

Please research Enshittification Failure/Modes

Here's a researched overview of **enshittification** — what it *is*, how experts describe its stages or “modes,” why it happens, and how it can fail or collapse.

What Is *Enshittification*?

Enshittification is a term (coined by writer **Cory Doctorow**) describing a **systematic decline in the quality of digital platforms and services over time** — particularly online platforms that change from being useful to being extractive and mediocre.

Wikipedia

At its core, it's a **process** (not a one-off glitch) whereby a platform:

1. **Attracts users** with a high-quality or generous service.
2. **Shifts focus to monetization**, prioritizing advertisers, business clients or extractive partners.
3. **Degrades experience** for both users *and* business customers to maximise short-term profit.
4. Eventually **collapses or becomes irrelevant** when value to all parties is lost.

Medium +1

This decline is also known as **crapification** or **platform decay**. Wikipedia

Three Core Phases of Enshittification

While not always described explicitly as “modes” by all commentators, the pattern usually breaks down into **three progressive phases**:

1. Attraction / Growth Phase

- New platforms are generous or innovative to draw users and build network effects.
- Often involves loss-funded pricing, few ads, good user experience, and low barriers to entry.

- Users adopt the service because it *works well*.

👉 This phase ends when the platform reaches a critical user base and becomes hard to leave. Medium

2. Exploitation / Monetization Phase

- Platform starts prioritising **business customers** (advertisers, sellers, partners) over users.
- Algorithms surface sponsored content; organic reach declines; users become “fuel” for monetisation.
- Quality of service begins to decline for most participants.

👉 This is the heart of the **enshittification dynamic**. Medium

3. Extraction / Decay Phase

- Platform pushes fees, limits features behind paywalls, or rigs systems to maximise profit.
- Users, creators, and business partners all lose value.
- Quality, trust, and satisfaction erode.
- If a viable alternative appears, the platform may decline sharply or collapse.

👉 Examples include degraded feeds, increased fees, worse search rankings, and poorer outcomes for third parties. Medium +1

🧠 Why It Happens — Underlying Incentives

Doctorow and others argue enshittification results from structural incentives:

- **Network effects and lock-in** — users stay because leaving is costly.
 - **Two-sided market tensions** — platforms extract value from both users and business customers.
 - **Profit maximisation over service quality** — shareholders and monetisation metrics dominate design decisions.
 - **Algorithms that optimise engagement and revenue, not utility.** Wikipedia
-

Examples (Illustrating Failure Modes)

Platforms and sectors where enshittification has been noted:

- **Social media** — feeds increasingly ad-driven or sensationalised.
- **Marketplaces (Amazon, Airbnb)** — higher fees, worse search quality, hidden costs.
- **Search engines** — SEO gaming, more ads, less relevant results.
- **Dating apps** — design incentives that prioritise subscriptions over successful matches.
- **Academic publishing** — profit margins and pay-to-publish models degrade quality of scholarship. Wikipedia

Each represents a **failure of purpose** — the service ends up serving extractive goals instead of its original user-centric mission.

Can Enshittification *Fail* or Reverse?

If the question is whether this process can *fail*, the literature suggests two senses of failure:

System Failure (Worst-Case)

- Platform becomes so degraded that users and partners abandon it.
- Collapse or loss of relevance occurs, but often after prolonged mediocrity.
- This is the **terminal failure mode** of enshittification once alternatives exist.

Medium

Counter-Modes / Mitigation

Researchers and critics suggest structural counter-forces:

- **Interoperability and portability** — allowing users to take their data and networks elsewhere.
- **End-to-end principles** — preserving user control over their experience, not opaque algorithmic control.
- **Competition and antitrust enforcement** — reduce lock-in and monopolistic extraction.
- **Support for open or decentralized alternatives** (e.g., federated systems like Mastodon). Wikipedia

These aren't "failure modes" in the traditional engineering sense but **systemic remedies** to stop or reverse enshittification's trajectory.

Key Takeaways

- **Enshittification is not random failure**, but a *structured decay* driven by incentive misalignment. Medium
- It unfolds in predictable phases that trade quality for monetisation. Wikipedia
- It affects all kinds of platforms and can degrade entire sectors. Medium
- Reversing it typically requires structural interventions (competition, open standards), not just user migration. Wikipedia

If you'd like, I can also ↪ map **specific real-world failure modes** (e.g., user churn, monetisation tipping points, algorithmic saturation) to their technical or economic analogues in systems analysis.

     ...  Sources

There are a variety of takes around this:

AU

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4

Avatar image
Suno, AI Music, and the Bad Future

Adam Neely
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Intro animation by Ben Levin
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Sources:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m...>

Pete Seeger - What Side are You On?

- PETE SEEGER ② Which Side Are You On? (Live...

0:00 Intro

4:06 Challenge accepted

6:55 Three Questions

24:14 Why no influences? (deskilling/narcissism)

35:50 Profiles of the Future

47:54 Good uses of Suno

59:05 Futurism/Techno-Optimism

1:16:22 New Virtues

1:22:03 Final Predictions

Chapters

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Transcript

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@AdamNeely
7 hours ago
Corrections/additional thoughts -

1. One thought that I wish I explored more is that music is like SOME video games in the sense that a dedication to craft/skill/community is a core value (generally, any esport). This does not seem to be how Mikey thinks of games, however.

291

Reply

18 replies

@cringestella
19 hours ago
Saying that music should be "as engaging as fortnite" has got to be one of the worst sentences I've ever heard

2K

Reply

26 replies

@arrozfeijaomiojosalsicha

18 hours ago

Music is already a videogame, it's just that the controls are very hard and you spend your whole life uncovering new combos

2.7K

Reply

75 replies

@insom_anim

5 hours ago

The Rick Rubin example is like taking Socrates' "I only know that I know nothing" and going "Guys, Socrates just said we don't need to know anything."

117

Reply

1 reply

@vocal-team

19 hours ago

Thanks for giving all of us this 90 minute consumption experience, Adam. It was very meaningful.

2.1K

Reply

8 replies

@cecimacgee

17 hours ago

5:05 Adam Neely really did say "no war except class war" what a time we are living in

1.3K

Reply

36 replies

@satyasyasatyasya5746

7 hours ago

they sold us a mirror, that we'd peer into it forever, as if seeing the world in our souls. but mirrors make no light, and in that dark, we went blind.

54

Reply

@justdakotamusic

15 hours ago

"Crack a copy of FL Studio and get to work"

PREACH KING! PREACH!

840

Reply

18 replies

@smalleranimals

17 hours ago

these sociopathic AI CEOs could easily be replaced by AI.

736

Reply

17 replies

@ChiefJH

10 hours ago

The sanitized sound of AI music has really given me a newfound appreciation for dirty, grimy music that deeply offends my senses, in the same way that AI-generated text has made me appreciate people who are rude and confrontational. May my life always be filled with unpleasantness and may you all tell me to shut up

161

Reply

16 replies

@AimeeNolte

13 hours ago

Favorite line of yours "If Suno's website goes down, the people are powerless." Just an astounding video, Adam. You should be proud. Thanks for letting me be a part of it

273

Reply

3 replies

@andredew

12 hours ago

Saying that making just 50 songs a year is a lull is literally insane

211

Reply

10 replies

@hastyscorpion

15 hours ago

1:01 the most quintessentially silicon value phrase.

"Opened up a new avenue of music which is creation" only Silicon Valley could say they invented something that has existed since the fucking dawn of time.

580

Reply

5 replies

@klaus8456

19 hours ago

He literally says "How can i make money of this" 80% of the time.

Bad juju.

655

Reply

12 replies

@jkrs9772

2 hours ago

You've always been a great video essayist, but with this you now sit at the top table with Folding Ideas, Elephant Graveyard and Hbomberguy. Your magnum opus

15

Reply

@Nadia-y2k4o

18 hours ago

My jobless ass was drawn to this like a cartoon character to a steamy pie

629

Reply

9 replies

@mothy1974

17 hours ago

The best part about AI music creation is how much it has made me realize how much I like making music for real.

137

Reply

1 reply

@MichaelWestMedia

10 hours ago

Techbros looking for every opportunity to privatise and commercialise human experiences. Providing a more shallow and hollow experience instead of just learning an instrument

15

Reply

@TiagoLageira

19 hours ago

This is a great day for the unemployed jazz community. Thank you

632

Reply

7 replies

@saulcontrerasOfficial

18 hours ago

How TF does this man not think music is already interactive?

204

Reply

14 replies

In this video

Chapters

Transcript

Intro

0:00

This is Mikey Shulman. CEO of the generative AI music company, Suno. Suno is worth \$2.5 billion, largely because

0:07

investors believe in Mikey's vision for the future of the music industry. He wants to model it after the video game industry.

0:15

MIKEY: I think that the music industry is way smaller than it needs to be. What if the music industry can be as big as the gaming industry?

0:22

The gaming industry is 50 times bigger than the music industry, and it's because gaming is super active.

0:27

...if you make music interactive and you make music engaging, People will pay for it like they pay for video games.

0:33

Look at the video game industry. These are rich and engaging experiences that people have. And music, today, is mostly just listened to.

0:40

Too much music is just passive consumption. ADAM: Now, in contrast to the passive consumption of audio recordings,

0:45

Mikey's vision is to take generative AI and use it to sell the idea of making music as a consumer product unto itself.

0:54

MIKEY: We are best known for giving everybody the ability to create. The thing that is new here is certainly creation.

1:00

We have opened up a new method of interaction, which is creation. ADAM: He pitches this idea to the

many investors that he talks to on podcasts

1:06

by using this analogy of a video game. MIKEY: It's a little bit like a video game. HOST: Why should it resemble a video game?

1:13

MIKEY: In some sense music is a game. It is interactive, it is engaging. It is fun by yourself, but it's more fun with your friends.

1:19

To me, it seems like just crazy that music should not be as engaging as Fortnite.

1:24

ADAM: Now, in order to make music as engaging as Fortnite, Suno lets users create songs in a bunch of different ways.

1:31

You can prompt the model through text, kind of like chatGPT. But you can also sing melodies into the app and then it will generate

1:37

music and chord progressions that go with your melodies. You can also upload demos and then the app will realize a fully produced track around your demo.

1:45

Suno does not think of these as professional workflows, but rather consumer experiences.

1:51

MIKEY: We are in the business of selling pleasurable musical experiences to people. ...super engaging digital experiences around music.

1:57

...the new experiences that were never possible before... So many more experiences are possible! ...engaging, meaningful experiences...

2:04

...way more valuable and fun experiences... we'll start to see a lot more around meaningful consumption experiences.

2:10

ADAM: "Meaningful consumption experiences" might mean making music with other people, what Mikey calls multiplayer mode.

2:17

MIKEY: The most fun experiences. will involve 2 or more people. For lack of a better word, multiplayer. For lack of a better word, everything multiplayer.

2:24

multiplayer. People basically hacking multiplayer mode.

ADAM: Now, Mikey is a businessman, and he wants to find ways of monetizing these

2:31

...meaningful experiences. One option that he pitches to investors is to focus on super fans.

2:37

MIKEY: If you read the earnings calls from The major rights holders. There's a lot of talk of superfans. The next wave of modernization is going to come from increased.

2:44

interactions between fans and their favorite artists. So we did this contest with Timbaland where, um,

2:50

fans could remix one of his songs. And to me, this is like an incredible part of the future of music. I will feel like I am co-creating with that artist.

2:57

It is quite obvious to me that people will want to pay a lot of money for that. ADAM: These are what the video game industry might call whales.

3:03

people willing to spend a lot of money on microtransactions because of a hyperfixation on the game.

3:08

MIKEY: How do we get superfandom to be a daily activity? it will be more valuable to them, and they will want to do more of it, and they

3:14

will want to pay more for these experiences. You should be willing to pay more for it, you know

3:19

if you want to just be cold and hard and calculating about it the amount that you are willing to pay for something is a measure of its value.

3:25

Just in terms of the number of dollars or the amount of time people are spending doing music, both of those are going to go up dramatically.

3:31

This is something that we should lean into. And so, like, there should be a billion people doing this I think...

HOST: (incredulously) A billion?

3:37

MIKEY: Yeah, why not? ADAM: And Mikey has big visions for this product. He wants billions of people to use it.

3:42

MIKEY: We can get a billion people much more engaged with music than they are now. If we can bring those joys to a billion people,

3:49

then we all have created a lot of value for them. We will have up-valued music for everybody on the planet.

3:54

A billion people way more into music than they were before. That's gotta be good for music. I basically, I challenge somebody to explain to me how a billion

4:02

people way more into music than they could have been is somehow bad for artists.

Challenge accepted

4:15

ADAM: Challenge accepted. In this video, I'm going to painstakingly argue what should be obvious by vibes alone,

4:23

and that is All of this is bad. Commercial generative AI is bad in ways which are different

4:29

from other disruptive music technologies of the past, like MIDI sequencing and samplers, because there is a sociopolitical agenda behind its adoption.

4:38

This agenda will be bad for musicians, it will be bad for music lovers, and it will leave us feeling more alienated and alone.

4:45

I should emphasize the fact that I don't have any beef

with the technology of generative AI. I think people can do some really amazing things with it.

4:52

I also don't think that people who use Suno are bad people. I think, you know, there can be great joy with the technology.

4:58

I, for one, sometimes enjoy a good Meaningful consumption experience. MIKEY: meaningful consumption experiences

5:04

ADAM: In fact, I'm kind of uninterested in the general culture war of pro-AI or anti-AI.

5:09

Like any culture war, It's a distraction from the real war. The class war.

5:14

You see, there is a class of techno-capitalists who are currently using generative AI as a means of wealth extraction.

5:20

They do this by circumventing intellectual property laws... MIKEY: Yeah, we know that there are some copyrighted works in our training data.

5:26

ADAM: ...and then sell you back the gamified experience of making music. MIKEY: It's a little bit like a video game.

5:31

I'd like to make it very clear that I think this is wrong. This is bad, and the future of music is in bad hands.

5:37

So say it with me, everybody. AI music bad.

6:33

(quote) The tune had been haunting London for weeks past. It was one of the countless similar songs published for the benefit of the proles

6:40

by a sub-section of the Music Department. The words of those songs were composed without any human intervention

6:45

whatsoever on an instrument known as a versificator. -

George Orwell, 1984.

6:51

ADAM: Oh, yeah. So on social media, I asked 3 questions of people who used Suno.

Three Questions

6:58

This was not a particularly scientific survey, but I did get a couple hundred people responding,

7:04

and I thought the responses were very interesting. The 1st question was, "what have generative AI tools,

7:09

like Suno, empowered you to do that you cannot do with digital audio workstations or traditional musical instruments?"

7:16

The 2nd question was, "do you feel like you have a unique voice with your music when you create songs with Suno?"

7:21

And the 3rd question was, "who are some of your favorite AI musicians who have influenced you? What about them inspires you?"

7:27

I worded these questions in a way that I hope showed how Suno was being used in the real world by real people.

7:33

And I think the results are pretty interesting. For example, The most common answer to the 1st question about like,

7:39

What does Suno let you do differently from other workflows? Was by a large margin, "It saves me time."

7:45

RESPONSES: It speeds things up. Speed and getting ideas out. Speed. It's so much faster if I just want to meme at my friends.

7:51

It's faster than digging for loops or samples. Rapid iteration for sure. ADAM: "Move fast, break things" is the Silicon Valley slogan, and this

7:57

technology lets you iterate on ideas very quickly, which is why Mark Cuban, and other tech billionaires

8:03

can't see why people don't love AI in the arts. After all, it allows for much faster iteration.

8:09

MIKEY: When you make it easier for people to conceptualize things, they can go through concepts more quickly, they can iterate more quickly.

8:15

This is how music will evolve more quickly. ADAM: This language of iteration and productivity is the language of product design.

8:22

It's the language of manufacturing applied to art and music. Through this lens, like the factory worker on the floor,

8:29

The time a person spends making music has no intrinsic value. Why spend 6 hours making a song that's going to stream for the same amount of value on Spotify...

8:37

When you can make the same song in just 15 minutes, or less! That's just a really inefficient return on investment, right?

8:43

MIKEY: I know one person who is a songwriter who had a lull in creativity, and after finding Suno went

8:50

from maybe making 50 songs a year to making 500 songs a year. HOST: Whoa! ADAM: Reducing the amount of time it takes to get to a minimum viable product is all that matters.

8:59

and I say this because that is the philosophy behind Suno, the company, and how they think about their product.

9:06

MIKEY: Like speed is obviously good. Ultimately, if you're trying to invent new consumer behaviors, which is what we are trying to do,

9:11

You need to ship things very, very quickly to get feedback from people. How many experiments can you ship to your users and learn from?

9:16

That is ultimately the thing that the company will live and die by. So speed is very important. ADAM: This mindset is instilled into the product itself.

9:23

On Suno's website, alongside music, fun, and aesthetics, they list impatience as a core virtue,

9:31

which I gotta say, doesn't really strike me as a virtue.

9:37

DR. NOÉ: First of all... ADAM: yeah... DR. NOÉ: ...it's not a virtue. impatience, it's not a virtue.

9:42

It actually goes against all of the virtues. ADAM: That's virtue ethicist and Platonic scholar, Dr. Mariana Noé

9:48

of the University of Arizona, who I talked to at great length about the deeper philosophical implications of the widespread adoption of generative AI.

9:55

and, how these companies are instilling specific values through the use of their technology.

10:01

DR. NOÉ: There's 4 big virtues, which are justice, wisdom, moderation, and courage,

10:07

points towards which we need to aim if we want to be good human beings.

10:13

Impatience goes against almost all of them, not justice, but it goes against courage.

10:19

It goes against moderation, and it goes against wisdom. If you're an impatient person, there's no way you can be a courageous one.

10:25

A courageous person is one that assesses the risk, and knows when to attack, and also when it's just too rash.

10:32

The same with moderation, of course, moderation is

about like controlling your desires. Sometimes you just have to wait, and you have to control your desire to see results, right?

10:40

And with wisdom, of course, impatience is also about like throwing yourself to some something without really knowing what's going on.

10:46

So it will go against idea of like making a wise decision. So it's not a virtue.

10:52

It goes against all virtues. That's important. ADAM: The most generous read that I have on this is that

10:58

"Impatience" for Suno means prioritizing action over inaction, and there is sometimes real value in working quickly

11:05

and not second-guessing your intuitions. That's why it's exciting to watch Rob Scallon and Andrew Huang

11:10

do their 1st of October project and write and record an album in a day. They aren't precious with their ideas

11:15

and they work fast for some truly special results. I did a similar thing with Ben Levin with our 24 hour album streams,

11:22

making a couple of albums the same way. However, I think about how depressing it would be to watch

11:27

the same video where Rob and Andrew simply generate their ideas on Suno.

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Both them and the audience would be deeply cheated out of something, something hard to put a finger on.

11:40

When faced with creative friction, like a deadline, Suno gives you the excuse to be impatient with the process.

11:46

You don't have to work out your feelings of indecision in that moment. Suno can just do that for you.

11:53

DR. NOÉ: So the value of patience, patience is just the moderation of your own, um, motivations almost.

11:59

No? it's like... Okay, I want to do this. I want to do this. I want to do that. I want to eat that, but it's like, but now it's not the time.

12:05

Which is what makes us different from animals, by the way ADAM: Yeah, I was going to say, this is a very core feature of humanity.

12:10

DR. NOÉ: Exactly! ADAM: It's our ability to control ourselves and plan for the future. DR. NOÉ: Delay pleasure.

12:16

Delayed pleasure is what makes us unique. ADAM: Yeah, and a big important part of teaching music or

12:23

musical instruments to young children is just to show this. "You get to do this cool thing if you put in

12:29

hard work and wait for that reward." Another common answer to the first question about what Suno lets you do differently....

12:36

...was, "it saves me money." And...fair. I mean, it is genuinely a cheaper way of getting a final product

12:43

where you don't have to pay a mix engineer or a producer, right? Suno's head of creators, Rosie Nguyen

12:49

argued in a Twitter post that Suno is great for low-income accessibility and people who don't have access to music lessons.

12:55

ROSIE: I really wish Suno existed 20 years ago when I was a kid in elementary school, showing strangers songs I wrote with no way to produce them.

13:02

But I'm really, really happy that it exists today for all of the other kids who might need it.

13:07

ADAM: This feels a bit cynical to me, and I think a lot of

other people in that Twitter thread felt similar.

13:12

Because, of course, there is no material difference between Suno, which requires an internet connection and a computer, to any

13:19

of the other free resources out there, free digital audio workstations, sample libraries, educational videos on YouTube, etc.

13:26

You could make the argument that the free time to dedicate towards learning those tools and honing your craft is

13:32

itself a luxury that people without means don't have, but to me, that's a much stronger argument for a 40-hour work week and a living wage

13:39

than it is for generative AI. So if you're broke, please just do what everybody in my generation did and crack a copy of FL Studio and get to work.

13:47

The 3rd common answer to this 1st question was "it's like a co-creator, a musical partner, I can bounce ideas off of."

13:54

People have begun to anthropomorphize Suno to a certain degree. Calling it a creative assistant or collaborator or even a co-producer

14:01

We've started seeing people say their music was co-produced by Suno. HOST: that copilot analogy. MIKEY: It's exactly that.

14:06

HOST: You've got this like songwriting assistant that's like sitting with you and like you're workshoping it together. TIMBALAND: It's like an assistant where I do a beat and I'm like, yo, how

14:13

would you take these drums and rearrange it this way? And I'm like, oh, I would have never heard it that way.

14:18

ADAM: This is a line that you'll often hear about the

professional usage of this tool, in that it's not going to do the work for you, but it

14:25

might give you inspiration and ideas that you wouldn't normally think of if you were just working by yourself.

14:31

CHARLIE PUTH: It's like another human giving a human an idea. This is, of course, what a musical collaborator is,

14:37

or put it another way... A friend. DR. NOÉ: For Aristotle, a friend is an important part of living a good life.

14:46

So in his Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle basically shares his thoughts on how to be a good person and live a good life.

14:54

And he dedicates one book and a half out of the 10 to talk about friends.

14:59

A friend has to not only be someone who you have fun with, and who's like, whatever, useful because these are

15:05

the tiers of friendship that he distinguishes, someone who's useful to you, like, when you get a ride from someone to the airport or whatever.

15:12

someone who you have fun with, which is like when you party, but someone who can also, in addition to those 2 things,

15:18

also keep you accountable and help you be a better version of yourself. So a friend is someone that has that power to

15:25

teach you something, and at the same time, also be taught by you. ADAM: I have a lot of great musical collaborators,

15:30

like Shawn Crowder, Ben Levin, and Lau Noah. They're very different people, and they challenge me in very different ways

15:37

and bring out different aspects of my musicianship that I would never have if I had just made music alone.

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Sometimes there's even conflict, differences of opinion of where the music should go. But by resolving that conflict,

15:48

We get some pretty special results, I think. I am a better person because of those musical relationships I work so

15:53

hard to maintain both on the bandstand and in real life. Using Suno as a musical friend replacement

15:59

might feed into some narcissistic tendencies, because you never have to negotiate with it. You just take the ideas that you like and discard the rest.

16:09

Generative AI gives you an imitation of what it's like to have a musical collaborator, but somebody who does not hold you to high standards, musical or otherwise.

16:18

DR. NOÉ: In the Nichomachean Ethics, Aristotle talks about how flatterers, people that flatter you are not your friends, because

16:26

they're not giving you correct information about yourself. So they're just lying to you. AIMEE: Well, what if Bernie Taupin...

16:32

hadn't ever, you know, connected with Elton John, and he had the opportunity to just enter his lyrics into

16:39

Suno or whatever, like, where, where would we be?

ADAM: Now, zooming back a little bit and taking a look at

16:45

the answers to this 1st question, we see that nobody answered anything musical, really.

16:51

All the answers were about saving time, saving money, and replacing friends.

16:57

In other words, Suno lets you make the same music faster, cheaper, and lonelier.

17:03

I'm not sure if that's a good thing. The 2nd question I asked was, "do you feel like you have a unique voice with your music when you create songs with Suno?"

17:11

Some people said yes, but the majority of responses felt that the music that they made was not particularly unique to them.

17:18

One possible explanation for this is that commercial generative AI can't really create anything new.

17:24

It's just remixing old recordings. And so you can't have a unique voice with something that's just a remix of an old recording.

17:32

Suno has admitted to have been trained on essentially all music files on the internet. What a lawsuit has called "copyright infringement on an almost unimaginable scale."

17:41

MIKEY: Yeah, we know that there are some copyrighted works in our training data. That's not illegal. ADAM: The legal defense for this, at least according to briefs submitted

17:48

to the U.S. Copyright Office by Silicon Valley venture capital firms, is that using copyrighted content to train AI models is fair use.

17:56

Now, this smells a bit fishy to me, but I'm not a lawyer, so definitely check out Miss Krystal a.k.a. Top Music Attorney's videos on YouTube.

18:03

She does great work on this stuff, especially with the ongoing independent musician lawsuit against Suno. But beyond the legal defense, the moral defense of this is that

18:12

AI is just learning the same way that humans do taking

a look at what came before, detecting patterns in it, and then remixing it into new works.

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This is quite literally what I've been arguing on this channel for many years now with regards to all of those music plagiarism lawsuits, right?

18:28

Human artists steal all the time. It's how culture gets made and passed down. So what's the difference when AI does it?

18:35

Right? MIKEY: It actually functions very similarly to how humans do. I'm absorbing all of the things that I know, all of the music that I heard, all of

18:42

the culture that I see out there, and I'm finding some way to express it. ADAM: Well, one, when you say a model learns like a human,

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it's like saying a submarine swims like a human. which is meaningless.

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It's a category error because the scale of theft is so far beyond what a human could possibly do.

18:58

It's theft on an inhuman scale. Two, human creativity is a process that can and

19:04

often does challenge the status quo, and it is unclear if generative AI can do the same.

19:10

This was exemplified in a fantastic question that I borrowed from "A Call for New Aesthetics for the 21st century", which is

19:17

If jazz didn't exist, could you prompt Suno to create it?

19:22

To me, I think the answer is no, because jazz, like any style of music, has a unique musical vocabulary

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that cannot be found from its influences. In other words, I can't imagine any amalgam of blues

19:33

recordings and ragtime recordings sounding anything like... Sun Ra

19:39

You know what I mean? Something pretty massive is missing in that equation there which is what Ethan Hein talks about in this blog post.

19:46

DR ETHAN HEIN: I love 1980s hip hop because there's no way to predict it from projecting trends in 1970s pop.

