

# TOGGLE

WEEKEND LIVING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

A publication of *The Daily Star*



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## Facebook will update community standards to clarify its stance on satire

Facebook said it will revise its community standards to be clearer about how it handles satirical content, following a proposal from its Oversight Board, according to a blog post.



"We'll add information to the Community Standards that makes it clear where we consider satire as part of our assessment of context-specific decisions," the post says. "This change will allow teams to consider satire when assessing potential Hate Speech violations."

The update was announced after Facebook's Oversight Board concluded that it was incorrect to remove a user's comment that referred to the Turkish government based on the two buttons meme.

Facebook took down the post, citing its Cruel and Insensitive Community Standard, which states that posts that target "victims of serious bodily or mental injury," which includes memes and gifs, will be removed. The removal was then categorised by Facebook as falling under its Hate Speech Community Standard.

The Oversight Board pointed out in its recommendation that while Facebook has said it will make exceptions for satire, it doesn't specify how or what qualifies as satire in its guidelines. Facebook said in its post that in addition to making its guidelines around satire clearer, it would "initiate a review of identical content with parallel context," and may take further action.

## Microsoft wants you to ditch consoles, play Xbox games directly from TV

Microsoft on Thursday said it is working on software to let people play Xbox video games on internet-linked televisions without the need for consoles. The news came as Microsoft and other video game industry heavyweights prepare to show off coming titles at an annual Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) being held virtually beginning Saturday due to the pandemic.

"As a company, Microsoft is all-in on gaming," chief executive Satya Nadella said in introducing the plan. "Three billion consumers look to gaming for entertainment, community, creation, as well as a real sense of achievement, and our ambition is to empower each of them, wherever they play."

Microsoft has been playing on the strength of its Xbox unit as it vies with Luna and Stadia cloud gaming services run, respectively, by Amazon and Google. The Xbox team is working with TV makers to embed software that will let video games typically enjoyed on its consoles be played directly from the cloud, requiring only hand-held controllers, according to Microsoft.

The US-based technology giant also announced it is building devices that will plug into any television screen or computer monitor to stream Xbox gameplay without any consoles. In the coming weeks, cloud gaming with Xbox Game Pass Ultimate subscriptions will be possible through internet browsers Chrome, Edge and Safari, according to



Microsoft.

"There's still a place for consoles and PCs and frankly, there always will be, but through the cloud, we will be able to deliver a robust gaming experience to anyone connected to the internet," said Xbox unit head Phil Spencer. "And with the cloud, gaming players can participate fully in the same Xbox experience as people on local hardware."

Xbox Game Pass had some 18 million subscribers worldwide at the end of last year, according to figures released by Nadella. Video gameplay has surged during the pandemic, as people turned more than ever to the internet for entertainment. Overall consumer spending on video gaming in the United States totalled just shy of \$15 billion in the first quarter of this year, up 30 per cent from the same period in 2020, according to industry tracker NPD Group.

Microsoft will stream an Xbox and Bethesda Games Showcase on Sunday, featuring games from its studios around the world.

## OPPO offers discounts on F19 Pro, Enco W11

Smart device brand OPPO has recently offered discounts on its smartphone F19 Pro and true wireless earphones Enco W11. The buyers can now purchase OPPO F19 Pro at a discount of BDT 2,000 and OPPO Enco W11 at a discount of BDT 1,000 along with a combo offer of a discount of BDT 3,000 on the total price of a dual purchase.

OPPO F19 Pro is a mid-range phone with Dual-View Video & AI Color Portrait Video, new crystal silver design with Reno Glow Effect, 30W VOOC Flash Charge 4.0 and Game Focus Mode, while OPPO Enco W11 is a pair of true wireless headphones



with binaural simultaneous Bluetooth transmission, enhanced bass, 20-hour battery life and dust and water resistance feature.

