When I was 21, I saw a rocket.
It was the 22nd of December, a Friday, just as the sun began to set over
the San Fernando Valley - my home. There was no wind and there were no clouds.
It was a SpaceX Falcon 9 launched 150 miles north of Los Angeles, just outside of a
small town called Lompoc, carrying 10 sattelites bound for low-Earth orbit.
As I gazed, sleepily, at the plumes of vapor heaving to each side as it roared upwards,
silent to all of us on the ground, I couldn't help but feel like...this is all still so sudden.
I looked down at my phone, displaying the exact timecode of Kanye West's Good Life
ft. T-Pain I was at - I can't place it exactly, but I think it was at the end of the hook where
T-Pain sings I'mma put shit down and they exchange AYs - and I remembered what it felt
like to hold the first CDs I ever owned. N-SYNC's No Strings Attached and 50 Cent's Get Rich
or Die Tryin, a choice combination selected by my big sis but we shared them. I remember
hitting bumps in the roads of the small town we grew up in and hearing the CD skip
while my dad recited the end of the hook to What Up Gangsta because it always made us laugh.
I remember my first portable CD player only a couple years after, listening to John Mayer's
Heavier Things on the playground and imagining I was the one playing guitar - trying in vain not
to move too much lest I make it skip. 2 years later, my first MP3 player, downloading
Gorillaz and Linkin Park singles on limewire - between my mom's phone
calls and my attempts to get past the 5th Terran mission in Starcraft.

Revolution.

I am in 4th grade. I understand that there is a rift between us
and it will only grow. Moore's law, a popular technological observation
coined in 1965, by, Gordon Moore, aptly captures the relationship that my
9 year old brain was struggling to put to words. It's a pretty basic projection, an
empirical relationship, not a law, really, it just sounds better that way, Moore's
Relationship Supported By Observation But Not Theory doesn't really roll off the tongue,
a pretty. basic. projection. that proposes the number of transistors in a dense integrated circuit
doubles, and will continue to double, about every 2 years, due mostly to
MOSFET scaling - the rapid evolution and miniaturization of metal-oxide-silicon
field-effect transistors. Something about...power density relative to area - who cares(.)?
2 years after this awkward rounded red prism blared Somewhere I Belong and
Feel Good Inc. into my young gamer ears, Apple released the iPhone and IBM's
Roadrunner supercomputer broke the petaflop speed barrier. Another 2 years,
scientists created the first self-replicating, synthetic bacterial cell. 2 years, physicists at
the Large Hadron Collider announced the discovery of the Higgs Boson. 2 years, the
ESA became the first space agency to land on a comet - 67P/C-G from the Kuiper belt.
A few years more, I looked down from a rocket to my phone, itself a digital
Library of Alexandria capable of responding to my location, light level,
direction, travel speed, voice, and finger print - and we hit a bump.

The music didn't skip.

Anyways I'm gonna talk about giant anime robots
now so put on your thinkin' caps and strap in!

I'm really smart and this is;

"Gurren Lagann and Getting It"

(title card)
(intro sequence)
(Debbie Taylor - I Don't Wanna Leave You)

Hooookay where do ya even start(.)?

Gainax was born as Daicon Film in the early 1980's by then-students,
now-anime divinities Yoshiyuki Sadamoto, Hiroyuki Yamaga, Takami Akai,
Toshio Okada, Yasuhiro Takeda, Shinji Higuchi, and Hideaki Anno - when
Takeda and Okada, after making a successful bid to host the Japan Sci-Fi
Convention in the city of Osaka for its third time in a row, decided they needed
a fresh ass animated short to play at the con's opening ceremony. Word around
the block was a fellow Osaka-native otaku named Anno, say that five times fast,
actually knew how to animate and, at their first link up, blew them to high heaven with a
rough flipbook of a mecha mmmmmmovin around. The event would be named Daicon III
as it was tradition to give the convention an affectionate epithet depending on its location,
and, "Daicon" is a snarky little pun on the first kanji used to spell Osaka and a type
of Japanese radish - Daikon. (play google translate recording of Daikon) Daikon.
Akai and Yamaga entered the fold as the team's work began in a small room in the
warehouse Okada's family ran, using vinyl sheets instead of traditional acetate cels to
keep costs on the low, and the resulting 5-ish minutes of feverish fantasy they produced,
along with its sequel for Daicon IV, were love letters to everything the group of
young Otaku worshipped; Yamato, Ultraman, Star Wars, Star Trek, Kaiju, Gundam,
and Playboy - among others. This also marked the beginning of the group's long
and let's say leniant(?) use of copyrighted material. The evocation of countless licensed
characters and icons as well as the Electric Light Orchestra soundtrack that
they for sure didn't pay for made it basically impossible to release the shorts
to the public - but some laserdisc copies did make it out so they can be found today
online with relative ease. I've watched them, you should watch them,
they are genuinely a heartwarming gesture to the things they and we love.
But, more importantly, they are a super insightful snapshot of the pop culture
permeated primordial soup from which Gainax the Monolith - would soon emerge.

Anyways, fresh off the success of their twin copyright calamaties, the boys approached no other than Bandai themselves to make an OVA based on a new series of Gundam, Mobile Suit Variations - which, considering the amount of times they'd just broken the law with their products, is some insanely big dick energy - but Bandai was actually in the market for an original theatrical film due to the recent box office killings made by Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind and Macross: Do You Remember Love?. And so, in 1984, the team began production on Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honnêamise and re-incorporated themselves as Gainax. A combination of Yonago slang, gaina - meaning big - and the most popular mecha letter in history, X, which, in their words; "just sounded...really cool". Big Robot Incorporated.

