SYSTEM://

THE QUIET FEED

PRODUCT BRIEF v1.2 // JANUARY 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Quiet Feed is a read-only feed aggregator that surfaces signal from your existing social connections while filtering noise. It does not post, comment, or interact with source platforms. It exists to give you back your attention.

Core proposition: Your feeds, stripped of the garbage.

We have not been responsible with AI and we have broken the internet. The Quiet Feed is a filter between you and the flood.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

These principles inform every technical and product decision.

COMPUTATION

- **Process once, serve many.** For any post we show to a user, we do not repeat expensive compute. LLM scoring, semantic embedding, origin tracing, deduplication—all happen exactly once per content item. The first viewer pays the compute cost; every subsequent viewer (whether the same user or another) gets the cached result.
- **Tolerate duplication to avoid coordination.** Distributed systems fail at coordination. Locks, queues, and consensus protocols are where complexity hides. If two Lambda instances occasionally score the same item, that's fine—we take the first result and discard the second. Idempotent operations, content-addressed storage, eventual consistency. The cost of occasional duplicate work is far less than the cost of coordination bugs.
- **Cache at every layer.** CDN edge for global latency. Regional cache for warm data. Cold storage for historical analysis. Each layer reduces load on the layer below. The marginal cost of serving content should approach zero.

USER RELATIONSHIP

- **Fail in favour of the customer.** When a decision could go either way, choose the option that benefits the user, not the system. If in doubt about whether to show something, show it. If in doubt about whether to charge, don't. If in doubt about an error message, be honest about what went wrong.
- **Fail in favour of privacy.** When in doubt, collect less, store less, share less. Default to private. Require explicit opt-in for anything that could be considered tracking. If a feature requires more data than strictly necessary, find a different approach or drop the feature.

- **The user's data is theirs.** We process, we don't own. Full export at any time. Full deletion at any time. No lock-in. No hostage-taking. If a user leaves, they should be able to take everything meaningful with them.
- **Hospitality, not hostility.** The interface should feel like a good host: attentive, unobtrusive, anticipating needs without being creepy. Warm without being patronizing. Helpful without being pushy. Never condescending about technical ability.

ENGINEERING

- **Small pieces, loosely joined.** Each component does one thing. Compose them through clear interfaces. Make them replaceable. If a better scoring model emerges, we should be able to swap it without touching the rest of the system. No monoliths, no god objects, no hidden dependencies.
- **Show me the code.** Prefer working software over documentation, prototypes over design docs, evidence over argument. Ship something small that works, then iterate. Brutal honesty about what's broken.
- **Multiple routes to the summit.** Browser, terminal, API—different users prefer different interfaces. Don't force everyone through the same door. The CLI is a first-class citizen, not an afterthought. Interoperability over walled gardens.
- **Falling is part of the process.** Systems fail. Plan for it. Graceful degradation. Clear error messages. Automatic recovery where possible. No silent failures. When something breaks, tell the user what happened and what they can do about it.

CULTURE

- **Quiet confidence over loud promises.** No hype. No growth hacking. No dark patterns. No manufactured urgency. Let the work speak. If the product is good, people will tell each other. If it's not, no amount of marketing will save it.
- **Joy in craft.** Take the work seriously without taking yourself seriously. Excellence is not pretentious. Care about the details because details matter to users, not because anyone's watching. Pride in making something that works well.
- **Bloody-minded independence.** Don't be captured by platforms, investors, or trends. Sustainable business model from the start. Bootstrap mentality even if funded. Skepticism toward institutions that claim to know what's best for users.
- **Longevity through simplicity.** Build for the long term. Avoid dependencies that won't exist in ten years. Prefer boring technology. The goal is a tool that outlasts its creators, not a startup that exits.

PRODUCT VISION

ACCESS TIERS

TIER	ACCESS	FEATURES
ANONYMOUS	No login. Optional local storage for preferences.	Curated public feed. Quality scoring. Basic filters. Free forever.
ENHANCE	Free, authenticated. Social login for your own feeds.	All filters. Deep Dedup. Origin Trace. Persisted preferences. Free forever.
HARD COPY	Paid subscription. First month free.	Unlimited platforms. Export. API access. Priority processing.

Naming: "Enhance" and "Hard Copy" are Blade Runner ESPER scene references.

FEATURE SET

FEATURE	FUNCTION
SCORE	Quality rating 0-100. Composite of: originality, AI detection, engagement authenticity, information density, source reputation.
TRACE	Origin tracking. Propagation path: original → first reshare → derivatives.
DEDUP	Semantic deduplication. Clusters similar content. Shows highest-quality version.
MUTE	Complete exclusion. Nothing mentioning this topic or individual appears.
WIRE MODE	Headline normalization. Rewrites sensational headlines to factual substance.
SHIELD	Dark pattern neutralization. No autoplay. No infinite scroll. Chronological available.
DEMOTE	Promotional rebalancing. Identifies and marks sponsored content.
CLUSTER	Topic and geographic segmentation. Auto-categorization with override.
TERM	Terminal interface. Full feed experience in shell. Browser handoff for OAuth.