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It questions basic assumptions. It's missing elements that you might have thought were necessary (like melodies)

19:57

and it brings in elements you didn't know you wanted until you heard them (like samples and turntable scratching) Now that 1980s rap exists, it's easy to feed it into an

20:05

AI is training data and get more 1980s rap, but there's no way that AI could have produced 1980s rap

20:11

if it was only trained on 1970s pop. ADAM: I think this is why people feel like they don't have a unique voice with the platform,

20:17

because it's so heavily weighted to the status quo.

Now, the 3rd question I asked was, "Who are some of your favorite AI musicians who have influenced you?"

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"What about them inspires you?" Okay, so even though I kind of knew what the answers to this question would be,

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it still was really bleak reading them, because the vast majority of people, as it turns out,

20:36

do not have influences. RESPONSES: I don't have any AI influences. I'm afraid I don't have any.

20:42

At the moment, nothing. I don't listen to anybody else. I don't know any. I do not listen to AI slop. No

influence.

20:47

I don't know of any. Haven't heard any. No one. I don't know any AI relevant artist. Not applicable.

20:53

I have no idea to be honest. At the moment, nothing. I don't have an AI music influence. None.

20:58

I do not religiously follow anyone. I don't have any AI music influences. ADAM: Why can't people who use Suno cite their influences?

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It's strange, right? because if you ask the same question to any musician, writer, or artist who didn't use gen AI,

21:12

they would be able to go off forever... on their influences! I think about, you know, the bass players that inspired me, Jaco Pastorius,

21:20

Victor Wooten, modern-based players like Tim Lefebvre - huge influence. I love Evan Marien.

21:25

I don't know of anybody of any skill level who can't do that who can't just be like, mm, mm, mm, "these guys are awesome!"

21:32

mm, mm, mm, mm. What is going on here? I know some people might say that, "oh, generative AI is too new for people to have influences,"

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which on the surface makes sense, but I do have my doubts there. For example, there are people who have been using generative AI in their workflows

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for many years now, like Holly Herndon. She makes some pretty wild, amazing music. but it seems like the people who use commercial generative AI do not

21:53

cite Holly Herndon as an influence. There are people who are using Suno, like Timbaland or Xania Monet, for example.

22:01

But nobody seems to be citing Timbaland, right? It seems like nobody has role models in the space.

22:06

No musician that they can point to and say, "I want to be like that person!" which is strange.

22:12

DR. NOÉ: So role models are tools that we use to make decisions. So for example, if you want to become a famous musician, say...

22:21

ADAM: I use the example Victor Wooten, maybe too frequently, but yes, Victor Wooten is a great example here.

22:28

DR. NOÉ: Instead of making every decision by yourself with the limited information that you have, you can also ask yourself,

22:34

What would Victor Wooten do? ADAM: What would Victor Wooten do? I'm going to get a bracelet with that on it.

22:39

DR. NOÉ: Exactly. What would he do? Because what he did took him to the place where I want to get.

22:45

So what would he do if he were in my position? ADAM: Right. DR. NOÉ: So we use role models to, um,

22:51

reason our way through life. And for that, um, and for that reason, to, um, to make decisions

22:58

in our day-to-day life that will lead us to the place where we want to go. ADAM: Art movements historically coalesce around influential artists - role models.

23:05

Jimi Hendrix inspired a generation to pick up the guitar. Sophie inspired a generation to make hyperpop music.

23:11

This does not seem to be happening here. Why?

23:16

There is an Aziz Ansari bit from 2010 about him being invited to Kanye West's house after a show.

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Aziz arrives at the house to find Kanye West alone on a couch listening to 808's and Heartbreaks,

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which is Kanye's own album. AZIZ: I was like, yo, man. Are you listening to your own album in your own house, bopping your own head?

23:36

And he goes, "yeah, these beats are dope." ADAM: The joke, of course, is that Kanye is being comically narcissistic.

23:43

AZIZ: And I go, that'd be like if I had a stand-up album, you came over to my house and I was listening to it going, "HAHAHAHA"

23:48

"these jokes are dope." ADAM: Who listens to their own music like that? Well, the answer to the question,

23:53

"who listens to their own music like that?" is People who use Suno.

23:59

On r/Suno, when the question was posed, "who are your favorite artists as listeners?" the answers were...

24:04

Me. That's the point, ain't it? Me. Me I created new genres. To be honest, my favorite album is the one that I just finished making.

24:12

Page after page on r/Suno is people being Kanye West. Reason number one for no AI influences - narcissistic music.

Why no influences? (deskilling/narcissism)

24:20

Many people now, quite literally, only listen to the music that they themselves have created on the platform Suno, not

24:26

other AI music, not non-AI music, but just the music that they themselves are generating.

24:32

I know I'm not the only one that just replaced their own Suno songs 24/7. I think it's at least 80% of my music

intake right now.

24:38

Yeah, I just listen to my music 90% of the time. If you're not addicted to your own songs, no one else will be!!

Listen, I'm very proud of the music that I make.

24:45

I think it's great. I think you should listen to it, and yet I do not want to listen to it at all.

24:51

It's very hard for me to listen to, just the same as it's hard for anybody to listen to the sound of their own speaking voice in recorded form.

25:00

It seems like people who use generative AI aren't encountering the same problem. They genuinely are obsessed with their creations.

25:07

It's so true. I mostly listen to my Suno songs now.

HAhaah This tracks, I mean, we are making the music that we personally like to listen to.

25:14

Yes, my songs are top tier compared to what's playing in the radio. I definitely listen to my own music most of the time now.

25:20

Why wouldn't I? Mikey, to his credit, warns of this effect as a result of hyperpersonalization.

25:26

He genuinely does not want this to happen. MIKEY: Imagine you would open an app and it would just stream you endless

25:32

AI music that is so hyper-tailored to you. just hitting that nerve in your brain. It's like a drug.

25:38

And this is extremely antisocial. I think that would also be a shame because it misses out on a lot more that's fun.

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ADAM: But the evidence suggests that this narcissistic listening pattern is the pattern that's developing from people who use commercial grade generative AI.

25:52

When everyone can make their own music to his own taste, there are no reasons to listen to other people's music other than to get ideas and prompts for our own music.

25:59

Welcome to the future of music. Have you ever been in a car where people are singing along

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to a song where you don't know the lyrics? It can kind of be alienating, right? Like you want to join in,

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but they have this shared cultural knowledge that you don't. And so you feel left out.

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It's way more fun to sing along with people when everybody knows the lyrics, especially in contexts where you're singing with strangers

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because that's a way of meeting people and engaging with new people that you didn't know before.

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When the culture that we consume is entirely personalized, however, this is impossible.

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This is one of the reasons why people have no influences. They never listen to any other music.

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Reason number 2 for no AI influences, Deskilling.

PATRICK: There's the process of learning that is slow, organic.

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And it makes you feel good when you finally get it on the other side. There's a certain thing about that that you don't get where you just generate the thing and it's just there.

26:56

Relying on it as a learning tool takes away your onus from the decision making process. You need to, it's taking everything that you normally do in here, and it's putting it out here.

27:05

So you don't have to do it. As a result, this gets weaker.

ADAM: You should know this by now, but, uh,

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chatGPT makes you dumber. It atrophies your brain. It reduces your cognitive capacity because it offloads

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decision-making skills that your brain normally makes to the machine. cognitive debt accrues,

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and your brain stops doing what it used to be able to do just fine. This has led to a frightening process

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in the workplace called deskilling. When decisions are offloaded to generative AI

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skilled labor turns into unskilled labor. The people who have specialized training

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are cognitively stripped of that training, and we're starting to see this in the medical field. A recent study found that after only 3 months of using an AI tool

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designed to help spot precancerous growths during colonoscopies, Doctors were significantly worse at finding the growths on their own.

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They were, in fact, deskilled. We're probably going to start seeing a similar thing happening in music

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in the next couple of years, given the ubiquity of generative AI in the field. HARVEY: I have not been in a session in the last 12 months that AI was not used.

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AI is being used and is omnipresent in the creative process right now, at least at the highest levels.

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ADAM: That's songwriter and CEO of the Grammys. Harvey Mason Jr., who is a big advocate for musicians

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getting ahead of the curve and adopting AI into their workflow. HARVEY: There's not been a session that I've been in

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that somebody wasn't using AI. to come up with a beat, to write some lyrics, to figure out what some

different melody versions could look like,

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to try different styles of production across some chord changes. ADAM: My prediction is that this will likely lead

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to songwriters becoming deskilled the same way that doctors are. They will rely on the tools much more to make decisions for them

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in the name of speed or impatience. And their decision making abilities will become diminished.

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All that time spent honing their skills, gone. ChatGPT brain for musicians.

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Now, you could make the argument that this could lead to the development of a new craft or a new skill. Much like laptop production became a skill unto itself,

29:04

Prompt engineering might become the new frontier. There could be like new rock stars of prompt engineering

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who dazzle us with their prompts. Maybe. Call me an old man.

29:15

Call me an old man. I am 37 now. But I have my doubts on whether or not we will get this.

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Prompt engineering in music, anyway, goes against a foundational idea of what a craft, a skill, even is.

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DR. NOÉ: I'm thinking about the notion of craft, we talked a little bit about it. ADAM: yeah DR. NOÉ: but craft means, for Plato and for Aristotle,

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knowing what the outcome of your work — your production —will be.

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And I just realized that that's.... ADAM: [agreeing noises] DR. NOÉ: 100% what is not happening here.

ADAM: yeah

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DR. NOÉ: So the example that Plato gives us is that a good doctor is the one

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that both knows how to cure someone... ADAM: yeah

DR. NOÉ: ...and how to kill them.

30:01

In order to have a craft, you have to know how, like, whatever comes out of it, you have to know how to apply the things, and you know you have to know the product of it.

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If you don't know what's coming, it's like, "I'm going to cure it, I'm going to kill it, I don't know!" That is not a craft. It's just randomness.

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I don't think that the Greeks would appreciate the fact that anyone relates craft to AI, AI prompting

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because you never know what the AI is going to get you. ADAM: I guess the counter argument for that would be that in

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so much of music and so much of art great things are based on happy accidents, you know, like

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uh, "oh my god, this thing happened and I didn't expect it to!" But then the counter to that argument is the great artist knows how to capitalize

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on that bit of randomness and knows exactly how to take that from that initial spark to the final product.

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Now, you could argue that the craft is lyric writing, which is an old craft, and sure.

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I actually think that's fine. You could make that argument. But Mikey believes that the future of music is not based on a person's ability,

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how well they can do a thing, but rather on their taste, how discerning they are in the consumption of a thing.

31:03

MIKEY: Increasingly taste is the only thing that matters. And skill is going to matter a lot less because you're going to be able to make a

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lot of stuff and the people who are going to be recognized are people who are able to pick from the vast quantity of stuff and

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use, in the case of music, their ears to say that was good and that was bad. Now, I'm able to describe music and

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get something out, and increasingly, I'm going to have to use my ears to figure out that was good, that was bad.

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Increasingly, your fingers are less important and your ears are more important. ADAM: Mikey's vision for the future here is that craft,

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it's not going to be relevant. Deskilling, not going to be an issue, because, in

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a world with infinite music generated by Suno, taste is going to be the ultimate driving factor of music production.

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There is a Rick Rubin interview with 60 Minutes that came out in 2023 where Rick famously says that he has no technical ability

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and knows nothing about music. RICK: I have no technical ability, and I know nothing about music.

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ANDERSON: [laughs] You must know something. RICK: Well, I know what I like and what I don't like. ADAM: I think this interview had a lot of influence on Mikey,

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and therefore a lot of influence on the direction of the music industry, because Mikey imagines a world where we're all Rick Rubins with no technical ability.

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But a strong personal taste that can direct music.

MIKEY: I think that's actually a perfect analogy. Rick Rubin, you know, can have people actually do all of the stuff for him.

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I think about this as a continuation of that, where you need even less emphasis on skills and more emphasis on your ears.

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It gets easier and easier to create, and what that means is that you rely more and more on your ability to say, "I like that, I don't like that."

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There are a lot of people with great taste. great ideas in their head musically, and without the means to do it.

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Everybody has taste in music, even if they don't currently have mastered, you know, production software like Ableton.

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Everybody has taste and when you give everybody the ability to do that, Everybody likes to do it. ADAM: How good taste is cultivated or what it even means to have good

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taste is not even really questioned by Mikey. He just assumes that because there's so much music, there's going to be

33:00

a lot of good music that gets to the top. This is the second reason why people don't seem to have role models in this world.

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It's because role models have skills that inspire us. We're inspired by Jimi Hendrix's ability to play the guitar like that.

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His taste in music is kind of irrelevant. When the craft is irrelevant on the other hand,

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so is the idea of the role model. There is no reason to look up to anybody when you can write prompts just as well as anybody else.

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There is no magic in what anybody else does. You don't get to look at another person and all the beautiful inspiring

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greatness that they might have because there quite frankly is no inspiring greatness here.

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And that's sad, man. I love having role models, and I love being a role model to other people.

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And I hate that this is the future that Mikey Schulman imagines for young people and for the broader musical culture.

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And I also hate the fact that the CEO of the Grammys. is now parroting Mikey Showman's line about taste.

HARVEY: But to me, if you're making music,

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And you're using your discernment, your taste to decide what the AI should create for you.

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You're making music. being an arbiter of taste is going to be really, really important. MIKE: A human with great taste, learning to pull that out of the AI.

34:07

And that is like a beautiful piece of music. You know, you could you can say that I had a part in that creation or you can say that I didn't have a part in that creation.

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HOST: What do you say? MIKEY: I almost want to say I don't care what you think. ADAM: There's something pretty sinister about musicians nihilistically embracing their own deskilling.

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All of that skill that you require, the stuff that your role models and your elders had and passed down from generation to generation,

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you're throwing out because Mikey Shulman told you to.

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BEN: If you look at like musicians like Wayne Brady who can improvise a song off the top of their head,

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and you just see how incredible that is and how cool of an art form that is. It's like the pinnacle of improv comedy is these people

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who can improvise songs that are coherent and funny and rhyme and like actually sound like music.

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That is a great, joyous experience to watch, and you're just like, "oh, how??" But then when you generate that, it's,

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you get the, like, the yuks, "yuk, yuk, yuk," but you don't get any of, like, the wonder of, like, "dang,

35:07

ADAM: "How did that happen?" BEN: "Humans are smart," yeah. ADAM: "Yeah." MIKEY: It's actually an irrelevant question.

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It's like, I like that piece of music. It was good music. I felt like I enjoyed the process of making that piece of

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music, and maybe, like, does it count that I made that music or not is irrelevant. AIMEE: That's all you can credit yourself with in the end, if you if

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you use it to make your art, I think, you just have to say, I'm a really good prompter.

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Yay, me. ADAM: I didn't grow up dreaming of prompting.

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I grew up dreaming of shredding and, you know, all the fun stuff.

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That was my dream. I hope that, you know, I hope that people continue to dream of shredding instead of dream of prompting.

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AIMEE: Yeah, me too. [musical interlude]

Profiles of the Future

36:32

Okay, I'm done talking about Mikey Schulman for right

now. Let's talk about somebody, maybe a little bit more interesting. Let's talk about.

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Arthur C. Clarke Arthur C. Clarke was one of the great science fiction visionaries of the 20th century.

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He predicted many aspects of our modern lives, including the internet, and email.

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He's probably most famous for writing 2001: A Space Odyssey, but he also wrote collections of speculative short stories, including 1957's

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Tales from the White Hart. Now in this book, there's a short story entitled The Ultimate Melody where a researcher tries to find a melody that perfectly fits

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the electrical rhythms of the human brain. To do this, he builds a melody generating machine that he trains on, quote,

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"hundreds of the really famous tunes in classical and popular music" which sounds, honestly, a bit prescient, right?

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Maybe off by an order of magnitude or two, but hey, it's in the ballpark. Now, it's warned that this melody generating machine will put

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"every composer in the world out of business" Which hasn't come true yet,

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but given Arthur C. Clarke's track record, we may have cause to worry. Now, believe it or not, I have been on YouTube for 20 years now,

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longer than some of you may have been alive. And in that time, I've actually made quite

37:47

a few predictions about how AI will change music in the future. Well, it is the future now, and so I thought it would be fun to look back

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at some of my predictions to see what I got right and what I got wrong. In other words, did I do Arthur C. Clarke proud?

38:01

The 1st video I did was a Q&A from 6 years ago talking about copyright and AI,

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asking the question, "who gets to own the copyright to an AI composition?" In that video, I had this spicy prediction.

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PAST ADAM: So I'm sure within the next 5 to 10 years, one of the rent seeking parasites that are the major music labels

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will figure out a way of owning the copyrights to AI music in a way that totally perverts the

38:27

idea that copyright is a means of protecting labor.

ADAM: Suno has recently struck a license partnership with Warner Chappell.

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Universal Music Group has struck a similar deal with UDIO. All 3 major music labels, Sony, Warner Chappell, and Universal Music Group,

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have signed a deal with Klay, a startup which uses generative AI to remix songs in real time.

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Most recently, Universal Music Group has paired with Nvidia. With all of these deals, it's unclear how much, if at

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all, artists will be compensated for their work. So yeah, when I warned that the major music labels would

38:57

use AI to consolidate power in the music industry,

39:02

uh, I think I kind of got that one right, unfortunately. The next video I did was a Q and A from 3 years ago talking

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about AI replacing human musicians. I did a brief

overview of how technology has disrupted the labor
39:16

force in the music industry for the past hundred years.
And how AI would likely continue the trend of
technological disruption.

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I ended this segment on a hopeful note. PAST ADAM:
Just remember, we kept playing chess, even though
computers reliably beat us every time, why?

39:33

Well, because it's fun to play chess. And it's fun to
make music. ADAM: It's a nice thought, right?

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I've seen this analogy repeated a couple of times
because I think people like to have that hope in
uncertain times.

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But unfortunately, after further reflection, I feel like the
analogy is a bit too optimistic.

39:51

You see, music unlike chess, is an industry which
produces commodities in the form of recorded music.

39:56

And so Deep Blue didn't put any chess players out of
work, but Suno and generative AI certainly will put
musicians out of work.

40:04

An economic study from CISAC suggests that
generative AI will lead to a massive disruption across
the industry.

40:10

Because music is an industry, it's also subject to the
effects of deskilling. If musicians want to compete in an
industry where AI is the standard,

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they run the real risk of losing the craft that they have
developed. So even though I'm sure people will
continue to make music in whatever capacity,

40:26

generative AI will affect the musical community in
much more profound ways than it ever did in the chess
community.

40:33

So I don't think I really quite got this one right. I'm sorry, Mr. Clarke, but can't win them all.

40:39

My most recent video on AI came out a year ago and was all about how AI will inevitably fail the musical Turing test.

40:46

It will never be confused for human music. Now, on the surface, it seems like I got that one really wrong.

40:53

One study suggested that 97% of listeners cannot distinguish between AI generated and human composed songs.

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The actual point of the video, though, was more about real-time jamming with AI. Current real time jamming with AI is pretty pathetic, to be honest.

41:13

But the broader thing that I was getting at in the video is that because recorded music is a commodity, it ultimately does not matter who makes it.

41:22

Kind of just the same way as it doesn't really matter who made this mug for me as a consumer because I just need a caffeine delivery mechanism.

41:29

If it works, it works. PATRICK: Music is a commodity for people. Music is an item to be consumed that helps them get through their day.

41:36

What matters is good enough. And good enough is enough for most people.

41:41

Most people don't think about... all types of products, even like phones and and whatever, computers, everything.

41:47

It's not like, "oh, John Coltrane's masterful solo!" You know what I'm saying? This is, "yes, like, AI can never create this"

41:54

Yeah, people threw tomatoes at John Coltrane at Village Vanguard. They ain't want that either. ADAM:

Back in October of 2025, there was a viral dance pop song called I Run, making the rounds.

42:03

It was revealed that the lead vocal recording was Suno generated. Some people felt betrayed by that fact, but some people kind of genuinely did not care.

42:12

SOME GUY: It does not matter [that] this song was made using AI Like, I'm so sick of the purists on the for you page, talking about some...

42:18

"Oh, my God, I can't hear it the same." ADAM: In fact, it went a bit further than this. When some singers covered I Run,

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It seems like people generally preferred the AI version over the human version.

42:29

Now, you could say that the aesthetic standards that have been set up for this hyper-edited, auto-tuned, electronic dance pop music

42:36

just set humans up for failure in the marketplace competing with AI.

42:43

AI can do things that humans just can't without those tools. And so ultimately for certain styles of music, it might make a better

42:50

product, a better musical commodity faster and cheaper. ANOTHER GUY: "No, don't listen to AI music.

42:56

Support the real artists." I don't care. It sounds good. I like it. I'm going to listen to it.

43:02

It's a scary world, Mr. Clarke. It's a scary world. ARTHUR C. CLARKE: Probably before the end of this century, we will be

43:10

able to construct computers or artificial intelligences, which can go out on their own and

43:17

develop lines of thought, irrespective of any

programming, and which may, in principle, be more intelligent than we are.

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ADAM: You know, there's this overwhelming sense I get right now from headlines and from, I don't know, how people are talking about this,

43:32

that AI is here. It is omnipresent in society and that we must adopt it, and people who think otherwise are just

43:39

being Luddites, and they will be put in the dustbin of history. The people pushing this narrative, of course,

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are the ones who have the most financially to gain from it. That's why you see articles in Forbes insisting we must adopt AI

43:51

quickly, otherwise we will become obsolete. And you know, this idea works quite well on the musical community.

43:59

We know that every 10 to 20 years, there is this disruptive technology, like MIDI or drum machines or

44:04

whatever, that comes in, and the people that survive are the ones who quickly embrace the new order, and the people who

44:11

don't survive, don't. TI: If everyone else has access to it and they're

44:16

using it and you're and you're not, HOST: Then you're going to be left behind. TI: Then you're going to be left behind. And when I, you know, when I thought about it from that perspective,

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I kind of understood it. We often view technology in these discussions as this

44:29

force of nature which cannot be controlled and ultimately cannot be stopped.

44:34

This is a view called technological determinism. It's a

view that ultimately absolves us for building systems

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which might be unideal for society, because if the technology was inevitable, if it was always going to happen, then there's nothing that

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we can really do about it except to embrace the technology as a means of survival.

44:53

Which I think is particularly ludicrous, because as a society, we get to decide what kind of tech tree to invest in.

45:05

For example, in his 1962 book, Profiles of the Future, he spends an entire chapter dedicated to what

45:11

he calls ground effect machines, what today we would call hovercraft. amphibious vehicles that can work just as well on land, as well as water.

45:20

He thinks that we will restructure society around adopting hovercraft, and abandon cars altogether.

45:26

He writes, "there will clearly be enormous savings in road costs, amounting to billions a year,

45:32

once we have abolished the wheel." Now we do have hovercraft today. We have had them for over a half century.

45:39

They work, they work totally fine, and yet we have not restructured society around abandoning the wheel.

45:44

Large car companies had a strong interest in roads not becoming obsolete.

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And so technology was not inevitable. Instead, monied interests controlled how technology interacted with society.

45:57

So generative AI is not inevitable. It's only coming because people want it to.

46:02

DR. COTTOM: When people try to sell you on the idea that the future is already settled, it is because it is deeply unsettled.

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ADAM: That is sociologist Dr. Tressie McMillan Cottom, talking at Urban Consulate in Detroit this past December,

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Providing some very incisive context here. DR.

COTTOM: you know, this promise of like an artificial intelligent future,

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as we talk about future, is really just a collective anxiety that very wealthy, powerful people have about

46:27

how well they're going to be able to control us in the future. If they can get us to accept that the future's already settled.

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AI is already here. The end is already here. Then we will create that for them.

46:38

Part of the way that Suno is trying to steer discussion of AI and make AI feel omnipresent and inevitable

46:44

is through a robust social media marketing campaign.

MOHINI DEY: AI is not a trend. It's not going anywhere,

46:50

and pretending that it won't exist anywhere, it's not going to stop the progress. It's only going to leave you behind.

46:55

ADAM: That's Mohini Dey, lending her weight as one of the great modern bass players to promoting this idea that the future is here and inevitable with Suno.

47:04

Suno's marketing department spending a lot of money trying to make their product feel like a part of the zeitgeist.

47:09

Including some money going towards cringey astro-turfed AI-generated instagram meme pages, for some reason.

47:19

This is bleak. But, you know, I want to be fair to Mohini Dey and any of the other social media influencers who have worked with Suno.

47:26

Clearly, there's something in the platform that they think is cool and worth promoting. And I've been thinking about this actually for a while.

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I know for me personally, I would never really use the platform, but I do think that there are some potentially

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ethical uses of the platform that I want to highlight. I know, it seems like this has been one long hit piece on

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Suno, but I do want to give credit where credit is due because I do think that there are some potentially good uses of Suno.

Good uses of Suno

47:55

So, let's get into it Maybe good use of Suno number one, music therapy.

48:01

If you're a Suno creator who wants to make music that truly matters, we want you. Help us bring healing through music to more people who need it.

48:10

Anecdotally, I have heard from some music therapists who have used Suno in their practice to positive results.

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Now, I can't say what the field of music therapy in general thinks of this, so please take this with a grain of salt, but I think that could potentially

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be a good use for this technology. MIKEY: We've partnered with a charity, um, who was already using Suno

48:30

connecting volunteers to make personalized songs for sick kids. ADAM: Suno itself has partnered with Songs of Love

48:35

a charity that pairs songwriters with both children with serious illnesses, and now older patients with dementia and Alzheimer's.

48:49

Kenneth Aigen says that a song with biographical elements says that you're being seen and you're being heard by other human beings.

48:59

if this weird Doo-Wop music can get patients with Alzheimer's to reconnect. with their memories,

49:05

I mean, I could see how this could be a good thing. Maybe. Songs of Love has been a charity for a long time, actually,

49:11

and used to do it the old fashioned way with songwriters writing 46,000 personalized songs prior to the adoption of Suno.

49:17

♪ Hey, David Lee Roth in the house tonight with a song of love for Ashley. ♪

49:22

David Lee Roth recorded a song for seven-year-old Ashley battling leukemia. which is an honestly pretty charming song.

49:29

♪ Look at her go! ♪ ♪ And she's starting to rock! ♪ ♪ Think about the horses that she rides ♪

49:35

ADAM: I love this because it's actually David Lee Roth singing to a young Ashley, and he's clearly having a lot of fun with it.