After Royal Space flopped due to some shaky marketing decisions, their followup feature, Route 20, was cancelled mid-production due mostly to a lack of stacks and at least in part, presumably, because it was so similar to another cyberpunk bosozoku gang film set in a polluted dystopian city that was slated for release in the late 80's before theirs could wrap - leaving only a haunting pilot set to The Crystal Ship by The Doors behind. Again, you should watch it. Some music videos, a disastrous series, a few killer OVAs, a myriad of video games, one based on the Titanic, but mostly just porn, later and Anno sealed a historic collaboration deal with King Records while out drinking with their rep. Their sole request was that he give them "something, anything" to fill a time slot with. Enter what is inarguably the most iconic contribution to the contemporary anime canon, what would bring Gainax from the perpetual brink of ruin shoveling out precursory NewGrounds hentai quiz games I played in 5th grade to grossing hundreds of billions of yen from a single property, what would spark two and a half decades of maddened debate on every possible forum and in every possible language including three dead ones about who best girl is when it is clearly Ritsuko, you crazy bitch,

enter...

Neon Gensis Evangelion.

(Cruel Angel's Thesis w the damb.. get lite videos w audio over it)
(REMEMBER TO TEST FOR COPYRIGHT SEPARATELY)

Anno had fallen into a deep slump following Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water, a production from hell that had lost Gainax 80 million yen and caused Hiroaki Inoue to leave the company, as well as the sequel to Royal Space Force, Aoki Uru's, failure to launch due to its unsecured budget falling through. In Anno's words, the purpose of Neon Genesis was twofold; to increase the number of otaku and to reflect his four year depression. Its central theme, running away - in a more abstract sense, what it is to possess the human will - was partly salvaged from the ruins of Aoki Uru, clearly a sentiment already weighing heavily on Anno as well as the country at large as it was still recoiling from an economic depression and multiple bio-terror attacks from the doomsday cult Aum Shinrikyo. In fact, early in its development, Anno was said to have changed aspects of the series, titled Alcion at the time, thank fucking god he didn't call it that, because too many aspects of the early episodes sympathized too much with the basis of Aum Shinrikyo's beliefs. Their notorious sarin subway attacks which killed 12 people and irreversibly damaged the nerves of hundreds, though estimated to be thousands, more, occured only a month before the first cuts of its first two episodes premiered at the second Gainax festival - itself a mere three months from the series air date. Not unlike the rest of the company's history, this coupled with Anno's seeming paralysis to make decisions until the last second, set the series on a pace that left it dangerously close to collapse until its completion, often changing entire episodes after their preview had already aired. A common otaku pop trivia conjecture as to why its final two episodes play out the way they do, an abstruse psychoanalysis of its characters with little in the way of action or set pieces, is because Anno had simply depleted what remained of his time and money - but Toshio Okada has since clarified that it was largely just because Anno "couldn't decide the ending until the time came, that's his style". Even with its breakneck changes in direction, though, the ethos of Evangelion ultimately remained the same from its inception. Hopelessness is inevitable, but to give in to hopelessness is a betrayal.

This is all important to mention, because the connection between Neon Genesis Evangelion and Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann as not simply achievements from the same studio but complimentary works, sister series, is imperative to appreciating how hard Gurren Lagann slaps.

And if you don't think they're sister series, I'm going to rob you with a real gun.

A timid young boy still failing to cope with the loss of one or both of his parents lives in a suffocating environment which he is pulled-slash-pushed out of by his parental surrogate and epitomization of courage, which he more or less deifies through the end of the series, the inherited burden of humanity's collective hope falls to his shoulders as he battles giant machines (asterisk) from above sent to eradicate humanity from the surface by an unseen force, using what are fundamentally the same machines (asterisk) built with technologies stolen from their enemy and controlled by their pilot's spirit, with a noticeable shift in tone and form around its 17th episode, culminating in a Bro Just Be Yourself pep talk finale meant to cheerlead its otaku progeny into not ffffffffelin so sad. The key to their difference is in the angle.

NGE obsesses itself with keeping it real, as much as it can anyways, in a show about giant robots. Pen Pen Hive stand up. It deals heavily in the psychological impacts of grief, trauma, guilt, and loss of faith - but from the perspective of its entire cast being incapable of successfully combating these until the series' final moments.

A feint retreat for hopelessness, so to speak.

Conversely, TTGL optimistically smashes through the pain with its hard hard head
and presents us with its many incarnations of despair solely to drill through them
in the biggest, brightest, and loudest way possible. Its message is not simply that you can
fight back against misery, but that you have an obligation to bring the fight to it.
Point blank. Both are incredible works that deserve the reverence they're given,
though only one cedes a whole shit load of ground to a doomsday cult,
but what I'm getting at here is the same juxtaposition that can be drawn between
Satoshi Kon's Perfect Blue and Millennium Actress can be drawn
between these big robs dealing with big probs and only the latter
succeeds in making me feel warm and fuzzy.

So let's talk about it.

Gurren Lagann erupted onto the scene on April 1st, 2007, 12 years after the premiere of
its gloomy big sis. Penned by veteran playwrite slash Getter Robo superfan Kazuki
Nakashima and the series directorial debut of Hiroyuki Imaishi, another mecha
obsessive who'd gotten his start as a key animator on, you guessed it,
Neon Genesis Evangelion.

Cue opening.

(BigQuint clips over it 4 copyright dodge)
(again test ahead of time plz)

God it's been like 7 years since I first watched it and the OP is still an
instant shot of dopamine to my brain. It's just - its energy is contagious.
In fact, the actual construction of its opening, is a good place to start,
as it immediately sets it apart, and in my opinion, above, much of its lineage -
both in genre and studio. One of the great unspoken laws of mecha, observation, not a
law, we've been over this, in particular mecha as it was in the 80's through the 2000's
is the first shot of an actual human in your OP needs to be the protagonist and they
need to be alone when it cuts to them. That's why Shinji comin in over that Cruel
Angel's Thesis lookin like the cover of Nothing Was The Same. I mean - Mobile Suit
Gundam, Code Geass, Mobile Suit ZETA Gundam, Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ,
Eureka 7, Mobile Suit Victory Gundam, Macross, Macross 7, Mobile Fighter G Gundam,
Mobile Suit Gundam Wing, Full Metal Panic, Turn A Gundam, UFO Robot Grendizer,
Armored Trooper Votoms, Space Runaway Ideon, Metal Armor Dragonar,
Super Dimension Cavalry Southern Cross, Blue Comet
SPT Layzner - trust me on this one. It's - I don't know why! They just do.
If I had to wager a guess, though, at least in the case of our dear old Alcion,
it's because it establishes that gd main character, from the jump, to be alone.

