure [a 2-1 victory for Liverpool over Chelsea](#) and return Arne Slot's side to the top of the Premier League. Earlier on Sunday, Manchester City took a dramatic 2-1 win over bottom side Wolves thanks to John Stones's injury time header.

The front pages

Top story in the Guardian print edition today is “Labour wants NHS ‘passports’ for all patients despite privacy fears”. “Reeves is warned changes to IHT will backfire” says the Daily Telegraph – that's inheritance tax, btw. The Times leads with “Rayner sets up ‘council housing revolution’”, while the Daily Mail covers a “‘Tsunami’ of asbestos deaths in schools”. The Metro says there is an “online con epidemic” with “9 million of us scammed”. The i has “UK air

Monday briefing: The Trump acolytes planning to interfere with November's election

defences unable to cope with missile attack, former ministers warn". "84% of disabled pensioners will lose winter payment" – the Express says that's the result of a poll. "Charles: you are the best of us" – the Daily Mirror marks the 25th anniversary of its Pride of Britain awards with a message from the king. The Financial Times leads with "Faltering confidence hinders global recovery despite buoyant economies".

Today in Focus

How the US border became a toxic issue for voters – podcast

Oliver Laughland reports from southern Arizona, where the issue of [immigrants crossing the border has become a controversial topic](#)

Cartoon of the day | Edith Pritchett

[Sign up for Inside Saturday](#) to see more of Edith Pritchett's cartoons, the best Saturday magazine content and an exclusive look behind the scenes

The Upside

A bit of good news to remind you that the world's not all bad

The Guardian's new section, The Filter, has a singular mission: to provide readers with help in cutting through the fake reviews, dodgy deals and **AI slop** that makes up so much of consumer journalism on the web. The latest has experts [recommending the fair price for 14 everyday essentials](#), from wine, to cheddar to running shoes. And if you're paying more than £4 for a cleaning spray you're being ripped off.

As for the wine, Pierre Mansour, director of wine at the Wine Society, says: "My advice is to spend between £8 and £15, the higher the better. The sweet spot is £12. Compared with a £7 bottle, a £12 bottle gets you four times as much value – a better return on your investment in terms of the wine's taste, quality and balance."

Bored at work?

And finally, the Guardian's puzzles are here to keep you entertained throughout the day. Until tomorrow.

[Quick crossword](#) [Cryptic crossword](#) [Wordiply](#)

**Load-Date:** October 21, 2024



## *McNeal review – Robert Downey Jr shines in muddled AI-themed play*

The Guardian (London)

October 1, 2024 Tuesday 5:21 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** STAGE; Version:2

**Length:** 810 words

**Byline:** Adrian Horton

**Highlight:** Vivian Beaumont Theater, New YorkThe Oscar-winning actor makes a smooth transfer to Broadway but Ayad Akhtar's play is a mixed bag of insight and exhaustion

### Body

---

Star Rating: 3 stars

The writer Jacob McNeal is, among other things, a bestselling and influential novelist, an esteemed winner of the Nobel prize for literature, a writer with style consistent and public enough to serve as a prompt for ChatGPT. From another view: a narcissistic cad, a terrible father, a lonely drunk. People argue whether he's a genius, a fraud, an iconoclast. After nearly two hours with him, it's not clear which. Though mesmerizingly brought to life by Robert Downey Jr in Ayad Akhtar's muddled and occasionally poignant new play of the same name, McNeal remains more reflection than character – a projection of success, an outlet for anxieties over artificial intelligence, a cipher to destabilize one's view of reality.

All of these angles offer fertile material for a play of ideas, and to Akhtar's credit, McNeal is not only a rare original Broadway play but an ambitious one, given starry billing and splashy, tech-forward staging at Lincoln Center. It's also all over the place, a play of strong performances – Downey, in his Broadway debut, chief among them – that chafe against vague, inchoate ideas about a vaguely ghoulish technology.

Things start simply enough: a giant, blue light-abundant iPhone interface looming above the stage, the home page tracking the minutes clicking by on Friday, 10 October in a way intriguingly familiar to most people in the audience. It's sometime in the near future, when ChatGPT-like **AI** is even more firmly grounded in American daily life – enough, as McNeal off-handedly remarks in Dr Sahra Grewal's (Ruthie Ann Miles) office, that several New York Times bestsellers are openly composed through machine learning.

The play proceeds in chronological-ish chapters in the sunset days of McNeal's distinguished career: an appointment diagnosing liver disease; a triumphantly tipsy and moralizing speech accepting the Nobel prize; a meeting with his hammy agent Stephie (Andrea Martin); a reunion with his estranged adult son Harlan (a jittery Rafi

## McNeal review – Robert Downey Jr shines in muddled AI-themed play

Gavron), who harbors intense loathing for the father he blames for his mother's suicide decades earlier (and which features some telenovela-esque revelations that nearly took me out of the play entirely). Some border on the surreal; some, especially a tete-a-tete between proudly un-woke McNeal and a young female Black reporter at the New York Times (Brittany Bellizeare, a standout) whip up propulsive, left-field tension as the novelist plunges deeper into the whiskey bottle. (Michael Yeargan and Jake Barton's evocative sets cover both, most pleasingly released in a luscious bookshelf full of both real and made-up titles.)

But as the chapters build, the narrative cohesion slackens. For each interlude deliberately muddies the waters by introducing the prospect of AI-generated material – Downey Jr's voice, as McNeal, prompting the machine for the scenes we are about to witness and providing personal material to synthesize. Eventually, the projections deliver dialogue as deepfakes of McNeal and his late wife/former paramour (Melora Hardin). (The program credits the "digital composites" to the company AGBO.)

Akhtar, a Pulitzer-winning dramatist (in 2013, for *Disgraced*) and novelist, has dressed up a reliably grating inclination – a writer writing about writing – with the mind-bending and reality-questioning drama of our fears with AI. The framing devices don't need to do much to touch on, without spoiling, the lines between inspiration and exploitation, between borrowing and theft, between assistance and cheating. Although delineating it this way feels like I'm giving the play too much credit – McNeal at most nudges these fault lines, seemingly chuffed with bringing up the topic as an end unto itself.

Downey, operating firmly in his lane of wise-cracking, sardonic charisma, is at least never less than compelling, and thankfully on stage for almost the whole show; the whole exercise is worth it to see an actor in peak, seemingly easy form. He sells McNeal both as a narcissist spiraling at the end of his road and as a provocation of AI's blurry ethical lines. Such provocation contains little insight, beyond that AI is scary and could make things worse; perhaps McNeal's most interesting idea is the unoriginal notion that generative AI will enable narcissists, or that it will allow people to express themselves through an artistic medium without putting in the hard work of craft.

McNeal ends on a confounding note, explicitly invoking the question: what is real, and how do you know? One could generously read the play's descent into confusion as a meta treatise on what a world full of AI slop and questionably generated material will wreak on our perception, tenuous as it is already. One could also say that it's a bit of unearned ambiguity. Our standards haven't fallen so far yet as to not hope for art with a clear vision.

**Load-Date:** October 1, 2024

Pick of the day



**Pick of the day**

i-news

September 25, 2024

SC1 Edition

Copyright 2024 Associated Newspapers Ltd. All Rights Reserved

**Section:** FEATURES; Pg. 35

**Length:** 32 words

**Body**

---

The Artificial Human 3.30pm, BBC Radio 4 Aleks Krotoski (above) and Kevin Fong examine the world of **AI slop**: mass-produced, low-quality images that have spread like wildfire over social media.

