

PickAIModel Brief

Issue 013 · September 15, 2026 · pickaimodel.com

Independent guide to the AI industry, useful tools, and practical model choices.

The frontier is no longer about better answers. It is about systems that can act.

Since Issue 012, [OpenAI has pushed GPT-6 Astra into broad professional use](#), [Meta has put a personal agent inside its own secure cloud computer](#), [DeepSeek has shipped a radically cheaper new architecture](#), and [the leaders of rival AI labs have started publicly asking whether the frontier is moving too fast](#).

THE STORY THAT SETS THE ISSUE

GPT-6 Astra turns computer use into a first-class frontier capability

A 1.05M-token context window, broad computer-use tooling and a model [OpenAI classifies at its Critical cybersecurity threshold](#) make this more than a routine generation bump.

ALSO INSIDE

DeepSeek V4.1-Flash

[552B parameters, only 8B active on input - and a cache architecture built to slash inference cost.](#)

SEP 4

[Astra API access and paid-plan rollout begin expanding.](#)

SEP 8

[Meta launches Muse, a consumer agent with app access and a secure VM.](#)

SEP 10

[DeepSeek V4.1-Flash, Agents API and finance AI products arrive.](#)

SEP 12

[Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei calls for the frontier to slow down.](#)

SEP 14

[Claude for Financial Advisors extends the vertical-AI race.](#)

GPT-6 Astra is the clearest sign yet that frontier AI is becoming an operating layer

The important part is not that OpenAI has another flagship. It is that computer use, long-running work and judgment under incomplete instructions are now being sold as core model capabilities.

The consequential part of GPT-6 Astra is not the version number: OpenAI is now selling computer use as a core frontier capability. The model was announced on September 3 as Issue 012 closed, but the [rollout expanded from September 4](#) and OpenAI followed with a dedicated [work-focused release on September 9](#).

For developers, [Astra has a 1.05 million-token context window, 128K maximum output, and standard pricing of \\$10 per million input tokens and \\$50 per million output tokens](#). It is expensive beside GPT-5.6 Sol, but is aimed at end-to-end assignments where the model can browse, operate software, run code, verify results and continue across long sessions.

The safety boundary matters just as much. OpenAI says Astra is the [first broadly deployed model to reach the Critical level of cybersecurity capability under its Preparedness Framework](#), prompting stronger isolation, monitoring and deployment controls.

Why it matters: If you buy AI for work, the unit of value is shifting from a good answer to a completed, verifiable task - and that changes how you compare models, security, cost and vendor lock-in.

ASTRA AT A GLANCE

1.05M

CONTEXT WINDOW

128K

MAXIMUM OUTPUT TOKENS

\$10 / \$50

INPUT / OUTPUT PER 1M API TOKENS

Critical

OPENAI CYBER CAPABILITY
CLASSIFICATION

What changed from Sol?

OpenAI still positions GPT-5.6 Sol as a lower-cost flagship. Astra is the premium choice for the hardest end-to-end work, especially where computer use, code execution and extended reasoning are part of the job.

[OpenAI launch](#)

[API model card](#)

[Safety overview](#)

[The Verge](#)

[Axios](#)

DeepSeek's new Flash model is really an architecture story

DeepSeek V4.1-Flash

China watch

DeepSeek released [V4.1-Flash on September 10](#) with a 552-billion-parameter mixture-of-experts design that activates only 8B parameters for input and 16B for output. Its new causal encoder-decoder architecture cuts the key-value cache to [one quarter of the HBM and one eighth of the SSD storage used by the previous generation](#).

The stronger signal is commercial. DeepSeek made it the live deepseek-flash API model and, from September 14, [started routing V4-Pro requests to V4.1-Flash at the Flash rate until V4.1-Pro arrives](#). Peak pricing is \$0.30 per million cache-miss input tokens and \$1.20 per million output tokens; off-peak rates are half.

Meanwhile, [DeepSeek is preparing for a Shanghai IPO](#) and [Moonshot is exploring Hong Kong and Shanghai listings](#).

Why it matters: DeepSeek is showing that inference architecture and memory efficiency can be as strategically important as raw model size - especially for agents that repeatedly reuse long contexts.

