

THE F1 CIRCUS BEGINS AGAIN, AND RIP TO A FRIEND

F1 ought not be in the homes of authoritarian despots in places like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi. They are there on the 2021 calendar nevertheless. And away we go with the 2021 season starting in Bahrain.

10 YEARS OF EMPTYWHEEL: KEY NON- SURVEILLANCE POSTS 2008-2010

Some key posts from the first three years of emptywheel.

DEATH OF THE CAR(GO) CULT(URE)

I had an economic and philosophic epiphany recently. It sneaked up on me, right about the time I let go of my comfortable illusion of middle-class security.

DAY 34: FRANKLY, WE HAVE A LOT RIGHT NOW

A lot of evidence or a lot of nonsense – we haz one of them. Bring yours to this open thread. It's also Day 34 in our countdown to Tax Day.

BREAKING: PRESIDENT-ELECT TRUMP CAN'T TELL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LINCOLN NAVIGATOR MKC AND FORD FOCUS

President-elect Trump apparently can't tell the difference between a Ford Focus and a Lincoln Navigator. Sad!

HALLOWEEN MONDAY: DYING FOR LOVE

In this roundup: Turkish troubles, good tech bad tech, fickle market reaction, and Halloween tricks-or-treats.

TUESDAY: DISINFOWAR DUST UP

In this roundup: Disinfowar, fossil fuels' finale, pipeline problems, and a longish short film about evolving hope.

MONDAY: AMERICAN MOUTH

In this roundup: Volkswagen vacillations, disappointments a la Colombia, UK, Hungary (and don't forget Poland!), anthropocene extinction, and maybe a straggling bit at the end to get this Monday on the road.

Today's featured musician is Sam Beam, who performs under the stage name *Iron & Wine*. He's a long-time songwriter whose *oeuvre* falls somewhere between folk and indie rock. Its spareness is successor to grunge, mellow good-humored maturity without the youthful driving angst. You may have heard his work before in TV and film – like *Flightless Bird*, *American Mouth* circa 2007. The video embedded here features one of my favorites, *Tree By The River*, though I prefer the performance of the same song in this video (at 9:43). You can catch Beam's more recent work, *Love Letter for Fire*, with singer Jesca Hoop at this link to the entire album.

Volkswagen de-volking

- VW doesn't want US to release documents to EU (Reuters) – Bosch, manufacturer of the fraudulently programmed electronic control unit

which defeated emissions standards, also doesn't want EU investors and vehicle owners to get their hands on the 20 million documents produced for the the U.S. government suit against Volkswagen. Yeah, no. Wonder where the German government stands on document request?

- 66% of 2.0L passenger diesel owners in U.S. signed up for settlement (USA Today) – That's a lot of buy-outs. Only ~3,300 opted out of the deal altogether. The remaining vehicle owners can still take advantage of the proposed vehicle fix – but good luck with resale on those beasts.
- VW offered \$1.2B to car dealers as settlement (Bloomberg) – IMO, this was light; this could have cost VW a lot more considering how much damage Dieselgate has done to dealers' brands. Offer is subject to approval by federal court.
- First, Audi tech officer Stefan Knirsch suspended (AutoNews) – If you're going to say something clearly false on the record to media, you deserve a whack for it. This is just plain

stupid:

"We don't have the four-eye principle, it's more like the six- or eight-eye principle," he said. "That is a very normal reaction once you've undergone something like this. And, we are extending this beyond the exhaust emissions issue by looking at every software process in r&d within the entire company. We are taking preventive measures to make sure something like this cannot happen again."

- Then Audi tech officer Knirsch stepped down (Forbes) – 'Defenestration', they called it, but they say organized labor gave Knirsch the much-deserved push out the window (I do love that word 'defenestration'), having prevaricated about his role in the emissions defeat technology's implementation.
- Now Audi chief to be questioned (Autocar-UK) – Rupert Stadler, who became Audi's chairman and CEO in January 2010, has known about the emissions defeat technology in the 3.0L passenger diesel since shortly after he was named to his role. That's four years of doing nothing to

stop the defeat before independent research discovered it, and another year-plus before the EPA took action.