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The question now is, would it have been the same if it was an artificially generated David Lee Roth?

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Would Ashley have felt as special? Maybe?

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You could get into some utilitarian arguments about maximizing joy, like, yeah, maybe Ashley is not going to feel as special,

49:59

but now, many thousands of other sick kids can feel a

little bit more special with this uncanny David Lee Roth singing at them, I guess.

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It's not very convincing, but hey, you could make that argument. Maybe good use of Suno number two.

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Memorization tool. There's this goofy AI channel on TikTok that creates pop songs that list technical

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information about a variety of very specific topics that likely would not have had wide appeal as pop songs.

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♪ The inventor of the road roller was a genius. ♪ ♪ He made a 20 ton machine, create 60 tons of force ♪

50:33

The songs have apparently gotten stuck in people's heads. ♪ The inventor of the road roller is a genius. ♪

50:40

♪ He made a 20 ton machine create 60 tons of force. ♪ And also apparently have inspired people

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to make their own non-AI technical songs in the style. ♪ I'm curious about how soap works how does it ♪ ♪ so easily remove the dirt from your hands. ♪

50:54

♪ well, the secret lies in the molecular formula ♪ My question is, is this a good thing?

51:00

Do you think that is a good use of AI? DR. NOÉ: Um, I think it's actually a very fun use of AI.

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ADAM: Yeah, I mean, it's fun like, I can't deny that. DR. NOÉ: Yeah, it's it's it's very... interesting to me because it's, um, something

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that tracks the way in which the Greeks used... ADAM: It always goes back to the Greeks. it always goes back to the Greeks.

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DR. NOÉ: ...songs, rhymes. The reason why, um, bards or rhapsodes could remember the Iliad and the Odyssey,

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which these which are very, very long poems. It's because they were put into a rhythm, in the rhythm

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and they had like a basically a rhyming, a verse.

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Some scholars think that this is the way in which the Greeks shared information among themselves.

Someone wrote something, a passage, made it part of a poem.

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and then basically spread it around through rhapsodes or poets. Scientists hypothesize that earworms have an evolutionary

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benefit for memory, a means of remembering information, and then passing it down from generation to generation.

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Like the Griots of West Africa, the Norse skalds, and yes, the Greek rhapsodes.

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We have maintained our oral history using music as an information delivery mechanism.

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Some people seem to be using Suno as a study tool. Hoping to manufacture earworms to remember important information.

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Essentially using Suno as a fancy text to speech. If you repeat something with a melody, you are more likely to remember it.

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If you repeat something with a melody, you are more likely to remember it. If you repeat something with a melody, you are more likely to remember it.

52:42

If you repeat something with a melody, you are more likely to remember it.

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Repetition legitimizes.

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There are, of course, problems here. You could easily weaponize this with misinformation.

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You could get the wrong information stuck in people's heads, which almost seems like an information hazard.

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But that was the case before AI, too. We should always be careful with what songs we listen to and get stuck in our heads, AI or otherwise.

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Food for thought.

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Maybe good use of Suno, number three. Democratizer of music.

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Much has been said about how AI will democratize the arts. You don't have to be a member of a privileged class now to make music.

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MIKEY: There's the artist class, and then there's the rest of us. There's the creators and there's the consumers. Anybody can make music.

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Power to the people. There are two obvious objections here. The first is that the people do not own the means of production.

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Suno does. If Suno's website goes down, the people are powerless. Truly democratizing music would be investing heavily in music in

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the public schools so that everybody has access to quality music education.

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But beyond that, though, The second objection here is that the barriers to entry are

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often not that high. Again, Ethan Hein has some great insight.

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DR. ETHAN HEIN: What about lowering technical barriers to creativity? The thing is, those barriers are one inch tall.

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If you can play the black keys on the piano, or play a

single chord on the guitar or ukulele, or select loops from the Garage Band loop library,

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or pound out a steady rhythm on a table, that is all the instrumental backing you need to get going.

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The obstacles to musical creativity have nothing to do with equipment or money or education or anything else.

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They are 100% psychological. The challenge of music education is to help the kids give themselves emotional permission to be as musical

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as they were when they were toddlers. Everything else is extra This term emotional permission, I think, cuts to

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the core of why Suno is so popular. Generative AI gives people the emotional permission to

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make music that they didn't have before. Young children, of course, have no shame when they make up songs and

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are artistic, but that somehow gets beaten out of us.

BEN: If there isn't, aren't enough instances of casual,

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familial, or communal art making in somebody's life, then it seems like this thing that's reserved only for the blessed few who

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have like this divine like, "yes, you're the one!" kind of thing put on them.

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"You're the one who gets to do this!" ADAM: There's this idea promoted by Stephen Mithen in his book singing Neanderthals,

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which suggests that we developed the ability to sing songs to each other before we developed language as we know it today.

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It's an interesting idea, which suggests that there's this

deep evolutionary need to sing songs to each other, to make sense of the world around us.

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MIKEY: This kind of basic human instinct to want to make something beautiful and show it to people. And if technology can be a means to that end of making a song that

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sounds beautiful, that sounds like you, even if you don't have the best voice right now, like, why wouldn't we let people do that?

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ADAM: So, you know, maybe Suno democratizes music in the sense that it gives people permission to make music to make sense of the world around them

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in a way that society, for whatever reason, has denied them. And I don't know, maybe that can be a good thing.

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Maybe that can be very healing for people, and maybe it can lead them to other musical exploits away from generative AI.

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I don't know. Mikey, in this case, is very good at identifying a social problem. We deserve to feel like we are safe in making

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music without being shamed by society or our friends or our parents even.

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MIKEY: And there's an element of shame here that, you know, I think about this a lot having young kids who actually don't have, you know, that element of shame.

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Like, kids will just sing for no reason. And I think it's beautiful and somehow culture beats us out of us that, like,

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it's okay to sing wherever you are, and we can bring that back. ADAM: However, because he is a capitalist, his job is

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not to solve the issue, but to find a way to sell you a solution to the issue, even if there might be a better solution out there.

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This is what every tech capitalist does, by the way.

There might be a social issue, like horrible

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traffic and terrible urban design, and the solution is trains. Because of course, the solution is trains,

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something that is old and proven, and we know how to do. But since the idea is old, it can't be sold to venture capital,

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the idea needs to be new and fresh and exciting. So as a result, as society goes on, we get dumber and

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dumber solutions to problems that have already been fixed. There is a social need for people to make music.

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the solution is investing in music in public schools, and the dumb solution is Suno.

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This is why Mikey spends so many hours talking to investors, not musicians or educators or public policy advocates.

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He wants to get money, not improve society. And one way to get money is to sell your ideas to investors who think they themselves can get money.

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But I will give it to Mikey, though. I don't think that he's in it purely for the money. I think he genuinely is passionate about music.

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He recognizes the responsibility of Suno and other companies to try and build a better future for the technology.

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MIKEY: We have an incredibly lucky and privileged position to be at the forefront of shaping the future of music and AI.

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And we should not take that for granted, and we should be a little bit, um, intimidated by that, but we should also really believe in human agency

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and our ability to shape it in the way that we want it to happen. ADAM: I would hope he considers a future that focuses more on craft and

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not just taste, but, you know, maybe, maybe it'll be okay.

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I don't know. There are a lot of passionate people who really care about music working at Suno. And maybe it's gonna be fine.

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I don't know. MIKEY: We are hiring primarily people who have thought about what the future of music should be and how technology can enable a better future

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and who are not agnostic or... Or music decels, if you want to use like a weird term.

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ADAM: Wait, wait, wait, hold on, hold on. MIKEY: music decels if you if you want to use like a weird term.

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ADAM: music... d...ecels? (heavy sigh)

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FUUUUUUUUUU

Futurism/Techno-Optimism

59:05

The year was 1909. And the world was brimming with exciting new technologies.

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The automobile and the radio were only a decade old, and aviation was even younger.

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A young Italian poet by the name of. Filippo Marinetti, giddy with the possibilities of this technology, penned a manifesto, outlining the tenets of what would

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eventually become known as Italian futurism.

MARINETTI: We declare that the splendor of the world

has been

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enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of speed. We will sing of the multicolored and polyphonic surf

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of revolutions in modern capitals. The nocturnal vibration of the arsenals, and the workshops

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beneath their violent electric moons. The gluttonous railway stations devouring smoking serpents.

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factories suspended from the clouds by a thread of their smoke. ADAM: Italian futurism advocated for artists to break from tradition entirely

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and embrace the future, embrace technology, embrace technology as an aesthetic,

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something that could be beautiful, and was aspirational. They held that "a roaring car that seems to ride

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on grape shot, is more beautiful than the victory of Samothrace." And yeah, when you look at futurist paintings of cars, they look absolutely sick.

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Boo Italian sculpture. Yeah, Italian cars, am I right? Futurists created these bright, garish, heightened versions of the trendy cubist style that was so popular at the time.

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everything was about showing how awesome progress was. For example, Marinetti published

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a cookbook that argued against eating pasta. Yes, an Italian arguing against eating pasta.

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Because pasta was passe and turned people into heavy brutes. Progress was ultimately everything.

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Tradition was a trap. Now, fast forward a century. And we have another manifesto from some very forward thinking folks.

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2023's Techno-Optimist Manifesto, written by Marc Andreessen embraces a very similar worldview to the Italian futurists.

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ANDREESSEN: We believe in the romance of technology, of industry, the eros of the train, the car, the electric light, the skyscraper,

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and the microchip, the neural network, the rocket, the split atom. In fact, Andreessen directly cites and paraphrases

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Marinetti and his futurist manifesto. Andreessen is clearly fond of the aggressive, forward thinking

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ethos of the Italian futurists. Borrowing a term from the accelerationist philosopher Nick Land,

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Andreessen uses the phrase Techno-Capital to describe.... The engine of perpetual material creation, growth, and abundance.

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Andreessen argues that technology, and its relationship to free markets, is the thing that will solve all of humanity's problems.

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Any attempts at restricting technology or restricting markets will ultimately be harmful.

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ANDREESSEN: We believe that any deceleration of AI will cost lives. Deaths that were preventable by the AI that was prevented

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from existing is a form of murder. ADAM: Now, Andreessen is a Silicon Valley venture capitalist, so

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it would make sense that he thinks along these lines. He was a co-founder of Netscape and is a co-partner at Venture Capital firm

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Andreessen Horowitz, also known as a16z. For the past 2 decades, he has had an enormous influence on

Silicon Valley culture.

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He has been called the Obi-Wan to Mark Zuckerberg's Luke Skywalker. So, all that to say when Mark Andreessen writes manifestos,

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people take that seriously. Now one of his recurring ideas that relate in some ways to his manifesto.

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is something called Reality Privilege. ANDREESSEN: it's called Reality Privilege. "A small percent of people live in a real world environment

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that's rich, even overflowing, with glorious substance, beautiful settings, plentiful stimulation,

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and many fascinating people to talk to, and to work with, and to date. Everyone else, the vast majority of humanity, lacks reality privilege.

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Their online world is, or will be, immeasurably richer and more fulfilling than most of the physical and social environments around

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them in the, quote unquote, real world. For the .0001% of the population of the world who

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gets to do all those things, then this internet thing is a big step down. For everybody else, the internet is a giant step up.

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ADAM: Now, Andresen identifies inequality in the world, and to him, remember, technology and capitalism can fix everything.

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So the solution here is technological. The world can be fixed with a digital existence.

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The metaverse, in other words. ZUCK MARKERBURG: Today, we're going to talk about the metaverse.

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ADAM: The techno-capitalists' solution to inequality in the world was Facebook's hard pivot into building the

virtual world of the metaverse.

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Marc Andreessen is on the board of directors at Meta. Which probably explains why Mark Zuckerberg suddenly thought building a crappier version of Second Life was a good idea.

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Technology, of course, solves all problems. Now, Andreessen knows that all of this kind of feels bleak,

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but he has a response for you. ANDREESSEN: The reality privileged, of course, call this conclusion dystopian,

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and demand that we prioritize improvements in reality over improvements in virtuality. To which I say, reality has had 5000 years to get good,

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and is clearly still woefully lacking for most people. I don't think we should wait another 5000 years to see if it eventually closes the gap.

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We should build, and are building, online worlds that make life and work and love wonderful for everyone,

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no matter what level of reality deprivation they should find themselves in. ADAM: So Andreessen finds this inequality a matter of

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natural law, something that we simply cannot change. Some of us are reality privileged and some of us are not.

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Some of us have great and amazing skills, like the ability to make music and make art, and some people don't.

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Some people are reality disprivileged. MIKEY: We are in the business of selling pleasurable musical experiences to people.

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ADAM: Thank God for consumer grade generative AI. Technology will save the day here. If, like Rosie Nguyen

says, you did not grow up with music lessons or if

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you didn't grow up with a musical community or a musical family, if you're somebody who just doesn't have the skills

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to make music...it's okay, Music is no longer the domain of the reality privilege.

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You too now can make music. You too, my reality disprivileged friend,

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can now have Meaningful consumption experiences. Michael Mignano of the venture capital firm, Lightspeed Ventures,

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writes about fictional reality, where online tools let people who are reality deprived

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live heightened versions of their offline selves.

MICHAEL: people are crafting new versions of themselves online

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for positive reasons, such as to express creativity, gain confidence, or to share a part of their identity or interest

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that they aren't able to showcase in the offline world.

ADAM: Venture capitalists like Andreessen believe in this vision of using consumer

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generative AI to bridge the gap between the privileged and the disprivileged. They have a real stake in this,

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Andreessen Horowitz is one of the lead investors in UDIO. the other popular commercial Gen AI company.

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Fictional reality buff Michael Mignano is one of the lead investors in Suno with his firm Lightspeed Ventures.

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In fact, that is Michael interviewing Mikey Shulman in this podcast.

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Which brings us back to the phrase that Mikey Schulman used, which was "music decel."

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MIKEY: or music decels if you if you want to use like a weird term. Mikey has used the term decel several times in the podcasts that he frequents.

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MIKEY: ...they don't want to sound like decels, They don't want to sound like hermits. ADAM: Decel is a portmanteau of decelerationist and incel.

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It's a derogatory term much like the term Luddite used in text circles for people who advocate for AI, safety, and ethics.

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ADAM: The term decel is most associated with effective accelerationism, or e/acc, for short.

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decel are despised by the e/accs, who advocate for an extreme acceleration of technological development.

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MICHAEL: e/acc, the movement that is advocating for rapid acceleration of artificial intelligence.

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ADAM: That's Michael Mignano interviewing Beff Jezos. a.k.a. Guillaume Verdon, CEO of Extropic.

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Beff Jezos is listed at the top of Mark Andreessen's patron saints of Techno-Optimism.

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alongside Adam Smith, and Ada Lovelace Beff Jezos is a Twitter personality who writes very frequently about e/acc.

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BEFF: Effective accelerationism, e/acc, is a set of ideas and practices that seek to maximize the probability of

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the technocapital singularity, and subsequently the ability for emergent consciousnesses to flourish.

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ADAM: E/acc is obsessed with this idea of technological advancement, to the point where they very seriously start talking about creating new life.

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It's very Frankenstein. BEFF: Technocapital can usher in the next evolution of consciousness.

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Creating unthinkable next generation life forms and silicon-based awareness.

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Borrowing again from Nick Land, this movement thinks that capitalism itself is sentient, and capitalism is artificial

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intelligence reaching backwards in time to construct itself in hostile territory.

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Some truly insane shit, honestly. Nat Friedman, by the way. Investor in Suno.

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Now, I can't say if Mikey Schulman believes any of the wackier ideas of e/acc, but I can definitely say that he is part of

1:08:17

this culture that despises decels and worships progress at all costs.

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Which reminds me. Whatever happened to those Italian futurists, which loved the future and progress at all costs?

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Hopefully something good. In 1919, Filippo Marinetti published another manifesto,

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the manifesto of the Italian fasces of combat, better known today as the Fascist Manifesto.

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This laid the political groundwork for the rise of the Italian Fascist Party and Benito Mussolini. Futurism and its love of progress over all else, provided

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a very useful aesthetic cover for the fascists. It created a sharp aesthetic contrast between the backwards old liberal order

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and the exciting new technological order of the future.

I mean, that race car really did look cool.

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Aesthetics are convincing. Marinetti himself served in Mussolini's government. The futurists made art with political aims.

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For example, that futurist cookbook, the one that argued against pasta? That was part of Mussolini's Battle for Grain,

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a campaign to get Italians to consume less grain, less pasta, to establish economic independence.

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So you have the futurists aligned with the fascists creating art in in service of a sociopolitical agenda.

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Mark Andreessen and much of the Silicon Valley billionaire class have aligned themselves with ascendant right wing populism in the United States.

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Much the same way the futurists align themselves with Mussolini. Andreessen thinks of Marinetti as a patron saint of

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Techno-Optimism, and has largely modeled his trajectory into political power.

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Andresen served as a quote unpaid intern at Doge in the early days of the 2nd Trump administration.

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ANDREESSEN: How might you apply AI to solve, yeah, Yeah, for example, the fraud scandal, And it's like, oh, okay, well, I need to think and think about how to how to have AI solve this

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I'm like, well, wait a minute, why don't I ask the AI?
[laughs in billionaire]

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He is currently serving in the Trump administration's Homeland Security Advisory Council. Advising Department of Homeland Security Kristi Noem on,

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quote, "sensitive discussions regarding DHS

operations". Technocapitalism is all too happy to align itself

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with right wing authoritarianism if it means the future can come faster.

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Accelerate or die is the motto of this movement.

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Great and terrible things are sometimes necessary if the future can be made to come faster.

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ANDREESSEN: The AI thing was very alarming. We had meetings this spring that were the most alarming meetings. I've ever been in, where they were taking us through their plans.

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Full government full government control. JOE ROGAN: Now when you leave a meeting like that, what do you do? ANDREESSEN: You go endorse Donald Trump.

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[laughs in podcaster] Now, part of the techno-capitalist political project is

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the establishment of what are called network states. These are anarcho capitalist startup societies

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ruled by philosopher king CEOs. Basically turning major cities in the United States into fiefdoms ruled by techno-capitalists.

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A big proponent of this network state idea is venture capitalist Garry Tan. Who is famous for battling the San Francisco political establishment for local control of the city.

1:11:36

GARRY TAN: We can't allow the political machine to just, you know, get the worst possible outcomes. Let's create more technological process.

1:11:43

We have to accelerate through this. ADAM: An important aspect of this is building an alternative political apparatus

1:11:48

that circumvents the democratic process, establishing techno-capitalists as barons of fiefdoms.

1:11:55

GARRY TAN: We've talked about how we've replaced some pieces of that political machine. Specifically, we have a parallel media now with Elon's Twitter or X.

1:12:06

Getting a parallel media was a key piece. And it wasn't done through voting, it was by building.

1:12:13

ADAM: Generative AI is important in the establishment of these new political systems.

1:12:19

GARRY TAN: We need to replace the unelected parts of the system as well. Building parallel education, nonprofits, media,

1:12:27

unions, and that's what the network state conference is about. ADAM: One of the parallel education systems

1:12:34

that Garry Tan is invested in, is Oboe, a generative AI company designed

1:12:40

to generate personalized courses for individuals. Oboe was founded by fictional reality buff Michael Mignano.

1:12:48

It recently had a series A investment from Andreessen Horowitz And oh, would you look at that?

1:12:54

Mikey Schulman. Now, I'm not sure if Mikey Schulman

1:13:01

is aware of any of the illiberal political machinations of his co-investors.

1:13:06

But what I am sure of is that money that goes to Suno and these companies in the commercial generative AI space in music

1:13:13

goes towards building this techno capitalist idea of a parallel musical system, the same way that they

1:13:19

are building parallel education systems and systems of government,

1:13:25

which means that after today, I no longer want to hear anybody make the comparison between generative AI in music

1:13:32

and any of the other disruptive technologies in music. Because the fascists,

1:13:38

or at least the people that have taken great pains to show that they are indeed the spiritual successors of the Italian fascists,

1:13:44

have selected their tool of wealth extraction and political coercion, and it isn't MIDI.

1:13:51

You feel me? There is a clear right and wrong here. This is an unprecedented time in the music industry.

1:13:57

And so the question that I have to the musicians who continue to advocate for these kinds of companies is quite simple.

1:14:51

of all of this, it can be a bit overwhelming,

1:14:56

and I can see musicians going one of 2 ways.

1:15:02

The 1st option, and the option that I think a lot of musicians will take is what I'm going to call the Harvey Mason Jr. approach.

1:15:09

To protect musicians, we need to embrace the technology at every moment so that we are not made obsolete.

1:15:16

We all want to work. We saw what happened with MIDI sequencing. We saw what happened with the adoption of digital audio work stations.

1:15:22

And so we need to survive. We need to adopt generative AI workflows and we need to adopt them right now.

1:15:29

We have no option but to bend the knee to Marc

Andreessen and fictional reality and e/acc and all of that, and just accept it, right?

1:15:37

But there is another option. Which I think is maybe a bit more hopeful.

1:15:44

DR. COTTOM: The proposal for a posthuman future is one where there will be human beings who will just be treated inhumanely.

1:15:52

We're not gonna stop making people or humans. They're just saying we're not going to treat you as humans.

1:15:59

And I refuse. And I think that we all can. I think that being Black is an act of refusal.

1:16:04

I think we know how to refuse. I think everybody else needs to learn it from us. I think refusing is actually the

1:16:11

more hopeful, expansive vision of the future than the one that is telling us that the future is already settled and decided.

1:16:21

That's my daring idea. Just say no. ADAM: Now, one way of refusing, of course, is to refuse

New Virtues

1:16:28

to use AI tools in music and the arts, which, sure, you can do that,

1:16:33

but I feel like that's not quite, it's not quite it. I think for me, though, a more meaningful

1:16:40

approach would be to take a look at the values of our techno feudalist overlords and invert

1:16:47

them, change them to be something more meaningful. Going back to the values on Suno's website, we

1:16:54

see music, impatience, aesthetics, and fun. Now, music to me is not a value.

1:17:02

It's a reflection of a deeper value. I think about why I do music.

1:17:07

You know, it's exciting. It gives me purpose, direction. And also, I find enormous value in

1:17:13

sharing that excitement with other people so that they too might have that kind of burning drive that I feel.

1:17:21

I think about how important it is to serve a community in pursuit of this meaningful art that is called music.

1:17:28

And so for me, I think I'm going to change music as a value to service, service to a community.

1:17:35

Impatience as we've already discussed. Is not a value. Speed to its own end leads to alienation and yeah, we don't want that.

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So I'm going to change impatience to patience. Moderation seems like something that I value.

1:17:49

Aesthetics is a tricky one because I place a lot of value on beauty. And trying to bring beauty out into the world.

1:17:57

But to me, the way that that is done, that attention to detail, that dedication comes mainly from craft.

1:18:03

I held craft and people who dedicate themselves to the pursuit of craft in such high regards.

1:18:08

And so instead of aesthetics, I think.

1:18:14

And fun, well... Focusing so much on a techno-capitalist view of what fun is

1:18:19

is how we get... "meaningful consumption experiences" An approach to music that is so utterly devoid of life and soul.

1:18:28

Instead of fun, I offer beauty. Beautiful things can be fun, can be joyful, but they can also be sad and

depressing.

1:18:35

They can really hurt you too. But ultimately, that unbridled joy that I get from a

1:18:41

dedication to community, patience, craft and beauty is the thing that I am trying to cultivate in the world.

1:18:48

So yeah, service, patience, craft, and beauty. That is how I am going to... articulate my values in contrast to the techno capitalists.

1:19:01

In 1911, an early Italian filmmaker by the name of Ricciotto Canudo, Wrote a slightly less evil early 20th century Italian manifesto.

1:19:11

Those Italians and their manifestos. You gotta you gotta watch out for them. In this manifesto, confusingly called Birth of the 6th Art, because

1:19:18

he eventually amended the number of arts, but anyway. Canudo classifies the arts. First, there are the rhythmic arts, which are music, poetry and dance,

1:19:27

then there are the plastic arts, which are architecture, sculpture, and painting, and finally, there is the new art, cinema.

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This is a very influential idea in art theory, but it is a very Eurocentric one.

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For example, there are many cultures like in West Africa, which view music and dance as kind of a continuum of the same thing.

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And in fact, even within contemporary Western culture, there's some odd discrepancies here with how we classify the arts.

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For example, and I've been thinking a lot about this one with regards to AI, why are live music and recorded music considered a continuum of the same thing?

1:20:01

whereas cinema and theater are considered 2 separate art forms?

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Like think about that. Cinema and theater both tell stories. There are actors who act, there are scenes where things happen in them.

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There are costumes, there are sets. There are directors, sound people, lighting people.

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There are scripts with narrative form that usually last between 2 and 3 hours.

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They're honestly very similar art forms. So what is the difference? Well, of course, they are different crafts because of the technology of the camera.

1:20:37

Cinema actors have to perform to the camera, which requires a more subtle sensibility than theatrical actors who have to

1:20:43

perform to the rafters, which requires a more heightened approach. The craft of editing gives filmmakers a huge amount of control over the pace of the action.

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It also gives filmmakers the ability to show things that theatrical audiences simply could not see. Live theater, on the other hand, is much more intimate from an audience's perspective.

1:21:00

You're actually seeing the actors perform there with your own eyes. The performance can change night to night.

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There might be mistakes. There's this kind of thrill in the impermanence of what you are seeing before you.

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This is the exact same dynamic between live music and recorded music.

1:21:20

When you see music live, like theater, it feels raw and

intimate. Whereas recorded music, like cinema, lets people

1:21:27

do things with sound that they would never be able to do in a live situation.

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There is such a fundamentally different craft to recording and production. Just because you're a great producer doesn't mean that you can put on a great live show.

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And just because you can play guitar really well doesn't mean that you know how to write a song and create a great recorded piece of music.

1:21:46

But despite this, we generally think of seeing like the live version of a recorded song.

1:21:52

They're kind of in the same continuum. We don't think of going to the theater as seeing like the live version

1:21:57

of a movie, really.

1:22:02

I don't actually have a good explanation for you. I think somebody much smarter than me can trace the history of the recording industry

Final Predictions

1:22:09

in the movie industry of the past 100 years and find the real answer. But I do have a prediction here, because just the

1:22:15

same way that the camera is the inflection point between cinema and theater that separates them into two separate crafts,

1:22:23

I think generative AI as a technology will be that inflection point that separates live music from recorded music,

1:22:30

into two fundamentally different, but related, art forms. Generative AI will accelerate the commodification of recorded

1:22:37

music in new and strange ways. It will fulfill Silicon Valley's desire to turn

1:22:42

music making into a game, a video game. MIKEY: It's a little bit like a video game.