(MY MOMMA TOLD ME THIS WHAT RIGHT FOR ME)
(feel like this one is safe bc it's literal 2 secs)

Physically, spiritually, emotionally, they are an island - which does Big Combat.

So it's sick as hell that Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann opens on the in-universe
symbol of the protagonist's soul, rather than pillow shots, then two quick shots of Gurren Lagann
itself, and straight to Simon in the company of his two best friends. Our hero does not begin
in isolation. This is a subtle but incredibly effective deviation from genre norms, and works
particularly well in service of what I like to call Simon's Massive L Mini-Arc, because by
the time his first on-screen trauma occurs, and boy does it occur, the opening has already
baked into us the expectation that he will be flanked by his companions and he will
be happy. He might be a bit shaky behind the controls for the first few EPs a la Shinji,
but friendship and happiness are inexorable elements of his existence once he
reaches the surface - and up until the rug is pulled out from under
him in Episode 8 - our confidence in this is only bolstered by the series
as more members join Team Dai-Gurren. The same is true of
the second OP which accompanies the show's post time-skip arc.
The first shot of a character that isn't a flashback is Simon sat beside
Nia in Lagann, but, what happens the literal first episode we get to see it?

(Nia Anti-Spiral transformation freestyle)

Through the show's openings alone we can discern much of its thematic heart because
they don't change to reflect these losses in a negative way. Simon loses his big brother
role model father figure, tragically, but the change made to the opening post-Kamina
death is a shot of way more people beside and behind him. Just because you feel alone,
doesn't mean that you are. In fact, you know how Nakashima's favorite mecha starts?
With the BOYS!

In continuing with the Gainax institution of wearing their influences on their sleeves,
Nakashima's love of 70's mecha and Imaishi's of the 80's come together to create
a simultaneously brilliantly refreshing and warmly nostalgic take on the genre
by blending the brotherhood and combination from Getter Robo, much of
the first arc's setting as well as the massive team dynamic and theft from Combat
Mecha Xabungle, and its blistering, over the top, multi-axis combat from Daddy himself.

(Gundam clipxxxxx babie)

Adding to its already infectious charm, it is also bursting at the seams
with what is inarguably the most endearing anime trope of all time.

The Called Attack.

The Mans Wrath Slash, The Take Your Hands Off My Dear Little Brother Kick, The I Have The Best Wife In The Universe Swing, The Giga Drill Break, The Giga Drill Maximum, The Infinity Big Bang Storm, The Man On Fire Blazing Chariot Kick, The Kittan Stinger, The Hell's Headsplitter, The Gember Press, The Bloody Clasper, The Carousel of Death, The Lazengan Overload, The Spiral Path, The King Kittan Giga Drill Break, The Double Boomerang Spiral, The Space Time Shattering Burst Spinning Punch, The Space Sunbeam, and last but not least; The Lagann Impact.

And the execution of these is made to feel nothing short of euphoric every. single. time. Simon's "I'm not my big bro" speech when he snaps out of his grief and performs his first Giga Drill Break without Kamina is one of my favorite moments in anything. The reaction shots of Team Dai-Gurren and Guame the Immovable as he belts out the phrase "finishing move" over Shoko Nakagawa's Happily Ever After and everyone, including you, knowing what's about to happen, feels like watching Shawn Michaels save Triple H from The Spirit Squad and hearing JR scream their finishing moves over the roar of a crowd who just saw the rebirth of D Generation X - magnified by a thousand. It is so fucking sick. The series' final battle is the most intoxicating adrenaline high I've ever seen and I revisit it whenever I need motiviation - which is admittedly really often. It's so good that my first time finishing the series, I restarted the last episode and watched it again the second the credits began to role, and I continued to do that every time, until last month, so I didn't learn Gurren Lagann, had an epilogue for 7 years. I'm not joking.

Speaking of its use of music, Taku Iwasaki's breadth of genre in his compositions is a revelation and perfectly reflects the eclectic variance in influence that Gurren Lagann so proudly wears; from the defiant Rap is a Man's Soul to the triumphant Pierce the Heavens With Your XXX! to the dismal Poison Prison to the melancholic An Elegy for Kamina's Old Man, Who Turned Into a Skeleton, I struggle to name a more diverse and well balanced collection of music to accompany what is already an exquisitely well-formed body of work. The use of the frantic, almost desperate sounding Blue Monday Electrical Parade anxiously clawing at our ears when the Anti-Spirals first attack, and during every subsequent battle with them until our characters gain the upper hand, expertly accentuates the disorientation and panic instilled by them and what they symbolize, and its recession, for instance in Episode 22 just before the Arch-Gurren Lagann combination when No Way! Only 1 Minute and 20 Seconds to Suck It Up surges into its place, does much of the heavy lifting in illustrating the odds being tipped back into our protagonist's favor.
The most potent aspect of its soundtrack, though, has got be how sparingly Imaishi actually employs it, a perfect example being when Kamina's death is realized by Simon and the others at the end of Episode 8 - all sound is swept away in an instant and all we're left with is the rain, sharp and unrelenting, scoring the static reactions of our just heart-broken team. Imaishi understands that, when a loss that deep is experienced, the ensuing stillness feels impenetrable. No music in the world is loud enough to hear over the rain. It's also gotta be a shoo in for Top 5 OPs of all time. I've spent more time listening to Sorairo Days than I have listening to every audio book I've ever bought.
A well realized soundtrack is only deserving of a well realized world, and Gurren Lagann's is nothing if not that. Between flying fish vaulting over the water with sticks and rearward mountain dogs rushing down dunes, the variety of wildlife developed for each environment encountered feel as fresh as they do charming, the various Gunmen adorned skyscrapers in Kamina City, each with their own conflicting design language, the melange of differentn vehicles and how they traverse their environments, the diversity in appearance and demeanor between its characters, and the distinction between village cultures from how they accessorize down to their naming conventions, lend themselves so wonderfully to creating a truly dynamic, liveable Earth - and this gives the show's ever increasing stakes all the more height, especially when that Earth hangs in the balance.