The offer is valid from June 20 onwards based on the availability of products.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

### 'One Country, One Rate' and other stories you need to know about

Earlier this month, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), the country's telecom regulator, fixed the maximum tariff for broadband internet connection at BDT 500 a month for using a broadband connection with a minimum internet speed of 5 Mbps. This step was welcomed all across the country, but little do we know about the struggles and consistent campaigning for years behind the step that was organised by freelancers from remote areas of the country. In today's feature, we talk to the freelancers who were at the frontline of this campaign since the beginning and know their story.

We bring you everything you need to know about Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome, a post-Covid health complication in children. And apart from our regular contents on career, tech and automobile, we talk about Nirvana's "Bleach" on its 32nd anniversary, an album that is very close to our hearts.

Nahaly Nafisa Khan, *Sub-editor*

## TOGGLE

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## Walton's new gaming laptop is priced at Tk 189,950

Walton has launched a new highly configured gaming laptop in the market- Waxjambu GL710H. The new laptop features a 15.6-inch full HD Matte IPS LED Backlit Display with a 144Hz refresh rate and 72% NTSC while the screen resolution is 1920x1080 pixels. It has a 16 GB DDR4 3200 MHz RAM with options to expand up to 32 GB. There is a 1 terabyte

M.2 228 SSD with NVMe PCIe Gen 3.0 X 4 interface. This device sports an NVIDIA GeForce GTX 3060 6GB GDDR6 with 2x2W speakers.

The laptop weighs 1.99 kg and offers 8 hours of backup. **PRICE: TK.189,950.** Offers and instalment option available.



# Jobs outside of software development that require programming skills

ARIFF AHMED

Programming is no longer an exclusive domain of computer scientists. Its increasing popularity and power are sweeping into occupations that did not traditionally require coding. People are beginning to realise just how much more can be done using programming languages, which is spurring a growth in computer science education.

Graduates from business to natural science are taking up programming courses to increase their productivity. At the same time, computer science graduates are finding roles outside of pure software engineering. Here are four occupations, outside of software development, where programming skills can be applied:

## DATA ANALYST

While Microsoft Excel is still the standard-bearer of the industry, its popularity is being clawed away by Python, a programming language. Businesses today produce vast amounts of data that cannot be processed or analysed in Excel due to its limit of about one million rows. Python, using libraries such as Pandas, puts out no sweat in processing large datasets.

When asked about why he prefers Python to Excel, Md. Shafiqur Rahman Ridith, Assistant Manager of Reporting and Analysis at Nagad says, "We can work with Big Data, load larger sets of data compared to Excel".

Python can also be used for automation to remove repetitive tasks. When it comes to predictive analytics, Python offers a lot more control and customisation. "Python can be used to perform advanced statistics, visualisation and machine learning," said Shafiqur. Excel is limited in its ability to run machine learning algorithms.

## GENOMICS RESEARCHER

When it comes to natural science research, programming has always been a staple due to the high amounts of data that need to be crunched. The most commonly used language in the scientific community is R. A programming language developed by statisticians for statistical computation and graphics, R's data analysis capability makes it an ideal choice for researchers. It is often used to summarise statistics for experiments.

Programming is also used to automate tasks such as creating a data pipeline in experiments. Researchers can input different variables and observe the results in a computational environment. Jahan Rahman, a research assistant at the New York Genome Center, used his

## OPERATIONS ANALYST

Operations is one of the major functions of an organisation and deals with a lot of data. Thus, being able to use SQL, a language used to handle data stored in a relational database management system, comes in very handy for members of an operations team.

Sabbir Ahmed, Manager of Digital Recharge (Market Operations Division) at Robi Axiata Limited felt knowing SQL allowed him to "reduce dependency in accessing customer data". He no longer had to bother another team to request data and that increased his work productivity. Data manipulation using SQL is also much easier compared to Excel. Sabbir also uses his knowledge of Python to build prediction models for

## ARCHITECT

Grasshopper 3D is a visual programming language used for architecture and structural engineering modelling. A visual programming language requires no scripting and is based entirely on drag and drop options to create algorithms. However, it has functionalities and follows the syntax of a typical programming language.