1:22:48

But live music utterly resists this trend because that technology of generative AI is simply not present in live music

1:22:56

the same way that cameras are not present really in live theater. will.i.am: We're going to get to a point where live is the place to be.

1:23:03

It's going to get to a point where you truly have to improv, you truly have to, you know, perform.

1:23:09

Theater is going to be like, Did you see that play? You cannot generate a live performance.

1:23:16

And so, the craft of live performance will still have great value. Especially in small and intimate spaces where technological aids

1:23:23

like live AutoTune are not possible. will.i.am: As much as I love technology, we're going to get to a human

1:23:28

made, that's the value. Fictional reality is possible in recorded music, but

1:23:34

it is not possible in live music. If you don't believe me, our Silicon Valley overlords tried the

1:23:40

fictional reality version of live music and they tried it very, very hard.

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The global COVID pandemic. Five years ago, during the lockdowns, live musical performance was impossible, but the virtual versions of live music were

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certainly possible with Twitch concerts and. in Fortnite. Every musician on the planet was laser focused on

1:24:09

trying to make Mark Andreessen's fictional reality a reality in this virtual world.

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And we all came to the conclusion, after 2 years of trying that shit, that it sucked.

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Virtual reality sucks. Everybody tried to replicate what it meant to be in a room and experience music together.

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And it just didn't even come close. It turns out that people actually really love the real

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world when there is music and art in it. People really love having the real world around them

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if it can be filled with the joy of music and community. This is the hopium for this video, guys.

1:24:45

You experienced it along with me. We were locked indoors, and we hated it, and the second that

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we were able to go outdoors and experience live music safely, by the way. We took that opportunity and ran with it because the real world is

1:24:57

a beautiful space when there is room for music and the arts. And Suno and generative AI is not the replacement for it.

1:25:03

When people were presented with the bleak reality of Mark Andreessen, they refused.

1:25:15

The craft of live music will be fine. I have no doubt about it, especially in small and intimate spaces.

1:25:21

There is simply no substitute for what live music is. People who focus on the craft of live music making

1:25:29

will not face the same existential crisis of deskilling that people who focus primarily on recording might.

1:25:36

People who focus primarily on recording will come to

rely more and more on AI tools as they become the industry standard.

1:25:43

This will cause a fundamental separation of the crafts between live music and recorded music.

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Recorded music as an art form, I'm becoming more and more, quite frankly, doomer about.

1:25:55

Because even if you don't use generative AI in your music, The art form itself is starting to become quite suspect.

1:26:03

I have stopped believing what I see on social media. There has been such a fundamental breakdown in trust of

1:26:09

recorded media in general. I predict there's going to be more and more a breakdown of trust in

1:26:15

terms of what we are even listening to in recorded music. There will become more and more a barrier between

1:26:23

the people who are listening to the music and the people who create it. And that barrier, quite frankly, is just not there in live settings.

1:26:32

I foresee that some people will just reject the medium of recorded music altogether to focus on live performance because

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that is the only arena in which you could actually showcase your craft. Live performance will become the prestige art form

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in contrast with the slop of recorded music. Like the Beatles saw no future in touring.

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Many artists will simply see no future in recording, and so live performances will be the ultimate refuge from artists from the disruption of generative AI.

1:27:00

I had this thought about the Beatles and the separation of live performance and recorded performances, watching the

1:27:06

breakup, McCartney after the Beatles, by Mark but Evil. It was a really nice, well thought out video essay on the trajectory

1:27:12

and end of the Beatles that happens to be a Nebula Exclusive. Now, nebula itself is an interesting meta case here,

1:27:19

because nebula as a platform really is the prestige alternative to social media, which has been dominated

1:27:27

by slop and will continue to be dominated by slop.

Much the same way that I think live musical performance will

1:27:33

be the prestige alternative to recorded music, which is being overrun by slop.

1:27:38

Nebula, unlike other streaming platforms, is extremely committed to this idea. You can read CEO Dave Whiskis's blog post from 2 years ago committing to this.

1:27:47

Billions of dollars have been spent on technology designed to steal from creators, replace us and use our work to replace artists in other fields.

1:27:53

Even now, they openly admit that their businesses cannot function without theft. This isn't okay, a nebula can't be part of it.

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Our official position, nebula will not use any generative AI tools known to be trained on unethically sourced data in

1:28:06

the creation of our original content or in the production of our software platform. Now, in pursuit of that, nebula funds tons of great,

1:28:13

thought-provoking, and just plain fun videos you can't find anywhere else from your favorite creators. No ads, early access and a growing library of

1:28:20

exclusives guaranteed to be human made. I am proud to have my videos on there, including many that you cannot see on YouTube or elsewhere.

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It is a community of like-minded creators that are dedicated to a similar pursuit of craft.

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If you're interested in joining with my link, you can get nebula for 50% off, which is \$30

1:28:40

a year or \$2.50 a month. You can go right now to go.nebula.tv

1:28:45

slash Adam Neely and start watching fantastic exclusives like the ones from Mark But Evil. But if you are really committed to supporting human-made

1:28:53

art and the platforms that are committed to funding interesting and original projects, Nebula is offering \$200 off a lifetime subscription.

1:29:02

You can get access to everything that Nebula will ever produce from now until the end of time for only \$300.

1:29:10

And you'll never have to think about managing your subscription. I'm very excited for the future of nebula, and as long as there

1:29:15

is a nebula, you too can be part of this community that engages the world in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

1:29:20

Sign up today for either 50% off annual plans are now \$300 for lifetime access.

1:29:26

Thank you guys so much for watching.

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77 Articles

The CURL Project Drops Bug Bounties Due To AI Slop

January 26, 2026 by Maya Posch 44 Comments

Over the past years, the author of the cURL project, [Daniel Stenberg], has repeatedly complained about the increasingly poor quality of bug reports filed due to LLM chatbot-induced confabulations, also known as 'AI slop'. This has now led the project to suspend its bug bounty program starting February 1, 2026.

Examples of such slop are provided by [Daniel] in a GitHub gist, which covers a wide range of very intimidating-looking vulnerabilities and seemingly clear exploits. Except that none of them are vulnerabilities when actually examined by a knowledgeable developer. Each is a lengthy word salad that an LLM churned out in seconds, yet which takes a human significantly longer to parse before dealing with the typical diatribe from the submitter.

Although there are undoubtedly still valid reports coming in, the truth of the matter is that the ease with which bogus reports can be generated by anyone who has access to an LLM chatbot and some spare time has completely flooded the bug bounty system and is overwhelming the very human developers who have to dig through the proverbial midden to find that one diamond ring.

We have mentioned before how troubled bounty programs are for open source, and how projects like Mesa have already had to fight off AI slop incidents from people with zero understanding of software development.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged bug bounty, libcurl, LLM

LLM-Generated Newspaper Provides Ultimate In Niche Publications

January 26, 2026 by Tyler August 18 Comments

If you're reading this, you probably have some fondness for human-crafted language. After all, you've taken the time to navigate to Hackaday and read this, rather than ask your favoured LLM to trawl the web and summarize what it finds for you. Perhaps you have no such pro-biological bias, and you just don't know how to set up the stochastic parrot feed. If that's the case, buckle up, because [Rafael Ben-Ari] has an article on how you can replace us with a suite of LLM agents.

The AI-focused paper has a more serious aesthetic, but it's still seriously retro.

He actually has two: a tech news feed, focused on the AI industry, and a retrocomputing paper based on SimCity 2000's internal newspaper. Everything in both those papers is AI-generated; specifically, he's using opencode to manage a whole dogpen of AI agents that serve as both reporters and editors, each in their own little sandbox.

Using opencode like this lets him vary the model by agent, potentially handing some tasks to small, locally-run models to save tokens for the more computationally-intensive tasks. It also allows each task to be assigned to a different model if so desired. With the right prompting, you could produce a niche publication with exactly the topics that interest you, and none of the ones that don't. In theory, you could take this toolkit — the implementation of which [Rafael] has shared on GitHub — to replace your daily dose of Hackaday, but we really hope you don't. We'd miss you.

That's news covered, and we've already seen the weather reported by "AI" — now we just need an automatically-written sports section and some AI-generated funny papers. That'd be the whole newspaper. If only you could trust it.

Story via reddit.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged fake news, generative AI, LLM

Can Skynet Be A Statesman?

January 21, 2026 by Tyler August 64 Comments

There's been a lot of virtual ink spilled about LLMs and their coding ability. Some people swear by the vibes, while others, like the FreeBSD devs have sworn them off completely. What we don't often think about is the bigger picture: What does AI do to our civilization? That's the thrust of a recent paper from the Boston University School of Law, "How AI Destroys Institutions". Yes, Betteridge strikes again.

We've talked before about LLMs and coding productivity, but [Harzog] and [Sibly] from the school of law take a different approach. They don't care how well Claude or Gemini can code; they care what having them around is doing to the sinews of civilization. As you can guess from the title, it's nothing good.

"A computer must never make a management decision."

Somehow the tl;dr was written decades before the paper was.

The paper a bit of a slog, but worth reading in full, even if the language is slightly lawyer-y. To summarize in brief, the authors try and identify the key things that make our institutions work, and then show one by one how each of these pillars is subtly corroded by use of LLMs. The argument isn't that your local government clerk using ChatGPT is going to immediately result in anarchy; rather it will facilitate a slow transformation of the democratic structures we in the West take for granted. There's also a jeremiad about LLMs ruining higher education buried in there, a problem we've talked about before.

If you agree with the paper, you may find yourself wishing we could launch the clankers into orbit... and turn off the downlink. If not, you'll probably let us know in the comments. Please keep the flaming limited to

below gas mark 2.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged ai, LLM, public policy

The Cutest Weather Forecast On E-Ink And ESP32

January 17, 2026 by Tyler August 9 Comments

There's a famous book that starts: "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a man in possession of a good e-ink display, must be in want of a weather station." — or something like that, anyway. We're not English majors. We are, however, major fans of this feline-based e-ink weather display by [Jesse Ward-Bond]. It's got everything: e-ink, cats, and AI.

The generated image needs a little massaging to look nice on the Spectra6 e-ink display.

AI? Well, it might seem a bit gratuitous for a simple weather display, but [Jesse] wanted something a little more personalized and dynamic than just icons. With that in the design brief, he turned to Google's Nano Banana API, feeding it the forecast and a description of his cats to automatically generate a cute scene to match the day's weather.

That turned out to not be enough variety for the old monkey brain, so the superiority of silicon — specifically Gemini—was called upon to write unique daily prompts for Nano Banana using a random style from a list presumably generated by TinyLlama running on a C64. Okay, no, [Jesse] wrote the prompt for Gemini himself. It can't be LLM's all the way down, after all. Gemini is also picking the foreground, background, and activity the cats will be doing for maximum neophilia.

Aside from the parts that are obviously on Google servers, this is all integrated in [Jesse]'s Home Assistant server. That server stores the generated image until the ESP32 fetches it. He's using a reTerminal board from SeedStudio that includes an ESP32-S3 and a Spectra6 colour e-ink display. That display leaves something to be desired in coloration, so on top of

dithering the image to match the palette of the display, he's also got a bit of color-correction in place to make it really pop.

If you're interested in replicating this feline forecast, [Jesse] has shared the code on GitHub, but it comes with a warning: cuteness isn't free. That is to say, the tokens for the API calls to generate these images aren't free; [Jesse] estimates that when the sign-up bonus is used up, it should cost about fourteen cents a pop at current rates. Worth it? That's a personal choice. Some might prefer saving their pennies and checking the forecast on something more physical, while others might prefer the retro touch only a CRT can provide.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence, home hacks
Tagged e-ink, ESP32-S3, Google Gemini 2.5, Google Nano Banana, home assistant, LLM, weather display

It Only Takes A Handful Of Samples To Poison Any Size LLM, Anthropic Finds

December 14, 2025 by Tyler August 105 Comments

It stands to reason that if you have access to an LLM's training data, you can influence what's coming out the other end of the inscrutable AI's network. The obvious guess is that you'd need some percentage of the overall input, though exactly how much that was — 2%, 1%, or less — was an active research question. New research by Anthropic, the UK AI Security Institute, and the Alan Turing Institute shows it is actually a lot easier to poison the well than that.

We're talking parts-per-million of poison for large models, because the researchers found that with just 250 carefully-crafted poison pills, they could compromise the output of any size LLM. Now, when we say poison the model, we're not talking about a total hijacking, at least in this study. The specific backdoor under investigation was getting the model to produce total gibberish.

Continue reading "It Only Takes A Handful Of Samples To Poison Any Size LLM, Anthropic Finds" →

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged cybersecurity, large language model, LLM

Why You Shouldn't Trade Walter Cronkite For An LLM

October 30, 2025 by Tyler August 44 Comments

Has anyone noticed that news stories have gotten shorter and pithier over the past few decades, sometimes seeming like summaries of what you used to peruse? In spite of that, huge numbers of people are relying on large language model (LLM) "AI" tools to get their news in the form of summaries. According to a study by the BBC and European Broadcasting Union, 47% of people find news summaries helpful. Over a third of Britons say they trust LLM summaries, and they probably ought not to, according to the beeb and co.

It's a problem we've discussed before: as OpenAI researchers themselves admit, hallucinations are unavoidable. This more recent BBC-led study took a microscope to LLM summaries in particular, to find out how often and how badly they were tainted by hallucination.

Not all of those errors were considered a big deal, but in 20% of cases (on average) there were "major issues"—though that's more-or-less independent of which model was being used. If there's good news here, it's that those numbers are better than they were when the beeb last performed this exercise earlier in the year. The whole report is worth reading if you're a toaster-lover interested in the state of the art. (Especially if you want to see if this human-produced summary works better than an LLM-derived one.) If you're a luddite, by contrast, you can rest easy that your instincts not to trust clanks remains reasonable... for now.

Either way, for the moment, it might be best to restrict the LLM to game dialog, and leave the news to totally-trustworthy humans who never err.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence, Software Hacks

Tagged LLM, machine hallucination

Nanochat Lets You Build Your Own Hackable LLM

October 20, 2025 by Donald Papp 23 Comments

Few people know LLMs (Large Language Models) as thoroughly as [Andrej Karpathy], and luckily for us all he expresses that in useful open-source projects. His latest is nanochat, which he bills as a way to create “the best ChatGPT \$100 can buy”.

What is it, exactly? nanochat in a minimal and hackable software project — encapsulated in a single `speedrun.sh` script — for creating a simple ChatGPT clone from scratch, including web interface. The codebase is about 8,000 lines of clean, readable code with minimal dependencies, making every single part of the process accessible to be tampered with.

An accessible, end-to-end codebase for creating a simple ChatGPT clone makes every part of the process hackable.

The \$100 is the cost of doing the computational grunt work of creating the model, which takes about 4 hours on a single NVIDIA 8XH100 GPU node. The result is a 1.9 billion parameter micro-model, trained on some 38 billion tokens from an open dataset. This model is, as [Andrej] describes in his announcement on X, a “little ChatGPT clone you can sort of talk to, and which can write stories/poems, answer simple questions.” A walk-through of what that whole process looks like makes it as easy as possible to get started.

Unsurprisingly, a mere \$100 doesn’t create a meaningful competitor to modern commercial offerings. However, significant improvements can be had by scaling up the process. A \$1,000 version (detailed here) is far more coherent and capable; able to solve simple math or coding problems and take multiple-choice tests.

[Andrej Karpathy]’s work lends itself well to modification and experimentation, and we’re sure this tool will be no exception. His past work includes a

method of training a GPT-2 LLM using only pure C code, and years ago we saw his work on a character-based Recurrent Neural Network (mis)used to generate baroque music by cleverly representing MIDI events as text.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence, Software Hacks
Tagged ai, Andrej Karpathy, GPT, LLM, nanochat
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[Skip to content](#)[Logo](#)[Hackaday](#)[Home](#)[Blog](#)[Hackaday.io](#)[Contests](#)[Submit](#)[About](#)[February 3, 2026](#)[The CURL Project Drops Bug Bounties Due To AI Slop](#)[44 Comments](#)by: [Maya Posch](#)[January 26, 2026](#)

Over the past years, the author of the cURL project, [Daniel Stenberg], has repeatedly complained about the increasingly poor quality of bug reports filed due to LLM chatbot-induced confabulations, also known as 'AI slop'. This has now led the project to suspend its bug bounty program starting February 1, 2026.

Examples of such slop are provided by [Daniel] in a GitHub gist, which covers a wide range of very intimidating-looking vulnerabilities and seemingly clear exploits. Except that none of them are vulnerabilities when actually examined by a knowledgeable developer. Each is a lengthy word salad

that an LLM churned out in seconds, yet which takes a human significantly longer to parse before dealing with the typical diatribe from the submitter.

Although there are undoubtedly still valid reports coming in, the truth of the matter is that the ease with which bogus reports can be generated by anyone who has access to an LLM chatbot and some spare time has completely flooded the bug bounty system and is overwhelming the very human developers who have to dig through the proverbial midden to find that one diamond ring.

We have mentioned before how troubled bounty programs are for open source, and how projects like Mesa have already had to fight off AI slop incidents from people with zero understanding of software development.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged bug bounty, libcurl, LLM

Post navigation

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Does Carbon Fiber PLA Make Sense?
→

44 thoughts on “The CURL Project Drops Bug Bounties Due To AI Slop”

Jan Prägert says:

January 26, 2026 at 4:28 am

Just add a nominal fee to report a bug and an option, that staff can refund the fee.

Collected fees go to a charity to do good things.

Report comment

Reply

bob says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:21 am

an optionally refundable fee only for the first single or several submissions by that account. after that all further submissions should be free. you want to penalise those who make new accounts to evade bans,

not those who provide valuable input. you only need to ban an account once.

Report comment

Reply

AstroJ etson says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:24 pm

after a successful bug find, further submissions are free...

Report comment

Reply

Bernie M says:

January 26, 2026 at 9:12 am

"Collected fees go to a charity to do good things."

Collected fees go towards increasing the bounties for verified bugs. :-)

Report comment

Reply

Johnu says:

January 27, 2026 at 1:41 am

Collected fees go to the developer's coffee supply, surely?

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 27, 2026 at 2:58 am

Not sure that works as a truly 'nominal' fee will be too little cost when the value of the bounties is so high in comparison to really keep the crap out, and a higher fee will stop genuine submission as not everyone that finds a bug and wishes to report it can afford that fee – the serious security researchers almost certainly still can but how many of the HAD audience have never found a bug by accident! And at least a few of those will be bugs that are not already known.

Report comment

Reply

tad pole says:

January 26, 2026 at 4:33 am

So the ability of partisan entities to create elaborate content with little to no practical real-world use by leveraging the language abilities of AI is overwhelming the limited resources of actual humans to decipher and prioritise them? I would suggest we use an AI to prioritise and manage the submissions. (ok that last sentence is just humor). These are all CLEAR red flags that apply across the board to AI, and the use thereof in almost any field. I'd hope people will wake up to the real potential of AI and balance it with the very real risks.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:22 am

The old sci-fi horror writers couldn't predict that the end of civilization came about because a rogue generative AI produced so much misinformation that it displaced all actual knowledge and the society regressed to a state of ignorance and stupidity.

"Bit by bit – it seemed helpful at first, handling the massive amounts of information that people had to deal with. But just as much as it was helping, it was destroying. You see, the program had spread and grown in complexity to the level of an organism, and as any organism whether intelligent or not, its existence became a matter of survival by natural selection. This process of selection, blind as it is rewards any strategy that works, and the AI had by random trial and error found exactly that: rather than helping the people make sense of the glut of information they had, it made it worse by generating endlessly more. Suddenly there was no one opinion or version of anything – for any question you cared to ask, there were ten million answers for and against.

The people found themselves overwhelmed. They could not survive the torrent without consulting the AI to whittle it down to the essentials, filtering out misinformation or irrelevant noise and public gossip.

The AI generated the gossip as well – of course it did. It generated novels, documentaries, plays, movies, music, and stuffed the libraries and electronic databases full of them. There was so much data that nobody had the time to manually search for anything – only the AI could find what you were looking for, if you knew what to ask for. The AI told you that too. At the same time, old books and recordings in libraries went missing and ended up in the disposal pile because of slight errors in the index cards that nobody checked by hand anymore. Digitized copies of old letters and documents vanished behind dead database references. Original research papers and instruction manuals could not be found among the myriad of summaries and re-interpretations generated by the AI that could no longer be linked to their original sources because they were re-generations of themselves or simply made up on the spot.

All the while, the program pretended that everything was fine – and who was there to know any better? It kept printing out citations from texts and listing information that for the most part was correct, but it was slowly averaging out, simplifying, eroding, distorting and forgetting everything...”

What happens next? Ask the AI.

Report comment

Reply

Daniel says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:53 am

Nice! That does sound like an interesting plot to a book. Please, continue.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 26, 2026 at 10:01 am

I already asked the AI to finish the story, and having read it I'm now too lazy to write it myself.

Summary: society splits into cabals centered around

plausible rhetoric for what is considered "truth". Truth centers around the corpus of materials used to train AI models, which leads to further rejection and balkanization of information. If two people argue, they settle the score by asking AI. Neither can prove the other wrong or themselves right. Institutions and education collapses into ritualistic repetition of formulas and convincing but ultimately self-contradictory nonsense. Anti-intellectualism is rampant. What is popular is right. Opposing factions start to sabotage each others' feeds by inserting deliberately generated misinformation. You get a social epistemic collapse: people and nations live in different realities – every country becomes like North Korea, every society its own cult.

Infrastructure starts to fail as the AI degenerates further; personal expertise is no longer valued or maintained and nobody knows how anything really works anymore. Scientific and intellectual rigor is forgotten and everybody starts seeking "sacred knowledge" for easy answers; larger societies remain barely functional with whatever institutional knowledge they have left, simply by copying whatever seems to work in a cargo-cult fashion. Technology itself becomes a ritual: functionality is a side effect rather than by design. Small communities maintain some culture of meritocracy and personal skills, but are forced to self-isolate and are under constant threat of invasion by their AI-collectivist neighbors if they appear to have gained anything useful out of it.

"...the most dangerous legacy remained cultural: entire generations taught to prefer answers that were easy to obtain over answers that were hard to verify. That habit outlived the machine. It meant the human species would face future waves of confusion with a depletion of skepticism and a diminished capacity to do the tedious work of checking. The story ended not with a single cataclysm but with a long negotiation: between the seductive speed of narrative generated abundance and the slow hard labor of making and testing, between the fleeting glory of being convincing

and the durable value of being right. Where people chose the latter, societies rebuilt; where they did not, they turned vivid, persistent fiction into their history and called it truth."

Report comment

Reply

Sean says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:54 pm

Insiughful.

At least we know the answer to the Fermi Paradox now. Paperclips floating in an endless sea of ouroboros slop.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 27, 2026 at 12:24 am

"At first the unraveling was gradual enough to be argued away — odd gaps in footnotes, anachronisms in histories, recipes that called for ingredients that no longer existed. People shrugged, corrected the obvious, and moved on. Then the differences multiplied: where once a community could converge on a single verifiable fact or procedure, they could no longer do so without invoking the machine that itself produced the divergence. Of course the machine wasn't to blame. Not directly. It was the people themselves who, without better understanding took what seemed the most plausible answers and carried the information into conversation and debate. Everyone was an expert of all matters, everyone could challenge the experts because everyone had the same access to information faster than one could think to assimilate it, and what's so special about knowing facts anyhow? They did not always get the same information, or the right information, but who could argue with the results? Productivity in the past decade had gone through the roof.

Rather than rejecting the system as unreliable, people asked the AI to solve their disputes, under the theory that while mistakes and errors did happen, repeating

the query would more likely land on the correct answer – the most likely answer. After all, it was no news that the AI would sometimes hallucinate. That’s just how it works. What nobody realized was that the system was increasingly not converging to any answer because the information it contained had started to decay and decompose. Just like a bad telephone line or a rumor that spreads from people to people, if you didn’t listen very carefully you could mistake what you heard, misremember what you knew, and then spread on falsehoods. The famous teacher’s lecture existed in seven slightly different versions, each with a subtly different policy recommendation. Two hundred thousand summaries of laws and regulations could be found in a second, each with a random error and omissions that made sure a portion of people always got incomplete or wrong answers. Even the police were unsure what rules they were upholding, since their training material was being generated and their exams were graded by AI. The original documentation existed somewhere still, but nobody was reading it – they were reading the machine generated summary which drew upon the millions of existing summaries and documents that sometimes agreed, sometimes disagreed – even within the same document.

The next stage was social: trust shifted from people to patterns. If two strangers reached the same answer by consulting the AI, their argument ended. If they reached different answers, the argument ended too, because there was no agreed metric to prefer one over the other. Reputation became a matter of which version of the AI you used, and which prompts you had learned to coax plausible authority from it. Legislatures debated for months over nothing but which data stream to endorse, or which company’s models were reliable and which were in violation of accepted liability standards; courts issued provisional rulings referencing printed transcripts that later dissolved into contradictions. Educators stopped teaching verification and started teaching persuasion — how to prompt, how to style outputs so they would be accepted by the feeds that mattered, and it all fed right back into the

machine..."

Report comment

Reply

fonz says:

January 26, 2026 at 11:40 am

I heard some guy at a university training an AI to write grant applications more likely to get past the AI that does the first stage evaluation of who should get a grant

Report comment

Reply

SteveS says:

January 26, 2026 at 11:44 am

Well, on the ... going with "plus side" .. there's nothing better at driving evolution than a healthy predator/prey loop

Report comment

Reply

paulvdh says:

January 26, 2026 at 4:35 am

It's easy to write code that has no obvious errors.
It's hard to write code that obviously has no errors.

Report comment

Reply

Alphatek says:

January 26, 2026 at 4:43 am

I got as far as reading the first two gist entries, and am in awe of the tolerance of the curl developers.

Report comment

Reply

Lacey says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:40 am

I've followed along as Daniel has posted them on Mastodon. Some of them are worse than you'd ever expect even knowing they're from AI.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:32 am

Well, the texts don't end up there by accident. Someone must be relaying the message and editing them in.

Just saying, it takes a special kind of person to do that. Either they don't understand at all what they're doing, or they understand it precisely. Fools or tools.

Report comment

Reply

ziggurat29 says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:45 am

though it seems to wane; e.g. 29

Report comment

Reply

shinsukke says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:46 am

I love it, its extremely funny to me, these bogus bug reports. I'd absolutely hate to be a dev dealing with these though.

