Multi-agent reality check: worktree-based parallelism, new Claude Code skills, and Codex 5.3 low-level wins

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Today's highest-signal theme: multi-agent setups break down on research rigor, even as raw coding capabilities keep climbing. You'll get concrete tool updates (Claude Code /batch + /simplify, Remote Control rollout), replicable workflows (spec→async agent run→deploy, worktree-based parallelism), and two watchable clips on long-horizon loops and evaluation scaffolding.

TOP SIGNAL

Multi-agent coding looks *very* different when the task isn't "implement this," but "do research." Andrej Karpathy tried running **8 agents** (4 Claude + 4 Codex) in parallel on **nanochat** experiments (1 GPU each) and found the system "doesn't work" largely because agents' **idea generation and experimental rigor are weak**—they skip solid baselines/ablations and run nonsensical variations, even if they can implement well-scoped instructions quickly [1]. His framing: the real target is **"programming an organization"**—prompts, skills, tools, and rituals (even "daily standup") become the "org code," and the eval is how fast that org makes progress on arbitrary tasks [1].

TOOLS & MODELS

- **Claude Code (next version): new Skills `/simplify` + `/batch`**
  - `/simplify`: run **parallel agents** to improve code quality, tune efficiency, and ensure **CLAUDE.md compliance** [2].

  - `/batch`: interactively plan migrations, then execute with **dozens of isolated agents** using **git worktrees**; each agent tests before opening a PR [3].
  - Intended use: automate much of the work to **shepherd PRs to production** and to do **straightforward, parallelizable migrations** [4].
- **Claude Code Remote Control: rolling out to Pro users**
  - Rollout: **10% and ramping**; Team/Enterprise "coming soon" [5].
  - Enablement checklist: update to **claude v2.1.58+**, log out/in, then run `/remote-control` [5].
- **GPT-5.3-Codex: "default choice" signals for automation**
  - OpenAI's Tibo Sottiaux: since release in the API, he's "consistently hearing" at meetups that **GPT-5.3-Codex** is the model to use to "get actual work done," and a "clear winner" for **background agents / automation at scale** [6].
  - Also notes it's breaking through on **raw coding ability** and that "the secret is out" on best results per **$** [6].
  - Docs: https://developers.openai.com/api/docs/models/gpt-5.3-codex [7].
- **Codex 5.3-high: one-shot, low-level infra surgery**
  - Reported "one-shotted" task: bypassed HuggingFace KV cache abstraction, **monkey-patched attention** at module level, handled **M-RoPE**, coordinated prompt-memory state with KV cache state, and performed **granular eviction with span tracking** [8].
  - Greg Brockman points to **Codex 5.3** for "complicated software engineering" [9].
- **Cursor adoption lens (workflow evolution)**
  - Karpathy's sketch of the "optimal setup" evolution as capabilities improve: **None → Tab → Agent → Parallel agents → Agent Teams (?) → ???** [10].
  - His process heuristic: **80%** of time on what reliably works, **20%** exploring the next step up—even if it's messy [10].

WORKFLOWS & TRICKS

- **Parallel agents with *real* isolation: git worktrees are emerging as the default primitive**
  - Karpathy's research-org simulation: each "research program" as a **git branch**, each scientist forks a feature branch, and **git worktrees** provide isolation; "simple files" handle comms [1].
  - Claude Code's `/batch` mirrors this: each migration agent runs in full isolation via **git worktrees**, tests, then opens a PR [3].
- **"Research org" orchestration pattern (Karpathy): tmux as your control plane**
  - One setup: a **tmux window grid** of interactive agent sessions so you can watch work, and "take over" when needed [1].

