

The Public Square for March 2025

Attention Citizens!

I wanted to talk about why I put **THINGS I'VE RECENTLY ENJOYED** sections at the bottom of these newsletters.

I've always been against algorithmic recommendations. Obviously they've been around for a long time, but I can't help but notice that they've slowly become a central feature for every service that interacts with the Internet. Sign up for Reddit, and it algorithmically tells you which subreddits to join. Twitter tells you which accounts to follow. Amazon tries its best to tell you what products to buy. Obviously YouTube was a pioneer in this field.

The thing about these systems is that they've always sucked, and with the trendy A.I. push of the last few years it seems like some of them are actually getting worse. For some reason I've dutifully logged every book I've ever read on Goodreads, but Goodreads has no idea what my taste in books is. In fact it sometimes doesn't even know what language I speak. Amazon seems to think that I collect cutting boards. I've never found the algorithmically generated Home page of YouTube particularly useful.

The thing is that these companies want you to use their proprietary algorithms to mindlessly figure out what kind of art or media to consume, but it's important for your brain that you don't let yourself fall into that trap. The algorithms are bad at what they pretend to do. They think you're stupid. And more importantly, they're designed to MAKE you stupid.

I fear that this problem is only going to get worse for the foreseeable future, and so it's vital for all of us to make a real effort to take our cultural cues from real humans that we know and trust. Not from corporate recommendation algorithms.

I've always found it really inspirational that Steven Soderbergh [publishes an annual list](#) of every bit of art he's consumed over the course of the year. (Or, at least film, books, and television.) He doesn't give recommendations or reviews, he just gives you a list of what he's been up to. For some reason I go line-by-line through the entire list every year, and I always come away with a few new things that I want to check out.

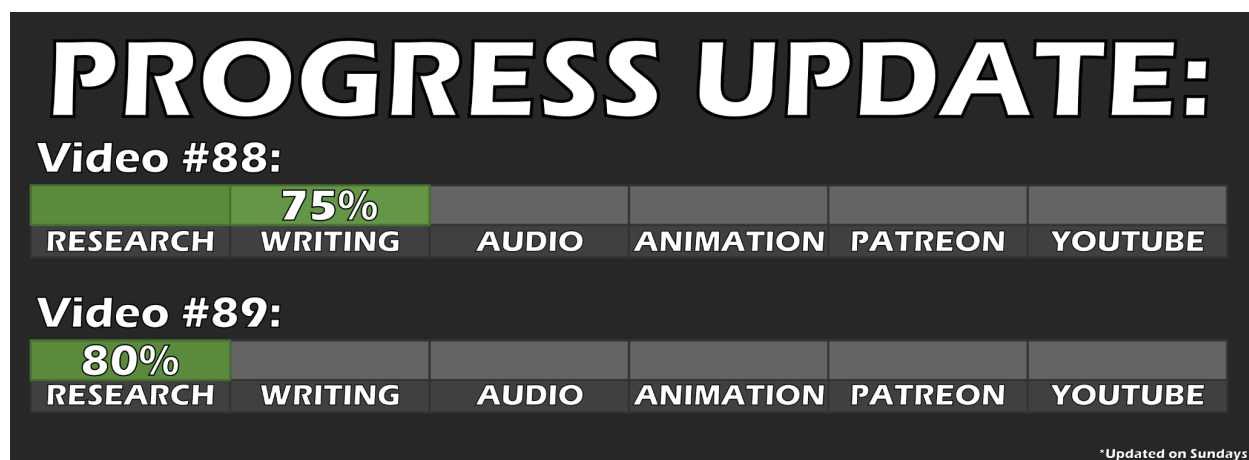
As you continue to develop your own mind and experience new art and go on your own intellectual journey, it's important to build an ecosystem of people that you trust in order to figure out where to go next. You can't trust algorithms or companies to do that for you, they don't have your best interest at heart. I read *The Peregrine* by J.A. Baker simply because [Werner Herzog told me to](#), and now I think about that book almost every day. No algorithm would ever have bothered

to recommend that book to me, they're too busy recommending Spanish language Lord of the Rings.

Like I said earlier, I've always found Soderbergh's annual list inspirational, and so I've decided to put my own version at the end of these newsletters. Obviously I'm not making a list of every bit of art I've consumed over the last month, because honestly I'm not that brave, but I've figured out that I can easily throw together a short list of **THINGS I'VE RECENTLY ENJOYED**. Your taste might be very different from mine so take it or leave it as you will, but if you want to use me as part of your cultural ecosystem of people that you trust, go for it.

In summary, Death to Algorithms, Death to Robots, take your cultural cues from actual humans.

Progress Update:



I've got Video #88 figured out. A month ago I wasn't so sure, but now I've got it nailed down. It's still long, but I like how it's turned out, so that's fine. I just need to go through it a couple more times to make sure it's nice and clean. So we're calling that 75% done.

It's tentatively titled "Reform or Revolution? (1830 to 1832)". But sometimes I change my mind while I'm animating, so we'll see.

I've put exactly ZERO thought into Video #89, which I've mentioned before is a sorta sequel to the "Work" video. My hope is that when I crack open the ol' research again, it will be immediately obvious what I will need to proceed. That's me being optimistic. Hopefully it's that, and not "what the hell is all of this?"

Books I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art, by Rebecca Wragg Sykes**
 - I'm pretty ill-informed when it comes to prehistory, so I've decided to slowly educate myself and fill in a few mental gaps. I'm not really a science person, and so whenever we spend too much time on carbon dating or oxygen levels or isotopes I'm immediately falling asleep. Thankfully there was not much of that in this book, great for idiots like me.
- **Mother Night, by Kurt Vonnegut**
 - I've been filling in some Vonnegut blind spots lately. **Player Piano** was not really my cup of tea, but **Mother Night** was GREAT. Clearly it's Vonnegut's first serious attempt to grapple with WW2, which I didn't really know going into the book. Great stuff.

Films I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **Bridge of Spies (2015)**
 - A goddamned perfect movie about diplomacy, a masterpiece in the Dad Movie genre.
- **The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976)**

Love this movie, maybe my 3rd time seeing it. Alien David Bowie comes to Earth because his planet needs Earth's water, and his plan is to use capitalism to get it. But uh oh, capitalism does what capitalism always does. Great for Bowie-heads.
- **Reds (1981)**
 - I HAD NEVER SEEN THIS BEFORE WHAT THE HECK IT'S SO GOOD. DIANE KEATON IS THE ABSOLUTE GREATEST.

Albums I've Recently Enjoyed:

- **My Aim Is True, by Elvis Costello**
 - I've been Costello-pilled. I haven't really gone deep on Elvis Costello before, but for some reason I felt compelled now. The big song on this album is **Alison**, which

everybody will already know, but new discoveries for me this time were **(The Angels Wanna Wear My) Red Shoes, Welcome to the Working Week, and Mystery Dance.**

- **This Year's Model, by Elvis Costello**

- Continue to be Costello-pilled. **Pump It Up, No Action, and Radio, Radio** are currently in high rotation.

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America Delenda Est.