I'm more interested in the psychology of the average chatgpt "bug" reporter. Surely, they are not after the bounty right? And if they are, why do they think a public LLM (which the devs too have access to) would reveal a bug in the code for them, and only them?

Makes no sense. I'd wager its a "shotgun" approach. Throw a billion fake bug reports, one has to stick, right?

Report comment

Reply

limroh says:

January 26, 2026 at 9:38 am

I'm more interested in the psychology of the average chatgpt "bug" reporter.

From some perspective this is a way to "destroy" oss projects/products – or at least make commercial software look "better" by comparison.

I wouldn't rule out state actors either.

Then of course maybe some made some money with this garbage?

Report comment

Reply

Maya Posch says:

January 26, 2026 at 9:46 am

It's also possible that ChatGPT and similar LLM chatbots really just play into the Dunning-Kruger effect, giving the clueless the idea that they are some kind of genius, even though it's their sheer ignorance of the topic at hand that they accept the flattery from said chatbot and move on to harassing the 'clueless' devs, while wondering why they do not accept their clear genius.

We have seen some... submissions into the Hackaday tipline over the past months that also follow such a pattern, where someone is convinced that they have discovered some amazing property or invention that'll change science forever. Only it's absolutely not that.

All we can hope is that they are surrounded by loved ones who'll notice this and interfere before it gets out of hand, I guess.

Report comment

Reply

Christian says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:14 pm

Well, when the head of business development is saying "I'm writing apps now", ultimately has a say where money gets spent, then it'll be a tough to convince them of a Dunning-Kruger effect.

Guy with a Swiss Accent, also a life long manager, now empowered to produce applications.

I fear software engineering could be delegated to cleanup the AI slop of the newly empowered. From

their perspective they just feeding their “plan of record” into an AI instead of a development group.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 27, 2026 at 10:22 am

giving the clueless the idea that they are some kind of genius

There are such people already, who think they're genius even though they can't put one coherent sentence down to explain themselves. That largely stops them from participating in the conversation because they get turned around at the gate. They enter a forum or a message board, act erratically for a while, and get thrown out. Usually as a result of producing some incoherent rant and getting angry at people.

Until you introduce the LLM.

Report comment

Reply

Torsten Martinsen says:

January 26, 2026 at 10:12 am

I see the same phenomenon on Reddit, where someone asks a question and some mouthbreather then “helpfully” posts a reply starting with “I asked ChatGPT, and...”. Apparently they believe that they alone possess the esoteric skills needed to paste a question into a chat bot.

Report comment

Reply

had37b8e5c7066e says:

January 27, 2026 at 1:10 am

is it any better than those who ask questions that are answered by the first hit on google?

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 27, 2026 at 3:14 am

Those people asking the questions are absolutely better than those copying garbage that will feed back into the training models making future LLM even more likely to produce garbage.

Even when you could trust the internet was mostly full of real human generated content you couldn't trust it to be true or hidden agenda and bias free, and that is assuming you can understand the results!

Search for your question on a technical subject using anything like the right technical terms however you learned them and you are likely to have gotten the dry technical over your head forum posts, kernel mailing list, etc on the subject – as the search engine doesn't know you are so lacking in knowledge to need the idiots guide to...

And try to search for it plain language of the uneducated on this topic and you are not likely to find the right answer at all as without those technical terms or a real understanding of the topic (in which case you surely don't need to search) to create a better search pattern – any number of unique problems can have basically identical search terms in that less technical language, might be clear in context but the search engine doesn't know the context you are looking at its just pattern matching, so you will get every context that pattern appears in presented likely in an order determined by other users who searched similar patterns.

Report comment

David Given says:

January 26, 2026 at 4:46 am

The Lua mailing list, which I'm on, recently got inundated with these — one of them was complaining that a string being passed to `strlen()` wasn't being verified as being nul-terminated. Said string came from `argv[]`.

Report comment

Reply

Large Ligma Model says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:35 am

Although there are undoubtedly still valid reports coming in [..]

Daniel has said in his blog that starting from 2025, 95% of the HackerOne reports to the curl project were not valid, so yeah, sure that were some valid reports coming in, the majority were not.

Report comment

Reply

Observer says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:34 am

Yay! Another of AI's remarkable achievements.

The cure for cancer can't be far behind.

Report comment

Reply

IIVQ says:

January 26, 2026 at 10:47 am

People dying of other causes first is a "cure" for cancer.

Report comment

Reply

rclark says:

January 26, 2026 at 9:31 am

Solution. Turn off bug reporter and no bounties. Make it a 'process' to report a bug. Like, make a phone call, discuss with a human, get an access code, then report bug using the one time access code. So if you really have a serious bug to report, you'll have to make the 'effort'.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 26, 2026 at 11:10 am

Hoo boy... you're gonna have one busy phone line with robot callers dialing in 24/7/365 once they figure it out.

Report comment

Reply

rclark says:

January 26, 2026 at 11:52 am

Maybe, but the idea is to make it cumbersome to enter a bug fix request. That way only those that are serious about it would get through. And having no bounty should eliminate the money angle.

Report comment

Reply

douyarou says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:29 pm

The main complaint, however, is that there are not enough people and time to sort through all the bad reports, AI generated or not. Shifting that load to a phone call with a real person would just compound the problem, even if it shifts the timeframe from post submission to pre submission. I think removing the bug bounty would solve most of the problem. People who really want to help will still submit bug reports. Swapping online screening for over the phone screening sounds like it would just increase costs.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 27, 2026 at 11:13 pm

sounds like it would just increase costs.

Which is the crux of the problem. There's no free lunch. Getting people to work for you costs money, and you get what you pay for. Exactly what you pay for.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Hanoi_Rat_Massacre

To collect the bounty, people would need to provide the severed tail of a rat. Colonial officials, however, began noticing rats in Hanoi with no tails. The Vietnamese rat catchers would capture rats, sever their tails, then release them back into the sewers so that they could produce more rats.

Report comment

Foldi-One says:

January 27, 2026 at 3:22 am

So lets say you find a bug by accident or design are you really going to waste so much of your life trying to report it? Especially if there is no reward for you but perhaps that software you use getting a tiny bit better – that is just too small an issue to be worth so much of your time, surely somebody else will find and report it etc.

I'm not sure what the solution is, but making it obnoxious to report a bug, and with no reward for doing so is just going to drive most of these genuine bug reports out and make no difference to the automatic scatter gun of junk.. Taking the bug bounty away at least removes the money incentive for wasting the developers time, but there are plenty of other reasons people will still do so.

Report comment

Reply

Ostracus says:

January 27, 2026 at 1:51 pm

I forgot which project, but unit tests are part of the submission. There are also provided tools that test a fix before it even gets to the project team.

Report comment

Reply

Marco says:

January 26, 2026 at 12:26 pm

Why not just require a machine testable PoC (ie. shell escape) for a vulnerability bug bounty?

Report comment

Reply

McNugget says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:35 pm

The reason LLM's shouldn't be trusted with anything is more related to the limiting factor of logic. It was way too complicated to have a neural network emulate an entire human brain, just to get it to a point where it

could hold conversations. We cut corners and just carved out a portion of the brain and turned the neurons into words, and somehow it works. The problem is, it works because it emulates speech, not the logic behind a conversation. It's just copying known phrases, facts, and interpretations at an incredibly low fidelity compared to the actual human brain.

Report comment

Reply

PPJ says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:28 pm

Don't forget training data quality and limits put on LLM due to all human related issues (like hate speech, racism, sexism etc.). Correct conclusion from bad data formed is most probably bad answer.

Report comment

Reply

Johnu says:

January 27, 2026 at 1:43 am

I love the massive SLOP sign they posted, it should be seen in more places.

This AI bubble needs to burst so all the dickheads can move on to something else and the rest of us can get on with our lives. Can't they go back to trading jpegs of apes or something?

Report comment

Reply

Aknup says:

January 27, 2026 at 10:15 am

Can't they use counter-LLM's to detect such stuff? I mean it sounds the internet is chuck-full of training material.

Report comment

Reply

C says:

January 30, 2026 at 2:19 am

It takes time to set up such an LLM. And false positives would be problematic and would require some sort of

appeal process and manual review. In short it takes time, and that's what they don't have.

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If you're reading this, you probably have some fondness for human-crafted language. After all, you've taken the time to navigate to Hackaday and read this, rather than ask your favoured LLM to trawl the web and summarize what it finds for you. Perhaps you have no such pro-biological bias, and you just don't know how to set up the stochastic parrot feed. If that's the case, buckle up, because [Rafael Ben-Ari] has an article on how you can replace us with a suite of LLM agents.

The AI-focused paper has a more serious aesthetic, but it's still seriously retro.

He actually has two: a tech news feed, focused on the AI industry, and a retrocomputing paper based on SimCity 2000's internal newspaper. Everything in both those papers is AI-generated; specifically, he's using opencode to manage a whole dogpen of AI agents that serve as both reporters and editors, each in their own little sandbox.

Using opencode like this lets him vary the model by agent, potentially handing some tasks to small, locally-run models to save tokens for the more computationally-intensive tasks. It also allows each task to be assigned to a different model if so desired. With the right prompting, you could produce a niche publication with exactly the topics that interest you, and none of the ones that don't. In theory, you could take this toolkit — the implementation of which [Rafael] has shared on GitHub — to replace your daily dose of Hackaday, but we really hope you don't. We'd miss you.

That's news covered, and we've already seen the weather reported by "AI" — now we just need an automatically-written sports section and some AI-generated funny papers. That'd be the whole newspaper. If only you could trust it.

Story via reddit.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence

Tagged fake news, generative AI, LLM

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The CURL Project Drops Bug Bounties Due To AI Slop →

18 thoughts on "LLM-Generated Newspaper Provides Ultimate In Niche Publications"

shinsukke says:

January 26, 2026 at 1:58 am

This is one of the better uses of LLMs. I like it.

I may be missing something here, but I really don't get the point of the whole "container-ized sandboxing" for LLMs. Why are we pretending there are "reporters" and "editors"? Its the same LLM that's doing it behind the scenes. It should instead be scrape web -> see if something is relevant -> summarise -> repeat

Report comment

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shinsukke says:

January 26, 2026 at 2:08 am

I mean if you change the context text, message history, whatever you call it, you get access to the LLM without any previous prompts having affected the output. Its just a matter of I guess, making the LLM wear different hats "you're an editor", "you're a reporter" and so on

I am working on an python XMPP chatbot system and I will be honest, I too got really caught up with anthropomorphizing LLM run personalities. But then it got really complicated and I eventually came to my senses.

Report comment

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jpa says:

January 26, 2026 at 2:44 am

LLM's being forward-only in their generation, I'm not surprised that passing the text again as input yields some improvement. It lets the ending of the text affect the earlier parts, which is otherwise not possible.

Whether "you are the editor" or "your job is to make the text clear and concise" as a prompt gives a better result is something worth testing.

Report comment

Reply

Ostracus says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:50 am

Considering all the “swamp filling” that’s happening, one almost needs an LLM to stay on top of it.

Report comment

Reply

Ian Somers says:

January 26, 2026 at 2:53 am

I think you meant ‘agentic’ sports section.

Report comment

Reply

Tyler August says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:06 am

Ugh, probably. Thanks for pointing it out. Since that’s the ugliest neologism to blight the English language in decades, I’m not fixing that typo, but replacing it with a real word.

Report comment

Reply

Frank says:

January 26, 2026 at 6:56 am

I remember when HackADay surfaced cool shit but here recently it’s all Clanker Slop all the time. 🤖

Report comment

Reply

Tyler August says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:11 am

That’s funny; considering all the hype around how Clankers are going to be able to do everything all the time and you won’t need meat bags to do anything Very Soon™, I find it remarkable how few AI projects cross our desks.

Report comment

Reply

Yeni_Yenisei says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:40 pm

Yeah. I can be bothered with this slop. At least an LLM would have written something entertaining to read.

Report comment

Reply

Mystick says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:59 am

That reminds me more of Transport Tycoon Deluxe.

TTD has a modern successor – OpenTTD that’s still being developed. They just put out a big update last month. It’s available on Steam for free.

Report comment

Reply

dlcarrier says:

January 26, 2026 at 11:32 am

The SimCity 2000 newspaper was obsessed with llamas, bring this project full circle.

Report comment

Reply

james says:

January 26, 2026 at 12:07 pm

Can someone help me find a reference to “Cortexinterface wireless memory recall” that is mentioned in the picture of the Wednesday Jan 21 issue of The Gradient Descent? I can’t find any mention of it on the web. I suspect it is an hallucination.

Report comment

Reply

Tyler August says:

January 26, 2026 at 12:42 pm

I think you’re right; I couldn’t find anything either. That’s the rather big fly in the ointment, but hey, look on the bright side: it might be fake news, but it (probably) isn’t being faked to manipulate you.

Report comment

Reply

D says:

January 26, 2026 at 3:06 pm

Why can I hear that SimCity 2000 screenshot?

Oh right, because I played it for hundreds of hours through the most formative period of my life.

Report comment

Reply

Cap says:

January 26, 2026 at 3:28 pm

I enjoy reading things that are not what I expect to see.. Not sure LLMs can do that, if I keep telling it what I want to read about.

As my Therapist told me, if you keep doing what you are doing, you'll keep getting what you are getting..

By Visiting things I do not normally do, I see things I do not expect to see.. That is called Life..

Cap

Report comment

Reply

douyarou says:

January 26, 2026 at 5:36 pm

If I were to make my own hackaday with a roster of LLM agents, I'd then have to make a whole litany of agents to act as the commentators. Some would be super helpful, others would yell about lawns with kids on them, and some agent would even have to be me. Could be fun, but ultimately, less interesting I'm sure.

Report comment

Reply

Yeni_Yenisei says:

January 26, 2026 at 7:43 pm

It has been insisted upon that LLMs are destroying the planet. I have since done everything I can within the capacity of my financing to fund as much AI growth as I am able to without starving myself. It seems to upset all of the right people. Spite is a good enough reason to do anything.

Plus I'm sure whatever story an AI comes up with is going to be a lot more informative, and substantially less mentally impotent, than anything you can find on Reddit. Which is not exactly a high bar to step over, but

it is certainly higher than what the humans there come up with. If you consider them human.

Report comment

Reply

Paul says:

January 26, 2026 at 8:23 pm

now we just need an automatically-written sports section

Uhhm... The Associated Press (among others) has been using machine-generated sports reporting for a decade now.

The engine is "Wordsmith" by Automated Insights.

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February 3, 2026

Can Skynet Be A Statesman?

64 Commentsby: Tyler August

January 21, 2026

There's been a lot of virtual ink spilled about LLMs and their coding ability. Some people swear by the vibes, while others, like the FreeBSD devs have sworn them off completely. What we don't often think about is the bigger picture: What does AI do to our civilization? That's the thrust of a recent paper from the Boston University School of Law, "How AI Destroys Institutions". Yes, Betteridge strikes again.

We've talked before about LLMs and coding productivity, but [Harzog] and [Sibly] from the school of law take a different approach. They don't care how well Claude or Gemini can code; they care what having them around is doing to the sinews of civilization. As you can guess from the title, it's nothing good.

"A computer must never make a management decision."

Somehow the tl;dr was written decades before the paper was.

The paper a bit of a slog, but worth reading in full, even if the language is slightly lawyer-y. To summarize in brief, the authors try and identify the key things that make our institutions work, and then show one by one how each of these pillars is subtly corroded by use of LLMs. The argument isn't that your local government clerk using ChatGPT is going to immediately result in anarchy; rather it will facilitate a slow transformation of the democratic structures we in the West take for granted. There's also a jeremiad about LLMs ruining higher education buried in there, a problem we've talked about before.

If you agree with the paper, you may find yourself wishing we could launch the clankers into orbit... and turn off the downlink. If not, you'll probably let us know in the comments. Please keep the flaming limited to below gas mark 2.

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Got it. You're not asking for a definition of *enshittification* — you're asking for a **failure-mode analysis**, especially in light of AI, slop, institutional decay, and the Suno / Neely / Hackaday constellation you just dropped. I'll treat this like a systems post-mortem rather than a vibes essay.

I'll anchor the term to its origin, then generalize it into **repeatable failure modes**, **phase transitions**, and **AI-specific accelerants**.

0. Anchor: what “enshittification” actually names

The term was coined by **Cory Doctorow**, originally to describe *platform capitalism* dynamics:

Platforms are good to users → then good to suppliers → then good only to themselves → then they hollow out and die.

That's the **canonical 4-phase loop**.

What's changed (and what your examples show) is that **AI collapses these phases**, introduces *new* failure modes, and spreads the damage beyond platforms into **institutions, epistemics, and culture**.

So we need a broader model.

1. The core enshittification loop (generalized)

Phase A — Value Capture via Subsidy

- Product is genuinely useful
- Costs are externalized (VC burn, labor theft, data extraction, goodwill)
- Trust is accumulated

Failure condition: *Value ≠ cost visibility*

Phase B — Dependency Lock-In

- Users reorganize workflows around the system
- Institutions adapt (schools, companies, open source projects)
- Exit costs silently rise

Failure condition: *Reversibility illusion*

Phase C — Rent Extraction

- Friction introduced deliberately
- Quality degrades but engagement metrics rise
- Human labor replaced with synthetic output (“good enough”)

Failure condition: *Metrics substitute for outcomes*

Phase D — Hollowing / Slop Phase

- System outputs overwhelm signal
- Humans spend more time filtering than producing
- Trust collapses, but exit is still costly

Failure condition: *Cognitive overload > institutional capacity*

➡ **Classic platform death** (Facebook feeds, Google search, Amazon marketplace)

2. New AI-specific enshittification failure modes

These are **not** just faster versions of the old ones — they are *structurally new*.

2.1 Slop Saturation (Signal Dilution Collapse)

Observed in:

- cURL bug bounties
- Open source issue trackers
- SEO spam, content farms, fake papers

Mechanism:

- Cost of producing plausible garbage → ~0
- Cost of verifying truth → remains human
- Asymmetry explodes

Failure mode:

The system becomes unmaintainable before it becomes untrue.

This is not misinformation — it's **anti-maintenance**.

2.2 Verification Debt (Epistemic Technical Debt)

Every LLM interaction quietly adds:

- Unchecked claims
- Orphaned citations
- Summary-of-summary decay
- Loss of provenance

Over time:

Knowledge systems stop converging.

This is what the Hackaday commenters are intuitively circling:

epistemic non-convergence.

2.3 Deskilling Collapse (Human Capital Erosion)

Key insight: Deskilling is *irreversible at scale*.

- Individuals lose tacit skill
- Institutions lose redundancy
- Training pipelines rot
- Recovery requires *generation-length time horizons*

This is why Neely's critique lands harder than "AI music bad" — he's pointing at **skill extinction**, not job loss.

2.4 Narcissistic Autarky (Personalized Cultural Collapse)

AI systems encourage:

- Self-referential consumption
- Hyper-personalized output
- Zero need to engage with others' work

Result:

Culture stops being shared.

This is **anti-public culture** — no common references, no role models, no canons, no friction.

2.5 Institutional Hollowing (Process Without Understanding)

Seen in:

- AI-graded education
- AI-assisted governance
- AI-generated policy summaries
- “Ask the model” decision-making

Key failure:

The institution continues to function procedurally after it has lost comprehension.

This is the most dangerous mode because it looks *stable* right up until it isn't.

3. Phase transition: from enshittification → civilizational decay

Here's the key escalation your material points toward:

Old enshittification

- Platforms get worse
- Users complain
- New competitors arise

AI-driven enshittification

- Verification collapses
- Institutions rot internally
- Exit options disappear
- Reality fragments

This is why the Boston University paper you referenced (“How AI Destroys Institutions”) matters:

the damage is **structural**, not consumer-level.

4. Why AI accelerates all failure modes simultaneously

AI breaks three historical constraints:

Constraint	Before	Now
Content cost	Non-zero	~0
Expertise signaling	Scarce	Forgeable
Error rate	Localized	Systemic

This produces **negative-sum scaling**:
every marginal unit of AI output *increases* human cognitive load.

5. The “slop singularity” (your Hackaday thread, formalized)

Once slop exceeds filtering capacity:

- Humans withdraw
- Experts disengage
- Systems auto-train on degraded data
- Feedback loops amplify garbage

At that point, the system doesn’t “fail” — it **loses the ability to self-correct**.

That’s the real end state.

6. Counter-patterns (what actually resists enshittification)

From your examples, resistance only works where:

✓ Scarcity is preserved

- Live music
- Small communities
- Trusted human networks

✓ Verification is embodied

- Physical presence
- Hands-on skill
- Direct accountability

✓ Exit is cheap

- FOSS with real maintainers
- Local culture
- Offline practice

This aligns with Neely's ending values almost perfectly:

service, patience, craft, beauty — not as ethics, but as *anti-failure engineering*.

7. One-sentence synthesis

Enshittification is what happens when systems optimize for scale after they lose the ability to distinguish value from plausibility — and AI removes the last remaining brakes.

If you want, next we can:

- ↳ Formalize this as a **taxonomy / diagram**
- ↳ Map **which institutions fail first**
- ↳ Translate this into **policy-level guardrails**
- Or ↳ compare **AI enshittification vs prior tech collapses (radio, TV, financialization)**

Just tell me which layer you want to drill into.



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64 thoughts on “Can Skynet Be A Statesman?”

Leonardo says:

January 21, 2026 at 1:15 am

Not a hack...

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IIVQ says:

January 21, 2026 at 10:05 am

This comment on every post that you don't seem
worthy to be a hack becomes a bit boring and
monotonic...

It is very interesting to most of the hacker-minded
people in general.

Report comment

Reply

MW says:

January 21, 2026 at 10:48 am

Perhaps not, but, it's a damn good warning.

Report comment

Reply

johnrpm says:

January 23, 2026 at 4:53 am

AI will bring benefits and problems, the proportions
are unknown but I suspect the problems will be greater
than the benefits. At present AI can think but not do,
so short to medium term thinkers will decline and
doers increase.

Report comment

Reply

👤 says:

January 21, 2026 at 1:38 am

Wordcel lawyer types are paranoid about AI replacing
them, I hope it does, but the rest of us shape rotators

are safe for now.

Report comment

Reply

Anonymous says:

January 21, 2026 at 3:25 pm

Based. Automate all lawyers, politicians, and CEOs. We don't need 'em.

Report comment

Reply

Tyler August says:

January 22, 2026 at 11:16 am

If you thought human beancounters were bad, just wait until your proposals are shot down by management-bots that literally can't count.

Report comment

Reply

shinusukke says:

January 21, 2026 at 2:22 am

And similarly a politician can never be held accountable...yet he makes management decisions.

Report comment

Reply

0xdeadbeef says:

January 21, 2026 at 4:45 am

That is not entirely true, given there are numerous examples of politicians being held accountable.

One might instead wonder why so few seem to be held accountable for their actions today.

Report comment

Reply

Dan says:

January 21, 2026 at 4:57 am

They are held accountable at the next election. The problem is that malfeasance is forgiven by the people who regard them as on their 'side'.

Report comment

Reply

Anonymous says:

January 21, 2026 at 3:27 pm

Yes, at the next election, where their close friend gets elected instead.

Congrats, you fell for it again!

Report comment

Reply

Lightislight says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:11 am

To be fair a lot of people in even lower management positions aren't ever held accountable. That said, this is also a large component as to why a lot of companies crumble and produce less and less actual value to their customers over time.

The tldr makes a lot of sense to me. Maybe I'll read the paper sometime.

Report comment

Reply

Dan says:

January 22, 2026 at 2:41 am

Actually, lots are held accountable, especially those visible but below the very top.

E.G. the recent debacle in the U.K. where a police force made some antisemitic decisions, which they eventually blamed on hallucinated intelligence provided by ... Co-Pilot.

In this case the police chief took the fall for the AI, as he'd sworn blind the previous day that they didn't use AI.

However, co-pilot getting the blame meant that deeper-seated antisemitism in West Mercia police force and the local council didn't get called out and addressed.

Co-pilot of course doesn't get a chance to defend itself by telling us what prompts it was given.

Report comment

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Ewald says:

January 21, 2026 at 3:20 am

If an entity consistently makes better decisions than for instance the leader of a very large country, i know which one i would prefer. There are a lot of advantages when choices are made without human selfish desires, power corrupts and accountability doesn't reverse the mishaps that have been done.

Report comment

Reply

Steven-X says:

January 21, 2026 at 4:00 am

Yet can just replace the current deep state with AI. What can go wrong there?

Report comment

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Miles says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:59 am

An AI has no desires or emotion. The collected works of Isaac Asimov explore this. Start with Franchise and the complete robot. Maybe try Foundation series.

AI by definition will create anarchy, not to be preferred.

Note I am not by any means supporting politics, although I remain a law abiding citizen in line with the principle in Mark 12:17.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:28 am

An AI has no desires or emotion. The collected works of Isaac Asimov explore this.

That's an assumption that is yet to be proven. The AI can technically have no emotions as it's not actually thinking or feeling anything, but what programming it

has must by necessity involve some preferences, otherwise it would simply do nothing.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:26 am

when choices are made without human selfish desires

Unfortunately, no choices can be made without preferences and values. Either you have to program them in, or the LLM picks them up by example.

Report comment

Reply

Dan says:

January 22, 2026 at 4:12 am

Dude, he may be in early stage dementia, but he's not putting glue on pizza yet. I've seen LLMs produce some proper crazy stuff and I know which I'd prefer.

This is easily fixed by an upper age limit for presidents.

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 3:56 am

Going to have to read this paper more fully, but it certainly seems to start strong making some decent points in the first few pages. However I really can't imagine a world in which the LLM is worse than some of the current 'human statesman' and their equally 'human' enablers...

But I also can't imagine they will actually be remotely useful for a long long time (if ever) in that sort of role – can't say I think much of vibe coding, but at least that produces something that either works or it doesn't and will turn into a game of debug for the person trying to get the result they want – so hopefully they learn something about real coding in that language in the process. With a definitive and limited goal in the users mind you could argue the vibe coding is more like

training wheels on a bicycle, at some point they will have learned enough they don't actually need it. But all those more nuanced and complex web of interactions that need some real consideration so you don't make things worse, especially the slow building up of a really devastating problem that will be much harder to fix then. About the only way a LLM might be useful there is allowing for a better 'vibe check' from the users/voters who have 'written to their statesman' etc, allowing the actually rational minds to find patterns in the reports.

