A bold claim: The Web has 99 things you need to see

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The Internet is more than just a moving target. It's a hall of mirrors with no outer walls, a hot-air balloon that never stops expanding.

It's hard to get your arms around it because your arms have, you know, physical limitations. They stop at your fingertips. The [Internet](#) stops for nothing.

For that reason the people and places that take stock of it once in a while become extra valuable.

One of them is named Greg Rutter. A 26-year-old Brooklyn ad man, he tried recently to sum up the collective wisdom from him and his peers about Web memes -- sites, concepts and, mostly, videos that have spread virally and, together, make up a kind of cultural literacy guide to the emerging medium.

Perhaps his title explains the idea better: "Greg Rutter's Definitive List of the 99 Things You Should Have Already Experienced on the Internet Unless You're a Loser or Old or Something."

It's a simple page, just a series of headings that link, to the best of Rutter's ability, to the [original source](#): Chocolate Rain, PostSecret, the Flying Spaghetti Monster.

If you don't know those names, you probably want to stop here, go to the site (youshouldhaveseenthis.com) and start clicking. A few days later--

allowing for links that lead to links, time to digest, back stories that require more clicking to fully understand, etc. -- you'll have graduated Internet 101.

If you're sly about it and your boss doesn't track your Web movements, you might even still have your job.

And what you'll now know is that, in entertainment terms, the Net is the go-to venue for the momentary distraction, a kind of Short Attention Span Theater.

There are some great and heartfelt things here: Matt Harding's "Where the Hell is Matt?" video of him dancing around the world, the wedding toast to a certain Amy done in the form of a musical theater number, Flying Spaghetti Monster's razorsharp lampoon of creationism.

But mostly, there is a reduction of the Internet to some of its most easily digestible aspects: irony, animal cuteness or wackiness, grimace-inducing stunts. Only in the list as a whole is there a sense of the Net's elemental, culture-changing power.

"The biggest thing (the list) says about us is that we love to share what we know," Rutter says. "Ninety-nine percent of these things are really stupid.

A tranquilized bear falling onto a trampoline is not what anyone would consider high art. But the fact that they all went viral is only possible because we felt compelled to pass it on to at least one other person. And that's the basis of the list itself, an overwhelming desire to share what I've seen with as many people as I can."

It will probably not surprise you to hear the following about Rutter: He has a blog, a Web site, a Tumblog, a flickr page, a Twitter account and

several other Web-based projects. The list is by far his most popular. Around his office, he says, he is known as "Intergreg."

He was motivated to compile the 99 Things list, he says, when: "My friend Jason ran into some guy he knew that had never heard of 'Chocolate Rain.' " This was a man working in advertising, the creative side. Jason rattled off a few other videos that he thought were as well known as the deep-voiced tune that its singer, one Tay Zonday, insists is about race relations.

"The guy had no clue," Rutter says.

"It's like living in 1980 and saying, 'What's this 'I Love Lucy?' " So Rutter, over a couple of months, summoned the memories of his peer group and made notes. From the original 150, he pared to what he considered the essentials. "There's still a whole bunch I missed," he says. "Like I forgot all about Star Wars Trumpet Lady."

It's easy to see why these things got passed around. These are, for the most part, first-rate distractions or, in some cases, just plain shocking (warning: Rutter includes four highly not-safe-for-work bonus links at the bottom).

But they do not make you think the next great entertainment medium is emerging.

"The Internet simply allows a different format to convey the news, art and culture that we've always been interested in but in a way that's much easier to index and share," Rutter says.

"The difference is that sometimes this 'culture' might be a monkey sniffing its butt and falling out of a tree."