

A bad movie full of big ideas about tech

Hi, friends! Welcome to *Installer* No. 75, your guide to the best and *Verge*-iest stuff in the world. (If you're new here, welcome, hope you have some time to kill this weekend, and also you can read all the old editions at the *Installer* homepage.)

This week, I've been reading about **Benson Boone** and **Tyler Cowen** and **EV factories** and **YouTube yoga**, catching up on old episodes of *Smartypants*, making a rare trek to the theater to see *Black Bag*, swapping in **Duck.ai** for my chatbot and AI search needs, getting rehooked on the *Tick, Tick... Boom!* soundtrack, giving my **Remarkable** tablet another whirl, and desperately trying to find a pair of noise-canceling headphones with a half-decent microphone. No luck so far.

I also have for you a couple of big new Netflix releases, a great new podcast (and a new way to listen to it), a cozy game with great vibes, and much more. Streaming-heavy week this week! Let's dig in.

(As always, the best part of *Installer* is your ideas and tips. What are you watching / reading / playing / buying / building / cutting out of construction paper this week? Tell me everything: installer@theverge.com. And if you know someone else who might enjoy *Installer*, tell them to subscribe here.)

- ***The Electric State***. This movie is, by virtually all accounts, crap. (They couldn't even make a good *trailer* for it!) But I have a feeling this flick, a very unusual take on a robot uprising, will still end up in the long-term canon of Tech Movies People Talk About Forever. Saving this for my next plane ride.
- ***Mickey 17***. Here's one to actually watch on purpose: a

new one from the director of *Parasite* that is both a high-concept action flick and a meditation on what it means to be human. Deep! And fun!

- ***Everybody's Live with John Mulaney***. I really enjoyed the quirky, occasionally unhinged run of *Everybody's in LA* last year, and Mulaney and co. seem to have recaptured the fun for this new Netflix show. I don't know if I'd watch it every week forever, but there's something about the... live-ness that I really like.
- **Skich**. A really interesting alternative iOS app store (unfortunately only available to folks in the EU) that promises both lower fees for devs and better discovery for players. This thing is still very new – it doesn't even have any games! – but is worth watching.
- ***Good Robot***. A new series from our friends at Vox, part of the terrific *Unexplainable* podcast, all about the rise of AI and the many, many, many questions it creates. The episodes I've heard are interesting and terrifying, which feels exactly right for all things AI.
- **Pocket Casts Web**. Speaking of podcasts! Pocket Casts has been my favorite podcast app for years, and my only hesitation has been that you have to pay for many of its best features. No longer: its web and desktop apps are now free, and you can sync all your stuff across all your devices.
- ***Wanderstop***. A game for Xbox, PlayStation, and PC about making tea. And hard work. And redemption. And quiet. And community. I get both *Animal Crossing* and *Stardew Valley* vibes from this game, and I mean that in the best possible way. It's also from the folks who made ***The Stanley Parable***, so I'm in no matter what.
- **Matter Co-Reader**. I've mentioned Matter here a few times – it's a really lovely read-later app for Apple devices. This new feature is a very clever use of AI: you select some text, the app will offer up questions you might have about it, and you just tap to learn more. Way more powerful than a dictionary or Wikipedia lookup.

- **Openvibe 1.9.** The all-in-one social feed app got the feature it needed most: timeline saving, so you can pick up where you left off next time you're in the app. This immediately turned Openvibe from an app I think is neat to one I'm using almost every day.

Screen share

Tina Nguyen joined *The Verge's* politics team a couple of weeks ago, in an extremely chill and normal time to be covering the intersection of technology and politics. She understands the Trump administration, the ways that everything from social media to podcasts have changed the way we interact with our government, and where this is all headed better than just about anybody. She also wrote maybe the funniest piece of restaurant reporting I've ever read, about her experience at the Trump Grill.

I asked Tina to share her homescreen with us, and she agreed – she also sent me a picture of her bookshelf, which includes a truly enormous Dunkin' mug and a WrestleMania chair. It's all very good. Anyway, here's Tina's homescreen, plus some info on the apps she uses and why:

The device: I got the iPhone 16 Pro recently, though I'll admit it was for self-serving reasons... 1) I went on vacation to Big Sky last year with a friend and her photos of us at Yellowstone were WAY better than mine, and 2) I wanted to get the latest phone before tariffs hit. (This trade war is chaotic and I'm not taking risks.)

The wallpaper: Sunrise in the Austrian Alps. I went on a weeklong ski trip to Arlberg in February 2020, and the memory of that vacation sustained me mentally for the next three

years, *The Giver*-style.

The apps: Messages, Signal, Weather, Apple Notes, Reminders, Settings, Photos, Clock, Camera, Lyft, YouTube Music, Google Calendar, Google Drive, Nike Run Club, Google Keep, Apple Fitness, Lime, Uber, Apple Watch, Slack, Elgato Control Center, Calm, Phone, Google Maps, Safari, Gmail.

