

ANTI-SOCIAL MEDIA



THE conviction of Axel Rudakubana for the Southport murders saw home secretary Yvette Cooper claim social platforms have a “moral obligation” to remove content likely to inspire violence such as that viewed by the killer.

While the Online Safety Act will require platforms to enact “proportionate measures” to protect users from illegal content, threats of fines or sanctions seem to carry little weight now that social media platforms are seemingly backed by the might of the US administration.

Meta has recently chosen to contest a \$840m EU antitrust fine. And Elon Musk has repeatedly refused to act to remove content from X such as the stabbing video viewed by Rudakubana before the attacks, or the video for which Stephen Yaxley-Lennon was convicted of contempt of court (*Eyes passim*). While the law tries to catch up with social media, tech billionaires are behaving increasingly as though they're above it.

DEEPPAKE pornography has been in the spotlight again thanks to the recent Channel 4 documentary in which Vicky Pattison highlighted how easy it was to create a convincing sexual deepfake of anyone by getting one made of herself.

It's not just easy, though – for social platforms, it's incredibly lucrative! Research by 404 Media found that an AI app for creating non-consensual nude images was running thousands of explicit ads featuring non-consensual nudity of celebrities and influencers, with Meta making money from every view or clickthrough. According to estimates, three sites run by the app in question received a quarter of a million visits in the final quarter of 2024 – 90 percent of which were driven from ads on Facebook or Instagram.



A - E Y E

ALL those rushing to dump Nvidia stock in the belief Chinese AI DeepSeek has made the US tech giant's chips redundant might want to think again.

Not only is DeepSeek reportedly being challenged by Microsoft and OpenAI for nicking proprietary data, it's also likely to be classified as a security threat in the US for openly making huge amounts of user data available to the Chinese government on request.

More than that though it seems to be simply, well, a bit shit. It's no surprise results are shaky on topics such as Taiwan and Tiananmen Square, but its failings go further. Counter-misinformation site NewsGuard ran 11 chatbots through their paces and found DeepSeek was the second worst. It repeated false claims 30 percent of the time and provided non-answers another 53 percent of the time. It also seems to have been trained only on data captured since October 2023, NewsGuard says – meaning that, among other risks, it might not be the best place to turn for investment advice.

RENEWED competition from China will inevitably see other major AI companies race to develop newer and more powerful models to attempt to reassert their dominance.

Donald Trump chose to prepare for this new era by rescinding an executive order focused on AI safety, issued by his predecessor. This had mandated that developers of AI systems that pose risks to national security, the economy, public health or safety must share the results of safety tests with the US government before they were released to the public.

The order also directed agencies to set standards for that testing and address related chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and cybersecurity risks. None of these requirements are now in place. What could possibly go wrong!

“There are a lot of social media posts on the motives of the attacker, which are dangerous speculation”



THE X-IT PARTY

REFORM MPs Richard Tice and Rupert Lowe both disclosed in the latest register of members' interests that they have benefited from payouts from Elon Musk's X, which rewards verified users for “successful” posts based on the degree of engagement they receive.

Each MP last month declared around £3,000 for feeding their fans such gems as “We need to eradicate the DEI venom from Britain” and “I'm with President Trump”. Whether posts such as these engage their actual constituents is, of course, immaterial – all you need to do to earn on X is to get in with the MAGA crowd and farm the engagement for cash!

Reform leader Nigel Farage also declares modest returns from both X and Meta – but his more substantial social media income comes from Google, courtesy of his YouTube videos, with his most recent declared monthly haul amounting to £3,561.40.

POP EYE

WHEN Rod Stewart grumbled to TalkSport about the £240,000 it will cost him to perform on the Glastonbury Legends stage on the Sunday afternoon of June's festival, he quickly backtracked.

“I've got to bring all my band back from America; of course Glastonbury don't pay for that. But I don't care if it cost me a million dollars, I would have done it. This is a great honour,” he said nobly.

