



Sub Pop

28. Nirvana – *Bleach* (1989)

Nevermind possesses Nirvana's breakthrough tracks and piles of tight, visceral rage, but *Bleach* was their purest, heaviest, and rawest effort. Selling just 40,000 units at first, their 1989 debut labeled the inner turmoil already infesting a frustrated, angry generation of suburban teens who sensed the unease within Kurt Cobain's chronically negative lyrics. "In my eyes I'm not lazy In your eyes I'm not worth it," he says in "Scoff," then pleads "Give me back my alcohol." Other lyrics are swollen with ironic, sick jokes and laced with pain. In describing a sexual assault on "Floyd the Barber," for example, Cobain switches up being "shaved" and "shamed." Waves of

melodic guitar riffs buttress Cobain's guttural screams, creating a cathartic sludge reminiscent of the Seattle grunge sound, a label Cobain rejected, but which the rest of the world hadn't yet discovered. *Bleach* displayed an intensity and honesty that kids like me didn't know they could outwardly exhibit. *Nevermind* was gateway grunge for a restless middle America, but it couldn't have existed without *Bleach*. – Emily Reily

Deeper Listening: Soundgarden – *Screaming Life*; Mudhoney – *Superfuzz Bigmuff*

Read More: [Nirvana's *Bleach* is still potent after 30 years](#)