Just like most programming languages, Grasshopper allows its users to automate tasks. Instead of having to draw the same line or circle multiple times, an algorithm can be developed in Grasshopper to do it. "Algorithms in Grasshopper are fairly easy to make. The functions come in pre-made elements that you drag, drop and connect. It's



programming knowledge to create open-source software that allows researchers to design customised RNAs. "Using programming, I can generate figures, parse data, and input standardised variables to get some standardized output that people can use," explained Jahan.

better customer targeting.

Normally, a new product has a response rate of about 0.01%. However, using a programming-based targeting system allowed him to get a response rate of 7 - 10%. This drastically reduced promotional costs.

all very visually intuitive. It's a lot less time-intensive than manually altering the geometry," said Arnob Faraz, a North South University Architecture graduate, on the benefits of using Grasshopper. Blocks of Python code can also be added to Grasshopper.

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## The Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza receives a facelift

ARFIN KAZI

When looking for a mid-sized SUV on the Bangladeshi market, your most common option is either the Honda Vezel or the Toyota CHR. Recently though, cars like the MG ZS and the Maruti Suzuki Vitara Brezza have been getting under the radar of customers; for good reason. Most of these SUVs come equipped with engines less than 2L, they are big and have a modest price tag; making it the correct formula for the market.



### OVERVIEW

The Suzuki Vitara is more designed towards commuting rather than comfort. To put it as easy as possible on paper, the Brezza does everything a mid-sized SUV is supposed to do. It drives all right, the 1.5L four-cylinder engine producing 105 HP is fairly fuel-efficient and the car looks good. LED head and taillights come as standard in all levels. The Brezza comes in two main packages; Sporty and Urban. Both the packages contain visual cosmetic mods only where the sporty package contains enhancements like the front, rear & side skid plates, wheel arch cladding, blacked-out grille, roof end garnish, and side body accent in the cubic finish, fog bezel garnish, rear lamp garnish, designer mats, seat cover, and interior styling kit package.

On the Urban package, things are a bit more sophisticated where the features include black carbon accents with loads of chrome garnish, front and rear skid plate garnish, fog bezel garnish, roof end garnish, bodyside molding, rear lamp garnish, seat cover, designer mats, and interior styling kit package.

### INTERIOR AND INFOTAINMENT

The interior of the Brezza is all right. Since the front compartment is rather big, the front dash compartment is supposed to be empty; Suzuki provided an extra glove box making use of that empty cosmos which is a brilliant use of space that could supposedly be left untouched. Other than that, there is no leather at all. The seats are made of fabric, the steering wheel is plain but, it has a dual-centred AC which is an essential feature in a climate like we have. Other than that, the infotainment system is a 7-inch touchscreen with Bluetooth connectivity for hands-free calling and music. The Vitara Brezza comes only as an automatic in Bangladesh but a manual version with a four-speed gearbox does exist, only for the Indian market.

### VERDICT

If having an SUV is totally a necessity on a minimum budget, then yes. It's a good commuter and since the engine size is within 1.5L, the taxes you would be paying for the Vitara will be the bare minimum. In our honest opinion, we think the Vitara is average. It gets the job done right but for the price is set on, we cannot complain either.



## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2021 TOYOTA AQUA MEET



PHOTOS: AKIF HAMID

## The road to 'One Country, One Rate'

The story of the rural freelancers who made internet available at flat rate across the country

ZARIF FAIAZ &amp; NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

On June 6, Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC), fixed the maximum tariff for broadband internet across the country at Tk 500 a month for using a broadband connection with a minimum internet speed of 5 Mbps. For 10 Mbps, the rate would be Tk 800 to Tk 1,000, and for 20 Mbps, Tk 1,100 to Tk 1,200, and so on.

The landmark decision to fix the rate of broadband connection across the country came after a series of meetings with operators of the International Internet Gateway, Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network, International Terrestrial Cable, and internet service providers. But behind the scenes, the credit goes to a small community of freelancers in Kushtia who have been campaigning for internet equality for the last 5 years or so. This is their story.

