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## Welcome to Quinn's AI Update

Issue #17, February 2024

Hello, AI enthusiasts! Welcome to the 17th issue of Quinn's AI Update published from mostly warm San Antonio, TX, where you can still golf in February.

So much going on. All the players in AI are making bold statements, announcing new alliances, and Puncatawney Phil predicts an early Spring!

- Deep Dive: Neuralink Is Like a Chip in the Head
- Apple Buying In?
- Deadly Nightshade Poisons AIs?
- AI for Product Placement
- The Coding Apocalypse: English is the New Python?

Read on for more!

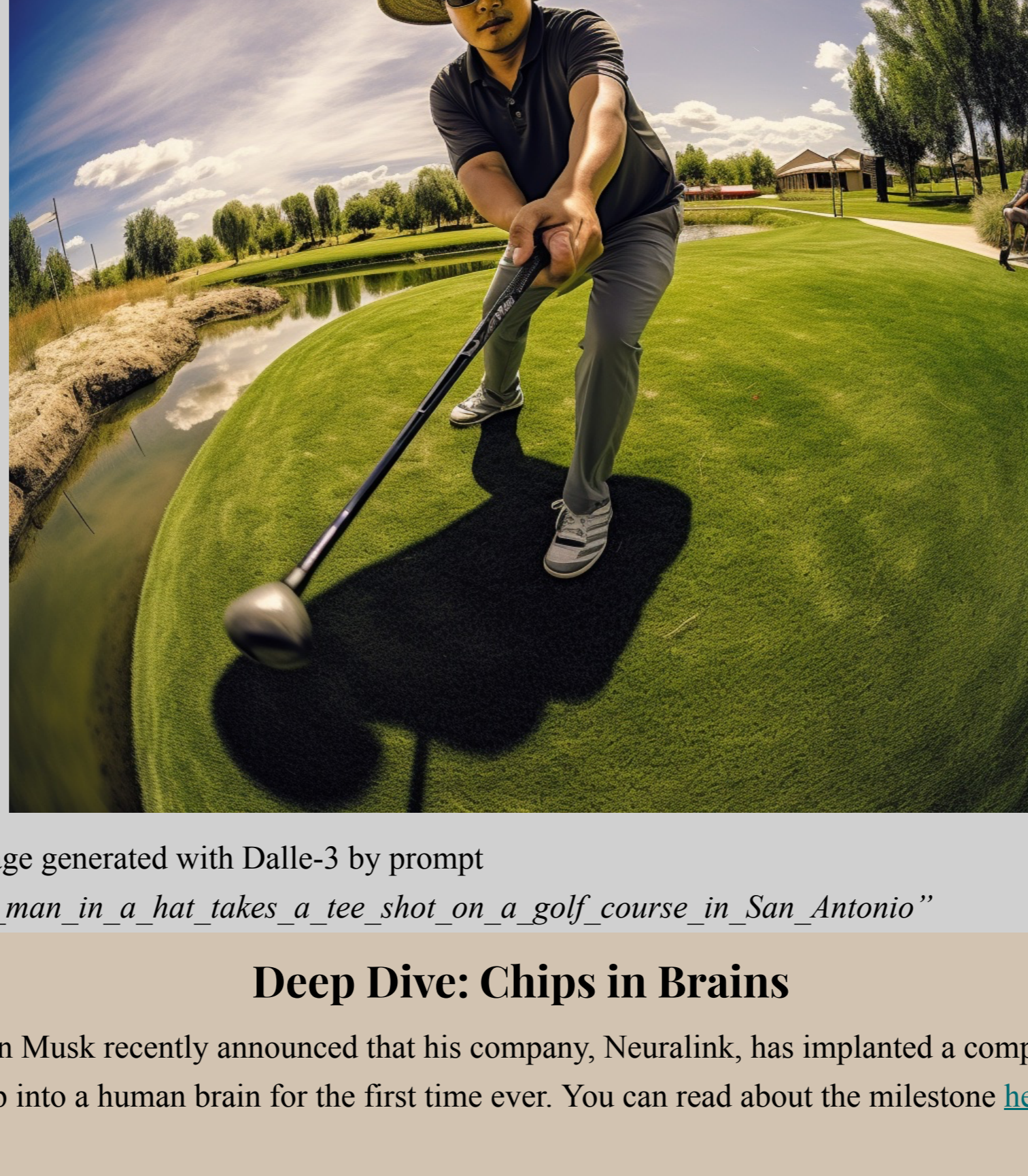


Image generated with Dalle-3 by prompt "A man in a hat takes a tee shot on a golf course in San Antonio"

### Deep Dive: Chips in Brains

Elon Musk recently announced that his company, Neuralink, has implanted a computer chip into a human brain for the first time ever. You can read about the milestone [here](#).

The rationale that Musk and Neuralink use for "brain chips" is to help those who have brain damage or another disablement that effects how their body works. For example, quadraplegics who are unable to speak or move their limbs may be able to again with the help of a brain chip. Simply think with the chip to speak or eventually even move again.

This initial capability was shown when Neuralink implanted a chip in the head of a monkey that allowed the monkey to play the computer game pong just using it's mind. You can see a video [here](#).

I applaud this use of technology to liberate those with severe brain and spinal injuries. Anything that we can do to help these human beings regain a normal life is a worthy goal. However, I believe this technology has much larger implications and applications going forward.

While I don't consider myself a transhumanist or post-humanist, I do believe that at some point we will begin to merge with our technology. I've been saying for some time now that the form factor of the smartphone is beginning to reach its limits. The Age of Computer Screens is likely coming to an end as we move to "multimodal" interactions with artificial intelligence: interacting using our voice or giving the AIs the ability to see the world. And that level of interaction probably begins in just the next few years.

Beyond that, just as I see the current use of AI as unstoppable due to the advantages it gives organizations and individuals, I think, sooner rather than later, the advantages that will accrue to humans who take that next step and work more closely with the AIs will be too great to deny. Or forgo.