Lime scooters are endemic in DC, which makes it easy to jet around the two-mile radius of places I visit on a regular basis, but if I have to go somewhere like Union Station (or locations where I have to wear heels), I'll race Uber and Lyft against each other.

The **Control Center app** is for me to adjust my **Elgato Key Lights** at my desk. I initially got them for doing media hits, but it turns out that they make excellent sun lamps, too. (My home office has NO WINDOWS, and I swear to god, they've improved my productivity.)

Of course I have the **Calm** app. Have you seen what I cover for a living?

I also asked Tina to share a few things she's into right now. Here's what she sent back:

- I subscribe to **Nebula** just to have access to episodes of **Jet Lag: The Game** a week before they **hit YouTube**. (It's a travel game show that's perfect for people who love public transit and flight logistics.)
- Related: their fandom of the **Cotopaxi Allpa** travel backpack has turned me into an Allpa fan – as well as a general backpack connoisseur. (My daily carry is a **Peak Design 15L**.)
- Now that I write for *The Verge*, I am so, so excited to finally get to bring my limited edition **Pikachu Longchamp bag** into Washington society without scandalizing my bosses. (I'm sure Tammy Haddad would be

aghast, but I'm not like the other girls, or something.)

- **This video** lives rent-free in my mind whenever I write anything about the Trump administration. "You are not based, you are actually cringe" is the philosophical underpinning of this political era.

Crowdsourced

Here's what the Installer community is into this week. I want to know what you're into right now as well! Email installer@theverge.com or message me on Signal – @davidpierce.11 – with your recommendations for anything and everything, and we'll feature some of our favorites here every week. For more great recommendations, check out the replies to this post on Threads and this post on Bluesky.

"You mention Fantasy Hike sometimes, so you've got to try **Prado Traveler**. It's an incremental step counter RPG where your daily steps fuel your character to delve dungeons, level up, and get loot. Like an incremental game, you can check in on it here and there without it consuming too much time, but all your progress is tied to your activity. Now I just need to get my friends playing so I can try out the co-op features." – Emmett

"Playing **Arco**. Great game – good combat system, good story, deserves a wider audience!" – Ben

"I discovered **Organic Maps**, a well-made app for **OpenStreetMap**. It seems to have great data where I live in Central Europe, and it even has public transport routing and opening hours. I try to look into open-source alternatives for US big tech apps, as you can't predict the future right now." – Alex

"The Australian TV series **Mr Inbetween** is having a bit of a renaissance in Australia at the moment. You might like it." – Bennett

“I’m wondering if I’m in the majority or minority of people that do this: **using email notifications for everything I possibly can**. All of these different services have their own app and push you to download it so you ‘can stay up to date with notifications’ or ‘pay bills from the app!’ I feel like it’s so much easier for me to manage these types of services by sending all of my notifications to one central location: my email address. Then I’ll just move them to the appropriate folder (label in Gmail) or even use the snooze feature on the email receipt to come one day after the estimated delivery time on my shipments.” – Tony

“The **Flipper Zero** is a really intriguing multitool that may be useful in the coming end times.” – Scott

“Before seeing *Mickey 17*, I can recommend the book ***Mickey7*** to anyone that liked anything by Andy Weir (*The Martian*, *Project Hail Mary*), Dennis E. Taylor (*Bobiverse* series), or Martha Wells (*Murderbot* series). Fun and smart sci-fi that is a joy to read!” – David

“**Logseq** has replaced all my workflow tools with one succinct journal-based document engine that builds the knowledge graph as I bullet journal. It even has Emacs’ Org mode-style to-do lists and an extensive plugin ecosystem. Also open source!” – James

“Before the holidays, I read this review of Zwo’s Seestar S50 ‘smart telescope.’ That rekindled my longtime (but never acted on) interest in astronomy. I learned that Zwo was coming out with a new, smaller entry-level model, the **Seestar S30**, so I preordered one in early December. It arrived a couple weeks ago, and I’m just blown away.” – David

Signing off

For the last few weeks, I’ve been running a bunch of

experiments on myself to see if I can find relatively easy ways to start using my phone less. (Lots more on this to come.) Everyone has lots of ideas, all the way from “gadgets that force you off your phone” to “just be disciplined, you buffoon.” I don’t love either of those approaches.

So far, the best and most achievable thing I’ve tried is to **charge my phone in another room**. I set up a little charging station down in my living room, and that’s now where my phone goes before I start getting ready for bed every night. But here’s the thing that really made it stick: I took the charger *out* of my bedroom. Now, even on nights when I absentmindedly walk upstairs with my phone, I have to go back down and plug it in. That one change has helped me read more before bed, and I’m no longer looking at a screen when I first wake up. I don’t know if any of it has made me a better person or whatever, but it does make my mornings feel a little quieter. And after only a couple of nights, it just felt like routine. Highly recommended.

See you next week!

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