TERM: TERMINAL INTERFACE

TERM is a command-line client offering the complete Quiet Feed experience in your terminal. Text-first, keyboard-driven.

DESIGN LINEAGE

MU/TH/UR 6000 (Alien, 1979): The Nostromo's shipboard AI, designed by Ron Cobb. "Used future" aesthetic—CRT monitors, monospace text, institutional tone. The terminal as a place of truth-seeking, not decoration.

Claude Code (Anthropic, 2024–): Born from experiments hooking Claude to AppleScript. Key insight: "It's like a Unix utility... the same way you would compose grep or cat." The CLI as first-class citizen, not afterthought. Composable, scriptable, pipeable.

USAGE

- **Install:** npm install -g @quietfeed/term
- **Auth:** qf auth → opens browser, returns token
- **View:** qf feed | qf feed --source linkedin
- **Filter:** qf feed --mute "crypto" --wire-mode
- **Pipe:** qf feed --json | jq '.items[] | select(.score > 80)'
- **Interactive:** qf → vim-style navigation

AWS ARCHITECTURE

Design principle: Infrastructure for 10 users that works unchanged at 1,000,000. No re-architecture, no migration—just AWS auto-scaling and the economics of caching.

ACCOUNT TOPOLOGY

Multi-account AWS Organization under Polycode Limited. GitHub Actions authenticates via OIDC (no stored credentials).

ACCOUNT	PURPOSE
master	OIDC trust, apex DNS (Route53). Minimal, stable. Not part of CI/CD.
ci	Feature branch deployments, ephemeral stacks, integration tests.
prod	Production workloads (thequietfeed.com). Release deployments only.
backup	Cross-region replication, disaster recovery. One-way (cannot modify prod).

CDK STACKS

STACK	RESOURCES
DnsStack	Route53 hosted zone, ACM certificate
DataStack	DynamoDB tables (on-demand), S3 buckets
ApiStack	API Gateway (HTTP), Lambda functions (ARM64, Node.js 20)
CdnStack	CloudFront distribution, cache policies, edge locations
ObservabilityStack	CloudWatch dashboards, alarms, SNS notifications

WHY THIS SCALES

COMPONENT	AT 10 USERS	AT 1M USERS	CHANGE
CloudFront	Idle	95% of requests	None (auto)
API Gateway	Idle	Cache misses	None (auto)
Lambda	Cold starts OK	Warm, scaling	None (auto)

DynamoDB	On-demand min	On-demand scales	None (auto)

The content ceiling: The world produces ~100K unique quality items/day. At 1M users, you're not scaling content discovery—you're scaling distribution. Marginal cost per user approaches zero.

CACHING ARCHITECTURE

Core principle: Expensive operations (LLM scoring, embedding, origin tracing) run exactly once per content item. Results are immutably cached with the item's content hash as key. No user, including the first, should trigger the same expensive computation twice.

CACHE LAYERS

- **L1 - CDN Edge (CloudFront):** Scored items served globally. TTL: 1 hour for fresh content, 24 hours for stable. This is where most requests are served.
- **L2 - Regional Cache (DynamoDB):** Scores, embeddings, dedup clusters. TTL: 7 days. Content-addressed (hash of content → analysis results).
- **L3 - Cold Storage (S3):** Historical scores for trend analysis. Retained 90 days. Used for "how has this account's quality changed over time?"

WHAT WE CACHE

- **Scores and metadata:** Our derivative analysis. Quality scores, AI detection confidence, originality signals, dedup cluster membership, origin trace data.
- **Embeddings:** Semantic vectors for deduplication. These are mathematical representations, not content.
- **NOT cached:** The original content itself. We cache our analysis of content, keyed by content hash, but not the content. The content is always fetched fresh from source platforms via user's OAuth token.

Economic principle: The marginal cost of serving a scored item should approach zero. We pay for the first analysis; all subsequent views are nearly free. This is how we stay sustainable without surveillance capitalism.

LEGAL POSITION

OUR ARCHITECTURE

Our legal position is designed around two principles: (1) user-delegated access, and (2) derivative data only.

