

FILM INDEPENDENT'S SPIRIT AWARDS 2007  
 HOSTED BY SARAH SILVERMAN  
**THIS SATURDAY**  
 5PM ET / 2PM PT ON IFC  
 LIVE and UNCUT  
 Enjoy it later 10PM / 9C on AMC  
 AMC IFC tv.uncut We

**RADAR MAGAZINE RETURNS!**  
 SIGN UP NOW FOR A RISK-FREE ISSUE

# RADAR

FRESH INTELLIGENCE **FEATURES** REVIEWS FAME-O-METER RADAR TV  
 HOLLYWOOD MEDIA POLITICS STYLE CULTURE

SEARCH RADAR:

RSS CONTACT US ADVERTISE SUBSCRIBE

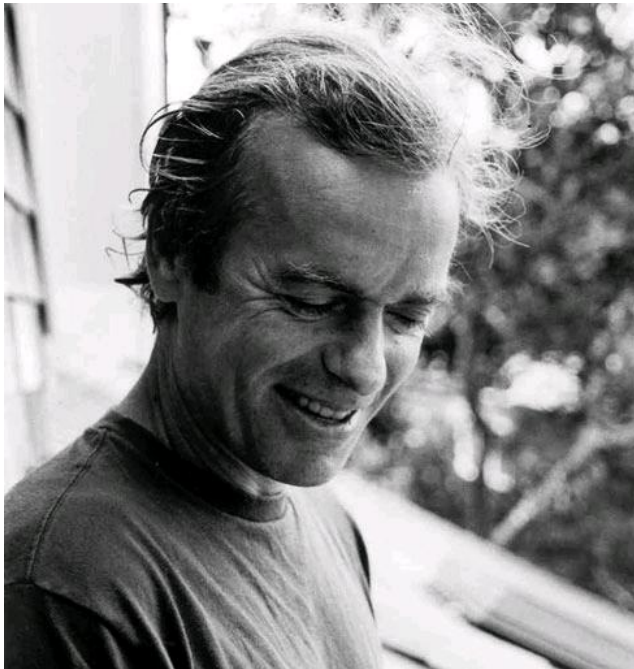
< BACK TO FEATURES

## SPOTLIGHT

### THE BARD OF BRASH

Martin Amis on his new book, the Iraq war, and a long-ago love affair with Tina Brown

by Chris Lehmann



FAMOUS CHOPS Martin Amis

If an enfant terrible can have a second childhood, Martin Amis is well into his. After creating a huge stir among his countrymen in the mid-90s by (temporarily) forsaking London for New York, taking up with a new wife, a new agent, and even a newly photogenic set of teeth, the brash English novelist incited still more rancor in his homeland with the 2003 novel *Yellow Dog*, which recorded a middle-age protagonist's porn addiction in graphic detail. Tibor Fischer famously likened it in the London *Telegraph* to discovering "your favourite uncle being caught in a school playground, masturbating."

With his latest novel, *House of Meetings*, Amis tackles a far more solemn theme: life in the Soviet gulags. The plot pivots on a love triangle; the book's never-named narrator vies most of his life with his younger brother and gulag-mate, Zev, for the affections of a Jewish woman, Zoya, who miraculously evades the camps. But the romantic tension builds to a brutal climax, disfiguring the inner lives of all three, not to mention the person of Zoya. Though a somber turn from previous works and in certain circles considered a welcome return to form, *House of Meetings* still earned Amis some feminist taunts—Stephanie Merritt in the *New Statesman* decried Zoya as a "woman reduced to pure sexual allure ... a sort of Russian-Jewish Jessica Rabbit."

*Radar* caught up with Amis recently in New York to talk about the politicized readings of his latest work, his perspective on the turmoil in the Middle East, and the healing powers of Tina Brown.