In 2013, Rasel Ahmed, a freelancer based in Kushtia, was paying a whopping Tk 20,000 for a broadband speed of 4 Mbps. "The price difference between internet connection in Dhaka and in rural areas were unimaginable. Internet speed is already drastically slower in rural areas, compared to bigger cities like Dhaka. We had no choice but to take packages that offered higher speeds at higher prices, just so

we could keep working," says Rasel. "We wanted at least the same price as that of Dhaka, if not lower. We often have to get on video calls with our clients or collaborate by sharing screens. The only way to do that in rural areas was to pay extra and get a connection with higher speed, which isn't very reliable either. Not everyone could keep up. We were losing clients to freelancers armed with cheaper, better internet. That wasn't a fair game."

Like Rasel, other freelancers working from rural areas were struggling to keep up with the burgeoning and unfair cost of broadband connection. Sabbir Ahmed, another rural freelancer, was paying at least 5 to 6 times more than his counterparts in Dhaka for a speed that was barely one-tenth of the usual internet speed in the capital city. "I once had a deadline to complete an assignment within a week. For four to five days, I was stuck trying to download a large file. I later had to get someone in Dhaka to download it for me, upload on a local server, and only then could I access it. It was a nightmare," Sabbir shared.

"Compared to freelancers in Dhaka, freelancers in rural areas are falling behind in every aspect. Even when a freelancer in Dhaka is just starting out, they are already quite a

few steps ahead of their counterparts in villages, just because they have access to better, cheaper internet," said Sabbir.

This growing digital divide between freelancers in rural areas and freelancers in the cities acted as the catalyst for a campaign that advocated for internet equality across the country, led by freelancers like Rasel and Sabbir at the forefront of the movement.

"We started out voicing our concerns in a Facebook group at first. We started campaigning in major public places with our demands and continued to appeal to lawmakers and concerned authorities. We were lucky to have been supported constantly by *Projukti Kushtia*, a community of local tech enthusiasts who helped us reach top authorities," said Rasel. "Freelancers have led this movement from the front. We have been campaigning for equal internet for a long time. It took us almost 5 years but we are finally here. After the pandemic struck, the case for internet equality was not only about freelancers any more, it was about everyone. As people shifted to online classes, meetings etc and started relying on the internet, they began to understand what we, freelancers have been going through for ages. Perhaps that acted as a wake-up call

for the authorities to finally make it happen."

But fixing the tariff rate is only half the job, according to the freelancers who have been with the movement since the beginning. Sabbir Ahmed believes that maintaining the fixed-rate requires strict monitoring and proper enforcement. "We are beyond happy with this new policy. Maybe finally, the marginal freelancers will get equal opportunities. But there's still room for discrimination if the ISP's continue to provide us with low internet speeds. The authorities need to properly monitor the ISPs and ensure that at a fixed rate, service remains the same across the country," says Sabbir.

"Nationwide Telecommunication Transmission Network or NTTN's monopoly over internet prices was why ISPs couldn't lower internet prices in the past. With this new move in place, it is now up to the ISPs to hold their end of the bargain," adds Rasel.

BTRC's new move to fix internet prices across the country is commendable. It remains to be seen how much of it will end up benefitting the marginal freelancers who continue to suffer from internet disparity. As Rasel Ahmed puts it, "It's a milestone, surely. But there remains a long road ahead."

# EQUAL INTERNET FOR ALL

ILLUSTRATION: ZARIF FAIAZ



# GAMES YOU CANNOT MISS

## Key highlights from E3 2021

ABDUS SALAM SHAWN

The fully online E3 2021 showcased many anticipated sequels and updates including Elden Ring, Halo Infinite, Starfield, Breath of the Wild 2 and so on as the biggest gaming conference in the world hits 26 years.

