BROADENING YOUR LANE

HOW TO BUILD A GREAT PODCAST OF GENERAL INTEREST FROM HIGHLY SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE.

BY DR. SEAN MUNGER, HISTORIAN
AND PRODUCER OF "GREEN SCREEN" PODCAST

If you have special knowledge, expertise or know-how in a particular field, whether professional, academic, vocational, or just something you know a lot about, you can turn that expertise into the concept for a great podcast that will generate interest even from listeners far outside that field. Here are some tips on how to do that.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

Factual knowledge: you're an expert.
Skill or specialty: you know how to do something.
Context: you know where something "sits" in our culture or in the scheme of things.
Insight: you can provide an interesting perspective.

WHERE DO THESE TWO OVERLAP?

WHAT'S A TOPIC OF INTEREST?

What is something people discuss a lot?
Are there subcultures or communities, especially on social media, around this topic?
(E.g., "gardening Twitter")
What would you type in a search engine to find it?

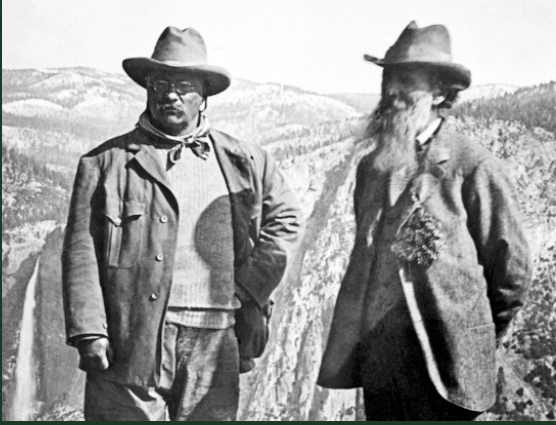## CAN YOU DECONSTRUCT OR EXPLAIN WHAT YOU KNOW?

This is your **MECHANISM.**

Think of your **MECHANISM** as a process by which you will apply your **EXPERTISE** to the **TOPIC**. The topic is merely a source of subjects, like raw materials in a factory that you will turn into finished goods.

HERE'S HOW WE DID IT ON *GREEN SCREEN.*

EXPERTISE:
ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

The study of how humans have interacted with the environment in the past.
Fascinating field, but very arcane. Most of its practitioners are university academics.

**WHERE DO THESE TWO OVERLAP?**

MOVIES ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

(Defined very broadly)

TOPIC OF INTEREST:
MOVIES

An always appealing topic with perennial public interest, abundant media subcultures, and which sustains numerous podcasts on various niche interests.

Our **MECHANISM** is the ability to analyze environmental themes in popular movies and explain how they do (or do not) match up with historical reality.
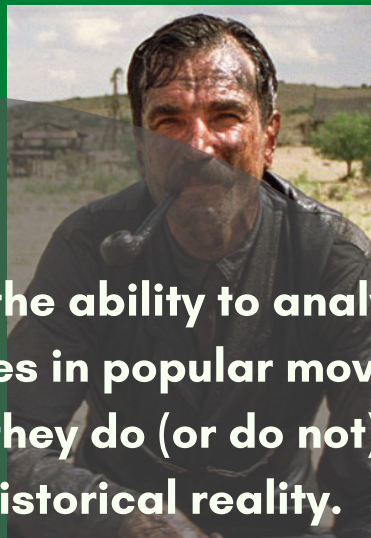
Your expertise-based podcast shouldn't seek merely to convey raw information or render an opinion. Rather, make your show a **DEMONSTRATION** of how your expertise works as applied to your topic. Listeners want to hear your **MECHANISM** in action. They want to hear you make the finished product from the raw materials of the subject in a way they could not do themselves.
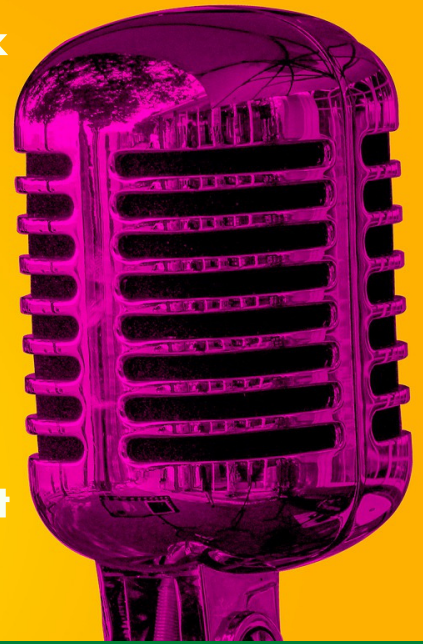
LOOK FOR UNIQUE WAYS TO APPLY YOUR EXPERTISE. UNEXPECTED CONNECTIONS ARE FUN.

We have a recurring segment on *Green Screen* called "What do Tauntauns Eat?", named after a creature appearing in the Star Wars film *The Empire Strikes Back*. How can large megafauna feed itself on a desolate ice planet? The same type of question, applied to other situations in other films, raises interesting issues about the environmental realism depicted in movies.

The reaction that we most like from our listeners, and that we try for every time, is "Gee, I never realized that [*movie*] had so many environmental themes in it, but now it makes sense to me." When you get this kind of reaction, people seeing an old subject in a new way, you know your **MECHANISM** is working.

SOME FREE & EASY RESEARCH TIPS.

An expertise-based podcast is obviously research-heavy. We reduce the time we spend researching episodes by using the following:

Follow footnotes on Wikipedia. Often they are to very reputable sources available online. Links dead? Try the Wayback Machine.

Look up books and articles on Archive.org. Requires a (free) account, but a surprising number of sources have been digitized and may be borrowed for free.

JSTOR. Huge database of academic articles. Sign up for a free account; during the pandemic, 100 free articles can be accessed every month.
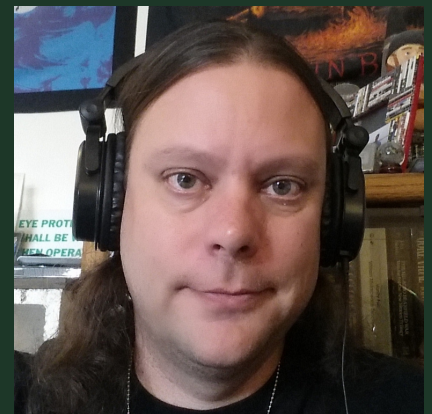

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

SEAN MUNGER

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GREEN SCREEN
The Environmental Movie Podcast

SECOND DECADE
History Podcast About the 1810s