*"Tina sort of saved me, because she was very pretty and ebullient and publicly affectionate. She got the scent off me"*

## ON THE RADAR

### FEATURES

EDITED BY:  
 Jordan Heller and  
 Adam Laukhuf

### KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T?

Email us at:  
[tips@radaronline.com](mailto:tips@radaronline.com)  
 or IM: TipRadar

### TODAY'S FEATURES

**The Thin Red Line**  
 Oscar invite get lost in the mail? Expert party crashers on how to slip past the ultimate velvet rope

**The World's Ugliest Awards**  
 The Academy Awards are tired, but the Oscar statuette remains a design classic—unlike these 10 highly coveted atrocities

**The Bard of Brash**  
 Martin Amis on his new book, the Iraq war, and a long-ago love affair with Tina Brown

**Killing Cupid**  
 How advertisers are exploiting your hatred of Valentine's Day

**Tainted Love**  
*Radar* salutes the world's worst Valentine's Day gifts

### FRESH INTELLIGENCE

**Elle** Editor Defends  
 Disturbing Diet

Tory, Lance, Stars Galore  
 Come Out for Damien Hirst in L.A.

KFC Now Desperate for  
 Pope to Bless This Mess

**Enquirer** Eager to Prove  
 Aniston a Cokehead

Axl Struggles for *Democracy*

Psych Expert: Pregnant  
 Smith Looked High on  
 Opiates

Cheney Fave Fox Spikes  
 Impeachment Story

Dannielynn Guardian Gets

Jerks  
 at  
 work  
 got  
 you  
 down?

**RADAR: One of the things that struck me about *House of Meetings* is it takes a more measured view of male brutality than some of your other novels have. It seems that the book's worst indictment of the Soviet system is that it kills the ability of men to love women.**

**MARTIN AMIS:** That tattoo from the Norlag camp, the one that says, "You may live, but you will not love," is really the summary of the book—the feeling that not all of us can transcend this brutality, that we can't just soar above all this. Most of the writers who did write memoirs of the gulags, they all had terrific force of life in them. It was my suspicion that the more typical experience would have been like my character, ruined in emotions by the degradation and injustice.

**Right, and even though your narrator undeniably turns into a monster, I still found him sympathetic.**

Me too. There's very little that can be used to justify what he does with Zoya. But [as for the brutality against German women] we're being too fastidious if we think that if the biggest army in history comes charging across your border without provocation to wage a war of annihilation that killed 25 million of you, that a little vengefulness is not mysterious.

**Still, both here and in Britain you get feminist critics saying you've excused this kind of action by explaining it.**

Well, it's so wrong to have that kind of a politicized reader. You just have to decide that you're going to do without them. You don't care if you don't have them because if they are that politicized then they've really got no business reading fiction.

**This is a dramatic shifting of gears, but speaking of women, can you tell me about your affair with Tina Brown?** She was at Oxford. I was 23, she was 19. What do you want to know?

**Was it mutually satisfactory?**

Yes. She was and is adorable. She sort of rescued me. I don't know if you've ever had one of those periods in your younger years when suddenly, not only are you not seeming to get a girlfriend, but it's as if the women all know that you can't get a girlfriend. The news has got around that you're not going to get a girlfriend. I was going to write about this in an autobiographical novel I'm doing. I was beginning to understand what it must be like to be Philip Larkin—the women *all* know. I didn't actually fear it then; well, no, I did. I was just feeling sort of grubby and exasperated, it just gets worse and worse. The women all—it's as if they've all been ringing each other up and saying, "Don't go near that guy." But Tina sort of saved me, because she was very pretty and ebullient and publicly affectionate. She got the scent off me and gave me confidence. That spell, she banished that. I don't think I've ever said this to a magazine before, but that's what I think about it.



THE TINA PAPERS Brown at VF

**Do you miss America?**

It's always a treat for me, because there's so much less baggage for me here in the States. And I think what makes the difference is that my father [Sir Kingsley Amis] is a more dominant figure in Britain, and I'm always seen as a continuation of him. And just as you get sick of your political leaders after two terms, the Amises have been stinking up the place for 60 years. They've had enough.

**In a recent online chat with readers of the London *Independent*, you called out the British Left for their affinity to Hezbollah. Did you encounter the same tendencies in the American Left?**

It probably is there. It's not there in the general psyche in the same way as in England. It isn't so much an American disease, at least certainly not in New York. But it's rampant in England.