- But Audi chief already in hot water over \$14K beer party (Bild am Sonntag) – Um. What? He spent that much money when the company needed to pony up BILLIONS for settlements, recalls, and repairs? VW told him it's on him, out of his own pocket. Sure sounds like VW Group's culture needs a reset.
- Dieselgate will be done by end of year, thinks VW's CEO (Road and Track) – Dude's delusional or just making shit up for the media. Their U.S. engineer won't be sentenced until January, and they still don't have a 3.0L engine fix, let alone a complete deal to offer the owners of those vehicles.
- Meanwhile, Volkswagen thinks electric cars will help us forget all about Dieselgate (The Verge) – Sure. I'll jump right into a VW programmed by these guys. Forget about it.

- Black Monday: As many as 6 million Polish women protest against abortion law (France 24) – Poland's conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party wants to enact a ban on all abortions; Poland already has strict anti-abortion laws, permitting terminations only in the case of rape, fetal deformity, or pregnancy threatens the mother's life. Women modeled a 1975 Icelandic women's strike, wearing black to mark the death of their rights.
- Colombia's low voter turnout may have undermined peace agreement with FARC rebels (Deutsche Welle) – Sub-40 percent turnout for the historic vote on an agreement between Colombia's government and FARC lead to an unexpected defeat. Colombia's ex-president Uribe campaigned against the agreement as it did not hold FARC accountable for past violence. FARC says it will work with the Colombian government to salvage the agreement.
- UK's PM May indicates focus on immigration limits over market exit (Guardian) –

Yeah, double down on racism and nationalism by focusing on limits of free movement by (non-white) people. I'm sure that this will help UK's economy. Meanwhile, banks like Royal Bank of Canada focus on 'smexit' and sterling drops to lowest level since the week after the referendum.

- Bright spot: Hungary's referendum on refugee limits fails (Der Spiegel) – Another case of low voter turnout has a better ending; not enough voters turned out to make referendum limiting the number of refugees legitimate.

Extinction level events every day

- Native Hawaiian bees now endangered species along with 48 other local plants and animals (Maui Time) – It'd be nice if neonicotinoids were banned before any more pollinators became endangered. It's not like we have alternatives to pollinated crops.
- Lone Rabbs' fringed tree frog dies (Scientific American) – The species once found in Panama may have been wiped out by a fungal

infection. This sole specimen had been rescued from its Central American home nearly a decade ago. The species is now believed extinct.

- Sixth mass extinction under way may kill large marine animals first (Los Angeles Times) – Large sea creatures may be the most obvious losses, but the extinction of Rabbs' tree frog shows small animal species are already taking the brunt of the anthropocene's deadly force. Human's impact on the environment launched a mass extinction unlike others documented in fossil records.

Longwatch: Blockchain technology

Digital Catapult and Furtherfield produced a video overview of blockchain technology and its potential use. It's not a very long video – less than 7:50 long – but it provides a brief explanation of the technology's purpose while expressing some fundamental concerns about blockchain's development. The homogeneity of developers, for example, is a legitimate concern; a lack of diverse thought in development of other software+hardware technology has cost society enormous amounts of productivity while excluding already marginalized populations. A value-transfer system recognized by democratic governments should minimize opportunity costs while protecting interests of all citizens who rely on such a system.

Tuesday's breathing down our necks...and it'll be trash day. What a coincidence. See you then.

WEDNESDAY: TIME TRAVEL

In this roundup: A short film about a mother's time travel adventure, the Internet of Stupid Things, and more.

My oldest just finished her degree program and my youngest left for his first year of college this past month. Now I feel like the main character in this short film about a time traveler, but without the ugliness of teen drug abuse and the awkwardness that comes with an unexpected change in gender identity within the social circle.

Internet of (Stupid) Things

Speaking of time travel...remember when I posted back in June 2014 about the Internet of Things and asked how much more deeply embedded does the internet need to become in our lives before we begin to rethink its widening application?

Yeah. That. Before ransomware attacked hospitals and universities.

Before insecure webcams were used to conduct one of the largest distributed denial of service of attacks on the internet?

Just wondering when the public, government, and corporations will begin to take the threat of pervasive but insecure wireless devices seriously. It's not as if there haven't been pointed warnings in which we've all been told "vendors ship their products like this...[A]nd then people put them online." (video at 22:40, c. 2013)

The attack on computer security expert Brian Krebs would have taken down nearly any other

entity altogether. Not all individuals or organizations should expect Google to step in and rescue them (which was awfully generous of Google, since the information it will collect from continuing DDoS on Krebs isn't worth much commercially).

