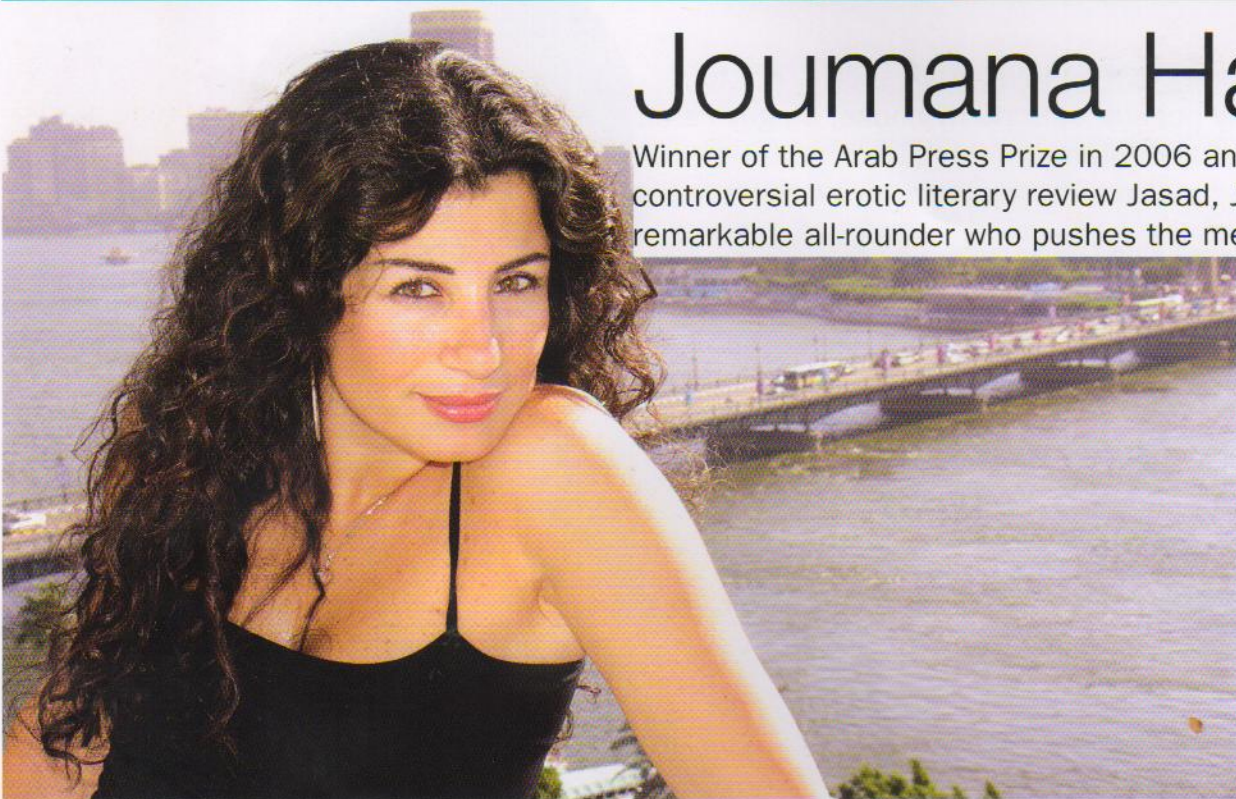


**SPECIAL EDITION 2009**



**40 Lebanese who make the capital great**



# Joumana Haddad

Winner of the Arab Press Prize in 2006 and founder of the controversial erotic literary review *Jasad*, Joumana Haddad is a remarkable all-rounder who pushes the media's boundaries.

## Beirut is...

Crazy. I've never been on good terms with Beirut. I was born in December 1970 and soon after that the war started. My connection with Beirut was a negative one for a while. When I was 30 I tried to reconcile with Beirut and we're working on that together. Beirut is the woman I might be but at the same time she's what I dread to be.

## What's the craziest thing you've done?

That certainly can't go into print.

## Well, let's tone it down enough...

Well, I guess the craziest thing I've done is starting this magazine [*Jasad*]. Everyone around me thought I was crazy; it wasn't the right time and it wasn't the right place, they said. I'm already juggling so many things: I'm the cultural editor of *An Nahar*, I administer the Arab Booker Prize, I'm a writer of six books myself, I travel continuously and I have two kids, a 16 year-old and a nine year-old.

## So was it the right time for it?

You have to invent the right moment, you can't just sit and wait for it to happen. You invent the moment, you create time.

## Well, do you feel that people want a local magazine with nudity?

I have to insist that *Jasad* is not about seeing naked people. Go on the internet, go on to Google, go on to YouPorn. It's far too easy to see nudity if you wanted to.

## But you must admit that nudity is part of the appeal...

Definitely, but it's not only that. People thought that we have too many issues in the Arab world and some even believe we're

going backwards rather than forwards. I'm a Lebanese woman and I've been part of Lebanon's nightlife for a while. I know what goes on and I think it's time we got rid of the hypocrisy of it all. I think people are ready. I realise a good part of the sales is a result of curiosity, but I've been getting good feedback and it's wonderful that I'm getting so much support. I was expecting worse.

## I did see that TV interview with...

That Saudi guy on LBC? God. He was pathetic – glossy, modern western clothing with a mind stuck in the middle ages. I remember one question that shocked people. The interviewer asked me: 'Why do you and your husband live in separate houses? Is it a way to let him have a sex life outside your marriage?' I was about to ask him: 'Didn't the opposite cross your mind?' It is unfortunate and frustrating to see how so many Arab men are still entangled with patriarchal complexes. For me it is always a sign of low self confidence. Anyway, whatever that poor guy was trying to do, he only succeeded in marketing my magazine in Saudi Arabia.

## So why do you live in separate houses?

We're both writers and we need our space. Freedom and oxygen are quintessential in any relationship. I'm crazy about him, he's crazy about me and we've been together for eleven years now. A good part of that is because we never lived together. We have a very nice village house where we both stay in over the weekend though and we travel together a lot.

## Fair enough. What's your favourite place in Lebanon?

Batroun, the seaside. My dream is to have a house by the sea and I don't mean overlooking the sea, I mean right by the sea. I want to step out of my house and onto the beach.

**A body of work**  
Haddad's *Jasad* magazine has caused controversy in conservative Arab countries.