**Load-Date:** September 25, 2024

---

End of Document



## *Radio choice*

The Daily Telegraph (London)  
September 25, 2024 Wednesday  
Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2024 Telegraph Media Group Limited All Rights Reserved

# The Daily Telegraph

**Section:** FEATURES; Pg. 28

**Length:** 109 words

## Body

---

A Suspension of Mercy Radio 4 Extra, 2.30pm & 8.30pm One of the best of Radio 4 Extra's crop of rediscovered "lost" classics is this nail-biting 1985 adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's psychological thriller. Stuart Milligan walks a "did-he, didn't-he?" tightrope as a writer suspected of murdering his wife when she disappears while taking time out from their marriage. Aleks Krotoski and Kevin Fong, meanwhile, are back with a new run of The Artificial Human (Radio 4, 3.30pm), this week exploring how online spam has evolved into **AI slop** - mass produced, low quality **AI** images that go viral. Will such images be the death of social media? Gerard O'Donovan

**Load-Date:** September 25, 2024

---

End of Document

Wednesday 25 September



## Wednesday 25 September

The Times (London)

September 21, 2024 Saturday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2024 Times Newspapers Limited All Rights Reserved

# THE TIMES

**Section:** SATURDAY REVIEW;FEATURES; Pg. 42**Length:** 487 words

## **Body**

---

TIMES RADIO 5.00am Rosie Wright with Early Breakfast 6.00 Aasmah Mir and Stig Abell with Times Radio Breakfast 10.00 Hugo Rifkind 1.00pm Andrew Neil 2.00 Jane Garvey and Fi Glover 4.00 John Pienaar with Times Radio Drive 6.00 Pienaar and Friends 7.00 The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay 10.00 Carole Walker 1.00am The Best of Times Radio RADIO 2 6.30am The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show 9.30 Vernon Kay 12.00 Jeremy Vine 2.00pm Scott Mills 4.00 Sara Cox 6.30 Sara Cox's Half Wower 7.00 Jo Whiley's Shiny Happy Playlist 7.30 Jo Whiley 9.00 Folk Show 10.00 Trevor Nelson's Rhythm Nation RADIO 3 6.30am Breakfast 9.30 Essential Classics 1.00pm Classical Live 3.00 Live Choral Evensong. With music by Imogen Holst, Leighton, Brahms and Ropok 4.00 Composer of the Week: Gluck. How Gluck became a fixture of Vienna's musical scene 5.00 In Tune 7.00 Classical Mixtape 7.30 Radio 3 in Concert. Manchester Camerata perform a programme of Mozart 9.45 The Essay: Music Rediscovered. Oskar Jensen sings the Millions be Free 10.00 Night Tracks 11.30 'Round Midnight 12.30am Through the Night

RADIO 4 5.30am News Briefing 5.43 Prayer for the Day 5.45 Farming Today 6.00 Today 9.00 More or Less 9.30 The Coming Storm. Gabriel Gatehouse enters a world where nothing is as it seems 10.00 Woman's Hour 11.00 A Wild Ride(r) 11.45 Book of the Week: The Siege. By Ben Macintyre (8/10)

12.04pm You and Yours 1.00 The World at One 1.45 Superhead. John Dickens investigates the superheads transforming failing schools 2.00 The Archers. Opportunity knocks for Fallon (r) 2.15 Drama: Riot Girls - Dykes. The angry 1970s give way to the more repressive 1980s (2/3) 3.00 Money Box Live 3.30 The Artificial Human. New series. Aleks Krotoski and Kevin Fong examine the world of AI slop 4.00 The Media Show. The latest news from the fastchanging media world 5.00 PM. With Evan Davis 6.00 Six O'Clock News 6.30 Paul Sinha's Perfect Pub Quiz. The host and his live audience compile the questions for a perfect pub quiz (r) 7.00 The Archers. George is struggling with recent events 7.15 Front Row. Arts programme 8.00 AntiSocial (r) 8.45 Profile (r) 9.00 The Life Scientific (r) 9.30 All in the Mind (r) 10.00 The World Tonight 10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Last Loves of Ronnie Maker (3/5) 11.00 Follow the Rabbit. A local woman claims she has a demon living in her biscuit tin (4/5) 11.15 The



Wednesday 25 September

Skewer 11.30 The Gift (r) 12.00 News and Weather 12.30am Book of the Week: The Siege (8/10) (r) 12.48 Shipping Forecast 1.00 As BBC World Service

A Suspension of Mercy Radio 4 Extra, 2.30pm

Every day this week, Radio 4 Extra is airing five "lost" BBC dramas. Today's offering is an adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's psychological thriller. The novelist Sydney Bartleby (Stuart Milligan, above) is a writer of thrillers. His wife, with whom he has a fractious relationship, has "died" many times in his imagination. But when she disappears, he finds himself under investigation.

**Load-Date:** September 21, 2024

---

End of Document

Honor recognizes unique contributions to the field, including Glaze and Nightshade tools



## **Honor recognizes unique contributions to the field, including Glaze and Nightshade tools**

The Pulse: Finch University of Health Sciences

September 6, 2024 Friday

University Wire

Copyright 2024 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

**Section:** LATESTSTORIES; Pg. 1

**Length:** 719 words

**Byline:** Miranda Redenbaugh

### **Body**

---

TIME magazine announced Sept. 5 that it has named Ben Zhao, the University of Chicago Neubauer Professor of Computer Science, to its TIME100 **AI** list.

The TIME100 **AI** list celebrates individuals who are shaping the future of **AI**, a technology that continues to revolutionize industries. As TIME highlights, the rapid growth of **AI** is driven not just by the technology itself, but by the people behind it—those who make critical decisions about its development, safety, and application.

Zhao's recognition on this list highlights his significant contributions and leadership, particularly in the areas of adversarial machine learning and security—a field that explores how machine learning models can be manipulated and how to defend against such attacks.

He is particularly known in the field for protective tools to mitigate harms of **AI**, including tools like Nightshade and Glaze, which artists can apply to their works to protect them from being scraped and used without consent to train **AI** models.

#### **Innovation and impact**

Zhao's research has spanned a broad range of areas, including networking, human-computer interaction, and security and privacy. Since 2016, he has focused on addressing security and privacy challenges in machine learning and mobile systems. Most recently, his work has centered on adversarial machine learning and developing tools to protect human creatives from the potential harms of generative **AI** models.

"My experiences across different areas (but especially in human-computer interaction) has taught me the value of engaging with users to truly understand how research and technology impacts real people," said Zhao. "As a result, I am always drawn to research challenges that impact large groups of people, and projects that address those challenges by taking into account perspectives of the users most directly impacted."

Honor recognizes unique contributions to the field, including Glaze and Nightshade tools

He is particularly known in the field for tools to mitigate harms of AI. This line of work began in 2020, with Fawkes, an image cloaking tool designed to prevent third parties from building unauthorized facial recognition models of individuals based on public photos online.

Zhao's team also developed Nightshade, which proactively protects content copyright of visual artwork by making them toxic to AI models that train on them without consent, and Glaze, which protects individual artists against style mimicry.

These programs make changes to an image that are nearly imperceptible to the human eye, but significantly change what the AI "sees."

Since its release in January 2024, Nightshade has been downloaded nearly a million times.

As AI continues to evolve at a breakneck pace, the insights and innovations of leaders like Zhao will play a crucial role in shaping the technology's future.

"The recent rush towards generative AI has been spurred on by an aura of inevitability, promises of societal benefits, and massive profits," Zhao warned. "While many of these have yet to materialize, harms like copyright violation, proliferation of AI slop and deepfakes, and disruption to creative sectors are here today. These are the harms our lab works to mitigate through our research."

Zhao is an ACM Fellow and a recipient of the NSF CAREER award, the Internet Defense Prize, and MIT Technology Review's TR-35 Award, among others. His work has been featured in prominent media outlets such as the New York Times, Scientific American, NBC, CNN, BBC, and the Wall Street Journal, underscoring the broader societal impact of his research.

In addition to his research, Zhao is deeply involved in the academic community. He serves on technical program committees for top conferences in computer security (ACM CCS, IEEE Security & Privacy) and machine learning (NeurIPS). At University of Chicago, he co-directs the Security, Algorithms, Networking, and Data Lab at UChicago alongside Neubauer Professor Heather Zheng and serves as the Director of Graduate Studies for the Department of Computer Science.

"I'm humbled by this recognition, and proud to share it with my long-term collaborator Prof. Heather Zheng, our wonderful students, and the many human artists, writers and other creatives working with us to build a future ecosystem where human creativity is valued more than technology," Zhao said.

- Adapted from an article first published by the Department of Computer Science.