It's a sensitive subject. In the old days, the cost of flying (*sailing, surely?* Ed.) his bandmates over from LA to the UK for Glastonbury would have been paid by a promoter or one of Rod's record labels. But after he flogged his entire music catalogue to entertainment rights firm Iconic Artists Group last year, Rod's outgoings are now more tightly monitored by Iconic's boss, former Ticketmaster CEO Irving Azoff – described as “easily one of the most loathed men in the music business” by one American music writer.

Azoff made his money promoting huge arena tours, so his thoughts on dear old Rod playing for the mud and welly brigade in Glastonbury – where headliners are paid peanuts compared to the big bucks Azoff would expect – are probably unprintable. But we shouldn't feel sorry for Rod. According to the *Wall Street Journal* he was paid almost \$100m for his music catalogue, so stumping up the readies won't be a heartache.



LUVVIES “I can't get on a plane without sobbing. I get impassioned on a flight: you feel like you've solved the world's ills, you've come to an understanding of who you are and why you exist, and you have a good cry. But once I've landed, all those epiphanies don't seem quite as easy to enact.”

The Brutalist star FELICITY JONES, Observer, 26 January

Submitted by WJ Styles

GNOME CINEMA



THE dilemma facing any actor playing a globally recognised singer in a biopic is whether to lip-sync or perform the vocals themselves.

This is not a problem faced by Timothée Chalamet, cast as the young Bob Dylan in *A Complete Unknown*. Playing the man Bowie described as having “a voice like sand and glue” his vocals are markedly less whiny and more tuneful than the originals. The bigger challenge is that there are already a ton of screen Dylans out there already: six alone in Todd Haynes' *I'm Not There*. Chalamet's is a mid-ranking Dylan, some way below Cate Blanchett's black and white mid-sixties Dylan in Haynes' film, but much better than Hayden Christensen's unintentionally hilarious brooding biker boy “Billy Quinn”, an imagining of Dylan, in the Edie Sedgwick biopic *Factory Girl*. He's also a better Dylan than the visions of Dylan played by Bob himself in *Hearts of Fire* and *Masked and Anonymous*.

Along with The Beatles' journey from Hamburg to *The Ed Sullivan show*, Dylan's trip from Midwest obscurity to the Greenwich Village folk scene of the early sixties to the betrayal of going electric is the great rock'n'roll creation myth. It's hallowed ground, subjected to intense scrutiny by Dylanologists. Though the film takes plenty of liberties, most notably a misappropriated “Judas”, the keepers of the Dylan scrolls are generally happy with the portrait.

Director James Mangold (*Ford v Ferrari, Logan*) was steadily ascending to the top rank of Hollywood directors until the disaster of the last geriatric Indiana Jones film.

Mangold plays it safe, walking the standard biopic line. Casting the most bankable film star of the moment was an astute commercial move: even if it doesn't grab any Oscars the film should at least cover its cost. Chalamet doesn't just sweeten the vocals – his likeability keeps audiences inside with a protagonist who is, in Joan Baez's words, “kind of an arsehole”.

The film opens with a humble Dylan turning up at Woody Guthrie's hospital bed to pay homage to his hero. It's a touching scene. But it doesn't last; just add some applause and he instantly becomes a knobhead. And much applause is needed: acclaim from a couple of dozen people at a folk club has him reaching for the dark glasses and turning up over an hour late for recording sessions.

He treats his ladies (Elle Fanning as a renamed Suze Rotolo, Monica Barbaro as Joan Baez) badly and bellyaches about the demands made on him by fans. The story arc is the lead up to his betrayal of mentor and father figure Pete Seeger, whom he meets at Guthrie's bedside, with his electric set at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival.

Surely this film has the wrong hero? Seeger, played by a very much cast against type Edward Norton, is the epitome of human decency. The film introduces him standing up to the House Committee of Un-American Activities which monitored alleged communist sympathisers, refusing to name names.

Granted, his ceaseless enthusiasm and understanding means he goes through life like he's on *Sesame Street*, but he's principled, selfless and sincere. And he stands for something. Dylan shirks any commitment whether it's relationship, professional or political because he has to be enigmatic, a complete unknown. His struggle to avoid being constrained, contained, restricted or boxed in by other people's views or expectations seems admirable but isn't it just a continual search to dodge responsibility. He tunes up, plugs in and cops out.

‘Q Brick’