joshpetersel.com

I write *narrative non-fiction* about technology, and purpose, and the people in my village.

Latest (Oct ‘26)

Definitive proof that modern-day LLMs aren’t conscious. A proof by way of The Game. (You just lost.)

Start here if you’re new

- Trojan Horse. My favorite thing I’ve written. It asks: What if we still haven’t solved self-driving cars 7800 years in the future? It’s the only science fiction I’ve ever published and it gets absurd.
- My Terrible Anxiety about our Future in Self Driving Cars. Skip the trolley problem. What happens to land, to “local,” and to your friendships when getting anywhere costs almost nothing?
- Airports are Mandatory Malls. About 40% of airport revenue has nothing to do with flying. The security line makes more sense once you see the terminal as a mall you can’t leave.
- What the f*ck is a monthly active user. The question you’re not supposed to ask at a tech company. I am a monthly active user of my fridge door.
- Luigi wins by doing absolutely nothing. Companies bet that you’ll be impulsive. Sit still and collect {::::}

Subscribe? Sign up here if you want email notifs when there’s something new, and if you wanna see my essays’ side-comments (and participate with your own!). Prefer a feed? There’s RSS.

About this doc, er, website

Writing is how I think.

I operate out of *Google Docs* instead of, say, Substack & Discord, for Docs' unrivaled feature set:

- it's intuitive for most any computer user to navigate,
- there's nice Gmail integrations,
- it offers some obfuscation from search engines to engender a sense of intimacy,
- and you probably don't need to create some new login for credentials

Dialogue (not clicks or scale) is my metric of choice: Consistently over the past decade every 1,000 words I've written has turned into over 3,000 words in comments, replies, and new ideas

from a few dozen loyal readers. So entries are really more than essays; they're kindling for conversation.

About me & contact

Personally: I live in Toronto; I'm a Brooklyn & St Louis expat. I listen to albums, slowly. I volunteer with Big Brothers / Big Sisters. My favorite sport is surfing; my favorite game is Berlin-style ping-pong

Professionally: I'm building a VR company and a musical theatre company. Previously I was a Director at Spotify, where I built revenue systems and led a team with the North Star mission of making music accessible & sustainable. I'm a fierce customer advocate. I'm a Harvard MBA, but don't identify with the mental image many seem to carry of that school's alums. I measure, and often rely on data to make decisions, but also know when it's time to trust my experience & instincts

Email me: josh@joshpetersel.com

Archive

2026

1. Definitive proof that modern-day LLMs aren't conscious (Oct)
2. In response to your AI-generated document (May)
3. Antonio & Sheridan's wedding service (Apr)
4. Quantifying Trump's Attention Tax (Apr)
5. **Luigi wins by doing absolutely nothing** (Feb)
6. Jordan Peterson's Microwave (Feb)

2026 (off-site)

7. Musical Theatre Governance (Apr)
8. Green (Notl Copy) (Apr)
9. **You Will Probably Lose Your Money** (Mar)

2025

10. **Airports are Mandatory Malls** (Dec)
11. RSS (Nov)
12. “Reasonable” Cocktails, Incredible Profits (Nov)
13. From Coaches to Cockroaches (Aug)
14. Bits (Jun)
15. Sweat Paywall (May)
16. Green (Apr)
17. What Mutual Friend learned in 2024 (Jan)

2025 (off-site)

18. Little Critters: Tower Defense that Hits Home (Nov)
19. House of Golf: Par for the (Home) Course (Oct)
20. Wordomi: A Daily Puzzle for Your Headset (Jun)
21. Detective VR: Unraveling the Mixed Reality Mystery (Feb)

2025 (email exclusive — sign up for future ones)

22. Re: WTF is an MAU (Mar)

2024

23. **The Peter Principle** (Nov)
24. WaluigiBird (Oct)
25. **What the f*ck is a monthly active user** (Sept)
26. Unsubscribe (Aug)
27. The Next Moneyball: WAR is over (if you want it) (Jun)
28. **Give up hoping for market pay** (May)
29. RIPitchfork (Apr)
30. Two types of jobs (Feb)
31. Doordash Dine-In (Jan)
32. WaluiGPT (Jan)

2024 (off-site)

33. Shattered Hands-On: How badly do you want to get out? (Dec)
34. A Case for Pencil: Why Physical Drawing is Better in Mixed Reality (Sept)

35. Track Craft: Take this out for a drive (Aug)
36. Why you need to try MR Chess (Jun)

2024 (email exclusive — sign up for future ones)

37. Re: “Slow Jams (Aug)
38. Re: “iPhone XX (Jul)

2023

39. 2023 (Dec)
40. **Venn Puzzle: A New Social** (Aug)
41. AI Concert Posters (Jul)
42. MTA (Jul)
43. Introducing MVR (Apr)
44. Cold Plunge (Mar)
45. Andy waits for the last time (Mar)
46. Experimenting with a drug (Jan)

2022

47. B2C...4B (Dec)
48. You’re the Worst: Reviewed over 8 years (Dec)
49. **On Time (Green Album)** (Nov)
50. **On Time** (Aug)
51. Four strikes, you’re out (Aug)
52. Polarize (Jul)
53. iPhone XX (Jun)
54. A Netflix Attack Vector (May)
55. In defense of college tuition (May)
56. Table of Contents (*you’re here!!*) & changes for 2022 (Jan)
57. business advice for musicians (Jan)

2021

58. conspiracy theory (Dec)
59. a modest Sales Pipeline primer (Nov)

60. Hearthstone Clickables (Sep)
61. The birthday list (Jun) (*guest post!*)
62. After Zoom (Jun)
63. A decade of dysthymia (April)
64. Songs to accompany you on the slopes (Feb)
65. The Fermi Paradox (Feb)
66. You're the Worst, pt 4 (Feb)
67. The end of the universe (Feb)
68. the inequity in equity (Feb)
69. Mandatory Fun (Jan)

2020

70. Playing with FIRE (Nov)
71. **Getting a job at a Blockbuster** (Nov)
72. Being Unaccountable Online (Aug)
73. Crossword Puzzle (Jul)
74. suffering from (Jul)
75. **Trojan Horse** (May)
76. Covid (Mar)
77. Music Festivals (Jan)
78. Stockholm Syndrome (Jan)

2019

79. Alohomora (Nov)
80. The Great Congealing (Aug)
81. **Aesthetic Fleischaker** (Jun)
82. Lifestyles of the Rich & Bored (Apr)
83. mixtape (Feb)
84. you're the worst pt 3 (Feb)

2018

85. Beating evolution & exercises (Dec)
86. There Will Be No Miracles Here (Dec)
87. perpetually (Nov)

88. Hockey (Oct)
89. The Hiring Manager's Dilemma (Oct)
90. Softball (Aug)
91. **Consider the Red Lobster** (Jun)
92. **Measuring** (Jun)
93. Think With Your Ears (Jun)
94. The Lomo Dada (Mar)
95. XFL (Feb)

Earlier

96. Global Warming
97. **My Terrible Anxiety about our Future in Self Driving Cars**
98. Slow Jams
99. $30,000
100. Money
101. all i really want
102. Mario Odyssey
103. Foxy shazam
104. Lewis & Artemis
105. The worst thing
106. Harry Potter & the Fear
107. Don't Sell Shovels

Even earlier (from the blog)...

108. I built a calculator
109. Tidal
110. The worst part about sports is the sport itself
111. Google X is just a marketing company