I think what's most precious about Gurren Lagann to me, though, is how consistently it denies its viewers vindication in whatever pessimism they'd brought to it. It's like cum denial but for negativity. Its determination to convince you its many villains and anti-heroes are, just that, villains, only to then force Team Dai-Gurren - and its audience - to learn how they arrived there and why it was the inherent altruism within us, merely contorted by the worst of our condition; depression, fear, and hate, is staggeringly mature for a show that dedicates an entire episode to how desparate Kamina is to see the girls of Team-Dai Gurren taking a bath or required multiple episode shot lists to be cut down to keep every time Boota jumps into Yoko's cleavage or the men of the team spurt blood from their nose like they were just hit with Wolf Fang Fist. Certainly the devil has enough advocates, and the characters are still given their penance if it is deserved, but the ambiguity within that, the care taken to remind us that humanity's factory setting is, yes, to be stupid and headstrong and impulsive, but sappy and beneavolent and nurturing in equal measure amidst an otherwise abnormally straightforward world of ultraviolence that we are moving across and upwards from at an exponentially accelerating pace is... I don't know, it's just sweet. Rossiou's arc in particular is critical to this argument the series makes. His upbringing in Adai Village, an environment endlessly more profficient at suffocating the embers of hope than either Littner or Giha weighs heavily on his every thought and action, becoming more and more evident as the series progresses. In his first full episode spent with the team, he immediately dawns the mantle of the voice of reason, constrasting the levity and enthusiasm of the rest in the bath house, and, though repeatedly proven wrong, surmises life can only be this straight forward for someone like Kamina or Simon or Yoko or Kittan or the others. His fixation on preserving life, protecting others no matter the cost, doubles back on itself as he recreates the mechanisms that left him with this pain in the first place; themselves wrought by a desparate man trying to keep as many people alive as he could without ever considering to challenge the conditions that lead him to it. Kamina's anger towards Father Magin and the team's towards Rossiou in the second arc is the show's anger towards resignation to circumstance and the rationalization of it. And Gurren Lagann's answer to it isn't, you know, "your soul has been rendered null, you are cast into the void", no, you just need to be punched in the face. You need to get mad. The question Rossiou poses to himself; "Was it wrong for humanity to dream of living on the surface?" encapsulates every character placed in the position of The Power in the series. Chief Shak, Father Magin, Viral, Lordgenome, The Anti-Spirals, they all exist as the Apollo to Team Dai-Gurren's Dionysus. And this power could be an analogue for...anything that resonates. Fascism, abuse, zealotry, depression - the cold and the rational are the parable of the stray sheep with the hot headed idealists playing the role of the shepherds.

When I was younger, I didn't - uh - I don't "get" Evangelion. What I mean is - 19 to 20 was a really weird part of my life. I was super lonely, super broke, and working in this call center that I only showed up to enough to like afford food and internet for the month. I was down bad, so naturally I did what any depressed new adult would do and I marathoned Neon Genesis Evangelion in a day by myself in a pitch black room. And it was beautiful! I love Eva! I think it's brilliant and I'm deeply appreciative of what Anno managed to channel his pain into. Uh, a funny thing about that is my friends for like years by that point had been jokingly calling me Shinji because, even prior to that arc of my life so to speak, I'd just always had this defeatist sort of self loathing streak in me, but aside from what I had absorbed through cultural osmosis, I didn't know exactly why they made the comparison, so the final two episodes seeing his many defense mechanisms and complexes just be torn apart by everyone he admires hit like super different. Uhm - but we were all young and I was - I deserved it, you know, I was really annoying - because I didn't like being me. I didn't want to be. Which was, of course, maddenning to the people who did like me. So one night, that summer, during this like Age of Empires II kick we were on for a week, it's like 2am, I'm in bed just kind of listening to the group call, and my friend Drew, out of nowhere is like; "Hey, didn't you watch Evangelion?" and I'm like; "Yeah bro it's sick!" and without skipping a beat he goes; "Well you clearly didn't get it, because you're still depressed." and we got into this like cartoonishly stupid fight about it. Uhm, but the reason it irked me wasn't because it was like, mean, or something, I mean at the time I SAID that's why, because it was such an out of pocket thing to say that was lowkey like really funny, buuuuut, that's not why it bothered me. It bothered me because I knew he was right just for a reason I didn't understand. It was like, Ratchet & Clank, like I saw the entrance to the point but I needed to unlock Gravity Boots before I could grasp it. Evangelion didn't make me mad and it should have. I remember, everybody hated to see me like that, you know, just coming home from work looking kind of dead, subsisting off of frozen burritos, and one day I got in this argument with my dad I think about like dishes or something small and at one point I said, you know, pointing out that I'm letting myself suck right now doesn't make me feel better. And he was like yeah it's not supposed to. It's supposed to make you mad. And then he gave me a hug, and he told me he loved me, and I thought of that argument with Drew, and then I thought of Gurren Lagann? Okay, yeah, I know the ending of Evangelion is supposed to be like "no you have to like, work on yourself and then you'll like, you know, pain is just what be happenin so, cope". You know, it's, Gurren Lagann is imperfect and maybe even haphazard, as are its characters, but there's a harmony it achieves in the center of that anarchy, that allows it to feel a lot more personal, a lot more human, to me, than Evangelion ever did, and I think that's worth a lot more than it's maybe given credit for. Drew's the reason I have this channel. Uh, actually, that whole group of friends is. That's what Nightly is. I made BREADSWORD in 2012. I remember in December of 2011 I was rewatching Jesse Cox, at the time OMFGCata's, The Day Deathwing Came video, because like my laptop would overheat if I played World of Warcraft for more than a half hour, and forget about walking through a major city, and I was like wow. I want to do this - or, or, something at least adjacent to it. I landed on the name broadsword a couple months after moving to California