**It just seems perverse and borderline anti-Semitic, as reluctant as I am to reach for that term in these debates.**

I completely agree with you. I was just reading today that the phrase *anti-Semitism* was created in 1870 by an anti-Semite, a crusading anti-Semite, who was saying, in essence, "That's our banner." But that wave of anti-Semitism at the end of the 19th century and beyond was an attempt to delegitimize Jewish equality, which had only recently been established in many places. And now the drive is to delegitimize Israel. An English lefty is never more comfortable, never more deliciously smug than when attacking Israel. It's anti-Semitism with a clear

Anna's Body

Harvard Harder Than Most Imagine

KFC Seeks Pope's Blessing for Loaves and Pitches



RADAR TV

## RELATED LINKS

### HOLLYWOOD

Ain't It Cool News

Cinema Confidential

Deadline Hollywood Daily

Defamer

FilmMakers

Fishbowl LA | Mediabistro

Hollywood Elsewhere

Hollywood, Interrupted

The Hollywood Reporter

Hollywood Stock Exchange

Hollywood Wiretap

IMDb

Charts | IMDb

Jack Shafer | Slate

The Numbers

Peter Bart | Variety

Showbiz Data

TMZ

### MEDIA

Ad Freak

Ad Rants

Ad Age

AdBusters

Blog Critics

Blodgebriy

BuzzMachine

Eat The Press | HuffPo

Editor & Publisher

Fishbowl NY | Mediabistro

Gawker

I Want Media

Jossip

Keith Kelly | NY Post

conscience.

**NEXT PAGE >>**

02/16/07

**File Under:** Christopher Hitchens, Martin Amis, Salman Rushdie, Tina Brown



## Post a Comment

[ Login ] [ Register ]

< **BACK TO FEATURES**

Media Blog | NRO

Media Matters

Media Mob | NY Observer

Mediaweek

On The Media | NPR

Romenesko | Poynter

Press Think

Radosh

The Transom | NY Observer

TV Newser | Mediabistro

### STYLE

Bluefly

Bryanboy: Le Superstar  
Fabuleux

Confessions Of A Casting  
Director

Daily Candy

Cobrasnake

Fashion Addict Diary

The Daily

Give Me Spirit Fingers Dammit

Go Fug Yourself

Imaginary Socialite

Cool Hunting

J'Adore Joey

Last Night's Party

Patrick McMullan

Men's Style.com

Runway Talk

The Sartorialist

SeamSters

Smashingly Fabulous

Socialite Rank

Style Bubble

Style.com

Style Tribe

Wire Image

Women's Wear Daily

### POLITICS

The Atlantic

Americablog

Atrios

CQ

Crooks and Liars

Daily Kos

Drudge Report

The Economist

Firedoglake

Government Search | Google

The Hill Blog

HuffingtonPost

Instapundit

Little Green Footballs

Lucianne Goldberg

The Memory Hole

MyDD

The Nation

National Review

The New Republic

The Note

Roll Call

Talking Points Memo

TPMmuckraker

Washington Whispers | U.S.  
News

Wonkette

**CULTURE**

All Music Guide

Arts & Letters Daily

Best Week Ever

Billboard

Book Slut

Brooklyn Vegan

Cool Hunter

Deadline Hollywood

Defamer

Entertainment Weekly

Hollywood Reporter

IMDb

iTunes

Metacritic

New York Review of Books

NME

Pitchfork

Pop Matters

Reality Blurred

Rotten Tomatoes

Salon

Slate

Stereogum

Television Without Pity

Variety

James Wolcott

**NEWS**

Breitbart

Digg  
The Economist  
Google News  
The Onion  
The Week  
Wired News  
Yahoo! News

**MUSIC**

Pitchfork  
Stereogum  
Brooklyn Vegan  
Coolfer  
Fluxblog  
Gorilla v. Bear  
Yeti Don't Dance  
Simple Mission  
Music for Robots  
KCRW (music)  
Insound  
Allmusic  
Catchdubs  
The Modern Age  
Status Ain't Hood

**BOOKS**

Bookninja  
Bookslut  
Buzz, Balls & Hype  
Maud Newton  
Old Hag

**FILM**

Apple Trailers  
Cinecultist  
Nerve Film Lounge  
Rotten Tomatoes

**TV**

The Futon Critic  
PopWatch | Entertainment Weekly  
Previously On  
Reality Blurred  
Television Without Pity  
TVGASM

