

The best smartphone photos of the year

Hi, friends! Welcome to *Installer* No. 49, your guide to the best and *Verge*-iest stuff in the world. (If you're new here, welcome, hope you like podcasts, and also you can read all the old editions at the *Installer* homepage.)

This week, I've been reading about **upstart baseball teams** and **canceled comics** and **Francis Ford Coppola**, watching ***Logan Lucky***, binging **Teo Crawford's camera videos**, listening to ***The Mess Around*** and thus rewatching ***New Girl*** for the millionth time, trying to plan **a trip to the Nintendo Museum** this fall, and giving **Capacities** another whirl since Casey Newton **recommended it this week**.

I also have for you a bunch of new podcasts that all launched this week for some reason, some amazing smartphone photos, a reason to hit the movie theater this weekend, and a new doorbell to replace your old doorbell.

And in the spirit of this unexpectedly podcast-filled week, I have a question: **who's your favorite lesser-known creator?** We all know and love **Veritasium** and **MKBHD**, but I want to hear about all the ones that deserve just as much shine. YouTube, podcast, Instagram, take your pick – if they're tech-y and *Verge*-ish, great, but if not, that's great, too! Hit me with one or two of your faves that you bet most of us don't know. I'll share some of my faves, too.

All right, big week of fun stuff. Let's go.

(As always, the best part of *Installer* is your ideas and tips. What do you want to know more about? What awesome tricks do

you know that everyone else should? What app should everyone be using? Tell me everything: installer@theverge.com. And if you know someone else who might enjoy *Installer*, tell them to subscribe [here](#).)

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I talk to **Liam James** more than just about anybody other than my wife – and honestly, it’s a close call between the two of them. As *The Verge*’s supervising producer for podcasts, we do a ton of work together on *The Vergecast*, and he’s also just a big giant tech nerd in the best way. He loves to brag about his Plex server, seems to be constantly tweaking his homemade weather station, and recently described a new to-do list app to me as “just OmniFocus for dummies.” What I’m saying is, he is our people.

I asked Liam to share his homescreen with us because if I know one thing about Liam, it’s that every single icon and location has been exhaustively thought through and rigorously tested for optimal performance. Liam also just bought a Pixel 9 Pro Fold, which means he’s about to undergo a big switch – so I figured it’d be good to capture the end of his iPhone run.

Here’s Liam’s homescreen, plus some info on the apps he uses and why:

The phone: iPhone 15 Pro.

The wallpaper: I’ve used the same wallpaper for about 10 years now. It’s a silly painting of my first dog, August, in the style of Kehinde Wiley.

The apps: Photos, Apple Music, Apple Podcasts, Apple News, Phone, Mail, Safari, Messages.

- I'm a big fan of the large widget carousel that automatically flips to whatever iOS thinks is most relevant to me. I only keep 3 widgets within: **Fantastical** – which I will sorely miss when I move to a Pixel – **Apple News**, and **Carrot Weather**.
- I am constantly deleting apps I no longer use in order to maintain a single-screen layout. I have four folder buckets: social, shopping, finance, and work. I do, however, fall back to the App Library screen for rarely used apps like Plex during travel days.
- I am SO feeling the label-less icon option in the **iOS 18 beta**. Looks so much cleaner.

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

- My job has forced me to use **Apple Podcasts** in order to keep a close eye on our shows, and you know what? It has really come a long way. In my opinion, it is the only podcast app that is capable of recommending shows you'd actually want to try out. And the new transcript and search features are very handy for finding that moment you wanted to go back to.
- Since I am running the iOS 18 public beta, I've been trying out the native Mail app. I wanted to see if any of the Apple Intelligence stuff could be useful to me, but that hasn't exactly shown up yet. Instead, it's mostly still the same old barebones, slow-to-update app it always was.
- **Wiser Than Me with Julia Louis-Dreyfus** is my latest podcast obsession. Like many a celebrity podcast, it comes and goes in seasons, but unlike all the others, this one has zero filler. I highly recommend starting with **the episode featuring award-winning author Isabel**

Allende. Some of Allende's life lessons will stick in your head for days afterward.

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It's fantasy football season, which means an alarming amount of my personality is about to be replaced by opinions on NFL players' weekly performance. I'm in two leagues, both of them in Yahoo's app, which is... fine. And this year, I'm realizing how much of a full-time job this stuff really is; news is spread around so many places, everybody has rankings and data about those rankings and podcasts about the data about those rankings, and it's all just exhausting.

Ironically, I think I get the case for AI now? If I could just say, "What's happening with my fantasy team this week," and ChatGPT could tell me, I'd be there in a heartbeat. Some of the apps are trying to imitate this – including Yahoo – but now that Twitter's gone, it all feels more chaotic than ever. If you have an amazing source for all this, tell me about it! No matter how much attention I pay, though, I always seem to come in sixth... so maybe I'll just leave it alone.

(Also, next year: Installer fantasy league? Should we? I feel like we should. It'd be awesome.)

See you next week!

<https://www.theverge.com/2024/8/25/24226795/best-smartphone-photos-2024-hollywood-hack-blink-twice-installer>