So, chips in all our heads? Yes, probably. Probably even implanted throughout our bodies to "onboard" AI capabilities. The advantages to thinking with the capabilities of artificial intelligence are going to be just too great to avoid it. Leading up to that will probably be ocular headsets (like Apple has announced), then glasses, then contact lenses, then possibly lasers painting images on our retinas.

Yes, I know: cracking open a skull to insert a chip sounds like 1984 to some. But consider this: futurists have been predicting the Technological Singularity for some time. The TS is that time when technological change is so rapid that it's unpredictable what new revolutions take place day to day or even moment to moment. Here's the [wikipedia entry](#) on the TS and here's the original paper from science fiction author [Vernor Vinge inventing the term Technological Singularity](#).

There is the concept of a "hard" takeoff to the singularity—the AIs take over and leave human beings far behind rather quickly. There is also the concept of the "soft" takeoff—which is a slower ascent to the singularity and typically involves humans and AIs merging together at some point. I think the "hard" takeoff is far riskier to humans than the "soft." The "hard" takeoff just seems to be completely on the AIs terms—humans will have very little input. The "soft" takeoff, I think, gives us the chance to guide the AIs in a way that is much more aligned with human needs and desires.

At least that's the way I hope it works. What do y'all think?

### Sneaky Apple Buying Their Way In?

Apple technically isn't an innovator—they take innovations made elsewhere and really fine tune them to make them great. For example, Apple didn't invent the smartphone, but they took the idea and massively improved it as the iPhone—so successful it killed the Rim Blackberry and most of the "dumb" cellphone market. Ditto the iPod killing Microsoft's Zune and a number of other competitors in the digital player market (I had an IRiver back in the day.)

Now, they're suspiciously silent on AI given they invented "Siri". [But Siri is way behind](#), the times now, supposedly because of some inside fighting at Apple about what advances to make to Siri. (Although leaks on Twitter/X suggest Apple may be planning a big revamp of Siri soon.)