(JEREMY BASED COOKING VIDEO SHOUT OUTS BROADSWORD 2012)

it's like, a bit I took from a Bo Burnham special and rephrased, the one about how the name Jesus of Nazerith sounds like something from Lord of the Rings, because my neighbor couldn't remember my actual name, but then I realized that broadsword is a straight up noun, so I changed a letter, and 16 year old me made BREADSWORD almost a year later to the elation of my boys. And then it gathered dust for 4 years. I built a pc, I had a mic, but I had already sunk too deep into my own head, I was so scared of what people would think of me, I didn't know what I wanted to make anymore, and I just felt really stupid and embarassed of myself for I didn't even know why, so I resolved to do nothing. I learned how to edit by making weird shitposts and cutting together videos for my friends of us gaming and stuff.

(clips of I hope I get c*ncer and fucking die video and Sniper Elite video dj dynamite part)

And that was it! I was just gonna, you know, not do what I knew I wanted to because I had rationalized myself out of trying. And everyone was mad about that except me. I couldn't get mad.

(THIS IS THE TALE OF A MAN WHO HAS YET TO REALIZE WHAT HIS DESTINY IS ep1-7)

Then Drew, one night, he was like the designated film boy of Nightly,
in fact, in that argument about Evangelion and another we had about why I thought
The Clone Wars is actually a good movie, I specifically came at him about how
he only likes really pretentious black and white films, but now they're like my
favorite, because of him. Uhm, so Drew invited me and some other friends to
watch a movie - Ingmar Bergman's The Seventh Seal.
And I - it was like seeing the other side of the moon or something.
It just clicked - instantly.
Later that week I watched Akira Kurosawa's Seven Samurai
for the first time and a month later, I posted my first video.

(AND THE MAN LEARNS HIS DESTINY ep8)

It was this short review of Stanley Kubrick's Eyes Wide Shut, opening with how
the use of Dmitry Shostikovich's Suite for Jazz Orchestra No. 2 accentuated the explicit
disdain for power structures underpinning the film because of Dmitry's rebellion
against the Soviet Union hidden in his compositions and letters which, of course, K Breezy
would have known. It had a Cam'Ron joke and I key-framed a PS4 into Tom Cruise
and Nicole Kidman's daughter's hands. I wish I could show you, but I lost it.
The title card's font was Bernadette. I don't remember what size.
It got like, a few hundred views, and I was through the roof.
I was still grappling with depression and a lot of anxiety,

(THIS IS THE TALE OF A MAN WHO
CONTINUES TO FIGHT AGAINST FATE ep9-ep16)

but I felt like I was starting to get back up. Fast forward a year, to 2017, I made a
video about Treasure Planet. It was like the least popular Disney movie I could think
of that I loved and someone had already made one about Don Bluth's Anastasia
from the 90's which was supposed to be my next project. I figured it could do maybe
5,000 views and almost resorted to uploading it to vimeo instead because I was on my
like ninth cut uploaded to YouTube due to copyright and I really wanted my friends
to see it, but I had a gut feeling that I should maybe just keep trying to get it past. And it paid off!
I had, you know, I had like a lot of people watching something I made myself that wasn't a joke. I
remember I ran out to the living room and showed my dad the view count when it hit 50,000 and I told him
the next video I drop will be good enough to make him watch it. I wasn't at the call center anymore,
thank god, I was working at this place that he helped me get a job at, uh, that sucked less,
and I was really kind of getting it together. You know?

There's a great deal of honor paid to the decision to be stupid in Gurren Lagann, that,
I fear gives the impression of a lack of intelligence or substance when compared to
the mecha that proceeded it, especially its sister series, and I think that that's
selling it catastrophically short. Gurren Lagann is an exploration of Arthur
Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Representation just through the lens of someone who
thinks Schopenhauer was a dickhead who had it all backwards because he was and he did,
delivered as The Epic of Gilgamesh meets Camellot but somehow even hornier and
there's a robot that's canonically 10 million light years in height whose name
is the show's name. Schopenhauer felt that at the heart of life, there is a blind, irrational
force called "Will" striving ad infinitum. That it is the dynamic, foundational essence of
this universe, expressed through humanity as sexual drive and the "will to live", and because these
things could be the source of great misery, he argued that humanity must do what we can to suppress
ourselves. Thus the drill as Simon's weapon of choice, and the spiral as the symbol of humanity's
agrestal ambitions. Frederich Nietzsche, well known Shope Stan, would later recapture this
as the Dionysian impulse in his book The Birth of Tragedy - which I cribbed from earlier.
Gurren Lagann is so adept in cloaking its sophistication because it actively resents
the concept of being analyzed by its viewer or its characters analyzing its world. Much
of the second arc, especially, relies on the many instances of Leeron, Lordgenome, and
Leyte's scientific explanations falling on deaf ears only for the team to cheer when they
reduce it to fighting spirit or love changing the universe, as its main source of humor but
it then doubles back and immediately validates this 4D chess approach as to maintain its
zeal towards the from the hip intuition and impulse Team Dai-Gurren acts on as
opposed to reason. In his video My Tansformers Midlife Crisis, better YouTuber and
person, Hbomberguy, points out that in Transformers - The Movie the Autobots' decision
to re-try the universal greeting after it had just failed in addition to its use of music
interwoven with the concept of daring, namely Stan Bush's Dare and Weird Al
Yancovic's Dare to be Stupid, is the essential, moral crux of the film. The naive and
childlike decision to try to be positive in the face of what we can only rationalize
as certain death, certain failure, is positioned as the radical and only choice to
save the universe. The assertion that things can be made better, allows the
impossible to happen, and Gurren Lagann captures and elevates this - perfectly.
I mean, it's literally Team Dai-Gurren's catch phrase. More crucial than
their brazen stupidity, though, is how clear Imaishi and Nakashima
are in how you must arrive at it. Stupidity may be the vessel with which we
pierce through the ceilings of despair and fear, but getting mad - our will to live
made manifest as a rush of tenacity to make better our material and emotional
condition - is its main source of energy. And they succeed in not allowing this
righteous, well-meaning infuriation of the spiral, our hereditary determination
to not settle for what we've been left to, to be confused with malevolence or
castigation - either of one's self or of others. Anyone can reach the surface, but first -
you have to get mad.

