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## Austin at SXSW 2013: Owen Egerton's 'Follow'

By [Jordan Gass-Poore](#) on March 14, 2013 - 1:00pm in [Local Indies](#) | [SXSW](#)



Renaissance man **Owen Egerton** is on fire.

... metaphorically speaking, of course. But the redhead's career has been making sparks in national literary, film and comedy circles recently.

Next month, the Texas State University MFA alum will lead readers through a bizarre apocalypse, filled with Jesus clones, a prophetic hermit crab and a slacker couple who are haunted by ghosts as they wait out their final days on Earth in his latest novel, *Everyone Says That at the End of the World*.

The Austin-based master multi-tasker also debuted his short film *Follow*, about one man's dangerous challenge to open a gift by his wife (starring local actor **Jonny Mars**), this week in the SXSW Film Midnight Shorts collection. Egerton based the film on a short story from his 2007 collection *How Best to Avoid Dying*.

Egerton and producer Seth Caplan are currently raising production funds for a feature-length version of *Follow*. I chatted with Egerton recently about writing and his current projects.

### **Slackerwood: What was your main focus in grad school (at Texas State University)?**

**Owen Egerton:** My graduate thesis was a novel called *The Book of Harold, The Illegitimate Son of God*, and that was published by Dalton [2010] and the paperback was published by Soft Skull [2012], and later optioned by Warner Brothers Television. I also wrote a number of short stories. It's very difficult, actually, to work on a novel in an MFA program, simply because in workshop scenarios, it's easier to have a complete short story than it is a chapter, which is only a fraction of the novel.

### **Can you talk a little about the plots of *The Book of Harold...* and *How Best to Avoid Dying*?**

**Egerton:** Some of the short stories in *How Best to Avoid Dying* I worked on at Texas State. *How Best to Avoid Dying* is a collection of thematically related stories, though not plot related, all dealing with death of some sort, be it physical death or death of a relationship, or some sort of cultural signs of mortality. It's sort of darkly comic, I have to say. And then *The Book of Harold* describes a Houston suburbanite who one day declares himself to be the son of God, and people believe him. And he starts his own religion; it's a modern-day Messianic misadventure.

### **Your screenplay *Bobbie Sue* was on *The Black List* in 2008 and sold to Warner Brothers. Is there a date scheduled for production?**

**Egerton:** It's always kind of a bit of a crapshoot which movies get made and which don't. *Bobbie Sue*, unfortunately, has been stuck in development limbo. Had a bunch of people attached, gone through several rewrites and there's no telling what's gonna happen with that, but we still have our fingers crossed that eventually that story will make it onto the screen.

### **What have you found to be more difficult: writing short stories, novels or screenplays? Why?**

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**Egerton:** Gosh, it seems that they all have their challenges and they're very different, they're just very different crafts. All of them involve the craft of narration, the craft of story structure, but I find that novels are more internal. Often, they're more of the story of what's going on in a person's thoughts and a person's memories. While a screenplay, especially the screenplays I tend to write for Hollywood; all that you write is what is seen and heard, so it is much more a story based in action. You can't get inside a person's head in film in the same way, you can only see what they do and hear what they say.

**What is your advice to aspiring writers?**

**Egerton:** My advice to aspiring writers is: write. That's more important than a fantastic graduate program, more important than the best kind of workshops. The most important thing is to be sitting down in front of a page and writing. And then writing some more. And then reading. And reading. And then writing some more. If you have a passion for sharing words, then eventually you're going to write something beautiful.

*Egerton's short film Follow is part of the Midnight Shorts Competition at SXSW, **which screens** Thursday, March 14 (tonight) at 9:45 pm at the ACC Vimeo Theater, and Saturday at 11:59 pm at the Topfer Theatre at ZACH.*

*[Photo credit: Todd Wolfson, used with permission]*