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KATY LANS DAL E GAL ON THE GO

JACQUELINE E. SMITH FOLLOWS THE BAND

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Follow the BAND

YA novel has a musical relationship at its core

By TODD GLASSCOCK

What do you do when you're in love with a member of the nation's hottest boy band? This question is more than just a teenage girl's fantasy for Melissa Parker, protagonist of Jacqueline E. Smith's latest novel, "Boy Band." It's her reality.

A reality that was easy to fathom for the 27-year-old Dallas-based writer. Smith was, after all, a teenage girl once, and a fan of boy bands.

"My sister and I grew up in the '90s and loved them," she said of any number of boy bands that hit pop music charts in the 1990s.

"Boy Band" – released April 21 – focuses on the protagonist, Mel, as she struggles with her feelings for her best friend, Sam Morneau, member of the boy band, Kind of September, and how those feelings get roiled up in the day-to-life of celebrities — passionate fans, hectic schedules and the ever-present gossip that gets tossed around pop stars. Glamorous settings, primarily California and New York, add to the appeal of the book.

In the novel, Smith draws on her teenage experience to shape her characters, but, like most writers, throws in bits and pieces of other people glued together with a bit of creative magic.

One of the main male characters in "Boy Band," for instance, shares a phobia with her sister,



Photo by KAYLYNN KRIEG

Katherine June – the fear of sponges and other porous things.

"I like the little things," she said of character creation. "It's the little details that make them not cookie cutters."

Stylistically, she draws on her background in theater and performance to write dialogue for her characters. Writing dialogue is one of her favorite aspects of writing.

Smith wrote the novel because it is the kind of book she would have read as a teenager. Her third book, she started it for fun, then realized it would make a good young-adult romance.

Smith gives her sister credit for encouraging her to write a young adult novel.

"Without her, I wouldn't have pursued it," she said.



Smith is ready for her book promotion and signing of "CemeteryTours" and "Boy Band"

Katherine June is Smith's first reader when she's working on a project. Smith trusts her sister to be honest about her work.

"She was more enthusiastic about "Boy Band" than she's been about any of my other books or projects," Smith writes in an email. "She would ask me multiple times if I was finished, or if I had written any more. She helped me write some of the lyrics featured in the book.

"She does not give praise lightly, so when she told me that it was a book she would read over and over again, I knew it was something special. She's my very best friend and I know I can always trust her."

Taking a stab at young adult fiction, especially a young adult romance about boy bands, is something of a divergence for Smith. Her first two novels, "Cemetery Tours" and "Between Worlds," are paranormal romance thrillers.

One reviewer said, "'Cemetery Tours' combines the suspense of a Stephen King thriller with the heart of a Nicholas Sparks novel."

She's especially delighted to be compared to Sparks, who, along with paranormal romance writer Meg Cabot, is an influential favorite.

Her interest in the paranormal came from watching TV shows such Ghost Adventures. That interest was further fueled by a personal loss, which caused her to begin reading books about the afterlife.

Smith has published all three novels through her own imprint, Wind Trail Publishing.

Her decision to publish independently is twofold. One, she retains the rights – and revenues – to all of her works and

feels she has more creative control over her career as a writer: if she wants to write about boy bands, she can; if she wants to write paranormal romance, she can. Two, she's interested in publishing as a business, and eventually would like to expand her enterprise and publish other writers.

"I still need to find my place in publishing," she said. "I'm really just getting my foot into the door."

As a business, she takes publishing seriously, using professionals for editing and graphic design, although she is proud to note the book cover for "Boy Band" is one of her designs.

Smith began her writing life at the University of Texas at Dallas one week in her junior year when she was sick, but it wasn't until graduate school she finally pieced together a complete novel manuscript.

"It's never seen the light of day," she said, adding that it probably never will.

When she's not writing, she likes heading out into the wilderness on hikes with her friends, as well as reading or taking it easy with her cat and drinking a glass of her favorite sweet red wine from Homestead Winery in Ivanhoe.

But writing and publishing are her true passions, and she's busy working on sequels to both "Boy Band" and the "Cemetery Tours" series.

She's also recently published a short story, "The Water's Edge," in the anthology "Lurking in the Deep" from Crushing Hearts and Black Butterfly Publishing. The story centers on the ghost of a woman who died at sea and her relationship with a nearby town. ☐