Etgar Keret
Visits Jewish Studies Students

Booker Prize-winning author Salman Rushdie says that best-selling Israeli writer and filmmaker Etgar Keret is “A brilliant writer...completely unlike any writer I know. The voice of the next generation.”
“Keret can do more with six paragraphs than most writers can with 600 pages.”
—The Atlantic Magazine
THE NEW YORK TIMES CALLS
Keret a “genius,” and former People magazine book and music reviews editor Kyle Smith, dubbed “America’s most cantankerous film critic” by The Atlantic, opines: “Keret can do more with six… paragraphs than most writers can with 600 pages.”

So, when the College of Arts & Letters Jewish Studies Program brought Etgar Keret to MSU, it was no wonder that writers young and old wanted to hear what he had to say, and just be in his presence for an evening. Beginning on stage at East Lansing’s Hannah Community Center with a question and answer session and the reading of a few passages from his book “The Bus Driver Who Wanted to be God,” Keret then turned to the audience for questions.

Asked about his writing process, Keret said, “I don’t really have a process where I write a certain amount every day at a certain time and place. I write when I can, and when I have the time.”

The evening’s promotional materials noted of Keret: “Hailed as the voice of young Israel and one of its most radical and extraordinary writers, Etgar Keret is internationally acclaimed for his short stories. The third child of parents who survived the Holocaust, Keret was born in Tel Aviv in 1967 into an extremely diverse family. His brother heads an Israeli group that lobbies for the legalization of marijuana, and his sister is an orthodox Jew and the mother of ten children.

“Keret regards his family as a microcosm of Israel. His book, ‘The Nimrod Flip-Out’ (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006), is a collection of 32 short stories that captures the craziness of life in Israel today. Rarely extending beyond three or four pages, these stories fuse the banal with the surreal. Shot through with a dark, tragicomic sensibility and casual, comic-strip violence, they offer a window on a surreal world that is at once funny and sad.”

Keret’s books are bestsellers in Israel and have been published in 22 languages. Keret has received the Book Publishers Association’s Platinum Prize several times, the Chevalier medallion of France’s Order of Arts and Letters, and has been awarded the Prime Minister’s Prize and the Ministry of Culture’s Cinema Prize. More than 40 short movies have been based on his stories, one of which won the Israeli Oscar. ‘Wrist Cutters,’ featuring Tom Waits, was released in August 2007. ‘Jellyfish,’ his first movie as a director along with his wife Shira Geffen, won the coveted Camera d’Or prize for best first feature at the Cannes Film Festival 2007. The animated feature film ‘$9.99,’ based on several of Keret’s stories, marries the tradition of Jewish self-flagellating humor with uncanny absurdity.”

Keret currently lectures at Ben Gurion University and Tel Aviv University.

Keret’s work is frequently featured on the National Public Radio program “This American Life.”

WRITING STYLE
Keret’s writing style is lean, utilizing everyday language, slang, and dialect. His work has influenced many writers of his generation, and brought a renewed surge in the popularity of the short story form in Israel in the second half of the 1990s.