**Load-Date:** September 6, 2024



## **'Trump is just trying to stay relevant': Inside the ex-president's AI-generated images frenzy**

The Independent (United Kingdom)

September 3, 2024 Tuesday 4:01 PM EST

Copyright 2024 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved



**Length:** 872 words

**Byline:** Mike Bedigan

### **Body**

---

First appeared "Comrade Kamala" with a hammer and sickle. Then, a line of blonde women wearing "Swifties for [Trump](#)" merch. By the time Donald Trump himself appeared riding a lion, it was clear: fan-generated **AI** images were the [Republican candidate's latest obsession](#).

The former president has been sharing such images as far back as March 2023, with his face photoshopped onto images including a Second World War soldier, a cowboy and even the muscle-bound body of Rambo - earnestly and unironically.

Yet the frequency of Trump's sharing of such fantastical images has ramped up considerably in recent weeks. Notably, it seems, following the ascension of [Kamala Harris](#) to become the Democratic nominee and the online success of her own campaign.

June Cross, director of the Documentary Journalism Program at Columbia University, suggests one simple reason for this: Trump is just trying to stay relevant.

"In 2016, whatever Trump posted actually blew into the liberal media," Cross tells *The Independent*. "People would be reacting like 'can you believe this outrageous thing he said today?' I'm not sure if that's happening this time around, because Kamala has proven herself as adept at using social media as Trump was. She's just better at coming up with memes."

[Link to Image](#)

The Harris campaign has [quickly excelled in the online sphere](#), ever since British pop singer Charli XCX declared that "kamala is brat" - a reference to her wildly popular new album. The addition of Tim Walz, already familiar with viral videos, thanks to his daughter Hope, has only built momentum.

'Trump is just trying to stay relevant': Inside the ex-president's AI-generated images frenzy

Cross suggests that Trump's over-posting of **AI** images is, as the younger generation might say, an attempt to "clap back" at the Harris campaign in whatever way he can. "It's almost like throwing spitballs on the wall and seeing what will stick," she tells *The Independent*.

But Trump's online posting - unlike that of his political rivals - is, and always has been, much more sincere.

From his first presidential campaign in 2016, Trump has attempted to project an image of himself as a strong leader, capable of uniting America in the face of great evil. Now, thanks to **AI**, he and the Republicans have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothetical realities they are peddling to their supporters, who seem receptive to the visual hyperbole of **AI slop** that now dominates right-wing social media platforms and accounts.

"Things like him on the lion or lying about Taylor Swift, it's aimed at trying to boost the morale of his supporters who do not get their news from anywhere else," Cross says. "And there's a whole army of people, of Trump supporters out there who get their news from social media... They don't trust any of the mainstream outlets."

[pic.twitter.com/H0ExcNXBdl](https://pic.twitter.com/H0ExcNXBdl)

- Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump)

[August 18, 2024](#)

Social commentator and activist Patrick Jones - known online as Mr Jones X - agrees. The integration of **AI** images into Trump's campaign is about strengthening his support base, not expanding it, he says.

"He understands that these visual images have the ability to sway a specific demographic of people, because if they see a thing, especially if it's coming from him on X or Truth Social, they're going to believe it," Jones tells *The Independent*.

The Trump campaign is already in possession of some of the most powerful political imagery of the past decade: the president's mugshot, and defiant, fist-raised stance following the attempt on his life being just two. But in the wake of Joe Biden stepping down and Harris emerging as the Democratic party's presidential candidate, this seems to have been forgotten.

"It was absolute panic, because now none of those talking points were going to work any longer. The whole framework of their campaign - essentially, they had to throw it out," Jones says. The momentum of the Harris-Walz campaign is "hard to combat", he adds. "So now you have to come up with the most absurd talking points, the most absurd arguments."

The former president's recent fixation on **AI**-generated promotions comes at a time in which serious concerns are being raised in Congress about the use of such content in the upcoming election - though there are currently few if any federal laws or regulations.

[Link to Image](#)

In March, Democratic senator Amy Klobuchar, of Minnesota, introduced two bills to address voter-facing **AI**-generation election content; one to ban deep-fakes of candidates, and the other to require disclosures on **AI**-manipulated political ads.

Republicans on the Senate Rules Committee voted against both, but a Democratic majority advanced the bills out of committee in May. They then failed a unanimous consent vote on the Senate floor in July and are still waiting for another go at a full Senate vote. But these images can have a bigger impact than a funny social media post.

"It's definitely potentially dangerous," says Cross. "What they did in 2016 was actually dissuade people from going to the polls. And you've got states where the margins are anywhere from 7,000 to 20,000 votes.

'Trump is just trying to stay relevant': Inside the ex-president's AI-generated images frenzy

"So if you can get those people to stay home, or get those people to switch votes a tiny number of them, or even not vote, that would be significant in the seven swing states that we're looking at right now."

**Load-Date:** September 4, 2024

---

End of Document



## *Inside Trump's weird new obsession with AI-generated images*

Irish Independent

September 2, 2024 Monday

Edition 1, National Edition

Copyright 2024 Independent Newspapers Ireland Limited All Rights Reserved

**Independent.ie** 

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 18,19

**Length:** 882 words

**Byline:** MIKE BEDIGAN

### **Body**

---

Republicans using new tech to create 'visual hyperbole' to peddle to their supporters online

First appeared "Comrade Kamala" with a hammer and sickle. Then, a line of blonde women wearing "Swifties for Trump" merch. By the time Donald Trump himself appeared riding a lion, it was clear: fan-generated AI images were the Republican candidate's latest obsession.

The former president has been sharing such images as far back as March 2023, with his face photoshopped onto images including a WW2 soldier, a cowboy and even the muscle-bound body of Rambo - earnestly and unironically.

Yet the frequency of Trump's sharing of such fantastical images has ramped up considerably in recent weeks, notably, it seems, following the ascension of Kamala Harris to become the Democratic nominee and the online success of her own campaign.

June Cross, director of the Documentary Journalism Programme at Columbia University, suggests one simple reason for this: Trump is just trying to stay relevant.

"In 2016, whatever Trump posted actually blew into the liberal media," Cross said.

"People would be reacting like 'can you believe this outrageous thing he said today?' I'm not sure if that's happening this time around, because Kamala has proven herself as adept at using social media as Trump was.

She's just better at coming up with memes."

The Harris campaign has quickly excelled in the online sphere, ever since British pop singer Charli XCX declared that "Kamala is brat" - a reference to her wildly popular new album.

## Inside Trump's weird new obsession with AI-generated images

The addition of Tim Walz, already familiar with viral videos, thanks to his daughter Hope, has only built momentum.

Cross suggests that Trump's over-posting of **AI**-images is, as the younger generation might say, an attempt to "clap back" at the Harris campaign in whatever way he can.

"It's almost like throwing spitballs on the wall and seeing what will stick," she said.

But Trump's online posting - unlike that of his political rivals - is, and always has been, much more sincere.

From his first presidential campaign in 2016, Trump has attempted to project an image of himself as a strong leader, capable of uniting America in the face of great evil.

Now, thanks to **AI**, he and the Republicans have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothetical realities they are peddling to their supporters, who seem receptive to the visual hyperbole of **AI slop** that now dominates right-wing social media platforms and accounts.

"Things like him on the lion or lying about Taylor Swift, it's aimed at trying to boost the morale of his supporters who do not get their news from anywhere else," Cross says.

"And there's a whole army of people, of Trump supporters out there who get their news from social media... They don't trust any of the mainstream outlets."

Social commentator and activist Patrick Jones - known online as Mr Jones X - agrees. The integration of **AI** images into Trump's campaign is about strengthening his support base, not expanding it, he says.

"He understands that these visual images have the ability to sway a specific demographic of people, because if they see a thing, especially if it's coming from him on X or Truth Social, they're going to believe it,"

Jones told The Independent.

The Trump campaign is already in possession of some of the most powerful political imagery of the past decade: the president's mugshot, and defiant, fist-raised stance following the attempt on his life being just two. But in the wake of Joe Biden stepping down and Harris emerging as the Democratic party's presidential candidate, this seems to have been forgotten.