If you are not yet familiar, E3, or Electronic Entertainment Expo, is a conference held annually in Los Angeles where hardware manufacturers, software developers, and publishers from the video game industry present upcoming products and interact with the gaming crowd. The event had been rebranded as the Electronic Entertainment Experience 2021 after a gap in 2020 due to Covid-19. If



you are looking for a new game, here are the best ones that E3 2021 had to offer:

### FORZA HORIZON 5

Set in Mexico and featuring a much bigger world than its predecessor, Forza Horizon 5 won as the Most Anticipated Game for this year. It will include a special Forza Edition Mercedes AMG-One hypercar along with many offroad cars such as the Ford Bronco and the Land Rover Defender. You will be able to explore the full world in the new campaign mode and race to a random point with another random gamer online as Battle Royale makes a comeback. The game will come



out on November 9, 2021, and will be exclusive to Xbox and PC.

### MARVEL'S GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

Announced during the Square Enix E3 showcase, Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy will appeal to the fans of the MCU. You will play exclusively as Star-



Lord in this single-player action-adventure with all the Guardians by your side. The game doesn't have the faces of the actual Guardians and oozes microtransactions, implying a possible mixed reaction when it comes out on October 26, 2021.

However, we like the new and sick beard on Rocket Raccoon and the rock songs from the '80s by Iron Maiden, Rick Astley, Kiss, and Wham, so check it out.

### BREATH OF THE WILD 2

Nintendo finally gave us some gameplay footage from the sequel to the widely popular The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild with its second iteration. The video shows Link falling from the sky which will be explorable in the game. The floating islands, new powers and skydiving ability promise a good experience for the console exclusive. Although the release date is a disappointing 2022 without an exact month mentioned, It will not be quiet when it comes out.

### ELDEN RING

The two-year-long wait came to an end with the release of Elden Ring, the product of a collaboration between director Hidetaka Miyazaki and author George R.R. Martin. FromSoftware has created a vast world for this action

role-playing game. You will be able to summon the spirits of deceased enemies and use them as allies in battles, leap up sheer cliff faces with your horse, and not to mention, use about a hundred magical skills. They want to give you 'a free level of progression and exploration' no matter which direction you choose to go in. The Elden Ring is coming out on January 21, 2022, on all major consoles and PC.

### HALO INFINITE

343 Industries has showcased Halo Infinite as well as a multiplayer version which is free for everyone. A section of the offline campaign was shown where Master Chief was seen pulling through wreckage in zero gravity and teaming up with Cortana to get some destruction done. A signature element of the multiplayer however has been axed for the upcoming game: the assassination animations. The game will be available for PC and Xbox at Game Pass but the release date, however, is a mystery.

There were many more notable returns and new releases in this year's E3. For 2.5D titles, we couldn't help but notice Replaced, an original and awe-inspiringly beautiful action-adventure game. The main character, an artificial intelligence trapped inside a human body, wanders in a dystopian, cyberpunk version of the USA. It is an Xbox exclusive coming out in 2022. Metroid Dread, a Nintendo exclusive, also caught our attention as it makes a return after being shelved for more than 15 years. Metal slug is also releasing a new game called Metal Slug Tactics for PC.

The E3 2021 event is still available to watch on E3 Expo Portal's website till June 30.



# Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C):

## A rare disease associated with the Covid-19

JINAT JAHAN KHAN

### SYMPTOMS OF MIS-C

In most cases, children with MIS-C may have a fever with a temperature of 100.4° F or more than it. It can last several days, along with some other symptoms. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other common symptoms besides fever may include:

- >> Severe abdominal pain without any reason
- >> Having conjunctivitis in which eyes become red or pink
- >> Rash on different parts of the body, especially on the lower part
- >> Poor feeding and nausea or vomiting
- >> Facing trouble while breathing
- >> Inability to stay awake and having a feeling of irritability
- >> Neck pain and chest pain
- >> Swollen hands and legs, which can become red too
- >> Pale, blue and grey-coloured lips, skin, and nail beds, which can differ due to the skin tone

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly affected people of all age groups, even children in some cases who are thought to be less likely to get affected. However, there is a rare but serious health condition that prevailed among children due to the Covid-19. This unusual disease named Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C) or Paediatric Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (PMIS) was first found in the UK in April 2020. In Bangladesh, it was first detected in June last year. Here is a quick overview of MIS-C.