Let's face it: no new government effort will begin before the next president takes office. Is anybody preparing for changes in standards and regulation after the next administration begins?

It'd be nice to hear about this topic in one of the remaining pre-election debates, but I'm not holding my breath.

Stray Cats and Dogs

Here's a few tidbits I've been thinking about but haven't pulled together enough related content for a theme.

- Apple iOS 10 passwords even easier to crack? (Elcom Soft blog) – Post published by a 'password recovery' application website should tell you more than Apple iOS 10's backup protection has a weak spot.
- Long whiny profile piece on EPA's Chris Grundler (Bloomberg) – Corporatist media outlet complains that Grundler, as Director of the Office of Transportation and Air Quality, will cost poor Fiat Chrysler a whopping \$5 billion. Nice framing, boneheads. Fiat Chrysler's vehicles are required by law to meet EPA emissions standards. This expense is

part of the cost of goods sold, period. Somebody at Bloomberg needs to take a basic accounting class. Same somebody should take comparative note how much it costs to wantonly violate emissions standards a la Volkswagen and its passenger diesels.

- Linux development community conflicted over ransomware (Softpedia) – Should infosec researchers and Linux developers post ransomware at Github, ostensibly for public review, or should it be kept under wraps? Surprisingly, the open source software community is split about the benefits/risks. The ransomware which had been posted has since been removed.
- Germany ordered Facebook to stop collecting data on WhatsApp users (Reuters) – Facebook plans to appeal this decision which protected German users' privacy. Have to wonder if Google's new communications app Allo could run into similar conflicts with German privacy laws.

Longlisten: Corporate bot-pwned farming

I've previously mentioned the problem with current copyright law and machines. Andrew Middleton (@EcoAndrewTRC) and Andrew Thaler (@SFriedScientist) discuss John Deere tractors in particular in their latest podcast at What the Farm?!

That's a wrap on this post, please use it as an open thread. Sorry about the site's performance burp last evening; new and refreshed sites often have hiccups, but we'll try to keep them to a minimum and as short as possible. And do note the site's comment policy has not changed with the refresh. Thanks!

WEDNESDAY: BIG WHEELS TURNING

Hard to believe this was made in 1982. Yeah, the production quality doesn't match today's digital capabilities, but the story itself seems really prescient. How can an ethically-compromised bloviating bigot manage to fumble his way into office?

Now you know. Bet you can even offer constructive feedback on how director Danny DeVito could update this script for today's social media-enhanced election cycle.

Self-Driving Vehicles

- NHTSA issues guidelines for self-driving cars (Detroit Free Press) – FINALLY. But is it a bit too late now that Uber already has a fleet on the streets of Pittsburgh and Tesla has been running beta cars?

Let's face it: the federal government has been very slow to acknowledge the rise of artificial intelligence in any field, let alone the risks inherent in computer programming used in vehicles. We're literally at the end of a two-term presidency, on the cusp of entirely new policies toward transportation, and NOW the NHTSA steps in? We need to demand better and faster rather than this future-shocked laggy response from government – and that goes for Congress as well as the White House. Congress fails to see the importance of early regulation in spite of adequate warning:

Legislators warned automakers at the 15 March Senate hearing that the governing body took a dim view of the industry's ability to self-regulate. "Someone is going to die in this technology," Duke University roboticist Missy Cummings told the US Senate during a tense hearing where she testified alongside representatives from General Motors and Delphi Automotive, among others.

Senators Ed Markey and Richard Blumenthal, who questioned car executives at the hearing, had cosponsored a 2015 bill to

regulate self-driving automobiles. The bill was referred to committee and never returned to the floor. [source: *Guardian*]

In the mean time, we have an initial 15-point guideline the NHTSA wants to address; are they enough? Is a *guideline* enough? Witness Volkswagen's years-long fraud, flouting *laws*; without more serious consequences, would a company with Volkswagen's ethics pay any heed at all to mere guidelines? Are you ready to drive on the road with nothing but non-binding guidelines to hold makers of autonomous cars accountable?