"It was absolute panic, because now none of those talking points were going to work any longer. The whole framework of their campaign - essentially, they had to throw it out," Jones says.

The momentum of the Harris-Walz campaign is "hard to combat", he adds. "So now you have to come up with the most absurd talking points, the most absurd arguments."

The former president's recent fixation on **AI**-generated promotions comes at a time in which serious concerns are being raised in Congress about the use of such content in the upcoming election - though there are currently few if any federal laws or regulations.

In March, Democratic senator Amy Klobuchar, of Minnesota, introduced two bills to address voter-facing **AI**-generation election content; one to ban deep-fakes of candidates, and the other to require disclosures on **AI**-manipulated political ads.

Republicans on the Senate Rules Committee voted against both, but a Democratic majority advanced the bills out of committee in May. They then failed a unanimous consent vote on the senate floor in July and are still waiting for another go at a full senate vote. But these images can have a bigger impact than a funny social media post.

"It's definitely potentially dangerous," says Cross.

"What they did in 2016 was actually dissuade people from going to the polls. And you've got states where the margins are anywhere from 7,000 to 20,000 votes.



## Inside Trump's weird new obsession with AI-generated images

"So if you can get those people to stay home, or get those people to switch votes a tiny number of them, or even not vote, that would be significant in the seven swing states that we're looking at right now." (© The Independent)

"There's an army of people out there who get their news from social media... they don't trust the mainstream"

## Graphic

---

Donald Trump dances onstage with Moms for Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice at an event in Washington on Friday night. Photo: ReutersLeft, a fake AI-generated of Kamala Harris holding a communist rally; above, an AI image saying Taylor Swift is backing Trump; and, below, an AI image of Trump riding a lion. Images: Twitter

**Load-Date:** September 2, 2024

---

End of Document

Bigger picture of Trump's weird AI images obsession The Republican party and its presidential nominee now have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothet....



**Bigger picture of Trump's weird AI images obsession; The Republican party and its presidential nominee now have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothetical realities they are peddling to their supporters, writes Mike Bedigan**

The Independent - Daily Edition

September 2, 2024 Monday

First Edition

Copyright 2024 Independent Print Ltd All Rights Reserved

**The**  **INDEPENDENT**

**Section:** WORLD; Pg. 17

**Length:** 862 words

**Byline:** MIKE BEDIGAN

## **Body**

---

First appeared "Comrade Kamala" with a hammer and sickle. Then, a line of blonde women wearing "Swifties for Trump" merchandise. By the time Donald Trump himself appeared riding a lion, it was clear: fan-generated **AI** images were the Republican candidate's latest obsession.

The former president has been sharing such images since March 2023, with his face photoshopped onto images including a Second World War soldier, a cowboy, and even the muscle-bound body of Rambo - earnestly and without irony.

Yet the frequency of Trump's sharing of such fantastical images has ramped up considerably in recent weeks. Notably, it seems, following the ascension of Kamala Harris to become the Democratic nominee and the online success of her own campaign.

June Cross, director of the Documentary Journalism Programme at Columbia University, suggests one simple reason for this: Mr Trump is just trying to stay relevant.

"In 2016, whatever Trump posted actually blew into the liberal media," Ms Cross tells The Independent. "People would be reacting like 'can you believe this outrageous thing he said today?' I'm not sure if that's happening this time around, because Kamala has proven herself as adept at using social media as Trump was. She's just better at coming up with memes."

Bigger picture of Trump's weird AI images obsession The Republican party and its presidential nominee now have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothet....

The Harris campaign has quickly excelled in the online sphere, ever since British pop singer Charli XCX declared that "kamala is brat" - a reference to her wildly popular new album. The addition of Tim Walz, already familiar with viral videos, thanks to his daughter Hope, has only built momentum.

Ms Cross suggests that Mr Trump's over-posting of AI images is, as the younger generation might say, an attempt to "clap back" at the Harris campaign in whatever way he can. "It's almost like throwing spitballs on the wall and seeing what will stick," she tells The Independent.

But Mr Trump's online posting - unlike that of his political rivals - is, and always has been, much more sincere. From his first presidential campaign in 2016, Mr Trump has attempted to project an image of himself as a strong leader, capable of uniting America in the face of great evil. Now, thanks to AI, he and the Republicans have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothetical realities they are peddling to their supporters, who seem receptive to the visual hyperbole of AI slop that now dominates right-wing social media platforms and accounts.

"Things like him on the lion or lying about Taylor Swift, it's aimed at trying to boost the morale of his supporters who do not get their news from anywhere else," Ms Cross says. "And there's a whole army of people, of Trump supporters out there who get their news from social media... They don't trust any of the mainstream outlets."

Social commentator and activist Patrick Jones - known online as Mr Jones X - agrees. The integration of AI images into Mr Trump's campaign is about strengthening his support base, not expanding it, he says.

"He understands that these visual images have the ability to sway a specific demographic of people, because if they see a thing, especially if it's coming from him on X or Truth Social, they're going to believe it," Mr Jones tells The Independent.

The Trump campaign is already in possession of some of the most powerful political imagery of the past decade: the president's mugshot, and defiant, fist-raised stance following the attempt on his life being just two. But in the wake of Joe Biden stepping down and Ms Harris emerging as the Democratic party's presidential candidate, this seems to have been forgotten.

"It was absolute panic, because now none of those talking points were going to work any longer. The whole framework of their campaign - essentially, they had to throw it out," Mr Jones says. The momentum of the Harris-Walz campaign is "hard to combat", he adds. "So now you have to come up with the most absurd talking points, [and] the most absurd arguments."

The former president's recent fixation on AI-generated promotions comes at a time in which serious concerns are being raised in Congress about the use of such content in the upcoming election - though there are currently few if any federal laws or regulations.

In March, Democratic senator Amy Klobuchar, of Minnesota, introduced two bills to address voter-facing AI-generation election content; one to ban deep-fakes of candidates, and the other to require disclosures on AI-manipulated political ads.

Republicans on the Senate Rules Committee voted against both, but a Democratic majority advanced the bills out of committee in May. They then failed a unanimous consent vote on the Senate floor in July and are still waiting for another go at a full Senate vote. But these images can have a bigger impact than a funny social media post.

"It's definitely potentially dangerous," says Ms Cross. "What they did in 2016 was actually dissuade people from going to the polls. And you've got states where the margins are anywhere from 7,000 to 20,000 votes. So if you can get those people to stay home, or get those people to switch votes - a tiny number of them - or even not vote, that would be significant in the seven swing states that we're looking at right now."

Bigger picture of Trump's weird AI images obsession The Republican party and its presidential nominee now have a tool that allows them to visualise the hypothet....

---

End of Document



## [How did Donald Trump end up posting Taylor Swift deepfakes?](#)

The Guardian (London)

August 24, 2024 Saturday 5:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** TECHNOLOGY; Version:3

**Length:** 1114 words

**Byline:** Nick Robins-Early

**Highlight:** AI images posted to Truth Social bore the watermark of a tiny Texas non-profit looking to bankroll X users

### **Body**

---

When [Donald Trump](#) shared a [slew of AI-generated images](#) this week that falsely depicted [Taylor Swift](#) and her fans endorsing his campaign for president, the former US president was amplifying the work of a murky non-profit with aspirations to bankroll rightwing media influencers and a history of spreading misinformation.

Several of the images Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, which showed digitally rendered young women in "Swifties for Trump" T-shirts, were the products of the John Milton Freedom Foundation. Launched last year, the Texas-based non-profit organization frames itself as a press freedom group with the goal of "empowering independent journalists" and "fortifying the bedrock of democracy".

The group's day-to-day operations appear to revolve around sharing engagement bait on X and seeking millions from donors for a "fellowship program" chaired by a high school sophomore that would award \$100,000 to Twitter personalities such as Glenn Greenwald, Andy Ngo and Lara Logan, according to a review of the group's tax records, investor documents and social media output. The John Milton Freedom Foundation did not respond to a request for comment to a set of questions about its operations and fellowship program.

After months of retweeting conservative media influencers and echoing [Elon Musk](#)'s claims that freedom of speech is under attack from leftwing forces, one of the organization's messages found its way to Trump and then his millions of supporters.