### WHAT IS MIS-C?

MIS-C is a health condition where some organs or tissues of a child such as the heart, kidneys, lungs, brain, eyes, skin or gastrointestinal organs become inflamed. It includes some features which are similar to Kawasaki disease (KD). A very small portion of young people who contract the coronavirus develop this rare condition. The complications of such disease start to appear 2-6 weeks after the initial infection.

From birth to 21 years, anyone can have this condition associated with the Covid-19. Though MIS-C is not contagious, children with such disease can have Covid-19 and any other contagious infection. So it is better to take precautions while taking care of such young patients with MIS-C.

### CAN ADULTS GET MIS-C?

MIS-C complications mainly prevail in children and adolescents, but there have been some reports of the multisystem inflammatory syndrome in adults (MIS-A) similar to MIS-C since June 2020. However, MIS-A may also have some different symptoms like low blood pressure, chest tightness, etc., besides common symptoms. This syndrome is more severe and complicated in the case of adults, according to the CDC.

### WHAT CAUSES MIS-C?

The actual cause behind MIS-C is still unknown. Even certain health conditions that are more likely to be responsible for such a disease are not determined yet. However, it seems to be an excessive immune response to the coronavirus. Some researchers suspect that the antibodies children make to fight against this virus may cause this illness. Another possibility appears to be genetic factors as the number of children developing MIS-C is too small.

### DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

According to the CDC, MIS-C can be diagnosed based on symptoms such as by testing for laboratory evidence or signs of inflammation. There should be a Covid-19 test too. If possible, SARS-CoV-2 serologic testing is recommended even though RT-PCR or antigen testing has been done. As MIS-C is frequently associated with cardiac involvement, different tests such

as echocardiogram, electrocardiogram, cardiac enzyme or troponin testing, and NT-proBNP can be performed.

For now, it is hard to mention any efficient treatment for MIS-C. Children mostly need close observation and some supportive measures according to their needs. The suggested supportive measures of the CDC include respiratory support, inotropic support, fluid resuscitation, and ECMO (in rare cases). Anti-inflammatory measures may consist of the use of IVIG and steroids as per the CDC. There may also be a need to use other anti-inflammatory medications or anti-coagulation treatments, depending on the condition.

Always contact doctors if there is any symptom of MIS-C. Without early diagnosis and treatment, this disease can lead to severe health problems with vital organs like the heart, kidneys, or lungs. In some rare cases, it may cause permanent damage or even death.

### PREVENTION IS THE KEY

Like the Covid-19 complications, it is better to prevent MIS-C. In both cases, the only known way of prevention is to avoid contracting this coronavirus. And the best way to do this is to maintain social distance, wear masks, and follow a hygienic life. Encourage children to wear masks and to avoid touching eyes, mouth, or nose with dirty hands. Teach them how to keep hands clean and to cover the mouth with a tissue or elbow while sneezing or coughing.



# NIRVANA AND THE SOUND OF A GENERATION

Bleach, Nirvana's debut album, turns 32

MUSHFIQUE FAHIM

Many iconic albums can be mentioned when trying to explain what 'Grunge' music is. Pearl Jam's *Ten*, Badmotorfinger by Soundgarden, Alice in Chain's *Dirt* and of course the later Nirvana albums among many others. But a description will never fully do because grunge is more of a feeling. A discontent in your stomach, a bad taste in your mouth, a forlorn feeling in your heart. And the first record that really 'felt' grunge and took a generation by shocking delight was Nirvana's debut album *Bleach*.