(LET ME SEE YOU GRIT THOSE TEETH)

That December, on a Wednesday, I spent my bus ride to work digging for music and proof-reading my next video's script - even though I had already recorded it twice. I was confident that I had found my vocation. It's about Dr. Strangelove, another Kubrick, something I thought would be more, like, deep to flex on my dad with and prevent myself from being pidgeonholed as a Disney-slash-Disney adjacent sort of channel. I got off the bus and skated to a corner store to buy one of these Starbucks DoubleShot energy drinks I was kinda hooked on at the time. On my way, I took a break to listen to Sorairo Days and imagine I was the one playing guitar. When I get home tonight, I thought, I'll finish cutting the audio and maybe if I'm lucky even get to start on the edit. I could hardly wait. A while into my shift, I looked down at my phone. My sister was calling me, but, I figured it probably wasn't important so I decided to call her back on my break. I put my phone back in my pocket, and I felt it start to ring again.

Weird.

(THIS IS THE TALE OF A MAN WHO
CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR HIS OWN PATH EVEN
WHILE HE IS BEING BETRAYED BY FATE)

The thing is, I tried really hard to figure out Evangelion when I watched it, you know? Because I wanted it to be some transformative experience for me. I wanted to get it. I wasn't, nothing about it left me confused, it wasn't challenging to follow, I was just so focused on ascertaining its point. On knowing it so I could feel, I don't know, better?

One of my favorite moments in Gurren Lagann is this exchange between The Anti-Spirals and Nia. The Anti-Spirals, while explaining her insignificance to her, say; "We have no need to understand, we only need to know." and she replies; "Then you will never be able to defeat them.".
It feels so definitive.
Like I said before, The Power as it exists as opposition to The Will and as it changes hands throughout the show, can be analaogous to virtually any oppressive force in this world, I think that's what makes it such an easy to appreciate show, besides its ridiculously hot cast, awe-inspiring animation, and fresh as fuck giant robots.

(LOOK AT THE FUCKIN DRIP)

Its accessibility for projection. The Anti-Spirals in particular, are maybe the best metaphor I've ever seen put to a cel for depression. Nothing about them makes visual sense for the universe they're in and this immediately abstracts them from the spiral and from the physical, each component of their fleet seems more hopeless to fight back against and more grotesque in its form than the last, and their appearance commands the same emotional whiplash as climbing out of a hole you just spent years of your life in only to be spiked straight back into it by the universe.
In fact, that is literally what their appearance is.

I love how it processes death.

For such an uplifting show, Tengen Toppa Gurren Lagann is inundated with pain and grief - its valleys made to feel like yawning chasms to contest its celestial peaks. Kamina's agony upon realizing he'd reached the surface only for his father to never see him stood atop it, is palpable. To carry such a weight is a Herculean task - and this enthralls us further in the hero's journey. And when Simon, in turn, loses Kamina, it feels, I don't know, validating when he lashes out at nothing, at whatever speculative god there is to feel hate towards, at his friends trying to comfort him, at himself, until the loathing feeds back and leaves him still in his misery as he watches the rest of the world continue to move forward around him. It feels...unmistakably hominin.

The last thing my dad ever said to me was that morning. As I walked out the front door and looked back at him, smoking on the porch and calmly watching the sun rise over the valley he'd lived in for most of his life, he said later buddy, then, just before the door closed, shouted after me "and remember the duck!". The night before we were talking about what annoyed us about work, and after noticing that I was in a more sullen mood than usual, he reminded me about why ducks are waterpoof(?). It's an oil, uh, from their Uropygial gland, I think it's called, that makes the water roll right off of them - hence the idiom. So when things get to feeling like it's too much, I just need to let it all roll off my back.

Stupid fucking cigarettes. He used to joke with people, uhm, when they told him they were bad for him, he'd pat his shirt pocket and go "No these? These are my friends!". He always wanted to make people laugh, to encourage them, he had a joke for everything, and every single ambition or project or phase my sister and I could come up with he would cheer on without a second thought.
He knew he was going to die soon.
He was such a great, big man, you know, he had these like Popeye arms and these giant hands and this booming laugh and this...enormous heart.
We found, uh, a pamphlet in his desk at his shop about heart stuff and, you know, like stuff from a clinic - a doctor that wanted him to call back or whatever.
He seemed invincible to us.

He never got sick.
At most, he'd get a mild cold once every year, the only medication he owned was aspirin that expired before the PS2 came out, and he could count on one hand how many times in his life he'd been to a doctor.
Though the truth of it is none of us could afford it if he wanted to.
A doctor told us they were initially afraid that a head injury he sustained when he fell during his heart attack could have damaged something because of the height, you know, that it itself could kill a person, but all it left on him was a cut.
We joked that it was because he was too hard headed.
We said goodbye on Christmas Eve.