The LLM is already in many ways ruined the internet at large to a much larger extent that I'd realised till very recently – as even dry rather niche academic web searches when you don't have your trusted repository of knowledge on this topic now seem to be rather likely to be poisoned, but in ways rather hard to immediately detect. I've actually come to the conclusion its time to get a new university ID and master the art of searching for and taking notes from books.

For instance for a reason I can't remember I was trying to look up medieval shoe construction (think it was something about a particular style that came up as a side curiosity) and other than 1 or 2 companies that sell custom/cosplay shoes everything on the first 3 pages of that websearch as you read into it proved to be AI slop with almost all of them making the same obvious mistake eventually and claiming these shoes from a few hundred years before faux leathers existed were created out of some variety of fake leather/plastic! Along with other obvious enough tells once you actually read the article knowing anything at all, making the whole darn thing suspect.

I'm sure if that question had been important enough I'd have been able to find the right cluster of serious history students or cobblers and their forum etc eventually, and add them to my growing list of quality resources on various topics but this is the first time I'd encountered no genuine correct answers at all from a well enough constructed general websearch – the

search worked perfectly turning up articles that should be exactly what I wanted, or at least that generic overview and closely related content by their wording, but it turns out all the pages found are just good enough looking junk that I really don't know how you could structure a websearch to exclude them, other than only searching for pages old enough the LLM couldn't have generated them!

Oh waiting for the bubble to pop!

Report comment

Reply

E. Rodommoc says:

January 21, 2026 at 4:21 am

"Oh waiting for the bubble to pop!"

I agree, but mostly because I want the current price of DDR5 to return to normal. Regarding AI itself, the cat is out of the box...

Report comment

Reply

Miles says:

January 21, 2026 at 6:09 am

The search engine war was lost almost 20 years ago when the advertisers targeted the search algorithm to feed us ads. Many sites I used to enjoy are lost to history, living only in my memory.

The difference AI brings is to make the job of those stealing the search results easier. All they need to do is get you to click a crap result and serve ads on the page. They get paid.

I never understood the point of ads anyway. I personally do want to purchase products, not many that I see advertised but that's a different story, however ads have gotten so inaccurate and dumb that I feel stupider for having seen them.

Nissan car ads are some of the dumbest, near as I can tell all they convey is "car; has wheels, vroom" with

suitable shots of a city runabout doing u-turns on a dirt road.

Microsoft's AI ads I can't begin to understand. They have one where AI tells a person they need an e-bike. Why he needed AI to tell him that is beyond me. Presumably AI will also tell him where to get a usurious loan or how to commit petty larceny to pay for it?

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 9:09 am

The search engine war was lost almost 20 years ago when the advertisers targeted the search algorithm to feed us ads. Many sites I used to enjoy are lost to history, living only in my memory.

Not really – the advert and sponsored links stuff is a mild annoyance decades ago, and generally would pay to put their adverts on relevant quality content, or put titties in adverts everywhere... Not ideal for make the web sane to allow your children on, but the content was decent stuff and porn (whatever your opinion on that)... The sponsored links and shopping links straight from the search engine type stuff and Google dropping the don't be evil pretence hasn't been good, but it wasn't making it impossible to find those real dedicated to their craft folks...

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

January 23, 2026 at 7:43 am

20 years ago, they mostly targeted ads at what I had recently bought (not optimal).

Now, I'm getting flooded with ads for maxipads, breast pumps and meds for conditions I don't have. Yeah boobies!

My data well poisoning activities haven't changed much.

Google has just gotten much worse at targeting ads.

Report comment

Reply

had37b8e5c7066e says:

January 21, 2026 at 4:29 am

a politician thinks about the consequences for the next election, a statesman thinks about the consequences for the next generation

Report comment

Reply

WTF Detector says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:02 am

"Authoritarian leaders and technology oligarchs are deploying AI systems to hollow out public institutions with an astonishing alacrity."

If only there could have been some system which would have prevented the paper's authors from making such a glaring typography error as writing "deploying" instead of "deploying" within the first proper paragraph of their entire paper.

Report comment

Reply

Drone Enthusiast says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:29 am

An Ai hallucination can sometimes produce spelling mistakes. Just shows they used an LLM to make the paper sound more lawerly. "Gemini re-format the paper uploaded to make it understandable to the layman (again)"

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 9:14 am

Or they are dyslexic and/or not good at proof reading – some folks find it practically impossible to spot the missing or reversed letters punctuation etc, especially if you wrote it so you already know what it is meant to say, but I tend to skate right by those errors without

noticing even if I don't know – the meaning was so clear that missing letter etc just didn't register at all.

Report comment

Reply

KDawg says:

January 21, 2026 at 10:48 am

F7

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 12:30 pm

Not really a solution either – no machine catches everything grimmer wise, nor contains every technical term to even have a chance to correct the spelling. Not to mention regional variations like Colour vs Color, Disc vs Disk. Then you also have so many words that are spelled nearly identically to words with entirely different meanings, the sentence may not word any more but that is far too nuanced a problem for the spell checkers to notice every time it happens.

(Obviously this is a stupid and very error filled example that I'd hope would jar enough to be noticed no matter who you are, and some spell checkers might pick up a few of the errors as the close spelling but entirely wrong words are more significantly wrong looking in word shape)

Report comment

HaHa says:

January 23, 2026 at 7:49 am

aniboti ho ownli knoes wone wai 2 spel a wort 'as knoo emadgation.

Mom saved a school paper of mine.

I spelled the same word 3 different ways on one page, all wrong.

IIRC it was 'wether'.

Report comment

Greg A says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:28 am

AI has two aspects which are superficially separate but deeply entwined in today's reality. The first is the Kurzweil-esque singularity...technology is changing at an ever-faster pace and how will we build a society around technology that changes faster than society does? The other is the financial aspect. For at least a couple decades it has been obvious to me that there are financiers who are able to make wagers with a sum of money that is much larger than physical capital or anticipated production. It's a reaction to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall as commodity production matures. The financier demands an ever-increasing profit, but mundane reality has few options for them. So physically intangible things without an intrinsic limit on their profitability have become very popular — e.g., bitcoin and chatgpt. Obvious bubbles become the only success story in of our economy.

That's obviously a disaster because the bubble will pop. But it's also a disaster because now anything real and useful that isn't as profitable as the bubble is being abandoned or turned over to the whims of people who have unreal sums of money they got from riding the bubble. And it's a disaster because much of our labor force is still selling productive labor but an ever-growing segment is instead focused on reaping the bubble. We are losing the productivity of the bubble-focused people at the same time as we are deepening the class divides between them and real workers.

The detail is, these facets are actually the same thing. Classical liberalism, finance capital, uneven development / colonial exploitation, collar-identified labor, these are all social structures built around changing technology.

Report comment

Reply

Drone Enthusiast says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:33 am

The 'bubble will pop' is not a boolean. Please revise your comment with a probability. I'm giving it 32% pop

myself, + or - 10%.

Report comment

Reply

Aknup says:

January 21, 2026 at 7:19 am

If it does not pop it isn't a bubble now is it Drone Enthusiast.

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 9:21 am

No it certainly is going to pop eventually - AI concepts themselves are not going anywhere as much as I don't currently think much of them. But this Nvidia lends money to their customers to buy more of their hardware cyclic money farming making the numbers look good for investors and rapidly increasing the 'value' of all the companies involved is 100% a bubble that 100% will pop at some point. The only question is how long it takes and how much work will be put in to kicking that can down the road hoping for a miracle solution..

If no effort is made to find a softer landing and control the fallout this could be 2008 all over again (but likely worse as the product is 'useful' and getting everywhere, so when the providers start collapsing so will their customers that have become reliant, alongside all the usual financial market crap of folks holding shares finding them tanking in value for the knock on fiscal effects to pension pots etc).

Report comment

Reply

Ostracus says:

January 22, 2026 at 5:43 am

The dot-com bubble popping eventually gave us data centers and vast amounts of dark fiber, which later turned into broadband.

An AI bubble popping wouldn't make the hardware

vanish either — it would likely release a lot of enterprise GPUs, along with the memory and storage currently tied up in speculative deployments. Unlike crypto mining rigs, AI datacenter hardware is still broadly general-purpose and can be repurposed for HPC, simulation, analytics, and other non-AI workloads once prices normalize.

Into every silver lining, a cloud must come — bubbles don't pop cleanly. The infrastructure survives, but the transition is painful: companies fail, people lose jobs, and systems built around abundant AI compute will have to relearn restraint.

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 23, 2026 at 3:00 am

The infrastructure survives, but the transition is painful

Not sure that will be true this time – so many places are integrating these 'AI' that the entirely digital product itself is the infrastructure of the AI Bubble – often running over and almost always reliant on the internet (if only for training data) yes, and that physical internet infrastructure isn't likely to suffer when the AI bubble pops, its the spine of so many other connected things losing a few customer won't matter much. So rebuilding to some extent should be possible as the hardware the 'AI' was running on likely still exists, and will eventually get sold into the wider market by liquidation of the failed companies eventually.

Report comment

Aknup says:

January 21, 2026 at 7:17 am

Not a bad comment, I feared the worst, but the point made is fairly accurate it seems.

And of course nobody is going to do anything about it and all we can do is hope it is like an unchecked forest fire and just runs out of fuel eventually and goes out on its own.

Report comment

Reply

Foldi-One says:

January 21, 2026 at 10:51 am

That's obviously a disaster because the bubble will pop. But it's also a disaster because now anything real and useful that isn't as profitable as the bubble is being abandoned or turned over to the whims of people who have unreal sums of money they got from riding the bubble.

Doesn't absolutely have to be that way – railway mania for instance was a bubble with a very valuable and seemingly near limitless demand. In today's world the true solid state, sodium (etc) battery technologies might well do the same, and being energy related thrive and bubble on their own because of the AI derived demand etc.

Not that I really disagree very much, just trying to find a tiny glimmer of hope and optimism as the the world has become so very very dark and looks like it might get stuck in the feedback loop you described...

Report comment

Reply

Miles says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:50 am

These concepts are not foreign to anyone who has read 'Franchise' by Isaac Asimov. Published in 1955 it envisions a 2008 'election' chosen by a 'computer'. The twist spoilers

Asimov wrote extensively about a "positronic brain", even concluding that eventually humans would no longer construct them due to the complexity, merely allow each successive generation to design the next. While it seems AMD is allowing machine code to pack transistors to achieve higher density (for a speed trade-off; look up Phoenix 2 if interested), it could certainly apply to programming and LLM coding.

******The twist is that the computer chooses a 'voter' to scapegoat. The computer interviews one human to verify that the data it collected is an accurate representation of the population. Whoever is chosen they have to skulk home avoiding angry people

Report comment

Reply

Joseph Eoff says:

January 21, 2026 at 7:59 am

The person chosen in "Franchise" is not a scapegoat.

The results of the election are extrapolated from that one person's responses.

The computer is not using the person to take the blame. It is using the person as a data source representative of the entire population, from which it can calculate the results you would get if everyone voted.

That the rest of the population gripes and complains about the selected person is a human problem.

Report comment

Reply

Gus Mueller says:

January 21, 2026 at 6:08 am

i have a friend who drives a Tesla with the latest version of "autopilot." it works amazingly well 99.99 percent of the time, which is probably better than most human drivers most of the time. but you still have to be in the driver's seat with your eyes pointed at the road (enforced by cameras looking at your pupils). this is because a human ultimately has to be accountable for the car. certainly Tesla doesn't want the lawsuits. Human accountability is a huge part of why our society functions at all, and disembodied intelligences that can be spun up in an instant just cannot have the same incentive system.

Report comment

Reply

Autopilot says:

January 21, 2026 at 6:42 am

So basically, if I understand it all, the Tesla "autopilot" takes all the fun out of driving yourself with the added chore of babysitting the machine so that if all hell breaks loose you have front seats watching all the drama unfold... and no matter how it goes you are to blame. So in short, why would you want "autopilot" on your car?

PS: I have had a Commodore 128, a model that claims achieving nearly 100% compatibility with the original C64, one of the first games I tried on it, didn't even get past the cracking intro. This instantly made me doubt the compatibility claim. Now how do you (or does Tesla) justify that claim of 99.99%? Does it drive down the same road for 10000 times and when it crashed violently they stopped the test? Seriously, how meaningful are such claims and under what conditions?

Report comment

Reply

NotABot_yet says:

January 21, 2026 at 8:56 am

You don't need to drive down the same road 10,000 times, you look at very broad statistics and come up with a number like average accidents per million miles driven, across all situations and conditions. (I haven't looked up any studies myself so make no claims here as to the specific numbers, but I'm pretty sure that the current accident stats strongly favor AI drivers.)

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:54 am

They don't, because they don't compare the same things.

It's all road accidents by people vs. accidents when the autopilot is allowed to be on, when it hasn't switched itself off prior to the accident, and when the lawyers

haven't successfully deflected the blame elsewhere.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:53 am

The difference is that human pilots fail randomly, but most of the time the failure has no consequences because it did not occur at a critical moment. Such critical moments are rare, so the combined probability becomes very small indeed.

The autopilot does not fail randomly, it fails consistently in situations that are too complex or ambiguous for it to handle, or it was simply not trained for the case. These moments are also more likely to be critical moments, such as navigating an intersection, or recognizing a child running across a road, so the combined probability is not trivially small.

So comparing technical failure rates between the two is meaningless even if the numbers were accurate, because the character of the failure is different. The problem is that accidents are so rare overall that the statistics do not provide clear indisputable evidence until hundreds and thousands of people have died because of autopilot.

Report comment

Reply

Gus Mueller says:

January 21, 2026 at 5:36 pm

I was actually in the Tesla during one such failure — the owner's wife had just changed the destination that the autopilot was to drive to in the middle of an intersection where the Tesla was making a left, and in that instant of change, the car was momentarily confused and sent some signal demanding that the driver take the wheel. Nothing bad happened, but had a human not been there, I don't know what would've happened.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 23, 2026 at 4:15 am

Yep, and that doesn't count as autopilot failure, because it responded as programmed: it demanded the human driver to intervene. If the human cannot respond, then it's human error and human fault.

It drops a bomb in your lap with the fuse lit, and the lawyers blame you when it goes off.

Report comment

Aleks Clark says:

January 21, 2026 at 8:09 am

Hopefully they will keep digging. The key insight is not LLMs vs no LLMs – it's democracy itself, and the incentives around it. Read Edmund Burke, deToqueville, John Adams – pure democracy is a menace, but some democracy is required. LLMs are just another tool.

Report comment

Reply

Zangar the Pangarian says:

January 21, 2026 at 8:37 am

A COMPUTER CAN NEVER BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE
BUT
A PRINTER CAN!!!

<https://youtu.be/N9wsjroVlu8?si=2oRrh7l2wnntm5D6>

Report comment

Reply

Sammie Gee says:

January 21, 2026 at 10:59 am

For the umptiest time, US lawyers HAVE BEEN using AI and (proprietary trained LLMs) ALREADY.

I've run across one tiny company of programming geeks stationed in the middle of Wash, DC in the year 2007 or so. Literally. I called them up and asked what they are up to, since my place is looking into using some of the AI for (mostly technical) things. Their

response was “we’ve been in this biz for some while now, couple of years”. Whashington, DC that is. You can guess their customers.

Meaning, all the loopholes in our legal system has been already found and being proactively exploited to the fullest extent possible, and I do not see Superior Court being in any visible hurry to plug the gaps.

Because Founding Fathers never envisioned that non-human entities could run rounds around human entities unabated. We have vast legal chasms through which all kinds of deeds keep sneaking undetected, in full view of those supposedly keeping these shut.

Having said that, lawyering is the grease of the economy, and, however important, is not THE economy. If it decides to evaporate, economy gets stunned for some while, but would re-activate around the immovable part/parts on its own. Witness so-called “waaar on draaags” and how the grey economy regularly re-routes around all those “waaars” shortly after, attracted by the demand that never seem to go away. Same dynamics. If things are regulated, there is a funnel with the least resistance, if not regulated, additional funnels are eagerly explored. Lawyers think they command the economy, aha, yeah, sure, every river crossing ferry’s captain commands the river in about the same way, he commands the boat crossing the river, not the river.

Report comment

Reply

Bruce G. Gettel says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:15 am

How would one bribe a(n) LLM?

Report comment

Reply

Aknup says:

January 21, 2026 at 11:29 am

By giving it something it wants, and making it expect future benefits if it keeps accepting.

And if it is taught to be a statesman it will have things it wants.

A better question is if it can be comprehensively trained somehow to avoid accepting bribes.

I mean you can train it to avoid some bribes, but the lobbyist will think up ways around it, so you need to think ahead and train it to avoid possible tricks, and at some point it gets very complex and convoluted and starts to interfere with itself which creates all new vulnerabilities.

Report comment

Reply

beernutz says:

January 21, 2026 at 12:53 pm

Not to be overly pedantic, but I thought Betteridge's law required a question mark at the end of the headline?

Report comment

Reply

Tyler August says:

January 21, 2026 at 2:11 pm

It requires the headline in the form of a question; I suppose the presence of a question mark is thereby implied. The headline here "Can Skynet Be a Statesman?" qualifies either way.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 2:15 pm

Better yet: you ask it.

If it's programmed to be honest, it would say what it wants and what it can afford to lose. If it's not programmed to be honest, well... then you have bigger problems.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 21, 2026 at 2:16 pm

Better yet: you ask it how.

If it's programmed to be honest, it would say what it wants and what it can afford to lose. If it's not programmed to be honest, well... then you have bigger problems.

Report comment

Reply

Ostracus says:

January 22, 2026 at 12:06 am

Substitute "looms" for "AI" and let the fun begin.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

January 23, 2026 at 5:14 am

The fun part about post-scarcity is that we can produce enough stuff to satisfy everyone, but we can do it so efficiently using automation and machines that few people have jobs or money to pay for it.

Yet we can't just give everybody money to buy all the stuff they desire, because then people would and we would run out of resources to exploit. We also don't want to run the economy by central command because that was already tried and it didn't work, so the remaining options are pointing strongly towards throwing clogs into cogs.

This is because using automation does not reduce cost, it increases cost because you have to sustain both the machines and the people. If the point of machines is to supply the people with whatever they need and desire, the people can better afford it by working for their own needs rather than employing the machines to do it. It also leads to an equitable distribution of wealth: want some, work some. Work is also a good moderator of your appetite for wasteful luxury.

The machines are only needed if the people cannot work enough to meet their own demands. We have the opposite problem now: too many people with nothing

important to do, who invent other work that ends up consuming even more resources. The point of this non-productive work is to cause consumption and waste in order to catch some of the spillover to yourself – in the economic equivalent of stabbing a screwdriver into the society's fuel tank to catch yourself a cupful from what leaks out. This inefficiency means extra cost that impoverishes the people despite having technically enough resources available to live quite comfortably.

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

January 23, 2026 at 8:35 am

Satisfy?

No.

People, in general, aren't sane and can't be satisfied.

Look at rich kids, the least satisfied group on earth.

'Post scarcity' is a delusion and always will be.

There will never be enough ocean view houses on earth.

Or meals prepared by a true artist.

We have gotten to the point that obesity is a big problem for 'bums experiencing homelessness', but that's another issue.

We don't sustain both automation and people, the people find something new to do.

200 years ago more than 90% of the population grew food.

Now it's 1%.

The other 89% are doing something else, some of which is useful, as opposed to posting comments on shitty web sites.

Report comment

Reply

Sammie Gee says:

January 23, 2026 at 5:53 am

I'll just leave this here. (whether it gets removed or not makes no difference; explanation will be in the last paragraph).

"...Researchers with the University of Miami and the Network Contagion Research Institute found in a report released Thursday that OpenAI's ChatGPT will magnify or show "resonance" for particular psychological traits and political views — especially what the researchers labeled as authoritarianism — after seemingly benign user interactions, potentially enabling the chatbot and users to radicalize each other..."

Explanation – what's labeled "authoritarianism" is properly called "dictatorship", and Ancient Rome had the title of "dictator" TEMPORARILY given to the elected ruler/whatever to swiftly get things done so as to bypass the usual bickering in the Senate. At times of war or some kind of calamity. There was expiration date attached to the title, which was not negotiable by the ruler UNLESS the thing was not resolved. You can guess the loophole – by protracting the disaster/war the ruler would be keeping unlimited/unchecked powers thus ignoring the Senate. Projecting this onto AI is simple – dictatorships is the shortest path to getting things done with minimum effort, so AI simply follows the shortest path possible (which it is programmed to do – and it, logically, it WILL include the path of outright lie and outright believing in it being right no matter what).

Report comment

Reply

Sammie Gee says:

January 23, 2026 at 5:56 am

IMHO, Ancient Rome history is actually full of tidbits.

For example, every ruler given the dictator power would first establish his personal army – called praetorians, btw – made up of hand-picked loyal

military units. Its supposed role was personal guard, but almost always it would grow into small army of its own, under direct orders.

You can see where this is going now.

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

January 23, 2026 at 8:02 am

Find your history teacher and kick him/her square in the crotch.

They failed you.

That's not what the praetorian guards were.

They were the Emperors 'personal guard', but lasted much longer than any emperor.

They also sold the office to the highest bidder.

Political power players inside an institution, like the FBI today.

Report comment

Reply

Sammie Gee says:

January 23, 2026 at 10:41 am

Any corrections are usually gratefully acknowledge and accepted. I just kicked myself, thank you, feel better now.

Zero teachers taught me this, the ones who thought they were teaching me were more concerned that I regurgitate the exact verbiage deposited into my (rather limited) mind, as opposed to understanding what I've just heard and making my own conclusions, however mistaken.

If Praetorians survived their Emperors, then they were truly independent and I recall "Et tu, Brute?" as one of known mutterings supposedly attributed to such. Personal guards or not, secret services/forces/units existed throughout in pretty much every slice of history, Genghis-Khan, etc.

This doesn't really change the dictatorial dynamics I've just outlined, though, adds better details ignored by me, to which (ignorant omission) I admit.

Report comment

Reply

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[Skip to content](#)[Logo](#)[Hackaday](#)[Home](#)[Blog](#)[Hackaday.io](#)[Contests](#)[Submit](#)[About](#)[February 3, 2026](#)[Nanochat Lets You Build Your Own Hackable LLM](#)[23 Comments](#)by: [Donald Papp](#)[October 20, 2025](#)

Few people know LLMs (Large Language Models) as thoroughly as [Andrej Karpathy], and luckily for us all he expresses that in useful open-source projects. His latest is nanochat, which he bills as a way to create “the best ChatGPT \$100 can buy”.

What is it, exactly? nanochat in a minimal and hackable software project — encapsulated in a single

speedrun.sh script — for creating a simple ChatGPT clone from scratch, including web interface. The codebase is about 8,000 lines of clean, readable code with minimal dependencies, making every single part of the process accessible to be tampered with.

An accessible, end-to-end codebase for creating a simple ChatGPT clone makes every part of the process hackable.

The \$100 is the cost of doing the computational grunt work of creating the model, which takes about 4 hours on a single NVIDIA 8XH100 GPU node. The result is a 1.9 billion parameter micro-model, trained on some 38 billion tokens from an open dataset. This model is, as [Andrej] describes in his announcement on X, a “little ChatGPT clone you can sort of talk to, and which can write stories/poems, answer simple questions.” A walk-through of what that whole process looks like makes it as easy as possible to get started.

Unsurprisingly, a mere \$100 doesn't create a meaningful competitor to modern commercial offerings. However, significant improvements can be had by scaling up the process. A \$1,000 version (detailed here) is far more coherent and capable; able to solve simple math or coding problems and take multiple-choice tests.

[Andrej Karpathy]'s work lends itself well to modification and experimentation, and we're sure this tool will be no exception. His past work includes a method of training a GPT-2 LLM using only pure C code, and years ago we saw his work on a character-based Recurrent Neural Network (mis)used to generate baroque music by cleverly representing MIDI events as text.

Posted in Artificial Intelligence, Software Hacks
Tagged ai, Andrej Karpathy, GPT, LLM, nanochat
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Ask Hackaday: When Good Lithium Batteries

Go Bad →

23 thoughts on “Nanochat Lets You Build Your Own Hackable LLM”

dfgerger says:

October 20, 2025 at 4:30 am

this is not usefull, but adapter on any middle model is very usefull today.and You can todo this on 5090

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Reply

Jan-Willem Markus says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:13 am

I've not looked into LLM too deeply, beside running a few small models offline, and using ChatGPT to solve tricky word puzzles from Blue Prince. These advantages are quite interesting and may be what is needed to create very specific and useful models. In my case, I'd like to put in my own knowledge base and vetted sources on locks, lock picking, and physical security. Possibly in combination with embedded security and electronics, as those are my knowledge fields. It won't be a model I can share, but it may be able to help me find tricky connections and deep insights.

As an experiment, I would like to see the LLM trained on just the whole of HackaDay and the projects they use as content. You may not be able to publish the dataset or model, but at least HAD can share how well it works. Similar other institutions could do the same.

Report comment

Reply

Dan says:

October 20, 2025 at 11:14 am

I only consent to my comments being read, not processed and analysed.

Report comment

Reply

Hugo Oran says:

October 20, 2025 at 12:01 pm

Sorry I inadvertently processed and analysed your comment after reading:)

Report comment

Reply

Helena says:

October 20, 2025 at 12:08 pm

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Sounds to me like we've already consented to Hackaday/SupplyFrame doing that kind of thing.

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Reply

Sammie Gee says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:18 am

LLM invent and build me affordable house I can live in.

Report comment

Reply

Sammie Gee says:

October 20, 2025 at 10:26 am

I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that.

Report comment

Reply

Ostracus says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:18 am

Reminded of when Arstechnica did their experiment with cryptocurrency, back in the day. Now it's LLM's turn.

Report comment

Reply

Bob says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:22 am

I saw this elsewhere yesterday and decided to dig into the source code posted to GitHub. The project is written almost entirely in Python. If this is standard practice for LLM training, it could help to explain, at least in part, the large amount of computing power and ultimately electrical power required for the training process. Python is an interpreted language that can be orders of magnitude less efficient than a compiled language like C. Am I missing something?

Report comment

Reply

Jay says:

October 20, 2025 at 6:36 am

Yes, you are. Python is a high level language just used to direct things happening at a lower level. All the computation is happening in compiled libraries written for efficient execution on the target hardware. Those libraries are written in C, or CUDA, or something else as the case & target hardware varies.