- **User-delegated access:** All platform API calls use the user's own OAuth tokens. We act as a tool the user has authorized, not as an independent scraper. The user has the right to access their own feeds; we're just the mechanism.
- **No content storage:** We do not cache, store, or persist the original content from source platforms. Every view fetches fresh content via the user's token.
- **Derivative data only:** What we cache is our own analysis: scores, embeddings, cluster memberships, trace data. These are our derivative works, keyed by content hash. The score is ours; the post is theirs.
- **Links to originals:** Every item links back to the source platform. We're a lens, not a destination. We drive traffic to platforms, not away from them.

CACHING AND COPYRIGHT

The caching question: does storing analysis results (keyed by content hash) implicate copyright in the underlying content?

- **We do not store the content itself.** A content hash (SHA-256 of the post text) is not the content—it's a fixed-length fingerprint that cannot be reversed to recover the original. Storing "hash abc123 has score 87" does not copy the post.
- **Analysis is transformative.** Quality scores, originality signals, and AI detection confidence are our original analysis. They comment on content rather than reproduce it. This is analogous to a review or critique—transformative use.
- **Embeddings are mathematical abstractions.** Semantic vectors used for deduplication are high-dimensional numerical representations. They cannot be decoded back to original text. Courts have generally not treated embeddings as copies.

FAVORABLE PRECEDENTS

- **hiQ v. LinkedIn (9th Cir. 2022):** Accessing publicly available data does not violate CFAA. User-authorized access is even stronger.
- **Meta v. Bright Data (N.D. Cal. 2024):** ToS cannot bind non-users. More relevant: court distinguished between scraping content vs. using API with authorization.
- **X v. Bright Data (N.D. Cal. 2024):** Dismissed. Platform's willingness to sell data undermined claims of harm.

RISK FACTORS

- **API access revocation:** Business risk, not legal risk. Platforms can terminate OAuth apps unilaterally. Mitigate: RSS fallback for public content, multiple platform support, clear user communication.
- **Evolving case law:** Reddit v. Perplexity (Oct 2025) and Google v. SerpApi (Dec 2025) may establish new precedents. Monitor closely.

- **DMCA 1201 theories:** Google v. SerpApi uses anti-circumvention rather than CFAA. Novel theory, unclear applicability to user-authorized access.

BUSINESS MODEL

PRICING

TIER	PRICE	VALUE
ANONYMOUS	Free forever	No login. Local storage opt-in for preferences.
ENHANCE	Free forever	Authenticated. Your feeds. Persisted data.
HARD COPY	10% margin pricing (floor $2/mo)	Unlimited platforms. Export. API.
$100 CLUB	$100/month during build	Lifetime free after trigger fires.

THE $100 CLUB: BELIEVER PRICING

Inspired by Roam Research's Believer pricing and Ghost's Kickstarter model: early adopters fund the build, then get rewarded when it succeeds.

- **$100/month** while we build. Full HARD COPY access from day one.
- **War chest trigger:** When 1 month's profit ≥ 24 months of running costs (2 years runway banked).
- **Founders go FREE:** All $100 Club members get lifetime free HARD COPY when trigger fires.
- **No cap on members:** More founders = faster trigger = everyone wins.

The Four Numbers

NUMBER	MEANING
$100/month	Founder price during build phase
24× costs	War chest trigger—1 month profit covers 2 years runway
10% margin	Post-trigger pricing floats to maintain this margin
$2 floor	Price never drops below this; surplus builds resilience

FEATURE MIGRATION MODEL

Features flow downward over time. What starts in HARD COPY migrates to ENHANCE when costs become tolerable and we have persisted user data to support it. What's in ENHANCE migrates to ANONYMOUS when it can work with optional local storage.

- **HARD COPY → ENHANCE:** When a feature's per-user cost drops below ~£0.50/month and requires only standard persisted data (OAuth tokens, preferences, connection history).
- **ENHANCE → ANONYMOUS:** When a feature can work with optional browser local storage and doesn't require server-side authentication.
- **Marketing principle:** ANONYMOUS and ENHANCE are how we demonstrate value. The more we give away free, the more obvious the product's worth. HARD COPY exists for power users and teams who need the extras, not as a gate on core functionality.

UNIT ECONOMICS

- **Primary cost:** LLM API for scoring (~£0.01-0.05 per item, amortized across viewers)
- **Target:** 60%+ gross margin at 500+ ENHANCE subscribers
- **Break-even:** ~200 paid subscribers

THE SLOPALYPSE: CONTEXT

For the record:

- 52% of new English-language articles are AI-generated (Kapwing)
- 51% of web traffic is automated (Imperva)
- "Slop" = Merriam-Webster's 2025 word of the year (M-W)
- Prediction: 99%+ AI-generated by 2030 (Copenhagen Institute)

END TRANSMISSION

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die."

— Roy Batty. Monologue by David Peoples, final line by Rutger Hauer. Source

Unlike Roy's memories, your feed shouldn't be lost in the noise. The Quiet Feed. Enhance. Stop.