(I will never forget. I will never forget this minute, this second.)

MAN that sucked.
For weeks afterwards I had sores in my mouth from where I bit down to keep myself from crying in front of people.
I let myself twice. 30 seconds each.
I kept working on the video, though I knew he'd never see it.
Besides, I needed the money now. Death is expensive as it turns out.
I never got to show him something I was proud of. Like a real thing I made as me, as a real adult, even if it's as insignificant as a youtube video where I mispronounce the word nuclear and get flamed for it for the rest of my life.
I never got to show him my Silver Play Button for 100,000 subscribers, which a part of me knows is corny, but it's the only award I ever got.
He never saw me come into my own, you know?
I mean - what the fuck is that?

I had just made it to the surface.

(THIS IS THE TALE OF A MAN WHO BLOWS A HOLE IN THE FATE OF A UNIVERSE THAT IS RULED BY THE ENDLESS CYCLE OF VIOLENCE)

Gurren Lagann is also full of mistakes in a way that I can't help but love.
Nobuyoshi Habara's work on this shot just after Simon and Kamina combine for the first time in Episode 3 gives Gurren Lagann this neck that is just...completely different from the rest of the series but the team thought it was so cool to have Habara of all people freestyle them a neck, that they didn't change it. The same goes for Yoko being ever slightly taller in Episode 1. Atsushi Nishigori was going off of his personal designs instead of the ones the team had agreed on, and, you know, they might have kept her that tall following that but, according to Imaishi, Shouji Saeki drew her extra hot in the second episode so they just stuck to his shorter Yoko.
It's like the anime version of Bigger Luke. In fact, the prologue to the show, in keeping with Gainax, in particular Neon Gensis Evangelion's tradition, was Imaishi calling their ending like way too confidently and not realizing they'd completely outpaced it until well after it already aired. And I think, actually, this sort of discord and casualness is one of the show's greatest assets. The reason Gurren Lagann is so successful at building such a naturally warm and familiar feeling team, aside from beginning with foundational one-shots for its first three episodes, to highlight Simon, Kamina, and Yoko separately thus alleviating much of the future groundwork necessary to introduce characters who occupy a similar space or are otherwise initially tethered to one of them, is because the team working on them were just as youthful and lax and complimentary and intuitive. Most of Gurren Lagann's core team worked together practically since the onset of their careers. Imaishi has said he would storyboard already imagining what Saeki's illustrations would look like so he barely ever needed to consult with him. In fact, after the first episode, there were hardly any shot checks between Imaishi and the team at all - often not exceeding 10 for a whole episode. Everyone knew the heart of what everyone else wanted to do and if the approach didn't line up, that's okay, that's balance, that's honest. Imaishi's own plot for Rossiou, Gimmy, and Darry's introductory episode, scripted by Hiroshi Yamaguchi, was almost completely transformed in a re-write by Osamu Kobayashi before they even got to storyboarding.
And Episode 5 is one of the most dexterous balancing acts between extreme despair and ludicrous comedy in the entire series because of that. One of the production team's paramount ambitions with Gurren Lagnan was to raise young talents, the same way many of them were raised on Evangelion and His and Her Circumstances, so many of the visible disconnects between fundamentally identical things throughout an episode, for instance the style in which extreme closeups are drawn or the way characters run, is because most episodes saw a veteran animation director handling Part B while the new blood handled part A. They frequently handed animators whose specialization were mecha segments spent entirely outside of Gunmen and vice versa. Imaishi's reasoning being that things come out stronger if you don't let yourself think too hard about them or literally have less of a capacity to.
The only possible outcome is what your gut is telling you.
Gurren Lagann is a work created by the same philosophy it professes.

After everything happened, time felt like it stopped working the way it normally does.
I used to be really patient and I turned into this like...obsessive maximizer of time.
And I wasn't even good at using my time efficiently. I was - I was actually afraid
of time. Eventually I had to hide the clock on my Windows taskbar so I couldn't
see it while I worked on videos or I'd have like a diet panic attack because it was
moving too fast. I started to get into arguments at my job because I needed to
have my phone on me no matter what. I, you know, I started like, grinding my teeth,
in my sleep and having nightmares(?). I got...bitter. All the energy I had just found started feeding back,
excitement for what I could make next quickly turned to resentment towards the reasons I couldn't
and sometimes even my peers who could. People I really like, you know, I'd just...hate that they
got to have a regular shot at it. I'd feel panicked and stressed if I took time off to spend with the
people in my life, and I'd feel full of dread and guilt afterwards because I could've, you
know, made more progress in the game we were playing or I could've been more relaxed on a date.
Most days, though, I'd go to sleep thinking I shouldn't have taken time off to begin with. It feels really
stupid when you realize you aren't having fun anymore with the only thing you were ever sure
you wanted to do. As time went on, scripts took longer and longer to write because
I felt like I had exhausted whatever was left of the will I had.
All the video ideas I could come up with were about him.
Capitalizing on ever smaller windows to produce something worth sharing,
ever still in my despondency, ever incapable of truly getting mad about it.