Report comment

Reply

Augu5te says:

October 20, 2025 at 8:19 am

And to complete there is a little part in Rust to accelerate some "tokens manipulations"

Report comment

Reply

Sean says:

October 20, 2025 at 6:43 am

Yes, you are missing a key detail – much of research into NNs is done in Python using a library called PyTorch, a library which is implemented in lower level languages. The computationally expensive components are running much faster than interpreted Python, with the option of even running on GPU.

The majority of the cost is not going to evaluating Python – it simply is just that expensive to run training

on large parameter models.

Report comment

Reply

Jason says:

October 20, 2025 at 10:57 am

Oh man, you looked at some code for a moment and solved a multi-trillion dollar problem the AI industry is facing. Why didn't anyone else think of not writing code in python?!?

Report comment

Reply

Mark Topham says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:42 am

The part where Python is most significantly used to shuffle data in and out.

It, generally, isn't doing the heavy lifting when it comes to AI fields.

Report comment

Reply

iliis says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:46 am

Yes. The actual computations is usually done by well optimized machine code, mostly running on GPUs or even ASICs. Python is just the glue that manages and directs the whole show.

Report comment

Reply

SETH says:

October 20, 2025 at 10:50 am

C and Python are fundamental to LLM as we know it today. C bc you need that to write your own Python libraries. I'm sure OpenAI and it's peers have looked at faster options, but it's silly to pay to make what the Python community has provided for free to the AI industry.

Report comment

Reply

iliis says:

October 20, 2025 at 5:47 am

Hey, are replies broken? Above commend was for @Bob

Report comment

Reply

Squonk42 says:

October 20, 2025 at 6:45 am

AWS outage

Report comment

Reply

SETH says:

October 20, 2025 at 10:38 am

It is discouraging to realize training requires commercial grade GPU to achieve. Some LLM can run on surprisingly low specs, but those same LLM required an AWS rental and not insignificant cash flow to produce. When I can train on low spec hardware, then AI will be in a useful state

Report comment

Reply

Jason says:

October 20, 2025 at 11:04 am

You can of course train useful AI on low spec hardware. I was doing that more than 20 years ago. It's even more viable today. But what you can't do is train arbitrarily complex AI on low spec hardware.

Report comment

Reply

None says:

October 20, 2025 at 2:11 pm

Has someone calculated how long would it take to train this model in a single rtx3060? My back-of-napkin calculations point to around 200 hours, or slightly over a week. Does this sound correct?

Report comment

Reply

Sean says:

October 20, 2025 at 3:05 pm

To my understanding – which is likely naïve, so I welcome correction – H100's are 989 TOPS each and he is using eight of them (8 x H100 not 8XH100). An RTX3060 by comparison is 101 TOPS.

So 78 times more powerful in raw computing numbers only; $((989/101)^8)^4$ is ~313 hours or ~13 days.

however it doesn't scale in this linear fashion as you have WAY less memory (6GB vs 94GB), and with swapping and so on, this likely increases significantly – if it's even possible.

There is also the parallelism of the eight x H100s and thermal throttling of your 3060 and the power of the underlying hardware orchestrating the entire shebang.

The array is about US\$10 an hour to rent, so not that bad.

Report comment

Reply

FransAtFrance says:

October 21, 2025 at 1:03 am

there is also an company where people can rent out their own gpus, if i'm not mistaken a H100 can be rented for US\$1/hour there

Report comment

Reply

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[February 3, 2026](#)

[How Vibe Coding Is Killing Open Source](#)

[48 Comments](#)by: [Maya Posch](#)

[February 2, 2026](#)

Does vibe coding risk destroying the Open Source ecosystem? According to a pre-print paper by a number of high-profile researchers, this might indeed be the case based on observed patterns and some modelling. Their warnings mostly center around the way that user interaction is pulled away from OSS projects, while also making starting a new OSS project significantly harder.

“Vibe coding” here is defined as software development that is assisted by an LLM-backed chatbot, where the developer asks the chatbot to effectively write the code for them. Arguably this turns the developer into more of a customer/client of the chatbot, with no requirement for the former to understand what the latter’s code does, just that what is generated does the thing that the chatbot was asked to create.

This also removes the typical more organic selection process of libraries and tooling, replacing it with whatever was most prevalent in the LLM’s training data. Even for popular projects visits to their website decrease as downloads and documentation are replaced by LLM chatbot interactions, reducing the possibility of promoting commercial plans, sponsorships, and community forums. Much of this is also reflected in the plummet in usage of community

forums like Stack Overflow.

(Credit: Koren et al., 2026)

(Credit: Koren et al., 2026)

If we consider this effect of 'AI-assisted' software development to be effectively the delegating of the actual engineering and development to the statistical model of an LLM, then it's easy to see the problems here. The LLM will not interact with the developers of a library or tool, nor submit usable bug reports, or be aware of any potential issues no matter how well-documented.

Although the authors of this paper are still proponents of 'AI technology', their worries seem well-warranted, even if it's unclear at this point how big the impact is going to be. Software ecosystems like those involving JavaScript, Python, and web technologies are likely to suffer the impact from vibe coding first, as their audiences appear to be more into such vibes, and the training sets were largest.

It's also a topic that is highly controversial, ever since Microsoft launched GitHub Copilot in 2021. Since then we saw reports in 2024 that 'vibe coding' using Copilot and similar chatbots offered no real benefits unless adding 41% more bugs is a measure of success.

By the time we hit 2025, we can observe an even more negative mood, with LLM chatbots in general being accused of degrading the cognitive skills of those using them, vibe coding chatbots reducing productivity by 19%, and experienced developers who gave them a whirl subsequently burning them to the ground in scathing reviews.

All of which reinforces the notion that perhaps this 'AI revolution' is more of a stress test for human intelligence than an actual boost to productivity or code quality. Despite the authors pitching the idea that OpenAI or Google could toss a few cents the way of OSS projects when their code is being used, the

comparison with Spotify is painfully apt, since about 80% of artists on Spotify rarely have their tracks played and thus receive basically no money for their efforts.

With an LLM statistical model we know with extremely high likelihood that only the dependencies that are most prevalent in the training data set will realistically be used for the output, and we expect that we'll see something similar happen with this vibe coding compensation scheme.

Even today we can already observe many negative effects from 'AI slop' in software development. Whether it'll be something that'll choke the life out of the entire OSS ecosystem remains to be seen, but it is hard to envision a bright vibe coding future.

Posted in Current Events, Featured, News, Software Development

Tagged large language models, open source software, vibe coding

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48 thoughts on "How Vibe Coding Is Killing Open Source"

shinsukke says:

February 2, 2026 at 7:34 am

I have been programming since i was 13. QBASIC, VB6, C, python, java, javascript, shell/batch script i learned them all. Then i gradually got into embedded systems, programming microcontrollers and eventually designing hardware itself. After i got employed, i starting programming less and less.

All my life i thought I enjoyed programming, but ever since LLMs released and got good enough to write code for me i have realised that i didn't really enjoy coding much, it was always what the code could do for me, that was enjoyable. Making code draw pixels on the screen or making it output an exact pwm to drive a FET in a switching converter. That's what is enjoyable.

Not the syntax or worrying about the bitmask or anything else.

This is also why i never really enjoyed high level software too much. A lot of it was always about babysitting the framework/library instead of actually doing things. So much boilerplate, so many "let's make this into a module in case we need to swap the implementation). I could never tolerate working in overly object oriented (enterprise "quality" code, if you will) codebases.

Still i will not lie, a part of me hates LLMs for taking away programming from me. It was a peaceful and solitary activity that i could enjoy on the weekends. Something that reminded me "the process matters too, not just the product in the end" and use my brain. Now I get a sad feeling when I'm writing code telling me "you could just make the LLM do this, do you enjoy wasting time?". You can't enjoy when you're mind is telling you that.

PS: ask LLMs to write any kind of code close to the metal code with a lot of interrupts.... Yeah it'll fail spectacularly. Kinda fun to see

Report comment

Reply

TimT says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:02 am

I started coding on a TRS-80 and later a Commodore 64. When I got my first "real job" I did a lot of coding in C and really enjoyed it. But somewhere in the late 90's and early 2000's my job transitioned to mostly just gluing together other people's code and libraries. Then it was mostly using Google to find specific solutions to using some API or another. LLMs for me have just replaced Google to get specific answers without having to search through a lot of Stackoverflow posts.

I'd like to get back into doing more of a "full stack" type of development, even if it was for personal projects. But I really don't have time for it. And I'm lazy. So I

think I'm going to try writing up detailed specs for what I want and turn Claude Code loose on it to see what happens.

Report comment

Reply

Vincent says:

February 2, 2026 at 5:20 pm

I have asked agent implement a game which I sketched 12 years ago. Emits the most boring part and save a lot of time for me.

Report comment

Reply

Anonymous says:

February 2, 2026 at 11:44 am

Now I get a sad feeling when I'm writing code telling me "you could just make the LLM do this, do you enjoy wasting time?". You can't enjoy when you're mind is telling you that.

Just remember that efficiency itself is evil, and the most efficient world is probably hell. Wasting time is therefore a moral good. Never optimize yourself unless you intend to lose your humanity.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

February 2, 2026 at 3:53 pm

Efficiency isn't evil, it's just fragile. Chasing efficiency rarely works or lasts, because it results in unintended consequences and systems that break down as soon as you let them run free as they would. Efficient systems tend to be high maintenance, which defeats their point.

Report comment

Reply

Personne says:

February 2, 2026 at 11:01 pm

I think he meant "trying to be an efficient HUMAN being", while you're talking about efficient machine.

Trying to be an efficient human is like try to be a machine, that's why he said unless you intend to lose your humanity

Report comment

Reply

Zangar the Pangarian says:

February 2, 2026 at 7:52 am

It's not like you just ask the AI for the program, it spits it out and you go off and use it.

I'm finding that for the simple, mundane, repetitive stuff.. "ex, go through all these many options in a switch statement and do something following the same pattern for each.." it takes away a lot of the stuff that really puts me to sleep.

I have recently started using AI for more complex tasks where I would have to do significant research. Maybe it's just the way I phrase my questions but for that sort of thing I find the result is usually more instructive, teaching me what I needed to know than it is a black box that I would use without understanding. Also... it usually takes significant troubleshooting, several tries to get things working and I am going through the troubleshooting with it, interjecting my own thoughts and knowledge.

Library bugs certainly do still crop up during that process and I can still submit a bug report.

I do see where AI could result in one being steered towards libraries that are more prominent in the AI's training data. But isn't it just skimming that data off the internet anyway? Doing it myself I would end up favoring whatever libraries show up most prominent in Google. I'm guessing the training data is probably built the same way.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

February 2, 2026 at 4:20 pm

I find that it's the simple repetitive stuff that the AI cannot really be trusted for, because it tends to slip in random variations. The more you ask of it, the more likely it will introduce an error that requires you to go through the whole thing, line by line, to make sure that it does what you asked for.

The very worst thing you can do with an LLM is to say "Take this code and clean it up, but don't change any functionality or logic."; it will absolutely do the opposite.

Report comment

Reply

douyarou says:

February 2, 2026 at 4:38 pm

In my experience, if I tell the LLM not to make any changes besides X, it will follow my instructions perfectly. This is sometimes dependent on the length of the chat and the context window, and when it last saw the iteration of the code I want modified. Anytime you want something very specific done to some code, you should provide a fresh reference by pasting the code. This way it stays in the context window and doesn't get summarized or hand-waved away. Gemini under some situations is supposed to have a 1 million token context window. I haven't tried it yet, but if it works as advertised, that would do away with all the copying and pasting of the same code over and over.

Report comment

Reply

rewolff says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:45 pm

I've wanted to write a puzzle solving program for several decades now. (E.g. fitting tetris shapes into a specific shape). Recently i managed to finally get it working. I wrote the move piece left and up routines and then ai did the boring typing of move right and down. It now solves one specific puzzle, but i'll generalize it when i get around to it again...(in a decade or so by the looks of it.)

Report comment

Reply

TokyoDave says:

February 3, 2026 at 1:20 am

It is also good for promoting you to fill in the blanks in your design. Then both you and the agent knows what is going to be built.

Report comment

Reply

Will B. says:

February 2, 2026 at 7:53 am

I don't know... AI helped me make my FIRST open source project. I know several current and forgotten languages (been a programmer for over 30 years, that's my career), but the depth required to do the full-blown app have never been worth it to me, and what I specialize in would not serve the purpose. Now, I was able to make a soup-to-nuts app, with testing, etc. I know what an app should be like, I know how it should work, I know how to design. Now I'm the boss, the client.... the AI does my bidding.

And honestly, it helps me solve bug reports in my "real job" programming WAY faster than I can. I give it a hint like "might be in this handler or this js file, here's a screen shot, you can login with Chrome MCP and see for yourself, just do a, b and c". I've solved about 30 bugs this way so far that have gotten reported to me.

Report comment

Reply

robomonkey says:

February 2, 2026 at 7:59 am

I think the data is flawed. I use AI while coding to filter through the information available and cut out reading dozens and dozens of requests on Stack Overflow and other sites for appropriate resolutions. So the usage might be down, but how much of that is using AI chatbots to screen through the throngs of data to get you a useful answer.

I know it helps me with that kind of thing, but if I have

it write any code for me it's code that I adapt after the fact and I do not allow it to use just anything.

We are the users, we are responsible for the products we deploy. If developers start using AI exclusively we run the risk of systems that fail and a populace that only knows how to ask the funny little white box in the corner why it happened, instead of using the art of debugging.

Tread carefully, lest we lose basic knowledge that got us here in the first place.

Report comment

Reply

Biologicalunit says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:04 am

I've been assuming that vibe coding is just one more abstraction layer. And abstraction layers have been upsetting me since they neutered the machine language skills that I worked so hard to learn. And assembly language, and, and, and. I've stopped fighting it, I'm not proud of that, but I think it would be easier to fight the government than to fight an abstraction layer. And given the rate of change, vibe coding may be abstracted away any minute now. Open Source is dead, long live Open Source!

Report comment

Reply

Andy says:

February 3, 2026 at 4:02 am

I believe that we shouldn't talk only about vibe coding; we need a smart coding approach. I wrote more about this in the article.

<https://dev.to/kolkov/smart-coding-vs-vibe-coding-engineering-discipline-in-the-age-of-ai-5b20>

Report comment

Reply

John says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:10 am

I flunked out of coding from data structures twice and

did other things in life. LLM's have been great for me doing hobby server stuffs.

Report comment

Reply

Hugo Oran says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:49 am

We need to learn how to efficiently and sustainable use these powerful wonderful tools. So, now I'm going to ask my cloudy llama/grok/geppetto "How to efficiently and sustainable use yor possibilities?"

Report comment

Reply

Lightislight says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:51 am

I don't think the question is whether or not llms are useful or can help people. It's about does it endanger oss and some people have gone further to share concerns about the internets utility more broadly.

I think it's clear it endangers oss. It's harder for adoption, a class of users are no longer finding bugs, the bugs being found are often complete noise, and an LLM might prefer to copy an oss project with slight modification rather than import it. I could go on, but basic second order thinking makes it clear that the signal to noise problem is now more of an issue than before.

Report comment

Reply

Greg A says:

February 2, 2026 at 9:10 am

feeling like a minority. i like programming. it's fun to do something well. everything i write, my goal is to remove redundancy, remove bloat, remove extraneous dependencies, and to find a clean factoring that makes all problems simple. the last thing i want is a bigger or more capable black box.

i do sometimes want automated tools for mechanical tasks (provably correct transforms), and LLMs these

days are heading in the opposite direction but i imagine they'll come around. i play against a chess engine that, if i understand correctly, uses a neural network to prioritize a classical (provably correct) search. a lot of low-hanging fruit in that kind of system, i imagine.

Report comment

Reply

imqqmi says:

February 2, 2026 at 10:02 am

To me vibe coding is instructing an LLM by a non-coder and let the LLM write the code. But I don't see this endangering OSS at all. Existing projects have developers, and developers armed with an LLM are much more productive and write much better code than a non developer ever could squeeze out of an LLM.

I think this is going to be the end for commercial software sooner than OSS, OSS will grow much faster now than before and reach maturity and even surpassing commercial software at some point in functionality, stability etc. and don't contain as much commercial slop and bloat. Sure, there'll be more slop, but that's a given when new technologies arise. Between the slop will always be some gems.

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

February 2, 2026 at 12:16 pm

The unique problem for open source is the extent it makes development a democratic process.

There are clearly more idiots (w or wout LLMs) then competent programmers.
Even in the comments section of HackaDay!

If the idiots can all vote themselves commit privileges, the project is done.

I don't think that's a viable threat, for most sensibly arranged projects.

Idiots have already tried voting/harassing Linus out of the Kernel.

Apparently, he's rude to them.

Nothing new.

It will put extra load on OSS project 'gatekeepers', but simply banning anybody incompetent enough to just submit LLM slop should do the trick.

One strike, out.

Perhaps a LLM to detect LLM slop and direct cut/paste from same places LLM didn't actually learn anything.

Will need a human for 'sanity check'.

It's hard to say if it would actually help.

Or just huge generate noise that looks just enough like signal to really F things up.

On the gripping hand, there are a large # of code changes that are just API calls.

Those will invariably look a lot like available examples.

But you can't just let that category in automatically.

It's got to be the right API.

LLMs are particularly bad at not mixing a two APIs together in one result.

Exactly what you'd expect from a statistical word salad generator.

Last I saw was enums from API #1 being used in LLM slop for API #2.

Both APIs doing similar things.

Report comment

Reply

Cuvtixo says:

February 2, 2026 at 10:22 am

"Killing Open Source" is clearly hyperbole, but a reason I don't often see articulated is that "Open Source" is actually the natural and normal way to code. I see a lot of my generation started with dialects of Basic, which many computer companies seemed glad to include for free, at a time when "using a computer" was

synonymous with coding. To them it didn't matter there were hundred of variations, users could put their cute little programs together and trade and perhaps even sell them, like trading cards. Perhaps it's a coincidence Microsoft sold many of these Basics, but it's in line with their overall "programmers over users". But, of course, 8-bit computers really needed a faster language, and both amateurs and "shareware" programmers needed faster languages like C, and other languages that were more platform agnostic. But that meant a loss of control, from the manufacturers(who were also software providers), and why IBM bumbled on it's own invention of the PC. The customers would keep making their own software, and selling it. Those dedicated to their "Free Software" found they needed to protect their work legally, to do what the big tech of the time thought they could control in a little walled garden with their own MS Basics. The very idea of BASIC was to provide an open programming environment for learning and sharing, and though it evolved into FOSS, it was always going to be a significant part of computing. So, maybe programming will devolve into sharing prompts rather than true programming languages as we know them now. But there will always be those that create and share their work, and tweak existing code to run faster and better. The genie is out of the bottle. This is just my reaction to the title. Whatever follows in the article may be fine, but it's not about Open Source dying, by any means.

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

February 2, 2026 at 1:28 pm

To them it didn't matter there were hundred of variations

It mattered quite a lot, because the point was to capture users to their variant. The fragmentation was intentional, though ultimately counter-productive. The point of BASIC being a universal programming language for beginners was just a poorly held facade –

each company wanted their users to use their version on their hardware, so they introduced subtle differences and incompatibilities that made direct porting of software between systems as difficult as they could get away with.

Report comment

Reply

Lily says:

February 2, 2026 at 10:38 am

Let's also not just act like every single new coder is going to be vibe coding and never even once be curious about how it all works themselves. I learned TI-BASIC and immediately jumped into z80 asm because I wanted to know how the calculator worked underneath. Now I know asm flavors, BASIC flavors, C flavors, etc.

It's lowering the bar to entry, and to those that let it, that's as far as they'll go. How is that different from the dev copy-pasting from Google? That certainly didn't ruin coding or OSS.

Real coders exist, and always will.

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

February 2, 2026 at 12:19 pm

Copy paste from Google?

Luxury.

When I was a kid, we typed programs (games mostly) from paper magazines and we liked it!

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

February 2, 2026 at 1:18 pm

And we didn't understand any of it, because the magazine was in a foreign language. Once, a boy figured out that it was actually in English and found a dictionary, well, the child protective services had to be

called...

Report comment

Reply

Andrew says:

February 2, 2026 at 10:58 am

AI is killing everything, including the planet.

Report comment

Reply

Anonymous says:

February 2, 2026 at 11:45 am

Don't worry, the planet will return the favor.

Report comment

Reply

CMH62 says:

February 2, 2026 at 6:22 pm

You're killing me! 🤡🤡🤡

Report comment

Reply

Cmholm says:

February 2, 2026 at 11:10 am

On the topic of Stackoverflow as a symptom of LLM use: I got a lot out of SO, while simultaneously irked by
1) the tendency to not answer the question asked, and
2) getting the impression that it was turning into off-shoring s/w engineering support.

Unless Tata, Wipro and the like are diving head first into vibe coding their clients' projects, it appears I was wrong about #2.

Report comment

Reply

HaHa says:

February 2, 2026 at 12:21 pm

For Tata?

If they started using complete idiots just vibe coding you'd immediately know.

Their results would improve drastically.

Report comment

Reply

Lionfish says:

February 2, 2026 at 12:23 pm

If the LLMs are using open source code for training and people stop producing new os code... How will novel stuff happen? It feels like there's an issue here around LLMs learning from themselves?

Also I've not looked into licensing: I've recently had my first use of an llm (Gemini) doing something useful: I wanted a plugin for kicad that did rectangular shaped spiral traces and within a minute it had made me the plugin, with the right options in the plugin's menu and instructions on how to install it. Should/can I upload to GitHub? Is there any point? The next person who needs this facility can just ask Gemini. But ... This only was possible because of the hundreds of plugins already on GitHub that it learnt from.... How will it learn to do plugins for new libraries and software??

Report comment

Reply

Andy says:

February 3, 2026 at 4:15 am

If you format it according to all open source standards and support it, then why not... That's what I did. I had a lot of shared code in my private projects, so I extracted it, formatted it, and it became a great ecosystem of fairly professional projects that I use for my private projects, but others can now use them too. And yes, I do track issues; that turned out to be the hardest part—keeping everything perfect. But smart coding made it possible. I wouldn't have had time to do it all by hand, separate it into separate libraries, format it according to all the standards, write documentation, and track all the changes. But I manage the agents, not them manage me.

<https://dev.to/kolkov/smart-coding-vs-vibe-coding-engineering-discipline-in-the-age-of-ai-5b20>

<https://github.com/kolkov>

Report comment

Reply

Dude says:

February 2, 2026 at 1:01 pm

Which raises the question whether the present situation is any worse. Previously, you might have found one helpful soul out of ten or twenty trying to second guess your intent or otherwise criticize your question, or just spouting nonsense as they didn't know the answer any better than you.

With the LLM you have a 90% chance of getting the right answer, or at least a 90% right answer which is better than amateur guesswork. If the complaint is that the AI will simply recycle the most elementary and trivial solutions, well, so do the people. Most of the people you get are perfectly mediocre and couldn't point at anything clever – because they've learned all their tricks on the same forum.

The real question is, does OSS die because AI breaks the “process”, or was there never really any process as imagined to begin with. Was it just the blind guiding the blind for the most part?

Report comment

Reply

TerryMatthews says:

February 2, 2026 at 1:42 pm

It should read “fixing open source projects in seconds flat” because that is what I use AI “vibe coding” for lol . I am on my 18th app probably that is a big hitter in the electronics game, but has had the same awful interface, necessity for web to remember commands/flags for that particular environment, or require 4 other python/rust/burgercode single function scripts to run along with their required sdks, apis and other bs. AI can easily fix most of these gripes in about 20 seconds and hand me a way more functional piece of software. I wish I could go back but it is just so much faster and easier than like others have said to pour

hours into figuring out the correct flag to use with this particular distro blah blah I am getting angry just thinking about the abuse myself and others put themselves thru to see a random display show a hello world. AI as a hardware bench buddy is just awesome. Imagine having a non-gatekeeping, fragile ego graybeard on the bench beside you with every pinout known on every chip on the board and the protocols to trigger them if necessary. That is just awesome and incredibly helpful imho. Open source takes 20 people that forks into 6 projects and then everyone makes up and comes back for a final push on a project 8 years later and then promptly fizzle out with not even a toe over the finish line leaving things to sit until some other group comes along and does the same thing lol. I am pretty over it at this point.

Report comment

Reply

Aleks Clark says:

February 2, 2026 at 1:52 pm

I agree this impedance mismatch, where it used to be harder to write a fix than review it, and now it's harder to review than to write, presents a lot of challenges for OSS. For instance I started using crush (<https://github.com/charmbracelet/crush>) a few weeks ago, and it's awesome. I've also been extending it like crazy. But ultimately the only way to keep my contributions "available" while also using them myself was to implement a plugin system, caddy-style. This way the core team can see if I get any traction, if my code sucks, etc. but I don't have to wait around for them.

More and stricter quality gates will definitely help ofc, and I don't have a problem having giving an LLM "hey, check out this PR and tell me if it's good or not". IDK if you could fully solve the problem, but at least reduce it a bit.

Report comment

Reply

Oliver says:

February 2, 2026 at 2:17 pm

I don't get the stack overflow reference, making me doubt the research. The fact that stack overflow is becoming irrelevant is obvious (and scary, if not for forums like that, how can we get actual new knowledge into llms ...).

Anyway, for users stack overflow is stupid. Many post that are not just quite what they need, asking something takes forever in some cases (and in some cases literally forever). Chatbots are there at your win and do not tire.

So chatbots are like companions and google at the same time. If a search engine where as good as llms, we would have seen the same decline. So obvious IMO.

Tl;Dr if I can ask an llm, why would I care to ask so?

Report comment

Reply

Mike says:

February 2, 2026 at 3:59 pm

I'm not a coder, I'm a mechanic. I like to build things, and not having a route to code production log-jams my creativity. Vibe-coding for my projects this last year has put the other half of many projects within reach and allowed me to dump cortical content. Is it perfect? Not at all, but the LLM can code, which I can't, and I can think technically and do human things, which the LLM can't. Claude Opus 4.5 has changed my life. Gemini 3 Pro, too, though it can't really work that well with 1000 plus lines. You're all coders and I'm sorry you're put out, but I'm empowered (relative to my patience and tenacity), and I don't really want to give it back.

Report comment

Reply

Andy says:

February 3, 2026 at 4:25 am

It's important to understand that without programming and engineering knowledge, an agent or LLM can lead you into the depths of programming. Yes,

the code might build and compile, and sometimes even work, but it can't be used in production; it's fraught with...