- Multiple Tesla car models hackable (Keen Security Lab) – Check this video on YouTube. At first this seems like an innocuous problem, just lights, mirrors, door locks...and then * boom * the brakes while driving. These same functions would also be controlled by AI in a self-driving car, by the way, and they're already on the road. This is exactly what I mean by the feds being slow to acknowledge AI's rise.
- 'OMG COOL'-like impressions from early self-driving Uber passengers (Pittsburgh Post-Gazette) – Criminy. The naïveté is astonishing. Of course this technology seems

so safe and techno-cool when you have an Uber engineer and programmer along for the ride, offering the illusion of safety. Like having a seasoned, licensed taxi driver. Why not just pay for an actual human to drive?

- Tesla caught in back-and-forth with Mobileye (multiple sources) – After analyzing the May 2016 fatal accident in Florida involving Tesla's semi-autonomous driving system, Tesla tweaked the system. The gist of the fatal accident appears to have been a false-positive misinterpretation of the semi-trailer as an overhead road sign, for which a vehicle would not slow down. But this particular accident alone didn't set off a dispute between Tesla and the vendor for its Autopilot system, Mobileye. Another fatal accident in China which occurred in January was blamed on Tesla's Autopilot – but that, too, was not the point of conflict between Tesla and its vendor. Mobileye apparently took issue with Tesla over “hands on” versus

“hands-free” operation; the computer vision manufacturer’s 16-SEP press release claims Tesla said the Autopilot system would be hands on but was rolled out in 2015 as hands-free. Mobileye may also have taken issue with how aggressively Tesla was pursuing its own computer vision technology even before the two companies agreed to end their relationship this past July. A volley of news stories over the last two weeks suggest there’s more going on than the hands on versus hands-free issue. Interestingly enough, the burst of stories began just after a hacker discovered there’s a previously undisclosed dash cam capturing shots of Tesla vehicle operations – and yet only a very small number of the flurry of stories mentioned this development. Hmm. Unfortunately, the dash cam feature would not have captured snaps for the two known fatal accidents because the nature of the accidents prevented the camera from sending images to Tesla servers.

Artificial Intelligence

- The fall of humans is upon us with our help (Forbes) – this article asks what happens when white collar jobs are replaced by artificial intelligence. Oh, how nice, Forbes, that you worry about the white collar dudes like yourselves but not the blue collar workers already being replaced. How about discussing alternative employment for 3.5 million truck drivers?
Or the approximately 230,000 taxi drivers?
How about subway, streetcar, and tram operators (number of which I don't currently have a number)?
How about the administrative jobs supporting these workers? This is just a portion of transportation alone which will be affected by the introduction of AI in self-driving/autonomous vehicles. What about other blue collar jobs at risk – like fast food workers, of which there are 3.5 million? And we wonder why Trump appeals to a certain portion of the working class. He won't be informed at all

about this, will not have a solution except to remove persons of color as competition for employment. But the left must develop a cogent response to this risk immediately. It's already here, the rise of machines as AI and algorithmic replacements for humans. Let's not wait for the next Luddite rebellion V.2.0 – or is Trump's current support the rebellion's inception?

- But every business needs AI! (Forbes) – Uh...no conflict here at all with the previous article. Nope. Just playing the refs. Save America, people, just keep buying!(By the way, note how this contributor touts Hello Barbie chatbot as a positive sign, though Mattel's internet-enabled Barbie products have had some serious problems with security.)
- The meta-threat of artificial intelligence (MIT Technology Review) – Doubt my opinion? Don't take it from me, then, take it from experts including one who plans to make a fortune from AI – like Elon Musk.

Longread: Academia becomes the new white collar underclass

You may have noted Long Island University-Brooklyn's 12-day lockout which was not really resolved last week but deferred by a contract extension. The dispute originated over a pay gap between Brooklyn and two other better paid LIU campuses. Ridiculous sticking point, given the small distance between these campuses LIU barred instructors from campus and halted their benefits during the lockout. Students walked out, infuriated by the temps who subbed in for the locked-out instructors – a cafeteria worker in one case filled in for an English instructor. LIU's walkout won't be the only such conflict over academic wages. To understand the scale of the problem, you'll want to read this piece at Guernica, which explains how academia is being shaken down across the U.S., not just in Brooklyn. I remember asking an academic administrator back in 2006 what would happen when secondary education was commodified; they couldn't imagine it ever happening. And now the future has arrived. What are we going to do about this while retaining U.S. standard in education?

Hope you're liking the site revamp! Do leave a comment if you find anything isn't working up to snuff.