One of the first lines in Gurren Lagann is
"So, all the lights in the heavens are our enemy"
and it reminds me of this quote from Joseph Kittinger.
He's this officer in the US Air Force who participated in Project Excelsior, a series
of jumps from weather balloons in our Earth's stratosphere from 1959 to 1960.
On his final and highest jump, Excelsior III, he realized the pressure seal
on his right glove had failed, early on in his ascent, but, knowing if he said anything
that ground control wouldn't let him go through with it, he stayed silent while his hand
overwhelmed him with pain, quickly expanding to nearly thrice its size and becoming wholly unusable,
which it turns out is a problem when you need to open a parachute. At 102,800 feet above our little blue dot,
he swayed for 12 minutes before plumeting from the highest step humanity had ever built. While he waited,
for what surely felt like an eternity, to drift over his designated landing area, sweating from the blistering
solar radiation on the left side of his face and watching it escape as vapor from the right, processing
in real time that our understanding of temperature breaks down away from home, he mused to the
rest of our species so far below; "There is a hostile sky above me. Man will never conquer space.
He may live in it, but he will never conquer it. The sky above is void and very black and very hostile."
I'm not sure if he meant it as a challenge, buuuut, that's how humanity took it. Just as Evangelion
and Gurren Lagann pirouette around one another as a symbiotic call and response, so too
are some of Simon's last lines of Gurren Lagann a response to some of his first.
Episode 27 - All the Lights in the Sky are Stars. Every episode's title is a quote
from one of its characters, whichever the prevailing Team Dai-Gurren member is at
that time, separated into 4 arcs of influence - with 1-8 being Kamina's, 9-15 being
Nia's, 17-22's being Rossiou's, and 23-27's being Simon's. In the epilogue of the series,
gazing at the same sky he did in its prologue, our protagonist offers an amendment - to
himself, to The Anti-Spiral, to Schopenhour, to Nietzsche, to Anno, to Kittinger, to us;
"The lights in the sky are not our enemy.
They're just stars, waiting for us to reach them."
I think Gurren Lagann shines the most in its capacity for love - for us.
How unabashedly it cheers for humanity's continued evolution, evermore
rapid in our ascent. Maybe that's why its pacing so remarkably mirrors it.
Every episode feeling like it's falling over faster than the last but never losing its
compsure. It takes every opportunity possible to remind us of the heights we're
capable of soaring to and to punch us in the face for doubting that we can.
Of the kindness, and the gentleness, and the bravery, and
the beauty, and the hilarity, and the ingenunity, and the brilliance, and the love,
and the naivity that our will is imbued with. Stupidity is baked in to our DNA and
it's our best quality. And I think no other studio is quite as capable of evoking
this depth of love than the boys over at Big Robot. The biggest otakus in Osaka.
9 years after Kittinger's humbled reflection from the edge of our world,
we walked on the moon. In the following 51, 239 people from 19 countries have
flown to the International Space Station as it hurtles around our home at 17,150 miles
per hour - 1 million 200 thousand some odd feet higher than Kittinger ever got.
Humanity is capable of unequaled care for other lives and things but
for ceilings, we care very little. Whether imposed through prudence, or malice,
or ignorance, or anxiety, or depression, or grief - their shattering will always be an
inevitability. We evolve from the person we were a minute before. We'll keep growing,
and we'll keep climbing, faster and faster, and when one of us stops, the next
generation will be there to take our place - and go even further.
Because we can't help it! Because it's in our nature!
Because - that's how a drill works.

(Inside people's hearts is a deep, dark, terrifying hole. This becomes a new tunnel.)

When I was 21, I saw a rocket.
What I know is that it was the 22nd of December, a Friday, just as the sun began to set over
the San Fernando Valley - my home. There was no wind and there were no clouds.
It was a SpaceX Falcon 9 launched 150 miles north of Los Angeles, just outside of a
small town called Lompoc, carrying 10 sattelites bound for low-Earth orbit.

What I understand...is that it was him...in some sort of...nebulous way.

I still wonder what the view was like.

It's been just over 2 years since I lost my dad, and since I resolved that my world had ended. I'm reporting back to you here, now, on the horizon of my tomorrow, to tell you that I was wrong. It's funny, I was watching Gurren Lagann, and I finally got mad. This isn't one of those videos, where like, you know, I'm like burnt out and I'm quitting, I already was. For way too long. This is more like Murtaugh in Lethal Weapon 3. I'm not turning in my badge and gun, this is my re-admittance to the task force - of enjoying doing this. I know how easy it is to stay in despair. The world can be a really dark place, especially right now, we don't have to talk about why, orrrrr maybe you're watching this years from now, and some other great calamity in your world or humanity's at large feels like the universe specifically engineered a windmill dunk to ruin your whole life. To make you feel afraid of your own growth, or of our growth, to convince you to repress the urge to move forward, for fear of what could go wrong or of letting go of what you've already lost, to lie still underneath a ceiling that you or someone else has rationalized for you, but I promise you we're gonna get back up. It's an obligation. It's part of us. We're too stupid not to.

(THIS IS THE ENORMOUS TALE OF A TINY MAN FROM A TINY BLUE PLANET ON THE EDGE OF A WHIRLING GALAXY - IF YOU WERE TO TELL IT IN FULL THE SUN WOULD RISE BEFORE YOU FINISH)

You know, for a long time I despaired over why those were the last words he said to me or if he even knew they would be. I thought, I thought in some way he must have felt like he had to, you know? Like, he was still worried how I'd handle things when he was gone - that I'd be too weak, too hard on myself, and I needed a pass to not carry it. Buuuut I get it now.

What he really meant was...let me see you grit those teeth.

(outro)
(I'M MAD AS HELL AND I'M NOT GONNA TAKE THIS ANYMORE)
(Fragile - Tatsuro Yamashita)

Yo also, uhm, I didn't have anywhere in the script to fit either of these facts but the president of Gainax, Takeshi Sawamura, was arrested in like 1999 for tax fraud for laundering like a billion and a half yen of their Evangelion money through, uh, other animation studios, like with their help, and then leaving them with a cut and putting the cash in safety deposit boxes, and Takami Akai, one of the co-founders we talked about earlier and producer of Gurren Lagann until Episode 5, had to resign from the company for flaming people on 2chan who were criticizing Osamu Kobayashi's animation in Episode 4, which are like two of the hardest possible reasons you could ever lose your senior staff over. Gainax is definitely the most powerful animation studio to ever do it off those things alone. Free my mans and have a good night.

Also wash your hands and shout outs to all my cashiers and baristas!

I love y'all!

Fuck capitalism!

Maybe I should cut that part!

Goodnight!

Dedicated to My Dad, Who Doesn't Live Here Anymore . . .