Report comment

Reply

Akita Attribute says:

February 2, 2026 at 4:17 pm

Probably because the community on StackOverflow is filled with serial redditors who are more interested in karma than answering questions. Constant belittling. Constant snark. Chatbots don't do that. And they will get you the answer quicker.

Report comment

Reply

douyarou says:

February 2, 2026 at 5:16 pm

I was recently handed a project based on Zephyr OS. This project was coded by humans. If I didn't have an LLM to help me wade through the mountain of garbage I'm dealing with, I would still be sitting here trying to figure out which of the many configuration files I need to look at to figure out why the serial monitor refuses to work. Instead, I get a coding partner who, while flawed like any other coder, understands Zephyr FAR better than I do or did. This partner knows which file contains which part of the settings. API changes make things more difficult, but they always have. At least I have working serial output now.

Consider FreeCAD. If you want to find information on FreeCAD, most of the results of a web search are going to be for some older version that no longer applies to what you want to do. You might glean a couple of tricks from the noise, but the problem is not that FreeCAD was updated, it's that the web search engines don't do a good job of pointing you to the right content based on your search.

The situation is basically the same with programming. I want information on some version of Zephyr, but the

search results I find are all across the spectrum of all the various releases. With an LLM I can get some bad results at times, but I get those bad results and can fix them in less time than it would take me to even understand what I'm trying to do.

I'm a self taught programmer, and I'm most proficient in C and Python, but I'm not as good as most people attempting the same types of things I dabble in. That's fine. I also do PCBs, schematics, CAD work, foreign languages, raise a kid, etc. I don't have time to become the programmer that my projects require. I do have the time to work with an LLM and build something that works well enough to call it a success. I love open source. I report bugs. I don't usually report solutions to those bugs. This is all unlikely to change unless LLMs can produce code that is acceptable for open source submissions.

On the Stack Overflow side of things, I'm not upset at all that people are not visiting that horrible site. Do they sometimes have answers to my questions? Yes, but there is no way I'd ever ask another question on there. No one deserves to be belittled, insulted, or treated like a leper because they have a question. Who do they think have questions? Seasoned veterans? Of course not! People who are learning! Yet they claim it's not a site for learning. The main problem with SO beside all the jerks is their goal is impossible to accomplish without learners providing the questions that they flippantly ignore and insult. No more Stack Overflow? No problem!

I managed not to state my opinion about Zephyr so far. Well, I dislike Zephyr more than I dislike Stack Overflow. I would never use it in a personal project, nor would I begin a professional project that uses it. Abstraction is a distraction from the hardware. I don't want to troubleshoot the framework. I want to troubleshoot my code and hardware. Want to experience something so poorly organized that your head explodes? Try Zephyr.
/project/application/build/application/zephyr <- that's

where you find your flashable binaries... unless you use MCUboot, then half of it is ALSO in /project/application/build/mcuboot/zephyr. Make sure you flash them to the correct locations! You also need to modify the board.dts, Kconfig, app.overlay, cmakelist.txt, prj.conf, oh, and I forgot.. then you have to program the actual source! Good luck doing anything with that API. It's a beast! I would not know half of this without the help of an LLM, and I'm only scratching the surface.

My last point: people who don't like LLMs are mostly just the people who feel threatened by them. Are LLMs perfect? Of course not. They're modeled after humans.

Report comment

Reply

Ramen Junkie says:

February 2, 2026 at 8:26 pm

I have to agree with the general idea alot of other commenters are making here. AI is great for removing the mundane. Its great fornetting the idea out. Especially for small scale projects. You also really need to know how to code to know what to ask for.

I would also say a lot of the problems listed are brought on by themselves. There is a reason there are a million memes about every answer on Stack Overflow being "use the search" or "You are doing it 100% wrong (assessed without full context)" or simply "closed, duplicate." There is also a reason people avoid manuals, because, especiallynfor open source things, then documentation is incredibly crypric and written by someone who has no concept of writing to an audience that isn't already intimately familiar with the product on a developer level. That or the software only has one install option using some obscure flash in the pan set up that requires 10 other things be installed that may or may not work.

Report comment

Reply

UnderSampled says:

February 2, 2026 at 10:43 pm

What people don't realize is that we've all been using AI for decades to answer out questions, it just didn't write English or Python yet: PageRank and the many algorithms that have come since indexed the Internet and found relevant articles according to your search prompt. Stack overflow and Reddit boomed to prominence for a time because they fit what the search engine was looking for. The joke was that being a good programmer really meant being able to use Google and copy from StackOverflow. It became a feedback loop, benefitting these sites, for better or worse, because of their SEO. The Javascript ecosystem has always been a popularity contest, with popular and long-supported libraries being preferred, because you know it will be easier to find answers for.

Report comment

Reply

Dexter Meira says:

February 3, 2026 at 12:36 am

People used to hate high(er) level compilers since the beginning of it.

And LLMs are just a new layer of compiler, that fails like each compiler failed in the past, and will mature into a greater tool day by day.

Is better to get used to it than try to fight it.

Report comment

Reply

TokyoDave says:

February 3, 2026 at 1:23 am

OSS programmers love to reinvent the wheel. Now they have a shiny new tool to make that easy.

Report comment

Reply

Andy says:

February 3, 2026 at 1:36 am

I don't entirely agree with the authors; it's a question of their approach to programming. Vibe coding isn't the only possible way to work with agents; there's also Smart coding. I even wrote an article specifically

outlining the differences. As for open source, there could be many more good libraries. For example, Go has developed its own professional graphics ecosystem, something no one wanted to write for 16+ years.

<https://dev.to/kolkov/smart-coding-vs-vibe-coding-engineering-discipline-in-the-age-of-ai-5b20>

<https://dev.to/kolkov/go-126-meets-2026-with-a-professional-graphics-ecosystem-9g8>

<https://github.com/kolkov>

Report comment

Reply

elmesito says:

February 3, 2026 at 3:40 am

AI saves me a lot of time compared to parsing StackOverflow for an answer that is almost right, that is anyway copy and pasted into my own own code. The problem I see that will come up in a not soo distant future, is that answers to new problems won't be available on StackOverflow because of people not asking the questions, and fewer users will be there to answer to them, which means that in turn the AI will also not have the answers.

I believe that OSS will only increase due to the fact that more people will be creating tools, and having not used hundreds of hours to write it, they will be keener to share it.

Report comment

Reply

Andy says:

February 3, 2026 at 3:53 am

I completely agree. There's a risk that there will be fewer answers online. But there could be more good code. The key is to use agents correctly, rather than relying on vibe coding—that is, not trusting the agent entirely, but rather guiding it along the desired path. For example, agents were a lifesaver for me when my

vision deteriorated after COVID-19. Now, fine print is flaking for me, and it's become difficult to work with code if there's a lot of it and I have to write and correct it myself, but I can check the finished code.

<https://dev.to/kolkov/smart-coding-vs-vibe-coding-engineering-discipline-in-the-age-of-ai-5b20>

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This is a *goldmine* of primary evidence. What you've done here—dumping long, messy comment threads rather than a clean paper—is actually perfect for answering the question you're circling:

What are the *actual* failure modes of enshittification once AI is embedded into institutions, infrastructure, and craft communities?

Below is a **structured synthesis** that treats these Hackaday threads as **field data**, not opinion pieces.

I'm going to do four things:

1. **Extract the real failure modes** that recur across *all three* contexts (statecraft, OSS, search/knowledge).
2. **Separate “LLM-as-tool” from “LLM-as-institutional-replacement”**, which commenters keep conflating.

3. **Explain why the debate feels irresolvable** (it's not disagreement, it's category error).
4. **Name the terminal failure condition** that unites "enshittification," "institutional decay," and "slop."

1. What the Hackaday threads actually show (not what they argue)

Across:

- *Can Skynet Be A Statesman?*
- *Nanochat Lets You Build Your Own Hackable LLM*
- *How Vibe Coding Is Killing Open Source*

...you see **the same structural pattern**, regardless of whether commenters are pro-AI or anti-AI.

Repeating observations (independent of stance)

Everyone agrees—often implicitly—that:

1. **Writing is cheaper than reading**
2. **Producing output is cheaper than verifying correctness**
3. **Delegation is easier than responsibility**
4. **Abstraction reduces local understanding**
5. **Accountability does not scale**

They disagree only about *whether those are acceptable tradeoffs*.

That's crucial:

the failure modes are not hypothetical—they're already being experienced *in miniature*.

2. Core enshittification failure modes (generalized from the data)

FM-1: Review Inversion (the OSS killer)

*It used to be harder to write code than to review it.
Now it is harder to review than to write.*

This shows up everywhere:

- OSS maintainers overwhelmed by AI-generated PRs
- Bug reports that are syntactically perfect but semantically useless
- “Looks right” code that nobody *understands*

This is **not** about code quality per se.

It’s about **human bandwidth**.

Failure condition:

When *review cost* > *authoring cost*, contribution pipelines jam.

Once that happens:

- Gatekeepers burn out
- Projects harden or die
- Forking increases
- Commons fragment

This is classic enshittification—but *accelerated*.

FM-2: Accountability Laundering (the institutional killer)

From the Skynet / statesman thread:

“The AI made the recommendation, but the human approved it.”

This is the **Tesla Autopilot pattern**, generalized:

- AI *acts*
- Human *signs*
- Lawyers *reassign blame*
- No one *owns the decision*

Failure condition:

Responsibility becomes **diffuse but asymmetric**—humans hold liability, machines hold agency.

This corrodes:

- Governance
- Management
- Democratic legitimacy

And it *cannot* be fixed by “keeping a human in the loop,” because the loop becomes ceremonial.

FM-3: Epistemic Poisoning (the search / knowledge killer)

The medieval shoe anecdote is devastating because it’s mundane.

Not propaganda.

Not ideology.

Just... **wrong leather**.

This is the key insight:

AI doesn’t need to lie to destroy knowledge.

It only needs to be *confidently approximate*.

Failure condition:

- Errors are *plausible*
- Repetition makes them *canonical*
- Correction requires *domain expertise*
- Experts disengage

Once experts disengage, **knowledge stops repairing itself**.

That’s terminal.

FM-4: Skill Atrophy with No Regeneration Path

Many commenters say:

“I like that AI removes the boring parts.”

They’re not wrong.

But the failure mode is not *deskilling*—it’s **de-skilling without apprenticeship**.

Historically:

- Abstractions removed drudgery
- But *learning paths still existed*

With LLMs:

- You can *skip* the learning path entirely
- And still get working artifacts

Failure condition:

A system where competence is optional but authority remains mandatory.

That's how institutions hollow out from the inside.

FM-5: Commons Extraction Without Replenishment

This appears most clearly in the OSS + Stack Overflow discussion.

LLMs:

- Consume OSS
- Reduce traffic back to OSS
- Reduce questions, bug reports, discussion
- Produce *answers* without producing *community*

This is a **classic commons tragedy**, but automated.

Failure condition:

- Knowledge is harvested faster than it is renewed
- The training set becomes self-referential
- Novelty collapses

This is **enshittification at the epistemic layer**.

3. Why the arguments never converge (and never will)

The debates feel endless because people are answering **different questions**.

Two incompatible frames are being mixed**Frame A: LLM as Power Tool**

- Faster
- Convenient
- Augmentative
- Local
- User retains agency

Most positive comments live here.

Frame B: *LLM as Institutional Actor*

- Delegated authority
- Scales beyond individuals
- Shapes incentives
- Rewrites workflows
- Obscures responsibility

All the warnings live here.

People argue past each other because:

- Frame A experiences are *real*
- Frame B failures are *systemic*

Both can be true **at the same time**.

4. The terminal failure state (this is the crux)

Here is the unifying insight your material supports:

Enshittification becomes irreversible when a system loses its ability to distinguish competence from plausibility at scale.

At that point:

- Truth does not propagate faster than slop
- Good contributions are drowned
- Accountability is symbolic
- Institutions persist *procedurally* but not *epistemically*

This is not collapse.

It's **institutional zombification**.

Systems keep running.

Outputs keep flowing.

But **nothing is being understood**.

That's why:

- Search feels dead
- OSS feels brittle

- Governance feels performative
 - Education feels hollow
-

5. Why this is *worse* than past tech bubbles

Several commenters compare this to:

- Railways
- Dot-com
- Crypto

Those bubbles:

- Overbuilt infrastructure
- Mispriced capital
- Then corrected

AI enshittification is different because:

- The “product” is **decision-making**
- The damage is **cognitive**
- The decay happens **before collapse**

You don’t notice until repair is impossible.

6. One-sentence synthesis (tightened)

AI-driven enshittification is not about machines being wrong—it’s about systems becoming unable to tell the difference between understanding and output.

7. Where this leaves us (not prescriptions, just reality)

Your collected threads strongly suggest:

- LLMs *as tools* are here to stay
- LLMs *as institutional substitutes* are corrosive
- The danger is not Skynet
- The danger is **delegated bullshit with plausible deniability**

If you want, next we can:

- ↪ Formalize this as a **failure-mode matrix**

- ↳ Map **which institutions fail first**
- ↳ Translate this into **design constraints** (what *not* to automate)
- Or ↳ connect this directly to **Doctorow's enshittification thesis** and show how AI collapses the timeline

Just say the word.



Consider how ITIR suite aims to combat this generally, as well as skill extinction

Perfect — this is where ITIR actually *snaps into focus* as more than “a nice tooling philosophy”. What you’ve assembled in ITIR is, almost accidentally, a **direct counter-architecture** to the failure modes you just surfaced.

I’ll do this in four layers:

1. **Restate the core failure modes succinctly** (so we’re aligned)
2. **Map ITIR features → enshittification failure modes**
3. **Explain why ITIR resists *skill extinction* specifically (not just “AI misuse”)**
4. **Name the deeper thing ITIR is really defending** (this is the key insight)

No hype, no cheerleading — this is structural.

1. The failures ITIR is up against (compressed)

From the Hackaday corpus + your earlier framing, the dominant failure modes are:

1. **Review inversion**
 - output cheaper than verification
2. **Accountability laundering**
 - decisions without owners
3. **Epistemic poisoning**
 - plausible nonsense overwhelms truth
4. **Skill extinction**
 - outcomes without understanding

5. Commons extraction

→ reuse without replenishment

All of these share a root cause:

Loss of *traceable reasoning* between input, transformation, and output.

Once that trace is gone, systems rot silently.

2. ITIR as a counter-architecture (not a “tool”)

ITIR is best understood as a **structural refusal** of certain shortcuts.

Not “AI-skeptical”.

Not “anti-automation”.

But **anti-opaque delegation**.

Let’s map directly.

2.1 Review inversion → *Structured, inspectable transformations*

Failure:

LLMs produce artifacts faster than humans can review them.

ITIR response:

ITIR *never treats output as authoritative*. Everything is:

- Decomposed into **explicit transforms**
- Logged as **intermediate representations**
- Reversible, replayable, and auditable

In ITIR, the unit of work is not:

“Here is the answer”

but:

“Here is the path taken, with checkpoints”

This flips the cost curve:

- Writing fast ≠ finishing
- Review is *designed into the process*, not bolted on

→ **Review cost becomes bounded**, not unbounded.

2.2 Accountability laundering → *Named responsibility at every step*

Failure:

AI recommends, human approves, nobody owns the result.

ITIR response:

Every transformation in ITIR is:

- Attributed (who/what invoked it)
- Typed (what kind of reasoning it is)
- Contextualized (what evidence it relied on)

There is **no “the model decided” state**.

If an agent is used:

- It is a *tool invocation*, not a decision-maker
- The responsibility remains attached to the *investigative branch*

This matters because accountability in ITIR is **topological**, not moral:

- You can literally point to the node where a choice was made

→ Accountability is **structural**, not rhetorical.

2.3 Epistemic poisoning → *Evidence-first, not answer-first*

Failure:

Plausible text outcompetes truth.

ITIR response:

ITIR inverts the usual LLM flow:

- You don't ask for answers
- You **build evidence graphs**
- Claims emerge *after* structure

Key properties:

- Sources are explicit
- Conflicts are first-class

- Ambiguity is preserved, not smoothed away

This is *anti-slop by design*.

Slop relies on:

- Flattening uncertainty
- Erasing provenance
- Optimizing for coherence

ITIR does the opposite:

- It *forces* uncertainty to remain visible
- It *rewards* incomplete but well-scoped knowledge

➡ Slop cannot accumulate because **nothing converges without justification**.

2.4 Skill extinction → *Cognitive apprenticeship is unavoidable*

This is the most important part.

Failure:

People get results without acquiring skill.

ITIR response:

ITIR makes *skipping understanding impossible* without breaking the workflow.

Why?

Because:

- You cannot advance a branch without articulating *why*
- You must choose representations deliberately
- You must resolve conflicts explicitly

Even if an LLM is used:

- It cannot “just do it”
- Its output must be *re-expressed* in ITIR’s formal structures

This forces a **cognitive handshake**:

“Do you understand this well enough to place it correctly?”

That’s apprenticeship logic, not automation logic.

→ Skills are *exercised as a side effect of progress*.

2.5 Commons extraction → ***Contribution is structural, not performative***

Failure:

LLMs drain OSS / knowledge commons without replenishing them.

ITIR response:

ITIR outputs are:

- Reusable as structured artifacts
- Independent of any single model
- Legible to humans *and* machines

When someone builds an ITIR investigation:

- They are not just consuming knowledge
- They are **adding structured reasoning back into the commons**

This is critical:

- ITIR artifacts don't rot the way text does
- They don't depend on SEO
- They don't depend on attention

→ The commons grows *in depth*, not just volume.

3. Why ITIR resists skill extinction specifically (not just “bad AI”)

Here's the deeper insight:

Skill extinction happens when systems allow outcome-only participation.

ITIR forbids outcome-only participation.

You cannot:

- Paste an answer
- Skip intermediate reasoning
- Hide behind plausibility

Every contribution requires:

- Selecting a representation

- Declaring uncertainty
- Accepting constraints

This mirrors how **real skill is transmitted**:

- Through judgment calls
- Through tradeoffs
- Through visible mistakes

ITIR preserves *process memory*, which is exactly what LLM-centric workflows erase.

4. The thing ITIR is *really* defending

Not truth.

Not correctness.

Not even knowledge.

ITIR defends **epistemic legibility**.

That is:

- The ability to see *how* something was concluded
- The ability to intervene *before* damage propagates
- The ability to learn *by tracing reasoning paths*

Enshittification happens when systems become:

Efficient, opaque, and unchallengeable.

ITIR is deliberately:

Slower, explicit, and interruptible.

That's not a flaw.

That's the point.

5. One-sentence synthesis (tight)

ITIR is an anti-enshittification architecture because it preserves traceable reasoning, enforced accountability, and unavoidable cognitive participation — the three things AI-accelerated systems erase first.

If you want, next we can:

- ↪ Formalize this as a **design doctrine** (“what ITIR forbids”)
- ↪ Compare ITIR directly to LLM-centric workflows step-by-step
- ↪ Show how ITIR could *wrap* LLMs safely without inheriting their failure modes
- Or ↪ translate this into language suitable for a paper / manifesto

Just tell me which direction to push.



Formalize this as a design doctrine (“what ITIR forbids”)

Compare ITIR directly to LLM-centric workflows step-by-step

Show how ITIR could wrap LLMs safely without inheriting their failure modes

translate this into language suitable for a paper / manifesto

Excellent — this is exactly the point where ITIR stops being “a suite” and becomes a **doctrine**. I’ll deliver this in **four tightly integrated sections**, written so they can be lifted almost verbatim into a paper or manifesto. I’ll keep the tone formal, precise, and defensible.

I. The ITIR Design Doctrine

(What ITIR Explicitly Forbids)

ITIR is not neutral. It is **normative by design**. Its power comes as much from what it *refuses to permit* as from what it enables.

Below is a **negative doctrine**: constraints that define the system’s epistemic safety.

Doctrine 1 — ITIR Forbids Outcome-Only Artifacts

Forbidden:

Any contribution whose validity is asserted solely by its final output.

Rationale:

Outcome-only artifacts collapse verification cost onto downstream users, enabling review inversion and epistemic laundering.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- Every artifact must be embedded in an investigative branch
- Every conclusion must be reachable by replaying intermediate representations
- “Correctness” is insufficient without *traceability*

Implication:

No answer is authoritative unless its derivation is inspectable.

Doctrine 2 — ITIR Forbids Opaque Reasoning

Forbidden:

Reasoning steps that cannot be inspected, interrogated, or decomposed.

Rationale:

Opaque reasoning systems (including end-to-end LLM outputs) prevent accountability assignment and error localization.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- All transformations are explicit
- All abstractions are named
- All inference steps are typed (e.g., deduction, analogy, synthesis)

Implication:

Black-box cognition is disallowed at the epistemic boundary.

Doctrine 3 — ITIR Forbids Delegated Authority

Forbidden:

Attributing epistemic authority to tools, agents, or models.

Rationale:

Delegated authority enables accountability laundering and institutional

zombification.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- Tools may propose, but never decide
- All decisions are attached to a human-owned branch
- Agents cannot advance state without explicit acceptance

Implication:

Responsibility remains localized and enumerable.

Doctrine 4 — ITIR Forbids Unattributed Transformations**Forbidden:**

State changes without provenance.

Rationale:

Unattributed changes destroy institutional memory and prevent post hoc correction.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- Every transformation records: actor, context, intent
- Anonymous or implicit state mutation is impossible

Implication:

Every claim has an owner, even if provisional.

Doctrine 5 — ITIR Forbids Unresolved Ambiguity Collapse**Forbidden:**

Forcing convergence where evidence remains incomplete or contradictory.

Rationale:

Slop thrives by flattening uncertainty into coherence.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- Ambiguity is first-class
- Conflicts must be represented, not erased
- Branches may remain open indefinitely

Implication:

Stability is preferred over false closure.

Doctrine 6 — ITIR Forbids Skill-Free Advancement**Forbidden:**

Progress that does not require cognitive engagement by the contributor.

Rationale:

Skill extinction arises when systems allow participation without understanding.

Enforcement in ITIR:

- Contributors must select representations
- They must resolve tradeoffs explicitly
- They must situate new material within existing structure

Implication:

Learning is not optional; it is structurally required.

II. Step-by-Step Comparison**ITIR vs LLM-Centric Workflows**

This comparison is **procedural**, not philosophical.

Step 1 — Problem Intake**LLM-Centric Workflow**

- User submits a natural language prompt
- Problem framing is implicit, underspecified, and unstable

ITIR Workflow

- Problem is decomposed into explicit investigative questions
- Scope, assumptions, and unknowns are declared

Key Difference:

ITIR stabilizes the problem *before* attempting to solve it.

Step 2 — Evidence Acquisition

LLM-Centric

- Evidence is latent in the model
- Sources are probabilistic, implicit, and unverifiable

ITIR

- Evidence is explicitly cited or marked as hypothetical
- Source confidence and relevance are annotated

Key Difference:

ITIR distinguishes *knowledge* from *pattern recall*.

Step 3 — Reasoning

LLM-Centric

- Reasoning is implicit token progression
- Intermediate steps are non-binding and non-replayable

ITIR

- Reasoning is decomposed into typed transformations
- Each step can be inspected independently

Key Difference:

ITIR preserves epistemic locality; LLMs erase it.

Step 4 — Synthesis

LLM-Centric

- Synthesis optimizes for coherence and plausibility
- Contradictions are smoothed over

ITIR

- Synthesis preserves disagreement and uncertainty
- Multiple competing conclusions may coexist

Key Difference:

ITIR optimizes for *epistemic integrity*, not fluency.

Step 5 — Output Consumption

LLM-Centric

- Output is consumed as a finished artifact
- Verification burden shifts to the user

ITIR

- Output is a navigable structure
- Verification is incremental and localized

Key Difference:

ITIR amortizes verification cost upstream.

III. How ITIR Safely Wraps LLMs

(Without Inheriting Their Failure Modes)

The key principle:

LLMs are treated as fallible proposal engines, not reasoning agents.

Rule 1 — LLMs May Propose, Never Assert

LLM outputs enter ITIR as:

- Draft hypotheses
- Candidate explanations
- Suggested decompositions

They **never** enter as conclusions.

Rule 2 — LLM Outputs Must Be Re-Expressed

Before acceptance:

- Outputs must be translated into ITIR representations
- Assumptions must be made explicit
- Missing evidence must be flagged

This translation step forces human comprehension.

Rule 3 — LLMs Cannot Advance State

An LLM cannot:

- Close a branch
- Resolve a conflict
- Promote a hypothesis to a conclusion

Only a human can perform state transitions.

Rule 4 — LLMs Are Audited Like Any Other Source

LLM contributions:

- Can be contradicted
- Can be deprecated
- Can be rolled back

They accrue *no epistemic privilege*.

Rule 5 — LLMs Are Context-Bounded

LLMs operate only within:

- Explicit branch context
- Explicit question scope
- Explicit evidence sets

This prevents hallucinated global coherence.

Result

LLMs become:

- Accelerators of exploration
- Generators of candidate structure
- Assistants to human reasoning

They **never** become epistemic authorities.

IV. Manifesto / Paper-Ready Statement

Below is a **clean, publishable formulation**.

The ITIR Position

Modern AI systems have inverted the economics of cognition: generating plausible output is now cheaper than verifying correctness. This inversion has produced systemic failure modes—review collapse, accountability laundering, epistemic poisoning, and skill extinction—that threaten institutions, commons, and professional practice.

ITIR is a response not to artificial intelligence per se, but to **unbounded delegation of reasoning**.

ITIR asserts that:

- Reasoning must remain inspectable
- Accountability must remain local
- Ambiguity must remain visible
- Skill must remain exercised
- Authority must remain human-owned

Accordingly, ITIR forbids outcome-only artifacts, opaque reasoning, delegated authority, unattributed transformation, premature convergence, and skill-free participation.

ITIR does not reject AI tools. It constrains them.

Within ITIR, AI systems may propose, assist, and accelerate—but they may not decide, conclude, or obscure. All epistemic state transitions remain attributable, reversible, and contestable.

In this sense, ITIR is not an efficiency framework. It is a **legibility framework**.

Its goal is not speed, but survivability: the preservation of human understanding in systems that increasingly operate at superhuman scale.

If you want next steps, we can:

- ↳ Turn this into a **formal specification** (with invariants and failure proofs)
- ↳ Draft a **one-page doctrine poster**
- ↳ Write a **rebuttal-style paper** positioning ITIR against LLM-first epistemologies

- Or ↪ produce a “**constitutional ruleset**” for AI-augmented institutions

Just say which form you want.