Trump distanced himself from the images in an interview with Fox Business on Wednesday, saying: "I don't know anything about them other than someone else generated them. I didn't generate them."

Disinformation researchers have long warned that [generative AI](#) has the ability to lower the bar for creating misleading content and threaten information around elections. After Musk's xAI company released its largely

## How did Donald Trump end up posting Taylor Swift deepfakes?

unregulated Grok image generator last week, there has been a surge of **AI** content that has included depictions of Trump, Kamala Harris and other political figures. The Milton Freedom Foundation is one of many small groups flooding social media with so-called **AI slop**.

A niche non-profit's **AI slop** makes its way to Trump

During the spike in **AI** images on X, the conservative @amuse account [posted the images](#) of **AI**-generated Swift fans to more than 300,000 followers. On the text of the post, which was labeled “satire”, was a watermark that stated it was “sponsored by the John Milton Freedom Foundation”. Trump posted a screenshot of @amuse’s tweet on Truth Social.

The @amuse account has considerable reach itself, with about 390,000 followers on X and dozens of daily posts. Running @amuse appears to be Alexander Muse, listed as a consultant in the investor prospectus of the Milton Foundation, who also writes a rightwing commentary Substack that includes posts exploring election conspiracy theories. The @amuse account has numerous connections with Muse. The X account is connected to a Substack posting the same articles that Muse publishes on his LinkedIn page, which also has the username “amuse”, reflecting his first initial and last name. Muse’s book on how to secure startup funding, which includes examples of him asking [ChatGPT](#) to pretend it’s Musk and offer business advice, lists that same Substack account as its publisher.

Prominent accounts including Musk have shared and replied to @amuse’s posts, which recently have included **AI** depictions of Trump fighting Darth Vader and sexualized imagery of Harris. Its banner picture is currently an **AI**-generated photo of Trump surrounded by women in “Swifties” shirts. The account posts misleading, pro-Trump headlines such as claiming Harris turned hundreds of thousands of children over to human traffickers as “border czar”. The headlines, like the **AI**-generated Swifties for Trump images, come with the watermark “sponsored by the John Milton Freedom Foundation”.

The John Milton Freedom Foundation, named after the 17th-century British poet and essayist, has a small online footprint: a website, an investor prospectus and an X account with fewer than 500 followers. The team behind it, according to its own documents, consists of five people based in the Dallas-Fort Worth area with varying degrees of experience in Republican politics. Muse’s daughter, described as a 10th grade honor student on the non-profit’s site, serves as the Milton Foundation’s “fellowship chair”.

The foundation’s stated goal is to raise \$2m from major donors to award \$100,000 grants to a list of “fellows” made up of rightwing media influencers. These include people like the former CBS journalist turned far-right star Lara Logan, who was [cut from Newsmax](#) in recent years for going on a QAnon-inspired rant that claimed world leaders drink children’s blood, as well as the author of an anti-trans children’s book. The organization believes that this money would allow these already established influencers to “increase their reach by more than 10x in less than a year”, according to its investor prospectus.

While only one of the fellows listed on the foundation’s site mentions the organization on their X profiles and none follow its account, the @amuse account has a prominent link to the group’s community page and the foundation often engages with its posts.

It is not clear that the foundation has any money to give and if all the media influencers listed as its 2024 fellowship class know about the organization. One Texas-based account that posts anti-vaccine content lists itself as a “JMFF” fellow in their bio, but none of the others advertise any connection. The most recent tax records for the Freedom Foundation place it in the category of non-profits whose gross receipts, or total funds received from all sources, range from \$0 to \$50,000 – far below the millions it is seeking.

The organization’s board includes its chair, Brad Merritt, who is touted as an experienced Republican organizer with claims to have raised \$300m for various non-profits; its director, Shiree Sanchez, who served as assistant director of the Republican party of Texas between 1985 and 1986; and Mark Karaffa, a retired healthcare industry executive.

## How did Donald Trump end up posting Taylor Swift deepfakes?

Muse's experience in digital media appears to be far more extensive than the non-profit's other members. In addition to his blog, he claims to have worked with James O'Keefe, the former CEO of the rightwing organization [Project Veritas](#), who was known for hidden camera stings until [he was ousted last year](#) over allegations of misplaced funds. Muse, who is described in the prospectus as a "serial entrepreneur", also blogs about how to make money from generative **AI**.

**Load-Date:** August 26, 2024

---

End of Document

A banned promoter of cancer 'cures' was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is 'flooded with garbage'



## *A banned promoter of cancer 'cures' was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is 'flooded with garbage'*

The Guardian (London)

August 24, 2024 Saturday 9:00 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

theguardian

**Section:** AUSTRALIA NEWS; Version:2

**Length:** 1582 words

**Byline:** Ariel Bogle

**Highlight:** Australian Barbara O'Neill's 'natural self-healing' remedies found a certain audience through her own efforts. But her image has run wild thanks to unaffiliated groups exploiting her name on social media Follow our Australia news live blog for latest updates Get our morning and afternoon news emails, free app or daily news podcast

## Body

---

Five years ago, Barbara O'Neill was permanently banned from providing any health services in New South Wales or other Australian states.

O'Neill, whose website describes her as "an international speaker on natural healing", was [found by the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission \(HCCC\)](#) in 2019 to have given highly risky health advice to vulnerable people, including the use of bicarbonate soda as a cancer treatment.

Since then her views have found a much larger audience overseas and online, supported by elements of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) church and media networks in the US. So far this year O'Neill has spoken in the US, the UK and Ireland and advertised retreats in Thailand for thousands of dollars. A Facebook page managed in her name is promoting plans for O'Neill to tour Australia later this year, despite the commission's ruling.

[Sign up for Guardian Australia's free morning and afternoon email newsletters for your daily news roundup](#)

But O'Neill's story reveals not only the limits of a state health regulator. Beyond her own promotional efforts, a vast scam economy has grown up that profits from her notoriety without her authorisation.

Clips of O'Neill's health teachings, often dating as far back as 2012, now feed a voracious economy of unaffiliated Facebook pages and groups – more than 180 at one point – that are branded with her name and share lecture clips and recipes but are outside the control of O'Neill. Many are controlled by accounts based in Morocco, but attempts to contact administrators went unanswered.



A banned promoter of cancer ‘cures’ was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is ‘flooded with garbage’

Old clips of O’Neill are being used to sell herbal teas, Celtic salt and castor oil on TikTok, [as Vox found](#). **AI**-generated content of O’Neill on the app now goes even further, making up entirely new claims about her and her health advice.

Accounts on the app share generative **AI** images that falsely claim she “disappeared” after revealing that a certain mineral that will help people live for 100 years, or that show O’Neill being “arrested” for sharing apparent methods of natural healing such as black seed oil. The videos typically link to online stores or even Amazon where, naturally, the product referred to is for sale. Questions to account owners went unanswered.

It’s part of an emerging online ecosystem in which would-be digital creators in search of easy money follow trending topics such as O’Neill’s health claims, and use generative **AI** to create eye-catching and often bizarre images on social media – often sending viewers to online stores.

Jason Koebler, cofounder of 404 Media, has explored the [“AI slop” economy](#) on Facebook. He suggests creators around the world are essentially “penetration testing” social media platforms to circumvent moderation policies and make money in new ways, building off content they know will capture attention. So-called “wellness secrets” fit the bill.

“That’s been the biggest effect of the generative **AI** boom,” he says. “The entire internet and social media platforms have been flooded with garbage.”

‘Genuine’ O’Neill content finds an audience

For years, O’Neill and her husband, Michael O’Neill – the founder of the Informed Medical Options party (now the Heart party), which opposes water fluoridation and [“No jab, no pay” immunisation requirements](#) – worked at the Misty Mountain health retreat in northern New South Wales.

She crisscrossed Australia giving health lectures, often in regional cities and outer suburbs such as Dandenong, SDA publications from the 2010s show. “Do you want better health?”, one ad from 2012 asked, indicating O’Neill would discuss high blood pressure and “overcoming depression”.