Now comes news that Apple may be [buying it's way into AI](#). Since 2015, Apple has acquired more than two dozen artificial intelligence companies, spending about \$1 billion. While its rivals are focused on building stand-alone generative AI models, Apple may have targeted machine learning infrastructure—and be poised with some advancements to be announced later this year.

Here's some background on Apple's activities and an "imagining" from the [ColdFusion Youtube channel](#) of what it might look like if Siri gains artificial intelligence.

*"\$500M, while obviously a large sum of money, is only equivalent to a 10k H100 (GPU) system from NVIDIA. Tesla will spend more than that on NVIDIA hardware this year. the table stakes for being competitive in AI are at least several billion dollars per year at this point."*

—Elon Musk on X

### Deadly Nightshade: Copyright Holders Strike Back?

A computer program developed at the University of Chicago called **Nightshade** has been released to be used by artists to [disrupt AI models scraping and training on their artworks without consent](#). Nightshade has been downloaded 250,000 times for free by artists around the world in the first five days of its release.

Nightshade "poisons" generative AI image models by altering an artist's works posted to the web. By "shading" them on a pixel level, to an AI trying to learn from them, they appear to be entirely different content from what they actually are — a car instead of a frog, for example. Trained on a few of these "shaded" images scraped from the web, an AI algorithm can begin to generate erroneous imagery from what a user prompts.

Nightshade's creators want to make it difficult and costly for AI companies to simply "scrape" images from the Web to train their AI's without compensating artists.

Will this succeed in protecting artists' work? Or is it one more step in an AI vs. humans "arms race"?

### Product Placement

The New York Times recently covered how AI is being used for product placement in videos on Tik Tok and YouTube (the article can be found [here](#).)

Its an old idea, product placement—you take a popular movie or TV show and have the characters drink/eat/use some famous brand's product, thereby advertising for that product and getting paid for it. The TV show *Friends* was famous for creating fake branded products for their characters to use that were close enough to re-world products that viewers thought they were real. [You can see examples here](#). Or check out the parody of product placement in the movie *Wayne's World* [here](#).

So, now, you can have an AI recommend the Tik Tok video you create and then also fit the realistic-looking product placement image in the video. But what happens when the Apple Vision Pro starts to place products in your [field of vision](#)? Do we get something like the explosion of ads seen in *Ready Player One*? Or will it be more like the spontaneous human combustion from "Blipverts" in *Max Headroom*?

Stay tuned!