  - His finding: agents are strong at **implementation**, weak at **experiment design** (baselines, ablations, runtime/FLOPs controls), so expect humans to still provide taste + rigor [1].
- **Fast app-to-prod loop with the Codex app (from a live demo)**
  - Romain Huet highlights a <30 min workflow: scaffold the app, use docs + **Playwright MCP**, add features with **plan mode**, then use **skills** for OpenAI image generation and **Vercel deploy** [11].
  - Demo link: https://x.com/kagigz/status/2027444590895063313 [11].
- **Spec-first → async agent run against a real repo (Simon Willison)**
  - Willison's loop: brainstorm the use case with Claude, have Claude write a **spec**, then kick off an **asynchronous Claude Code "for web" research project** against his `simonw/research` repo to turn the spec into working code [12].
  - Shipped artifacts:
    * Code/report: https://github.com/simonw/research/tree/main/unicode-explorer-binary-search#readme [12]
    * Deployed demo: https://tools.simonwillison.net/unicode-binary-search [12]
- **Context-window hygiene via "stop-and-reset" loops (Ringo/OpenClaw example)**
  - Ringo's "RALPH loop" executes a task markdown file **one step at a time**, then stops so the next step starts with a **fresh context window** [13].
  - Practical takeaway: if your runs degrade over time, consider deliberately **chunking work into restartable steps** instead of trying to one-shot long horizons [13].
- **Safety guardrails for agentic tools with destructive capabilities (OpenClaw talk)**
  - Patterns called out: mandatory confirmations for destructive actions, sandboxing/read-only modes, and using a **separate phone number/SIM** for the bot [13].
  - Failure mode to design around: rules stored only in the model's working memory can be lost after **context compaction**—leading to destructive behavior [13].
- **Eval realism check: scaffolding juice is real, but overfit risk is too**
  - METR's Joel Becker describes harness/scaffold tuning for high performance on dev tasks while trying to avoid overfitting; they invest heavily in scaffolds to **upper bound** model capabilities for safety analysis [14].
  - He also notes how measuring productivity got harder: developers may refuse "AI-disallowed" randomization, and today's concurrent workflows (multiple issues in parallel) don't fit old study designs [14].

PEOPLE TO WATCH

- **Andrej Karpathy** — concrete, instrumented look at why "agent research orgs" are still messy: implementation is easy; **ideas + rigor are the bottleneck** [1].
- **Boris Cherny (Claude Code)** — shipping practical agent "skills" that encode repeatable team workflows: `/simplify` + `/batch`, plus Remote Control rollout details [4, 3, 15].
- **Romain Huet (OpenAI/Codex)** — curating high-signal Codex workflows and capability examples (rapid app shipping; low-level infra tasks) [11, 16].
- **Max Woolf** — detailed "skeptic tries agent coding" writeup; notable claim that **Opus 4.6/Codex 5.3** feel "an order of magnitude better" for complex tasks than models from months earlier [17].
- **Simon Willison** — repeatable "spec → async agent run → deploy" patterns with publicly inspectable artifacts [12].

WATCH & LISTEN

1) OpenClaw Manila — Ringo's "idea → live prototype" loop (24:15–27:55)

How it works under the hood: a ReAct-style loop that writes a task file, executes **one task per fresh context window**, and uses infra integrations (GitHub/Cloudflare/etc.) to ship prototypes fast [13].

OpenClaw Manila - February 2026 (24:15)

2) METR (Joel Becker) — harness/scaffold tuning and the overfit trap (56:25–57:35)

A grounded explanation of why different harnesses can swing results—and why METR invests in scaffolds to estimate "best possible" model capability without fooling themselves via overfitting [14].

Measuring Exponential Trends Rising (in AI) — Joel Becker, METR (56:25)

PROJECTS & REPOS

- **DeerFlow 2.0 (ByteDance) — long-horizon agent architecture**
  - Rebuilt on **LangGraph 1.0** with planning, long-term memory, file system, and skills [18, 19].
  - Repo: https://github.com/bytedance/deer-flow [18]
  - Prior version: **20k+ GitHub stars** [18].
- **Unicode Explorer (Simon Willison) — binary search over HTTP range requests**
  - Live demo: https://tools.simonwillison.net/unicode-binary-search [12]
  - Code/report: https://github.com/simonw/research/tree/main/unicode-explorer-binary-search#readme [12].
- **Rust wordcloud CLI (Claude Code-built) — small, shippable agent output**
  - Link: https://github.com/simonw/research/tree/main/rust-wordcloud#readme [17].
- **Decompile-driven porting example (Huntley link roundup)**
  - `ls` → Rust port via objdump: https://github.com/DanielJoyce/ls-rs [20].
- **Ben Tossell's "files interface" (open-source, looking for testers)**
  - Described as an API + frontend that looks IDE-like, designed so

agents can extend it [21, 22].

Editorial take: Raw coding is getting solved; the leverage is moving to **orchestration + isolation + guardrails**—and the hardest remaining gap is still *tasteful, rigorous idea generation*, not implementation [1, 3].

Sources

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