After a series of complaints in 2018 and 2019, the HCCC investigated some of her claims. [The commission found](#) that among her many claims was that cancer was caused by fungus and that it could be treated by “sodium bicarbonate wraps”.

Her comments about infant nutrition, antibiotics for pregnant women and vaccinations were also not based on evidence, the HCCC found, and she had “limited qualifications in the area of nutrition and dietetics”.

“Mrs O’Neill does not recognise that she is misleading vulnerable people (including mothers and cancer sufferers) by providing very selective information,” it concluded, and banned her permanently from providing any health services. The ban is enforceable in New South Wales, the ACT, Queensland and Victoria.

Misty Mountain [lost its charity status](#) in 2021. Yet despite the restrictions she faces in Australia, O’Neill maintains a rigorous international touring schedule. In May, she hosted an eight-day retreat in Phuket, Thailand that was advertised as costing between US\$2,979.80 (about A\$4,500) and US\$7,070.90.

A June event about childhood vaccinations run by an Australian anti-vaccine group advertised a “bonus zoom live with Barbara O’Neill” for about \$180.

“I believe it is our role to get this message out to as many as possible,” O’Neill said in a recent online interview. “The ban has actually freed me. It freed me to go places I don’t think I ever would have gone.”

Seventh-day Adventist networks have helped O’Neill continue to share her message. She has spoken at retreats and conferences organised by SDA institutes and colleges, though not all are affiliated with official church leadership.

A banned promoter of cancer 'cures' was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is 'flooded with garbage'

A flyer for a multi-day event in September 2023 organised by the Mountaintop SDA church in Maryland, seen by Guardian Australia, said O'Neill would lecture on topics including "Cancer: Causes and Treatments" and "Safeguarding Against Depression".

She has [featured prominently](#) on media published by Amazing Discoveries, a channel that broadcasts messages on "health, creation-evolution, media, current events, Bible prophecy, history, and Christian living".

"I do believe that Amazing Discoveries has certainly contributed to Barbara's fame but we are definitely not solely responsible," the executive director at Amazing Discoveries, Wendy Goubej, says. "The recent TikTok videos are I think what really catapulted her to prominence. It's sad to see that there are people who are misquoting her and misusing her information for personal gain."

The US General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists did not respond to a request for comment. A spokesperson for the church in Australia said O'Neill was not an employee and that the church had no involvement in her speaking engagements.

"In matters concerning health, the Seventh-day Adventist Church advises people to seek information and guidance from qualified and accredited healthcare professionals," they said.

#### Fake posts take up the message

But publicity genuinely affiliated with O'Neill is dwarfed by the avalanche of scam posts on almost every major social media platform. Even as videos are taken down, new accounts and claims emerge.

In July, a Facebook ad used faked Channel Nine news footage to claim that O'Neill, an "Australian health coach", had revealed a medicine that would heal "joint diseases" in three weeks. The page's operator, with a Democratic Republic of Congo phone number, said over WhatsApp they had no idea where the video came from and they believed their page had been hacked.

Other Facebook ads claim she has recommended everything from particular herbal salves to supplements that help men with impotence. An ad linked to a Dubai pharmacy claims she is "considered one of the best urologists in the world".

One particularly unconvincing video merges faked video and audio of the former Fox News personality Tucker Carlson and O'Neill to promote eyedrops.

In late 2023, O'Neill's team shared a video on her verified Instagram account addressing the deluge of fakes online. The post said that while she was grateful for fan pages that "faithfully share" her teachings, "it is important to clear up some misconceptions as people have been impersonating Barbara on social media and selling consultations and 'cures'."

In August, her Facebook page again posted about the scams. "So many people still being tricked," it read. "We are tagged in stories of people excited about purchasing fake items or products sold off fake AI videos."

Tara Kirk Sell, a senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, says the phenomenon around O'Neill "shows the limit of regulatory powers".

"I think that a lot of people are looking for easy solutions in this space: 'if only we could take all this content off social media ... the problem would be solved'.

"Well, it's not that easy, right?"

A Meta spokesperson said the company was reviewing the Facebook ads flagged by Guardian Australia. "Meta adopts a multi-faceted approach to tackle scams," he said. "We use both technology, such as new machine learning techniques, and specially trained reviewers to identify and action content and accounts that violate our policies."

A banned promoter of cancer 'cures' was hijacked by genAI. Now the internet is 'flooded with garbage'

A TikTok spokesperson said the platform did not allow impersonation accounts "or attempts to defraud or scam members", and removed an account sharing generative **AI** images of O'Neill identified by the Guardian. "In Australia, between January and March 2024, we removed over 73,000 videos for violating our Frauds and Scams Policy, with 98% of these taken down proactively before anyone reported them," they said.

An HCCC spokesperson said it could not comment on specific cases or speculate on potential complaints. "The global spread of health misinformation through social media is an ongoing concern for the commission," he said.

O'Neill did not respond to requests for comment.

**Load-Date:** August 25, 2024

---

End of Document



## **Twitter page gains thousands of followers for making fun of Facebook posts**

CE Noticias Financieras English

August 14, 2024 Wednesday

Copyright 2024 Content Engine, LLC.

All Rights Reserved

Copyright 2024 CE Noticias Financieras All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 372 words

### **Body**

---

Anyone who has an account on a social network knows that each platform has its own particularities, which means that its audience is also unique. In a "crossover", a profile on X (old) has been successful for making fun of bizarre posts made using images generated by artificial intelligence.

Théodore Cazals, 19, is a French student living in Paris and the creator of the profile "Insane Facebook ***AI slop***" (low-quality madness made by artificial intelligence on Facebook, in free translation), which already has more than 100,000 followers since its creation in April.

The images published on Mark Zuckerberg's network are generally appealing and stir users' empathy and superstition because they portray sad situations, despite being unrealistic. They are also accompanied by phrases that encourage user engagement. Prints of these posts ended up on X as a joke.

The page came about when Théodore Cazals realized that this type of post generated a lot of engagement on X. Although he is the only one behind the profile, there is collaboration from followers, who send suggestions by private message.

According to Cazals, the aim of the page is to show a side of Facebook that many X users don't know about. In addition, the young Frenchman suggests that the content helps his followers to know what less tech-savvy relatives are consuming - and believing - on the social network.

The Frenchman says that the page didn't gain many followers in its first month, but has grown a lot recently. "The ridiculous aspect of the images and the fact that they mock less technologically literate people is what makes it so successful," he says.

Cazals has come to see the page as a product that could be worth something in the future. He explains that if this type of content no longer engages, he intends to change the name and subject matter in order to make the most of the space with the followers he has already gained.

Here are the main posts from X's @FacebookAIslop page, formerly Twitter:

"I'm poor. Who loves me?"

"The biggest fish in the whole world"

"Incredible photo of a truck full of babies"

"Why do images like this never go viral?"

"When Peter Griffin visited Africa to donate food"

"Today is my birthday"

"Nobody loves me because I'm poor"

Twitter page gains thousands of followers for making fun of Facebook posts

**Load-Date:** August 15, 2024

---

End of Document



## **Letter writer declares 'Durango Decline' citing online classes, branding and merch**

The Gateway: University of Nebraska at Omaha

June 24, 2024 Monday

University Wire

Copyright 2024 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

**Section:** NEWS; Pg. 1

**Length:** 276 words

### **Body**

---

It's hard not to notice as you walk about our campus that the higher-ups are hard at work rebranding each and every aspect of our fine institution with the "Maverick" or "Durango" moniker. We have a Maverick Store, Advising Center, Productions, the list goes on. While I can appreciate the sentiment of building community in a low-prestige commuter school, we've officially entered the era of "Durango Decline".

Somewhere along the line, the higher-ups decided that shifting to prioritizing totally online, self-paced course sections would help improve accessibility and fit more people into classes, so why not do it? Plus, it's another thing to charge fees for.

Well, students went all in for this. And why is that? Because, in most online sections, one can get away with pasting **AI slop** three times a week into a discussion board. Because, in most cases, professors or grad instructors are too busy to bother enforcing any kind of academic rigor in their online sections. Because, you don't need to really be present or part of the community to get your rubber-stamp credits.

