

The Power of Silly

"No accident ever comes late; it always arrives precisely on time."

Mark Twain

Making Bingeclock

Ideas can seem to descend on you as much like a mad pigeon as like a crispy leaf. They waft, they float, and if you let them, they settle down at the top of your head, or across a shoulder where you can see them out of the corner of your eye.

The thing is, you never know when the *right* idea is going to land. You can guess. Usually, there is a feeling that comes with it – something like the buzz you'll get when you return to an old, familiar place or feel a loved one's hug. A painting, a story, a business, a philosophy, they're all the same. They're all pigeons and leaves, making their descents.

Bingeclock was such an idea for me. When I started working on it, I was 24 years old. I had just finished my undergraduate degree in English Literature and Classical Studies, wrapping up the final two semesters I had put off during a year-and-a-half gap. It made sense to me: who *wouldn't* want to know how long it took to watch all the episodes of a TV show?

For two months, I built the site in PHP and MySQL. My then-girlfriend helped me with research, looking up episode lengths for the database. She seemed to get the idea more than most did. Explaining it to others, they were politely ambivalent.

"Why do you need to know how long more than one episode is?"

"Can't people just do the math themselves?"

"How much TV is anyone really watching?"

The consensus was that the idea was quirky, trivial, and just a little *silly*.

I listened to their feedback. I knew what they were saying. Still, I kept on with my launch plans, and in January 2015, Bingeclock went live.

What happened then was disappointing, if only because I was tending toward impatience. It took *time* for anyone to notice that Bingeclock was online. I made a few posts on message boards about it, but it didn't seem to be catching – until *it did*.

Virality and the News Cycle

Today, Bingeclock draws around 160,000 unique visitors each month. It has done as many as a quarter-million monthly now and again: during the final *Game of Thrones* season, as the Covid-19 pandemic began, again over the 2019 holidays.

That didn't happen overnight, though, and it didn't happen because the idea for Bingeclock made sense to *me*. Instead, it was other people who decided that Bingeclock – in all its triviality, all its silliness – was worth visiting. Multiple large communities on Reddit were talking about it. There were mentions of it in *Time*, *Quartz*, *PBS NewsHour*, and *The AV Club*.

Nothing changed, though. The silliness of the idea didn't go away. The difference was that someone had bit. Someone else had grokked the silliness and agreed that it *was* a decent question to ask. How long does it take to watch every episode of a TV show? Then, the answer to that question became valuable. Google "how long does it take to watch" plus any TV show, and Bingeclock is the first result.

I would never say "I told you so" to the people who thought Bingeclock was an unnecessary website in 2014. They weren't wrong: the website just wasn't for them.

Bingeclock, I was aware while I was building it, would be able to sustain an audience of at least two – myself and my then-girlfriend. There was no guarantee anyone else was going to buy into it. I was working on a hunch.

I don't want to make this too much about me or even too much about Bingeclock, though. What does it all mean to *you*?

A Theory about *Silly*

There is an idea in your mind somewhere. You may think it's too offbeat to share with anyone. In a real way, though, you *love* that idea. All your life you've wanted to cradle a newborn puppy dachshund, and that's what it is, its head half the size of its body and its ears half the size of its head. It's looking up at you, all your maternal admiration aglow, and it's waiting for you to pet it – or tell it to go fetch, whichever you decide.

What *is* your idea? Put it at the front of your mind. If you work in sales, the idea is something about sales strategy. Real estate, houses. Hospitality, hotels. From the inside-out, something makes sense to you in a way it doesn't make sense to most other people. That's where you're going to find your *most powerful silly*.

While I was building Bingeclock, I was watching a lot of TV. I wanted to learn about the narrative structures that worked for the shows I enjoyed most. *Lost*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *The Leftovers*, *Six Feet Under*, *The Sopranos*: I would watch six, seven, eight hours a day, all while I was coding.

Bingeclock, then, made sense to me. I *got* why it was silly, but underneath the silliness, there was a prime beauty and an immediate practicality. Once you find something that makes sense like that, you do yourself a favor and you hold on to it.

Else, you lose it.

There's no in-between.

Your Silliest, Most Powerful Idea

If you are waiting for a less-silly idea to come along, I would tell you to stop. Instead, embrace *the power of silly*. Accept it whole and then figure out how to find the people who are going to connect with it.

The silliest idea, as hard as it is for you to explain to other people, is also likely to be the richest, most impactful one you have to offer.

It *will* push you. You have to get comfortable with discomfort here. If you blush when you think about it sharing it, that's a positive sign your heart is in the right place.

Then, just the *work* remains. Sticking with your silliest idea, you will be able to create on a plane you never could have if you had chosen to pander, to compromise, to go along to get along, to break.

Are you ready to get your *big, silly, powerful* idea out into the world? I can help you with that. To get your thoughts down onto the page in the form of an e-book, [contact me about my Pro, top-rated book writing gig on Fiverr](#) or [enroll in my book-writing and self-publishing course on Fiverr Learn](#).