

Thorium, Quincy Jones, and OpenAI: Today's Highest-Signal Recommendations

Recommended Reading from Tech Founders

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Balaji Srinivasan's thorium explainer stood out for its specific learning value, Ben Horowitz's documentary pick offered a concrete leadership lens, and Sam Altman and Elon Musk shared two very different reads. The rest of the list clusters around Balaji's media-and-power books.

Start here

Sam Monella Academy video on thorium

- **Content type:** YouTube video
- **Author/creator:** Sam Monella Academy
- **Link/URL:** Direct resource URL was not provided in the source; mentioned in this interview
- **Who recommended it:** Balaji Srinivasan
- **Key takeaway:** Balaji said it is essential for understanding India's thorium and breeder-reactor progress, and said "everyone should watch."
- **Why it matters:** This is the clearest technical learning recommendation in today's set because it comes with a specific reason to spend time on it. [1]

"Everybody should know about thorium... there's a really good Sam Monella Academy YouTube video on thorium, which everyone should watch." [1]

One leadership case study to watch

The Greatest Night in Pop

- **Content type:** Documentary

- **Author/creator:** Not specified in the source
- **Link/URL:** No direct resource URL in the source; described as available on Netflix and discussed in this interview
- **Who recommended it:** Ben Horowitz
- **Key takeaway:** Horowitz recommended the film about the making of “We Are the World,” with Quincy Jones’ leadership highlighted in the source notes as the lesson to watch for.
- **Why it matters:** It turns a documentary recommendation into a practical management case study on leading highly talented, difficult people. [2]

Two individual reads worth saving

Paul Graham essay at paulgraham.com/kids.html

- **Content type:** Essay / blog post
- **Author/creator:** Paul Graham
- **Link/URL:** <https://paulgraham.com/kids.html>
- **Who recommended it:** Sam Altman
- **Key takeaway:** Altman shared it with the simple endorsement: “this is so good.”
- **Why it matters:** The source gives no extra framing, but the endorsement is direct and unambiguous. [3]

Sam Altman May Control Our Future. Can He Be Trusted?

- **Content type:** Magazine article
- **Author/creator:** Ronan Farrow and Andrew Marantz
- **Link/URL:** <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2026/04/13/sam-altman-may-control-our-future-can-he-be-trusted>
- **Who recommended it:** Elon Musk
- **Key takeaway:** Musk called it “very much worth reading” while using it to reinforce his criticism of Altman.
- **Why it matters:** It is the only long-form reported feature in today’s set and the only recommendation centered on OpenAI leadership. [4, 5]

Balaji’s media-and-power reading cluster

Balaji also surfaced a reading stack he framed as worldview-changing examples involving journalists and authoritarian leaders. No direct resource URLs were provided for the items below; all were mentioned in this interview. [1]

- *Ten Days That Shook the World* - **Book** by John Reed. **Who recommended it:** Balaji Srinivasan. **Key takeaway:** Balaji presented it as a book that whitewashed the Bolshevik Revolution and emphasized Reed’s importance to that moment. **Why it matters:** It opens Balaji’s broader media-history list and sets the frame for the rest. [1]

- **Walter Duranty's Stalin coverage - Articles / reporting** by Walter Duranty. **Who recommended it:** Balaji Srinivasan. **Key takeaway:** Balaji singled out Duranty as a Pulitzer-winning Stalin apologist tied to covering up mass killing in Ukraine. **Why it matters:** It broadens the cluster from books into consequential newspaper reporting. [1]
- ***Red Star Over China* - Book** by Edgar Snow. **Who recommended it:** Balaji Srinivasan. **Key takeaway:** Balaji said the book became a major Western source and portrayed Mao and his followers as dedicated reformers. **Why it matters:** It shows the same theme through an influential book-length account. [1]
- ***The Gray Lady Winked* - Book** by Ashley Rinsberg. **Who recommended it:** Balaji Srinivasan. **Key takeaway:** Balaji called it a good book on the Herbert Matthews / Fidel Castro episode and said it goes through similar cases. **Why it matters:** It is the most explicit follow-on reading recommendation in this cluster because he directly called it a good book on the subject. [1]

Bottom line

If you only save two items from today, the thorium video has the clearest technical learning payoff, and *The Greatest Night in Pop* has the most immediately transferable leadership lesson. [1, 2]

Sources

1. Balaji Srinivasan on AI, NYT vs Tech, and Why Media Is Power| MTS Live
2. Ben Horowitz from a16z on Venture Capital Systems, Network Effects, and Culture in the AI Era
3. X post by @sama
4. X post by @elonmusk
5. X post by @RonanFarrow