*Bleach* came out 32 years ago from Sub-Pop Records. The record features a 23 years old Kurt Cobain, Krist Novoselick on bass and Chad Channing behind the drum kit. Melvin's Dale Crover had also rehearsed with Nirvana and ended up drumming in the final mix of *Floyd the Barber*, *Paper Cuts* and *Downer*. Upon release, *Bleach* failed to garner any significant critical acclaim and didn't even crack the *Billboard* 200 albums chart. But now in retrospect, the album has a legacy of its own comparable to the status of its monumental follow-ups *In Utero* and *Nevermind*. Today, *Bleach* remains the highest-selling record to ever come out of Sub-Pop. Even though immediate fanfare was almost nonexistent, it put Nirvana on the map for an entire generation that was looking for a sound that fits their chaotic time.

*Bleach* is an extremely raw album, anxious in nature and utterly restless. What makes it the definitive Seattle grunge record is the lack of polish. It's not like producer Jack Endino had much of a choice. Nirvana was a struggling group with hardly the means for a well-produced album. As a result, the record is punctured with distortion, feedback and noise. But Kurt liked the dark, muddy sound. At the time of its release he said about other albums, 'There's no energy. It's too programmed and fake, you hear too much. I want a little mud in my music.' And this disregard for glossing things up and the tendency to say things as they are, make music that went hand in hand with the bleak, mindless and numbingly mechanical nature of the world is what resonated with the youth of the Pacific Northwest. A band had come about that wasn't afraid to scream about the oppressive feeling that pervaded society.

The album opens with *Blew*, a track that remained a concert staple for Nirvana. Krist Novoselic starts with a growling, killer bassline that sets the mood for the rest of the album before Kurt bursts into the first verse on top of a dirty guitar riff. The fame that disconcerted Cobain later in his career was yet to find him and he was free to indulge in his dark, fearless, arrogant

and often enigmatic songwriting. Worn out by the stress of life and embracing carefree resignation, he sings, 'And if you wouldn't care I'd like to leave/ And if you wouldn't mind I'd like to breathe.' The record continues with the same neurotic energy as *Floyd the Barber*. In the song, Kurt uses the innocent setting of *The Andy Griffith Show*, a 60s TV program about an idyllic family to expose how shamefully society crawled to hide behind a facade. Next comes *About A Girl*, a relatively softer, ballad-like number that was written about Kurt's girlfriend at the time. As the group was constantly pressured to make a heavy album, Kurt was conflicted about putting the song on the record. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, he admitted, 'Even to put *About A Girl* on *Bleach* was a risk.'

*Paper Cuts* and *Sifting* are two slower-tempo, dizzyingly heavy songs that ride on drawn-out, drawling, filthy guitar riffs. In between jarring riffage, the words to *Paper Cuts* paint a dismaying picture of domestic, parental abuse. Showing zero interest in compromising the horror of victims, Cobain sings, 'My whole existence is for your amusement/ And that is why I'm here with you,' Disenchanted with the fears of high school and showing a total apathy towards a system that bullies and encourages bullies, Kurt's razor-sharp voice screeches, 'NO RECESS',

in the chorus of *School*. In *Sifting*, he simply denies that teachers and preachers alike had anything to offer him as he groans repeatedly, 'Don't have nothing for you.'

The record never deviates from a grinding, murky sound that sets the stage for lyrics that lay bare despair, guilt and disillusionment. *Big Cheese* was a ruthlessly angry reply to the pressure the group was facing from Sub Pop chairman Jonathan Poneman. Kurt said, "I was expressing all the pressures that I felt from Jonathan Poneman at the time because he was being so judgemental about everything we were recording.' He screams in agony at the hypocrisy of men who run the world as he accuses them of being, 'Sickening pessimist hypocrite master/ Conservative communist apocalyptic bastard.'

*Bleach* is a record of outrage, anxiety and apathy. It doesn't have a flowery side and it's not sorry. Because of its unmatched authenticity, the album is relevant to the aimlessly meandering youth today who are rendered neurotic, passive, depressed and disenfranchised by society. The unapologetically distorted guitar, relentless bashing of drums, grumble and moan of the bass blended with the very real pain and aggression of Kurt's voice create a sound that still fills the heart longing just to be itself.