

# Theater Review: HUMAN INTEREST STORY (Fountain)



by [Tony Frankel](#) on February 24, 2020

in [Theater-Los Angeles](#)

## HERE'S SOMETHING THAT WILL INTEREST YOU

This is the second show this year in L.A. to take head-on the insanity of modern journalism (the insanity being that while newspapers deliver so-called news, they gotta make a buck, so sensationalism often wins out [ask Hearst]), but now we have the internet to contend with, where any fool can start a firestorm of fake news). With no intentions of reviewing, I caught the world premiere of *Human Interest Story* at the Fountain Theatre last night, and it can't be more highly recommended.





As with [Steven Leigh Morris's \*Red Ink\*](#), Stephen Sachs creates in his world premiere a journalist who is up against a corporate takeover. When a brash, opinionated columnist has been laid off from his paper, he is so incensed that he invents for his final article a phony letter from “Jane Doe”, a homeless woman who promises to kill herself on July Fourth due to an inhumane humanity. When the out-of-work journalist meets a homeless, black woman in a park, he takes her under his wing to be his “Jane Doe” — a decision they both make out of desperation. In a way, this intelligent ex-teacher is his frontwoman, and Jane Doe becomes a media darling. What ensues is a taut, thought-provoking 150-minute thrill ride that takes on the tyranny of corporations, almost like a non-satirical *Network*. While Sachs should step aside as director so an outsider can pick up the slack, he has assembled one helluva cast with scenes so riveting that you want to freeze them forever. Aleisha Force's turns as a mid-west talk show host and relationship-starved writer are incredible (most of the 7-member cast play multiple roles), and James Harper's ferocious billionaire politician wannabe is one for the books.





I applaud Morris's meta-theatrics for *Red Ink* (and I urge him to continue in that direction), but Sachs's play succeeds with pure, unadulterated drama (*Jane Doe* should be the title, not *Human Interest Story*, as the gist for me is how millions, if not billions, of nameless people are falling through the cracks due to technology, overpopulation and gentrification). Instead of giving us yet another limp issue play (which the Fountain has been guilty of presenting in the past), Sachs tackles homelessness, women's issues, greed and more in ways that resonate because it's about the universality of the characters, not the issues.

photos by Jenny Graham

*Human Interest Story*

Fountain Theatre, 5060 Fountain Ave.

Fri, Sat & Mon at 8; Sat & Sun at 2

ends on April 5, 2020

for tickets, call 323.663.1525 or visit [Fountain Theatre](#)