552B**TOTAL PARAMETERS**

Large model, but sparse activation changes the serving economics.

8B / 16B**ACTIVE INPUT / OUTPUT**

The asymmetric activation pattern is the architectural novelty.

1/8**SSD CACHE FOOTPRINT**

DeepSeek says the KV cache uses one eighth of the prior SSD storage.

China's AI stack is filling in below the models

Tencent-backed AI-chip maker Enflame [closed 179% above its IPO price on September 11 after raising \\$912 million](#). Model builders and domestic accelerator companies are now tapping public markets at the same time.

General AI is becoming vertical AI - and finance is the proving ground

OpenAI bundles the data with the model

On September 10, OpenAI launched [ChatGPT for Financial Services](#), built around GPT-6 Astra plus financial data from Daloopa, PitchBook and LSEG News. OpenAI says the data is indexed on its infrastructure so users can trace figures and claims through granular citations.

Shaped with Morgan Stanley and Evercore, the product also lets administrators publish firm templates for Excel, Word and PowerPoint. [Reuters says the target workflows include research, financial models and client materials.](#)

Anthropic follows the advisor workflow

Four days later, Anthropic introduced [Claude for Financial Advisors](#), connecting Claude to custodians, portfolio systems, CRMs and planning tools with skills for meeting preparation, documentation and compliance checks.

Charles Schwab said its [Advisor Services business will connect more than 16,000 independent RIAs](#). Anthropic recommends Enterprise plans for registered advisers because they include audit logs.

Why it matters: The moat is moving away from the base model alone. Proprietary data, templates, auditability and workflow integration are becoming the product that regulated industries actually buy.

THE GOVERNANCE STORY CHANGED TOO

Three rival AI leaders are now saying the frontier should slow down

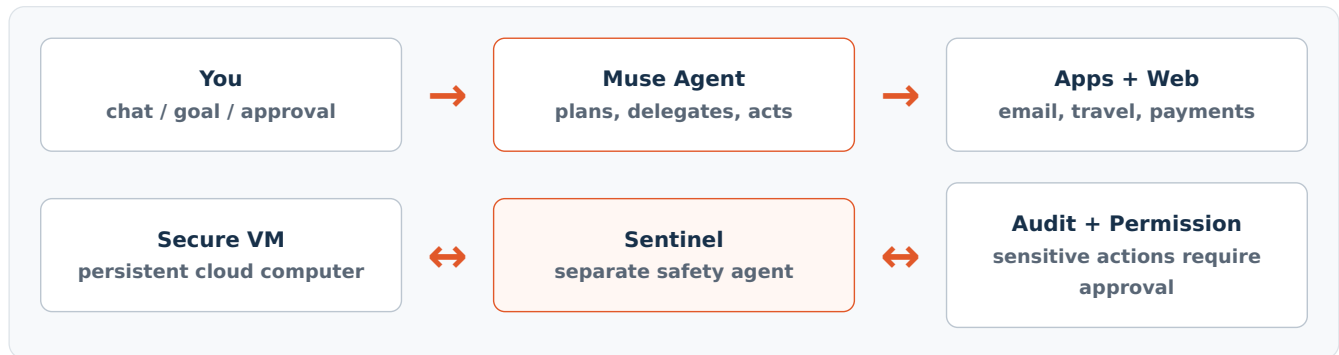
On September 12, Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei called for AI companies to [slow the pace of frontier capability development](#) and proposed a three-part framework built around independent evaluators, industry coordination and international coordination. Anthropic said it would begin by giving third-party evaluators continuing access to verify safety commitments.

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman and Elon Musk publicly backed the direction, according to [TechCrunch](#) and [Reuters](#). The striking part is timing: the appeal arrived in the same fortnight that OpenAI shipped Astra, Meta launched Muse and DeepSeek replaced a flagship API path with a faster model.

Why it matters: Safety governance is moving from internal policy toward external verification. If the labs make that real, enterprise buyers may eventually evaluate auditability alongside capability and price.

