

Pinback's Rob Crow on penning perfect indie-pop

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by [Mike Diver](#)

Artists: **Pinback, Prego, DiS DJs, Phosphorescent**

Across four albums – their latest, *Autumn Of The Seraphs*, is reviewed **here** to the tune of 9/10 – San Diego outfit **Pinback** have established themselves as masters of indie-pop songwriting.

Their melodies embed themselves deep, lyrics swimming around the head for weeks. Their songs' addictive qualities linger in the system for a long while, and ahead of their headline London show on July 14, a DiS co-promotion (with The Local, [link](#)) at The Scala, we asked for a ten-point guide to penning the perfect indie-pop song.

Responses (and they might not be 100 per cent serious!) come from Pinback frontman **Rob Crow**, pictured with bandmate Armistead Burwell Smith IV (aka Zach Smith) – Rob has also worked with Chino Moreno in Team Sleep, and contributed vocals to Drive Like Jehu's seminal *Yank Crime*.



Pinback (l-r): Zach Smith, Rob Crow

Rob Crow's ten-point guide to writing the perfect indie-pop song

1. Haircut

No one is gonna take you serious unless you have that 'indie' look, so I suggest not washing your hair for a bit and then putting some weird jelly-type product in it and then scruffing it up a bit. **IMPORTANT:** make sure that yours eyes are obscured just enough so that you look 'mysterious'. Eyeliner is welcome, just don't put on so much as to look Goth/Black Metal.

2. Start a band with likewise enthusiasts

I suggest Hot Topic, or the food court. Just pick out the most attractive kids with makeup that are trying to be noticed acting like they aren't trying to be noticed. Maybe pick up a Crass sticker while you are there (you don't need to know who they are).

3. Band name

This is easy. Just copy these names: "*Charles Bukowski, Kurt Vonnegut, and Chuck Palahniuk*". Now paste them into Google and pick the name of one of their books (they are authors) at random. If you are feeling like doing a little more research (NOT RECOMMENDED), there is this weird reclusive author (all you need to know) named J.D. Salinger and you can use one of his character's names. I'm sure you can find these on Wikipedia. **IMPORTANT:** avoid reading these guys! It could accidentally start a downward spiral into sincerity (it usually doesn't, but still...).

4. Stickers

The second you've chosen a name, before you even have your parents buy you instruments, make copious amounts of stickers and put them up on every club bathroom, street sign, and record store window (make sure they are next to impossible to peel off of glass conveniently).

5. What is everyone else doing?

Look, making up your own distinct voice is JUST TO HARD and no one will understand you anyway. There will never be a **Bob Graettinger** Edition of *Guitar Hero*. Nobody likes a snob, so just turn on the radio and find a song you like and then just write a more boring version of it. REMEMBER: when singing, actually caring or having a sense of humour will get you nowhere, but ACTING like you do will be just transparent enough to let people know you are just as vapid as they are. Choose a character from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and pretend you are them. Or maybe some one from a Wes Anderson movie (and you can rip off one of the songs in there while your at it).

6. Spam

Endless announcements on MySpace, Facebook, and especially other band's chatrooms, websites and fan pages. These are the things that get you noticed. Be sure to hand out flyers at inappropriate events.

7. Send band photos to major label record companies.

This is what REALLY gets you signed, and nothing says 'indie' like being on a major label. Be sure to stress how much you sound like Modest Mouse (Epic Records) meets Radiohead (previously EMI) with a Death Cab For Cutie (Atlantic) vibe (or words to that effect). This apparently does some Jedi mind-trick on them and it doesn't seem like they care, so they might not check.

8. Record Producer

The quality of the singer is negligible compared to sound of the recording. Even if you record it yourself, the record label can hire a hit-maker to recreate a perfect radio-friendly single.

9. Video

C'mon, you just can't take a song seriously if it doesn't have a video! Remember to stare out of as many windows as possible and keep that "*Why are we standing in a field / abandoned building / empty theatre?*" look off of your face.

10. Publicists

These are the people who get your song on a Hummer commercial and THAT'S WHERE THE MONEY IS.