Don't get me wrong - we need to include students who work full-time, and can't attend regularly scheduled classes. There's other options, though, like night and weekend classes, as well as synchronous online classes. All of those, of course, would take money and effort, which UNO would rather spend on flimsy Maverick merch.

Congrats to UNO for improving the accessibility of an education, by making sure nobody gets one at all.

Editor's Note

The Gateway welcomes letters to the editor as a part of our duty to provide a public forum for the university. Please submit any letters here.

**Load-Date:** June 24, 2024

Comment: 'We deserve more than reheated housing ideas and AI slop'



## **Comment: 'We deserve more than reheated housing ideas and AI slop'**

standard.co.uk

June 12, 2024 Wednesday 11:54 AM EST

Copyright 2024 Evening Standard Limited All Rights Reserved

**London  
Evening  
Standard**

**Length:** 435 words

**Byline:** India Block

### **Body**

---

The manifestos and housing pledges are dropping, and with it any hope for serious ideas to help London's struggling renters and homeowners.

Nothing even vaguely fresh or original has made it onto the menu.

Labour suggested it would [extend the Conservative's 95 per cent mortgage scheme](#) to help first-time buyers (FTBS). In reality, anyone who can't save for a deposit will struggle to pass the mortgage checks, especially in pricey London.

The Conservatives are still insisting they'd totally be able to pass the Renters Reform Bill in ban section 21, a broken promise from the last election.

[They also want to bring back Help To Buy](#), which begs the question why they stopped it in the first place - seeing as London new build prices are now permanently inflated.

Lib Dems want to bring in Rent to Own for social housing, a rebranded Right to Buy that would require a lot more social housing to replace the stock moving into private ownership. They'd also build 10 garden cities, location undetermined.

"Quality housing should be our shared future, not a reanimated zombie of the past."

Labour is beating the drum for new towns too, getting into bed with Conservative think tank Create Streets with a New Town's Code that promises new urban hubs with old world charm.

Create Streets' **AI**-created images of leafy streets and faux-Edwardian mansion blocks should give us all pause.

Comment: 'We deserve more than reheated housing ideas and AI slop'

Looking to RETVRN to a non-existent halcyon past of housing is an alt-right dog whistle, one that won't fly in multicultural London.

The appeal of building an entirely new place is you don't have to risk upsetting existing residents by bolting on hundreds of new homes.

But much of this NIMBYism is underpinned by the real fear over having to share already over-stretched public services, not fussing over the visual familiarity.

New homes need sufficient GP appointments and school places - they don't need to smuggle in weird nationalist ideas.

That Create Streets has to resort to image generators likely trained on stolen art speaks to a lack of commitment to serious design that values human labour.

We have plenty of smart architects and urban planners working on contemporary housing ideas for our city. [Just look at the winners of the recent RIBA London awards.](#)

Quality housing should be our shared future, not a reanimated zombie of the past.

Read More

[General election: Labour pledges 'Freedom to Buy' mortgage guarantee scheme - but will it work in London?](#)

[Tory manifesto: pledge to revive Help to Buy scheme 'devoid of imagination' say property experts](#)

[Comment: Can the general election rescue a bedraggled London housing market?](#)

**Load-Date:** June 28, 2024





## *The Artificial is Rarely Intelligent*

Free The People

June 5, 2024 Wednesday

Copyright 2024 Content Engine, LLC.

All Rights Reserved

Copyright 2024 Free the People, USA All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 1196 words

**Byline:** Taylor Lewis

### **Body**

---

Jerry Seinfeld's commencement speech at Duke garnered national attention for the wrong reason. The handful of kids who petulantly stomped out in protest of Seinfeld's "Zionism," which I guess means being Jewish and believing your race deserves a homeland free of wanton pogroms, earned a few headlines, while also kicking in the Streisand Effect, awarding the sitcom star even more media regard. Score one for the children being carpet-bombed in Rafah, right?

What Seinfeld told graduates, which in typical comedic fashion cut against the grain of public sentiment, was approbatory. So of course it wasn't sensationalized. He issued no angry adjurations to feel guilty about earning a college degree because someone, somewhere, probably in a Botswanan bidonville, will never achieve the same credential. No preening "land acknowledgement." No "remember your fellow man" Dickensian platitudes meant to humble with humiliation. No cringey "change the world" injunction that inevitably leads to an overly idealistic student throwing him or herself into traffic to save the whooping crane.

Instead, Seinfeld ripped every page out of the DEI handbook, urging the audience to embrace their privilege and get this-be proud of their accomplishments. Who knew it was still legal to toot your own horn in America? (Lest you're a racial/sexual minority with a grievance pathology, obviously.)

That's all grand contrarian messages go, and Seinfeld's pro-privilege postulation would fit nicely in a Daily Wire infomercial. (Picture Ben Shapiro hyper-verbally sputtering, "Facts don't care about your feelings and privilege is good. You hear that, libs? PRIVILEGE IS GOOD. Ha! Triggered!") It's also uniquely American-that is, it was American up to about, by my estimate, seven years, fifty days, and thirty-two seconds ago when the Great Awakening entered its shame-success phase, when even the slightest flash of self-respect is slagged and maligned.

Being in favor of unapologetic excellence gives Seinfeld and edgelord verve. But he went further, needling America's most applauded class, after blacks, gays, and illegal migrants: the lazy. In particular, he went after the biggest boon to the slothful since the advent of DoorDash: artificial intelligence.

"AI," Seinfeld quipped, "is the most embarrassing thing we've ever invented in mankind's time on earth. Oh, you can't do the work. Is that what you're telling me? You can't figure it out?" You could almost hear the iconic bass line and laugh track as he delivered the bit. "This seems to be the justification of AI: I couldn't do it."

## The Artificial is Rarely Intelligent

That AI is a shortcut for the short-sighted and short-thinking is indisputable. The synthetic brain was coded to ease the pressure on organic brain tissue—that's its deontological purpose. Meanwhile, half of comedy's deontological purpose is, as Justin Taylor explains, is putting forth a "critique of the world as it is based on a vision of the world as it ought to be." The other half is to tickle your diaphragm with discernment.

Seinfeld mocks Silicon Valley's latest plaything as a godsend for hand-sitters, thumb-twiddlers, fiddle-fotters, dodderers, and work-shy corner-cutters. Extra points for Jerry: the shiftless need beration, if only to get their sorry hides off the couch.

Yet we seem to be increasingly settling for AI-generation in commercial areas that, as recently as a month ago, weren't subsumed by computerized composition. And the creations are far from triggering an "uncanny valley" feeling. They're downright chintzy.

Take Rudy Giuliani's fall from grace, hitting a new nadir with a panhandling coffee ad. America's mayor-turned-mendicant is fobbing off drop-ship java beans in cheaply cartoonish bags for \$30 a pop. "The will to survive," or pay off legal debt, "sweeps away moral imperatives," declared poet Marius Kociejowski. The spot Rudy recorded for his latest fleece-MAGA scheme was even jankier. He recorded his please-buy-plea in front of an obvious AI-produced background, complete with a Photoshop of his own product, which was supposed to resemble a Manhattan penthouse but comes across like a living room out of Sims 2. Just like his challenging the 2020 election results, Giuliani could hardly be accused of supererogatory effort.

The fakery involved in Giuliani's light-roast-grift is of a piece of widespread AI usage. There's always something off, something askew, something off the mark, something unholistic, something vaguely uneasy about digitized simulacrum of real life. The computerized-contoured images aren't all the way there; the .JPEGs can't pass a visual Turing test.

For one, there are the human hands, which most AI pic-producer flubs by turning digits and palms into alien echinoderms. Then there was the Google chatbot's wokely unhistorical depictions of ethnicities, including Indian-shaded Vikings and blackified American Founding Fathers. Clearly, Gemini was coded with more Lin-Manuel Miranda than Noah Webster. There was also the amorous case where Microsoft's own AI avatar tried seducing a journalist—a very artificial affair, if you'll allow. Facebook, which was basically created by a borg passing as a man that has a surname curiously close to "sucker," hosts a multiplying ecosystem of bizarre "island of lost AI slop" content, including erotic martial Christian memes.