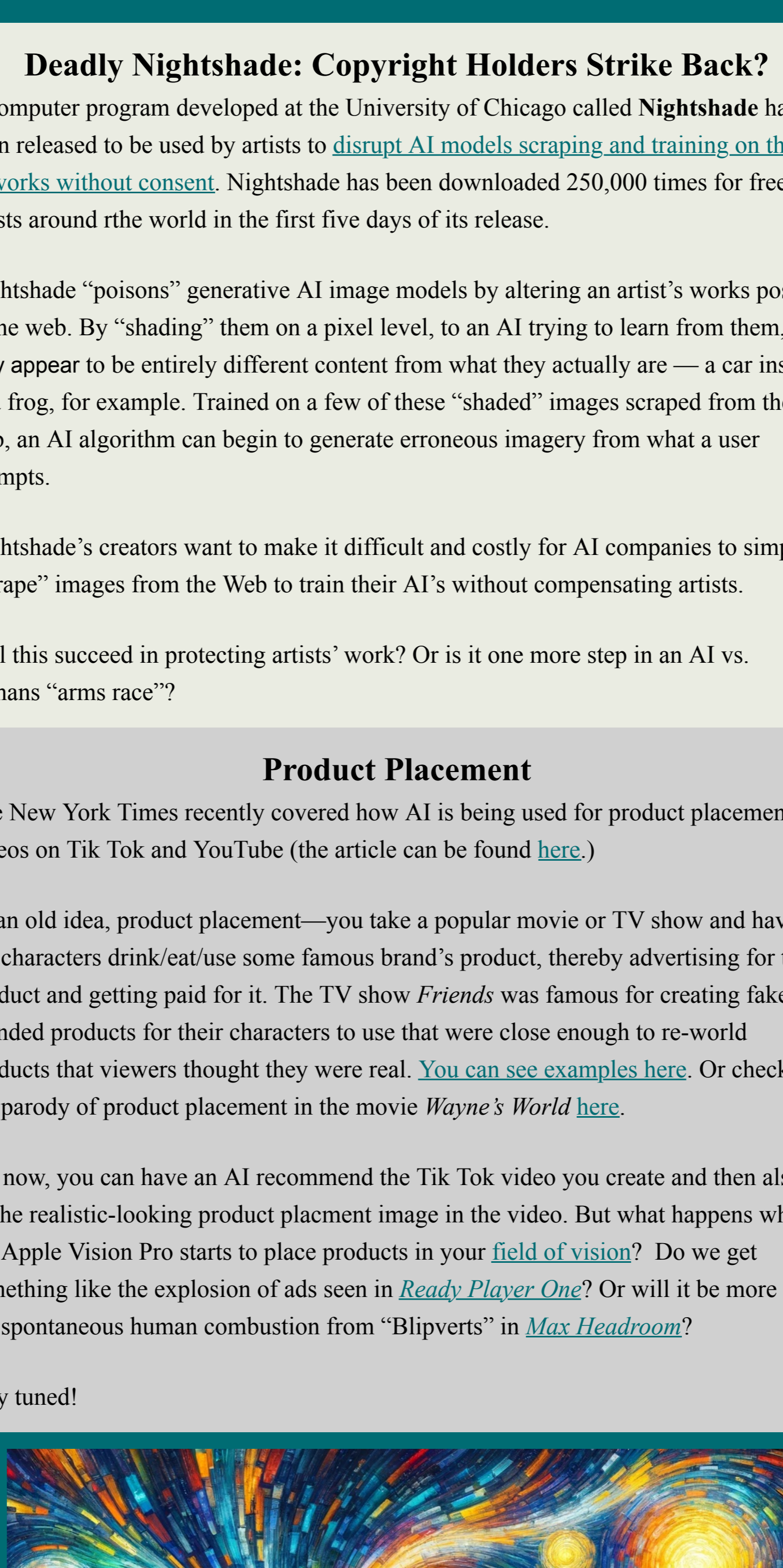


Image generated with Dalle-3 and the text prompt: "Paint an image of San Antonio, TX in the style of van Gogh's 'Starry Night'"

### English is the New Python?

The Human Coding Apocalypse Is Night?

Among the many layoffs we've seen in the last year, job loss among human software coders is for some the most perplexing. Human coders, we've heard, have been in high demand, earning high six figure salaries. Surely the law of supply and demand will ensure humans will always have a job writing computer code, right?

Some are beginning to question that rationale. The shockingly fast collapse and shutdown of Code Up, a coding bootcamp, took everyone by surprise, leaving students scrambling to find other ways to finish their education. Further, the large-scale layoffs taking place recently at tech giants like Google, Duolingo and Salesforce have been attributed by those companies themselves to the adoption of AI.

The future does not bode well for human coders.

The prediction of [Emad Mostaque, founder and CEO of Stability AI](#), that there will be no code written by a human by 2028 sounds unrealistic to many. But is it, really?

With the advent, possibly this year, of [ChatGPT-5 and it's multimodal abilities](#), will you just ask ChatGPT to create an app, or generate code? And have another instance of the AI check the code for errors?

Will you simply be able to have a conversation with an AI and have it create whatever app it needs on the fly? With the new [Rabbit](#), you're able to talk to the device and have it complete rather complex tasks, like order an Uber or make a DoorDash order. No coding required.