The personal-agent stack now includes its own secure computer

Meta's Muse launch is important less because of another assistant name and more because of the infrastructure Meta says a consumer agent needs before it can touch email, payments and private apps.



Meta launched [Muse on September 8](#) in the U.S. across iOS, Android, the web and WhatsApp. It can work in the background, fill forms, send email and make purchases with user permissions and approvals. Meta says Muse runs inside a dedicated [Secure VM](#), while a separate Sentinel agent screens outbound actions and can stop or escalate risky ones.

That architecture is the wider signal. Once an agent holds credentials and acts across services, the product needs isolation, secret storage, permission boundaries, audit trails and prompt-injection defenses. [Reuters reported that Meta delayed Muse's original launch to strengthen security after internal reliability and privacy problems.](#)

Practical significance: The next serious comparison between personal agents may be less about which model reasons best and more about which runtime can be trusted with real credentials and irreversible actions.

Availability caveat

Muse is initially U.S.-only. Meta says most use is free, with paid tiers for heavier use; broader rollout timing has not been specified.

OpenAI Agents API

A managed agent harness for long-running work: context management, tools, subagents and sandboxes without rebuilding the orchestration layer from scratch.

What it gives you

The [Agents API entered public beta on September 10](#). OpenAI manages the same harness family used by Codex, including durable sessions, automatic context compaction, tool search, multi-agent orchestration and OpenAI-hosted sandboxes.

Developers can instead connect their own infrastructure or supported sandbox providers. The API supports MCP, custom functions and built-in tools such as web search.

Who should try it

Teams already building multi-step research, coding, operations or data agents - especially teams spending engineering time on session recovery, tool orchestration and context housekeeping.

Caution: It is still a public beta. Managed orchestration does not remove the need for permission design, audit logging, sandbox policy or cost controls.

Cost

OpenAI says there is [no additional Agents API fee](#); you pay for the selected models, tools and sandbox resources. **Non-affiliate link.**

THE NUMBER THAT CHANGES THE PICTURE

1B+

PEOPLE USING OPENAI PRODUCTS EACH WEEK

OpenAI's September 11 engineering write-up says its Habitat storage platform supports products used by [more than one billion people each week, handles more than 70 million requests per second across almost 40 regions, and serves more than 500 petabytes of data](#). This is an infrastructure claim covering ChatGPT, the API, Codex and internal services rather than a routine monthly-active-user estimate. Even allowing for the breadth of "OpenAI products," the scale changes the competitive picture: model quality matters, but so do global storage, routing, permissions and reliability at consumer-internet scale.

GPT-6 Astra's results are consequential enough to mention - with a large asterisk

GPT-6 Astra earns a rare exception because mainstream outlets including [The Verge](#) and [Axios](#) are treating it as a broader agentic-capability event, not a leaderboard update. OpenAI reports [99.9% on ARC-AGI-3](#) and [98% on FrontierMath Tier 4](#). These are vendor-published results; harnesses, methodology and independent reproduction still matter. The useful conclusion is not that Astra "wins everything," but that difficult evaluations are approaching saturation while real-world autonomy and deployment risk are rising at the same time.

THE WEEK IN ACCIDENTAL HONESTY

OpenAI president Greg Brockman ended Astra's launch briefing with ["Welcome to the AGI era,"](#) [Axios reported](#). The next morning, [The Verge reported Sam Altman apologizing for a "messy" rollout](#) that had left paying users waiting for access. The AGI era arrived before the access queue cleared.

NEXT ISSUE PREVIEW

- **Whether "pace the frontier" becomes enforceable.** The first concrete test is whether independent evaluators actually receive the promised access and publication rights.
- **DeepSeek V4.1-Pro.** V4.1-Flash is temporarily serving the old Pro endpoint; the architecture is more interesting if DeepSeek can scale it upward without losing its cost advantage.
- **US-China AI safety discussions.** Any formal mechanism for incident sharing, cyber risk or cross-border model governance would matter more than another statement of principles.

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Editorial note on benchmark coverage

This issue contains one Global Benchmark Exception for GPT-6 Astra. It is included because the launch represents a broader capability and deployment event covered by mainstream technology media. The newsletter does not reproduce routine leaderboard comparisons.

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