

Human Interest Story Review – Meet Jane Doe

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Tanya Alexander as Jane Doe in HUMAN INTEREST STORY - Photo by Jenny Graham

When the image of a 1941 Frank Capra movie called “Meet John Doe” popped into his mind while driving through Los Angeles, playwright Stephen Sachs was off and running. How might the issues in this classic film – released just as the war in Europe was exploding and just before Pearl Harbor would be bombed by the Japanese, with most of the world soon clasped in the arms of war – resonate with today’s audiences? Faced with a flood of fake news, attacks on the press, continuing international brinksmanship, terrorism, and domestic homelessness, would it be possible to update the 1941 film to reflect the modern-day problems we all face in 2020? Thus was born a HUMAN INTEREST STORY.



Matt Kirkwood and Rob Nagle - Photo by Jenny Graham

When columnist Andy Kramer (Rob Nagle) is summarily fired from the newspaper he has worked for since he was a teenager, he decides to create a small ripple in his faithful readership by authoring a supposed note from Jane Doe, a fictional homeless woman with an axe to grind and a suicide to commit - on the Fourth of July.



Richard Azurdia, James Harper, and Tarina Pouncy - Photo by Jenny Graham

Soon the ripple grows into a tsunami as the world eagerly grabs onto the tale and wants more. The shocked

and stymied newsman is caught in the proverbial bind as he tries to figure out his next move – when who should appear but Jane Doe herself (Tanya Alexander), a down-and-out homeless black woman willing to do anything to escape her currently miserable lot in life. Soon the two cook up a solution to Kramer's problem – with a resulting stew which will impact millions.



Aleisha Force, Rob Nagle, and Tanya Alexander – Photo by Jenny Graham

Writer Sachs cleverly weaves many of today's urban issues into this tale about doing all the wrong things for the right reasons. When the powerful and superficially benevolent newspaper publisher Harold Cain (James Harper) decides to offer aid and assistance to Jane Doe, there are strings attached which just might choke everyone within striking distance – including Jane Doe, Kramer, and Kramer's wannabe reporter girlfriend Megan (Aleisha Force). Because a HUMAN INTEREST STORY will soon grow into an expose of many of the crises we face today, including poverty, race, burgeoning social media, public opinion shapers, and raw, unbridled political power. Directed by playwright Stephen Sachs, the talented cast keep the impact escalating as each character rushes towards his inevitable fate – or is that fate truly inevitable?



Rob Nagle and Tanya Alexander - Photo by Jenny Graham

Matthew Hill's set and video design work effectively as a backdrop for the play, with Jennifer Edwards' lighting, Shon LeBlanc's costumes, and Peter Bayne's original music and sound adding to a well-produced piece. HUMAN INTEREST STORY is a timely - and often incendiary - look at life in America today. This thought-provoking account should foster lots of conversation - and maybe even some controversy - in audiences. One thing is sure. No one will leave the theater without some strong opinions, old and new.



**Tanya Alexander - Photo by
Jenny Graham**

HUMAN INTEREST STORY runs through April 5, 2020, with performances at 8 p.m. on Fridays and Mondays, at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and at 2 p.m. on Sundays. The Fountain Theatre is located at 5060 Fountain Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Tickets range from \$25 to \$45 (seniors \$35, students \$25, Mondays Pay-What-You-Want). For information and reservations, call 323-663-1525 or go [online](#).