*"It's actually quite incredible to be alive as this moment. It's hard to completely absorb the enormity of this transition. Despite the impact of AI recently, the world is still struggling with the idea of how big a deal its arrival is. We are in the process of seeing a new species grow up around us. Getting it right is unquestionably the great meta-problem of the twenty-first century. But do that and we have an unparalleled opportunity to empower people to live the lives they want."*

—Mustafa Suleyman, co-founder of DeepMind (acquired by Google) and Inflection AI

### What Does the Science Fiction Say?

**"Old Man's War"** is a science fiction novel by John Scalzi that explores themes of aging, rejuvenation, and interstellar war. The story follows John Perry, a 75-year-old man who enlists in the Colonial Defense Forces (CDF), an army that fights for human colonies in space against various alien species. Upon enlistment, Perry, like all recruits, is given a new, genetically enhanced body designed for combat, effectively making him young again. A central piece of technology featured in the novel is the "BrainPal," also referred to as a "Brain Buddy" by the soldiers. The BrainPal is an advanced neural implant that allows for direct communication between soldiers, access to a vast amount of information, battlefield data, and control over various weapons and military hardware through thought. Through Perry's experiences, the novel explores the implications of such technology on personal identity, communication, and the nature of warfare. You can find **"Old Man's War"** by John Scalzi on Amazon through this [link](#).

**"Westworld"**, originally a 1973 film written and directed by Michael Crichton, is a science fiction thriller that explores the themes of artificial intelligence, virtual realities, and the ethical implications of creating lifelike robots for entertainment. The movie is set in a futuristic, adult-themed amusement park called Delos, which is divided into three distinct "worlds": Westworld (a representation of the American Old West), Medievalworld (a recreation of medieval Europe), and Romanworld (a re-creation of Pompeii). These worlds are populated by highly sophisticated androids programmed to fulfill the fantasies of the park's guests, allowing them to live out their dreams of being a cowboy, knight, or Roman aristocrat without any risk to themselves—or so it seems. You can stream the 1973 movie **"Westworld"** on Amazon Prime Video.

### The Smart Money in AI

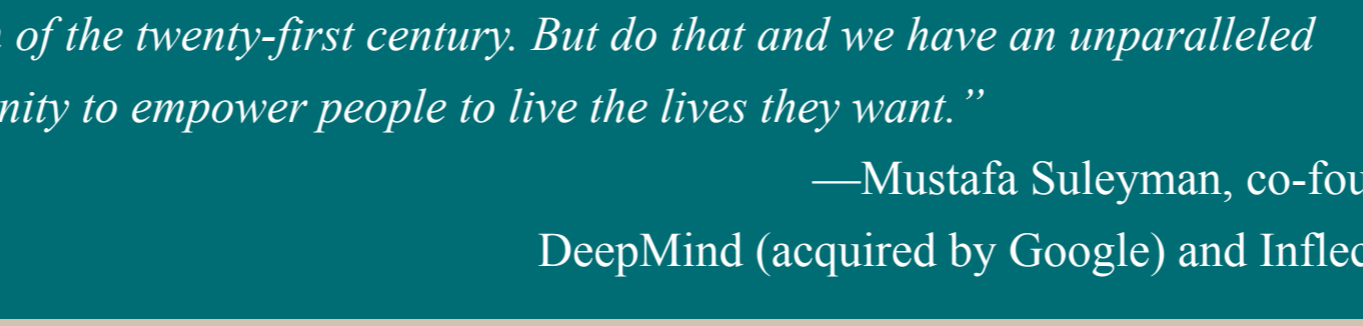
- Krutrim became India's first AI startup to reach unicorn status with a [\\$50M funding round](#).
- Anomalo, which uses AI to detect data quality issues, [raised \\$33M in Series B funding](#).
- [Not all Robot Companies are Making It: The Collapse of iRobot](#)
- [AI Companies Funded in the Last 3 Months](#)

### The Last Word...for now.

Thanks for reading my newsletter—let me know how I can make it even better!

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Let me know what you think!



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