I know the left wants to sexualize everything, but J.C. being spooned by a biracial soldier couplet isn't something any human mind dreams up. It could only come from the rigidly binary algorithm of a circuit board that takes man-made inputs and pushes them to illogical-or maybe too logical-conclusions.

With the U.S. presidential election in high gear, and a long hot summer of hustings events on deck, the use of AI campaign tactics are no doubt underway. That also means a concomitant rise in shenanigans, including the use of deepfake videos and propagandic imagery. Fake news has long been in America's stock of electoral weapons, but AI has the capacity to take the mendacious scheming of trolls to new heights. ChatGPT commandeered Scarlett Johansson's sultry voice; how long before a dirty trickster uses a comp-contrived Biden dialect to tell Democratic voters the election is really on November 12th? Answer: six months ago.

If artificial intelligence is a workaround for trying, it's going to take actual effort to parse the real from the ersatz. Piercing AI's verisimilitude will require, contra Seinfeld, us to do the work. Sometimes it'll be simple to spot the N64 diorama behind a washed-up pol selling repackaged Folgers. Other times, it will take that extra few seconds to realize what you're hearing or seeing isn't an organic creation but a tech-fashioned artifice.

I know it's noisy out there, and too easy to scroll along. But take the extra half-minute to question and consider if what you're looking at comports with reality. Remember Kipling and keep your head if you see a grainy video of President Biden reading Mein Kampf and his lips aren't matching the words he's supposedly reciting. And do not, under any circumstances, take the first Google result for gospel.

The post The Artificial is Rarely Intelligent appeared first on Free the People.

## The Artificial is Rarely Intelligent

**Load-Date:** June 6, 2024

---

End of Document



## [Morning Mail: Iran president in helicopter crash, family lawyers quit over burnout, City take Premier League](#)

The Guardian (London)

May 19, 2024 Sunday 10:10 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 The Guardian, a division of Transcontinental Media Group Inc. All Rights Reserved

**theguardian**

**Section:** AUSTRALIA NEWS; Version:1

**Length:** 1316 words

**Byline:** Charlotte Graham-McLay

**Highlight:** Want to get this in your inbox every weekday? Sign up for the Morning Mail here, and finish your day with our Afternoon Update newsletter

### **Body**

---

Good morning. A Guardian Australia investigation reveals some family lawyers are leaving their practices or warning juniors to avoid entering the field, as they experience burnout and stress from a system that requires them to bill domestic violence survivors – sometimes for huge amounts for legal fees.

Meanwhile, a helicopter carrying the Iranian president and foreign minister has crashed. At the time of writing, rescuers were yet to reach the crash site and the condition of the passengers was not known. Our [live blog has the latest](#).

Plus: Manchester City have taken their fourth-in-a-row Premier League title.

Australia | Justice | “I couldn’t do it any more,” [one family lawyer who has left the practice told Guardian Australia](#), echoing others’ stories. “I couldn’t bill people who I just knew couldn’t afford to pay it.” Housing | Major Australian lenders are [not doing enough to support mortgage customers in financial hardship](#), and in some cases they are ignoring requests for assistance altogether, the corporate regulator found. Analysis | Peter Dutton’s policy-lite budget reply speech [contained the seeds of campaigns](#) that will inevitably be deployed by the progressive side of politics on nuclear and wages, Paul Karp writes. Women | Scott Morrison said he and his government [did everything they “possibly could have” for women](#) while he was prime minister, and called criticism of his actions a pile-on which was “weaponised for political purposes”. Solar | With newly installed solar panels on his roof, Guardian Australia’s Nick Miller [gamified Australia’s power industry](#) – and learned just how weird and perverse it could be. World | Search teams were looking for the downed helicopter [that the Iranian president, Ebrahim Raisi, was travelling](#)

Morning Mail: Iran president in helicopter crash, family lawyers quit over burnout, City take Premier League

[in](#) when it vanished amid poor weather conditions and thick fog in Iran's East Azerbaijan province. US presidency | Donald Trump [flirted with the idea of being president for three terms](#) during a bombastic speech for the National Rifle Association. Meanwhile, the president, Joe Biden, [renewed his pitch to Black voters](#) at a college graduation.

Europe's far right | International far-right leaders, including France's Marine Le Pen, Hungary's Viktor Orbán, Italy's Giorgia Meloni and Argentina's Javier Milei, [came together in Madrid to rail against socialism](#) and "massive illegal migration" three weeks before hard-right parties are expected to see a surge in support in European elections.

Sean Combs | The rap mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs [admitted in a video apology that he punched and kicked his ex-girlfriend Cassie in 2016](#) in the hallway of a hotel after CNN released footage of the attack, saying he was "truly sorry" and his actions were "inexcusable".

Rocket man | Sixty-one years since he was selected but ultimately passed over to become the first Black astronaut, Ed Dwight [finally reached space in a Blue Origin rocket](#) – and, at 90, is the oldest person to arrive at the edge of space. Full Story

### Gaza through the eyes of two Australian doctors

Last month, two Australian doctors spent two weeks in Gaza treating countless injured Palestinians. Surgeon Sanjay Adusumilli and general practitioner Siraj Sira tell Nour Haydar [why they left Sydney to volunteer in the besieged territory](#), the pain they witnessed and the feelings of guilt on their return.

Read our latest on Gaza: The United Nations' humanitarian chief warned of ["apocalyptic" consequences due to aid shortages in Gaza](#), where Israel's military offensive in the southern city of Rafah has blocked desperately needed food.

### In-depth

She is the real-life Lady Whistledown, an eyebrow-raising female writer – anti-racist and proto-feminist – who penned a salacious weekly anonymous gossip sheet that skewered 18th-century London society.

Like the fictional pamphlet from Netflix hit Bridgerton, which returned for a third series last week, Eliza Haywood's The Parrot, published in 1746, has a distinctive, mocking voice that punches up and "speaks truth to power". Now, [a new book will republish Haywood's funny, subversive periodical](#), which she wrote from the perspective of an angry green parrot.

### Not the news

Your email inbox is full of spam. Your letterbox is full of junk mail. Now, your web browser has its own affliction: **slop**. "**Slop**" is what you get when you shove artificial intelligence-generated material up on the web for anyone to view. Experts hope the unpalatable name will help herald its harms.

It might be bizarrely incorrect information on a website, or dangerously incorrect books on Amazon (where you apparently shouldn't buy mushroom-foraging books written by machines). Or just downright cursed images on social media (sorry).

Alex Hern and Dan Milmo investigate [why all this AI slop is filling the zombie internet](#).

### The world of sport

Premier League | Manchester City [beat West Ham 3-1](#) to win their fourth Premier League title in a row. Here's [our play-by-play commentary](#). Arsenal were denied the title despite [a late 2-1 victory over Everton](#).

AFL | Essendon [left middle of the road behind](#) as their "edge" led them to the second spot, Jonathan Horn writes for Sportblog. Formula One | Max Verstappen [held off Norris](#) to win the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix. Media roundup

Morning Mail: Iran president in helicopter crash, family lawyers quit over burnout, City take Premier League

According to The Australian's Newspann, a - [record low number of people](#) have judged Jim Chalmers' third budget as good for the economy. Hundreds of homes in Melbourne [were suddenly deemed flood-prone](#) and residents want answers, the Age reports. The Courier Mail [investigates kids' addiction](#) to social media and gaming.

What's happening today Cold case | The Queensland coroner will deliver his findings from the inquest into the 1986 disappearance of Sharron Phillips. [AI](#) | A public hearing is scheduled for the [senate select committee on adopting artificial intelligence](#). Sign up

If you would like to receive this Morning Mail update to your email inbox every weekday, [sign up here](#). And finish your day with a three-minute snapshot of the day's main news. [Sign up for our Afternoon Update newsletter here](#).

Prefer notifications? If you're reading this [in our app](#), just [click here and tap "Get notifications" on the next screen](#) for an instant alert when we publish every morning.

Brain teaser

And finally, here are the Guardian's crosswords to keep you entertained throughout the day. Until tomorrow.

[Quick crossword](#) [Cryptic crossword](#)

**Load-Date:** June 28, 2024

---

End of Document